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TITLE OF THESIS:

**UWI DMLL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE MOST EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO
FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING.**

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ABSTRACT

Perceptions within the context of Foreign Language Learning, involve either teacher or student input. In similar manner, approaches incorporated by the teacher or student impact the way in which learning takes place. The main objective of this research was to investigate the perceptions held by students of the University of the West Indies, Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics regarding the most effective approach to Foreign Language Learning. Data was derived through the exploration of the Sequential Exploratory Mixed Methods Design, a two phased process that began with the qualitative phase and followed by the quantitative. The first phase encompassed a total of eight interviews, while the second phase encompassed a total of fifty questionnaires. Thereafter, analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data was done through thematic coding and generalisation of thematic coding to a larger sample size respectively. The major findings of the research revealed that students' perceptions do influence their foreign language learning through a host of topic-based considerations. Moreover, through the approximation of at least ten language learning approaches and through reflections that describe the most effective language learning approach to be pluralistic in nature and not singular. Based on further analysis of findings, it was suggested that as conventional learning modules exist, guiding and instructing how foreign language learning be taught, in similar fashion, should there be more avenues of research that implements considerations of the student regarding the learning of a foreign language.

Keywords: students' perception, language learning, foreign language learning, approaches to foreign language learning, most effective language approaches, students' conceptions to second languages, students' language approaches.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
LIST OF ABBREVIATION.....	v
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
Rationale.....	2
Parameters	2
Objectives.....	2
Research Questions	3
Methodology	3
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Understanding effectiveness of learners	6
Conceptions of teachers and students.....	6
Qualitative and quantitative conceptions	7
Process and Methods of FLL	8
Motivation in LL.....	9
FLL and instructional approaches	9
Conclusion of FL instruction	11
CHAPTER 2: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.....	13
Phase 1: Qualitative Presentation of Results (Interviews)	13
Demographics and FL choices	14
Influences and learning styles	14
Importance and techniques employed in FLL.....	15

Evaluation and impact of learning styles on FLL	16
How language components should be taught and the most effective approach to FLL.....	16
Phase 2: Quantitative Presentation of Results (Surveys)	17
Demographics and Personal History	17
Perception on how FLs should be taught	22
Perception on learning environments and effective FLL approaches	24
CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION.....	26
Research problem and Importance of findings	26
Major findings and comparisons to other research findings	26
Conclusion.....	31
Limitations	32
Recommendations	32
WORKS CITED	33
APPENDIX A (Interview Questions).....	0
APPENDIX B (Questionnaire questions).....	4

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UWI - University of the West Indies

DMLL - Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics

FLL - Foreign Language Learning

FL - Foreign Language

FLs - Foreign Languages

QUAL- Qualitative

QUAN - Quantitative

SLA - Second Language Acquisition

LL - Language Learning

L2 – Second-language Learning

L1- Native Language

MLs - Modern Languages

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Appendix A: Samples of Qualitative Analysis (Interview questions)
2. Appendix B: Samples of Quantitative Analysis (Survey/questionnaire questions)

UWI DMLL Students' Perception on the Most Effective Approach to Foreign Language Learning.

INTRODUCTION

In the academic context, motivation plays a major role in students' learning process and this is not an exception in language learning contexts. More specifically, there is a combined set of actions that one embarks on when learning Foreign Languages (FLs). These include but are not limited to, effort, coupled with desire and favourable attitudes toward learning of the desired foreign language (Gardner, 1985). During the 1970's, the attribution theory accounts for an integral facet of motivation, social psychology, educational psychology and it highlights some of the explanations that people tend to make concerning their perceived reasons as to why people attain successes or failures (Weiner, 1974).

At the University of the West Indies, the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (DMLL) is charged with the responsibility of delivering three major foreign language offerings. These are French, Spanish and Portuguese. Students that pursue undergraduate degrees with majors and minors in foreign languages, do so for varied reasons and may have different approaches to their individual learning process. Perception of learning, is another pivotal point of reference that any language learning student would consider when learning a foreign language. Thus, this paper seeks to explore the students' perception toward the language learning process. To this end, the desired goal is to ascertain according to the students, the most effective approach that should be employed in Foreign Language Learning (FLL). In order to learn of the most effective approaches, one must investigate the dispositional factors and situational factors that exist and compare them in an attempt to determine similarities or differences in the cognition of the students.

Rationale

The main objective in selecting this topic of research for the researcher is derived from conflict he would have observed in other students during class sessions, as it related to their perception of best practices or study methods that should be adopted when embarking upon FLL. As a consequence, this paper investigates the perceptions held by students of the UWI DMLL pursuing majors or minors in foreign languages and their considerations as to the most effective approach to FLL. Special emphasis will be placed on all three foreign language offerings; French, Spanish and Portuguese, with a view of understanding the students' varied viewpoints on FLL across levels one to three.

Parameters

As this investigation employs an in-depth focus on the perception of the student and his or her considerations regarding the most effective approach to learning a Foreign Language (FL), there will be limitations. Firstly, as the study examines the students of the UWI St. Augustine Campus, in the DMLL. Further, limitations are expected to persist as the research sample is hinged in the local context of Trinidad and Tobago and not to the region or international context.

Objectives

This work is intended to investigate the impact of perceptions on the ways in which a student believes that his or her perceived approach to FLL can be achieved to gain success while pursuing a major or minor in FL studies.

Research Questions

1. How does students' perceptions influence FLL?
2. What are some of the students' approaches to FLL?
3. What is the student's most effective approach to FLL?

Methodology

The research design that guided this investigation was the sequential exploratory mixed methods design, where data collection in the investigation is conducted in two phases. The first phase captures Qualitative (QUAL) data that will explore the topic. Then, based on findings from the first phase, collects Quantitative (QUAN) data in a second phase that generalizes the qualitative findings previously attained. This two-phase approach can be defined through, (a) the QUAL phase, which fleshes out thematic findings and subsequently (b) the QUAN phase, which refers to a quantitative data collection process that seeks to generalize the discovered themes found from the QUAL phase among a larger group of participants. The sample size for the QUAL phase received a total of eight students all of whom were randomly selected from across the DMLL to participate in interviews. The subject area categories were either both French and Spanish or Spanish, French or Portuguese alone. The interviews were geared toward getting thematic and in-depth perceptions on the topic questions and were expected to last up to ten minutes per participant. When asked, "How does your learning style impact your Language learning (LL)?", the objective here, was to get personalized opinions from participants in an attempt to unearth the value they place on evaluating their learning styles. Thus, mapping any approach they adopt in the LL process. Each interview was audio recorded so as to commit full attention to the interviewee and lessen the level of distraction that could have been created by writing while the interviewee would have been

speaking. Personal information such as names and addresses were not requested from participants so as to allow for animosity and confidentiality in responses (see appendix A).

On the other hand, the sample size for the QUAN phase, took the form of questionnaires which were a total of fifty persons (females= 38, males=12). A voluntary approach of participants was adopted from across the DMLL to ascertain whether or not participants studied any FL. Moreover, selection of participants was done upon approval from lecturers during an allotted period of time within selected FL classroom sessions. The questions posed on the questionnaires were derived from results and findings from the QUAL phase. In similar manner, phase 2, the researcher did not request neither the names nor address of participants. However, they were asked to indicate on the questionnaire sheets, the current year of study to which they belonged as well as the programme of study that they were pursuing (see appendix B).

Upon completion of phase 1, the data were analysed to flesh out specific themes relating to demographics of the student, deep seated perceptions of students (second & final years) on how FLs should be taught, how they should approach FLL, some of their approaches to FLL, purpose and importance of FLL and learning styles among other thematic considerations which will be further discussed in the chapter on presentation of findings. The analysis of the first phase was instrumental to informing the second phase due to the need for quantitative data that will build on and generalize qualitative findings (themes).

Upon completion of phase 2, the QUAN data were analysed by creating a connection with data from the QUAL phase by building and testing those findings and using them to select variables. Each questionnaire response was critically reviewed to get a generalized appreciation of the research topic. Therefore, the research design employed to carry out this investigation was the sequential exploratory mixed methods design in nature and it proved to be useful as it allowed the

researcher to identify quantitative measures that were actually grounded in the qualitative data obtained from study participants and thus, lead to clear interpretation of findings.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

The overall objectives of this chapter are; firstly, to establish the significance of the general field of study; secondly, to identify a place where new contributions could be made to enhance existing research and thirdly, to add new material where gaps would have been observed. This chapter critically examines the work done by past researchers in this field or in fields of a similar nature with a view of determining the appropriate approach for investigating the research questions.

Understanding effectiveness of learners

Along the course of time, the search for ways of understanding why some learners are more effective than others has turned increasingly in recent years toward ways in which the learners themselves make sense of the tasks with which they are faced (Williams & Burden, 1997), the messages which are transmitted by their teachers (Feuerstein et.al.1991), the nature of the learning environments (Fraser, 1998), and their own perceived capabilities (Bandura, 1997). It is important that any student pursuing studies in FLs must be able to comprehend and reproduce information that is fed to him or her from the target language into the native language with a view of correctly interpreting scenarios or situations that might be present. He or she must have the capacity to decode information through messages that are transmitted by teachers of said FLs, must be able to determine if and to what degree does the learning environment impact interpretation and comprehensibility of FLL and be honest in ascertaining his or her capacities for FLL.

Conceptions of teachers and students

FL teachers and students may have very similar or disparate notions of effective teaching, and the intersection of the two sets of beliefs has ramifications for language learning and the effectiveness of instruction. Horwitz (1990), Kern (1995), and Schulz (1996) have argued that

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 study. Every student and teacher may have expectations when attending a class; for the student, it may be to pass the course with thorough understanding or mere knowledge and to the student that might suffice. On the other hand, however, the teacher's expectation of the students may be to pass the course with the hopes that everyone achieves understanding. To this end, the teacher's reputation increases and so to their pass rate for the given subject matter. When considering the ultimate quality of the student learning product, there are a number of factors that should be considered. Identifiably, there are two marked opposing conceptions of learning; reproductive or quantitative, and comprehensive or qualitative (Marton & Säljö 1976).

Qualitative and quantitative conceptions

On the one hand, quantitative conceptions of learning refer to a process of accumulating information in order to reproduce or apply it. On the other hand, in qualitative conceptions of learning, learning has to do with comprehension and interpretation of meaning. According to Marton, Dall'alba, and Beaty (1993), they were able to identify variants of the main conceptions of learning and break them down into six conceptions. These six conceptions are further sub-categorized into two groups, where the first three areas are classed as variants of quantitative learning. These include: (1) increasing knowledge, (2) memorising and reproducing and (3) applying. The second three conceptions are considered to be variants of the qualitative conception of learning and refer to: (4) understanding, (5) seeing things in a different way and (5) changing as a person. The understanding of these concepts to the researcher is integral since, in order to understand the perception that each student may hold when analysing the most effective approach to FLL, will flesh out a clear road map whilst defining key terms and concepts that will explain

the researcher's questions. The researcher, when considering whether or not there was a difference between the approaches to learning and the perceptions of learning, discovered that there are indeed marked differences between the approaches to learning when compared to the conceptions of learning. To distinguish the difference between the two, on one hand, the conceptions of learning refer to how students learn whilst on the other hand, the approaches to learning refer to how learners represent learning.

Process and Methods of FLL

The process of learning however, is said to be distinguishable by three layers of learning which entail: surface, deep and achieving. In the surface learning approach, it is said that learning involves dealing with learning situations with minimum effort that responds only on a compulsory need basis in order to meet the demands of memorization. Contrastingly, the deep learning approach implies that learning is dealt within an academic manner due to enjoyment of learning which results in comprehension. Lastly, the achieving approach of learning encompasses the search for excellent grades through an organization of work (Duarte).

Another area that the researcher explored was the field of: language and communication, and methods of learning and teaching FLs. It is said that since language is an integral and present component of everyday life, it is often taken for granted and seldom do persons really consider the vast skill set that is involved in its use. However, when we are faced with problems regarding second-language learning (L2), do we then realise some of its complexities. In order to view L2 in the right perspective, as suggested by Stork, it may also help to know about the sequence of events in the acquisition of the native language, if only to highlight the differences and the difficulties involved. The native language is acquired as a result of the interaction of two factors: (1) an innate potential to acquire language; something all human beings and apparently only human beings

possess, and (2) the environment which determines the language acquired (Stork). For example, a child growing up in a Spanish-speaking environment will speak Spanish regardless of his or her nationality being German. L2 requires conscious effort. It does not occur in the same way as an infant with a clean slate. However, it entails learning the spoken language as well as the written language (Stork).

Motivation in LL

Motivation is another aspect of L2 and is considered as one of the most important ingredients. Motivation in L2 is dissimilar to learning of a native language (L1), as in the case of an infant but it will aid in preventing frustration and loss of the particular interest which first led to the motivation of L2. Having a definite purpose in mind and specifying the type of language required aids motivation and achievement in L2 (Stork). Thus, when one considers facets of FLL, it can be appreciated that the following are integral; communication of the language dealt with L1, L2, motivation of the two, and having purpose in mind. Further, based on the established methods that existed for both learning and teaching of FLs, the researcher was able to unearth that the traditional method of teaching modern languages (MLs) was done based on the methods used for teaching classical languages of Latin and Greek using traditional grammar in their approach. However, in the teaching of written language, teaching of grammar was restricted (Stork). Further, it was disinterred that MLs in its early use was not to teach in everyday practical use rather to teach a restricted literary form for cultural purposes (Stork).

FLL and instructional approaches

Early emphasis on written language was placed on traditional methods of learning grammar not as a descriptive guide rather as an educational desirable in itself (Stork). The researcher was also able establish that for the teaching of a FL, it was perceived and expected that the FL teacher

be a native speaker to the language that he or she is teaching. Three forms of such FLL entails: (1) description, since a good description is integral for meaningfulness, reference and revision, (2) drill, which combines oral and or written skills and (3) practice, which places an emphasis on language as a creative method of communication, also considered to be the most difficult type of study (Stork). Further, Stork found that among the four practical language skills, they are grouped into two categories: (1) receptive skills- employing the skill of listening and reading and (2) expressive skills- employing the skill of speaking and writing. He further summates that the expressive skills can be acquired without the receptive skills. This being the case, he concludes that the expressive skills presuppose the responding receptive skills. A final point Stork made suggested that it is possible to learn to understand spoken language or to read written language without necessarily learning to use either actively for speaking or writing. However, the ability to speak presupposes the ability to understand, and the ability to write presupposes the ability to read.

Another area of research holds that during the latter part of the ninetieth century, phoneticians like Henry Sweet, Wilhelm Vietor, and Paul Passy, made some of the first truly scientific contributions to language teaching. These contributions are sequentially advocated in the following four principles: (1) the primary form of a spoken language, (2) application of phonetics, (3) solid training in phonetics for language teachers and (4) phonetic training for learners to establish essential speech habits (Celce-Murcia et al).

Further advances during the twentieth century ensued, thus modifying instructional methods of FLs. The Grammar translation approach, which entailed an extension of the approach used to teach classical languages such as Greek and Latin, was adopted into the principles of teaching MLs. There were seven major characteristics of this approach; (1) grammar as a way of studying language firstly through the rules of grammar, followed by the task of implementation

where the student is then required to translate texts into and out of the target language. (2) Focus of reading/writing where little or no focus was placed on speaking or listening. (3) Reading vocabulary selection where words were solely chosen from texts that were read. (4) Teaching and practice of language. Emphasis here was placed on accuracy in translation, deductive teaching of grammar through study and presentation of grammar rules and L1 as a medium of instruction. (5) The direct approach which involves the reaction to the grammar-translation approach and its failure to produce learners who could communicate in the foreign language. (6) Reading approach- a reaction to the problems experienced in implementing the direct approach. (7) Audio-lingualism- a reaction to the reading approach and its lack of emphasis on oral-aural skills. (8) Oral-situational approach- a reaction to the reading approach and its lack of emphasis on oral-aural skills. (9) Cognitive approach- a reaction to the behaviorist features of the Audio-lingual approach. (10) Affective-humanistic approach- a reaction to the general lack of affective considerations in both audio-lingualism and cognitive approaches. (11) Finally, the comprehension-based approach which speaks to an out-growth of research in first language acquisition which led to some language methodologists' assumptions that SLA was similar to L1 acquisition; (Richards and Rodgers).

Conclusion of FL instruction

Therefore, based on these instructional models that were developed and still receive modifications today, it has both impacted how teachers instruct L2 and the perceptions students hold regarding approaches to learning FLs. Further, the researcher established that it was easier to access scholarly work, peer reviews and general research on the following topic: (a) acquisition of FLL, (b) approaches to FLL, and (c) perceptions of teachers in the process of FLL. In this regard, the researcher experienced some difficulty in accessing a vast range of scholarly research on the students' perspectives toward SLA. Therefore, the researcher summates that works may exist in

similar fields of research but was unable to readily access such works. As a consequence, the researcher perceives an existing gap where the findings of this research can add to the existing scholarly research on the students' perception on the most effective approach to FLL.

CHAPTER 2: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The main objective of this research was to ascertain UWI DMLL students' perception on the most effective approach to FLL. To this end, the researcher examined three core areas of the topic with a view of understanding how perceptions influence FLL, the approaches employed by students when learning a FL and the effectiveness of their employed approaches. Further, research was conducted into existing literature to unearth what other scholars may have contributed to the said topic. Lastly, the researcher, through the implementation of a sequential exploratory mixed methods design, was able to examine the topic which unfolded through two major phases.

Phase 1: Qualitative Presentation of Results (Interviews)

The researcher here, employed the precepts of the sequential exploratory mixed methods design which speaks to a set of procedures that are used to collect and analyse qualitative data to explore the research topic as part of the first phase and then employ the principles of the second and quantitative phase. The research adopted this first approach in order to explore and identify themes as well as to develop an instrument for further analysis for the second phase based on the said thematic findings. Therefore, this section highlights the results obtained from the interviews and then presents further findings to be discussed in the next phase.

In this first phase, the researcher would have prepared a total of thirteen open-ended questions that were targeted to eight students (second and final year) of French, Spanish and Portuguese. Coming out of the eight interviews, the researcher observed a myriad of themes as expressed by the students. They included: (a) demographics and FL choices, (b) influences and learning styles, (c) importance and techniques employed in FLL, (d) evaluation and impact of learning styles on FLL, and (e) how language components should be taught and the most effective approach to FLL.

Demographics and FL choices

Each student was asked to identify his or her age and the programme of study to which he or she belonged. The student was then asked to give consent and to be honest in his or her responses (see appendix A). All of the eight interviewees studied either Spanish or French, a combination of the two, French and Portuguese, Portuguese alone, Spanish alone or French alone. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 19-25 and consisted of six females and two males. Of the three FL course offerings proffered by the UWI DMLL, variations in degree majors were observed among the eight interviewees. One person majored in Linguistics, one person majored in both French and Spanish, three persons majored in French, three persons majored in Spanish, and no one majored in Portuguese. Additionally, student FL minors accounted for overlaps in both Spanish and French while one person minored in Portuguese.

Influences and learning styles

When asked, what influenced them (students) to pursue studies in FLs, they attributed it to passion, the result of family influences, follow through from secondary school, natural inclination and success with FL courses, interest for travel, learning new cultures and career opportunities. Thereafter, it was observed that two interviewees were not clear of their learning styles and sought to get further explanation. Subsequently, after clarification, one of the two participants, indicated their learning style to be visual. Further outlining that seeing the material is integral in actually remembering what was taught. On the other hand, the next interviewee indicated that their learning style may have predominantly been visual but still remained unsure of other possible combinations. As a result, all learning styles were clearly listed and placed into the QUAN phase of the investigation to get a more generalized concept from participants. In contrast, the remaining six interviewees, were able to identify their learning styles and evaluate them along the lines of the

LL process. Their responses outlined the following learning styles: (i) kinaesthetic/tactile and (ii) auditory and visual. The following were considerations for selections of learning styles: (a) For kinaesthetic/tactile, learning must be made to be hands-on/must put into practice with careful considerations to how the student feels during the learning process. Also, the student must be able to reproduce based on being physically involved in doing what is being taught. (b) For auditory, the learner must be exposed to videos, music and even live conversations with natives in order to learn. For visual, learning must present repeated visual imagery with a lot of examples. Therefore, by analysing those responses it revealed that learning styles of the participants do impact the way in which a FL is learnt.

Importance and techniques employed in FLL

Further, in response to the student's considerations on the importance of FLL, the general consensus revealed a number of factors attributing to the importance of FLL. They include: (a) the creation of job opportunities locally, regionally and internationally, (b) ease of comprehension and communication, (c) necessary for business and trade matters, (d) for the creation of broader worldview perspective and (e) learning of new cultures. Interviewees elaborated that conversing with natives, reading, listening to music or immersion are some of the overlapping techniques employed to enrich their learning experience. Contrastingly, some of the distinguishable techniques employed by participants are: (i) lack of structure, (ii) dependability on innate abilities, (iii) watching movies that have been dubbed into a FL, (iv) having a pen-pal, (v) actually attending classes and (vi) gaming.

Evaluation and impact of learning styles on FLL

Upon evaluation of learning styles and its impact on FLL, students were allowed to choose more than one option out of the four learning styles and then give it a range of either high, medium or low. The range that received the highest participant selection was the medium range with 29 participants. The next range that received the second highest amount of selection was the high range selected by 20 participants. The lowest category of selection was the low range which received a selection by 1 participant.

How language components should be taught and the most effective approach to FLL

The final areas that were critically analysed from the QUAL phase were the conceptions of the interviewees regarding how grammar, reading/writing and speaking/listening should be taught and the perceptions held by students on the most effective approach to FLL. Firstly, regarding the way grammar should be taught, all eight participants indicated that it is being taught well and that no adjustments should be made. Regarding the reading/writing component, interviewees indicated that it should be taught in class, with relevance to Latin America and Spain, with relevance to Trinidad and Tobago, with relevance to France and Brazil respectively and with relevance to student desire and autonomy. Regarding the way speaking and listening be taught, interviewees indicated the following: (a) inclusion of music, (b) more native input through language assistants, (c) a balance between teacher and student autonomy, (d) with videos of varying speeds, (e) through a combination of in-class and outside of class environments, (f) with topics that vary on a weekly basis, (g) through discussions and debates and (h) through creative teaching methods that vary from the formal class structure.

Finally, regarding the perceptions of the interviewees on the most effective approach to FLL. The following considerations were derived by combing the conceptions of all eight

interviewees: through direct immersion, individual passion, desire for FLL, consistent practice, social interactions with natives and non-natives learners, through exposure to videos, music and documentaries, self-learning, in-classroom or outside of classroom approaches.

Phase 2: Quantitative Presentation of Results (Surveys)

In this second QUAN phase, the researcher combined the QUAL findings that were previously discussed, into the generalized methods of phase 2 in an attempt to gather survey data from participants (see appendix B). A total of 50 surveys were printed for dissemination to random year 1 to final year students. Each survey contained a total of 15 questions that were developed following thematic findings discussed in phase 1. Subsequently, the researcher analysed the survey data statistically creating three major sections of analysis: (1) demographics and personal history, (2) perception on how FLs should be taught and (3) perceptions on learning environments and effective FLL approaches. The main objective here in analysing the data, was to connect the perceptions of the students throughout both phases, firstly qualitative and secondly quantitative (QUAL/Quan) to be able to respond to the main research question- “what is the most effective approach to FLL?”

Demographics and Personal History

As indicated in phase 1, the age group of the survey sample size ranged from 18-30. This accounted for persons in the first to final year of studies and further indicated the length of time each participant held studying FLs. Further analysis shows the range in time spent by each student

learning FLs (3-30 years). The sample size equalled females= 38, males=12 (see fig. 1).

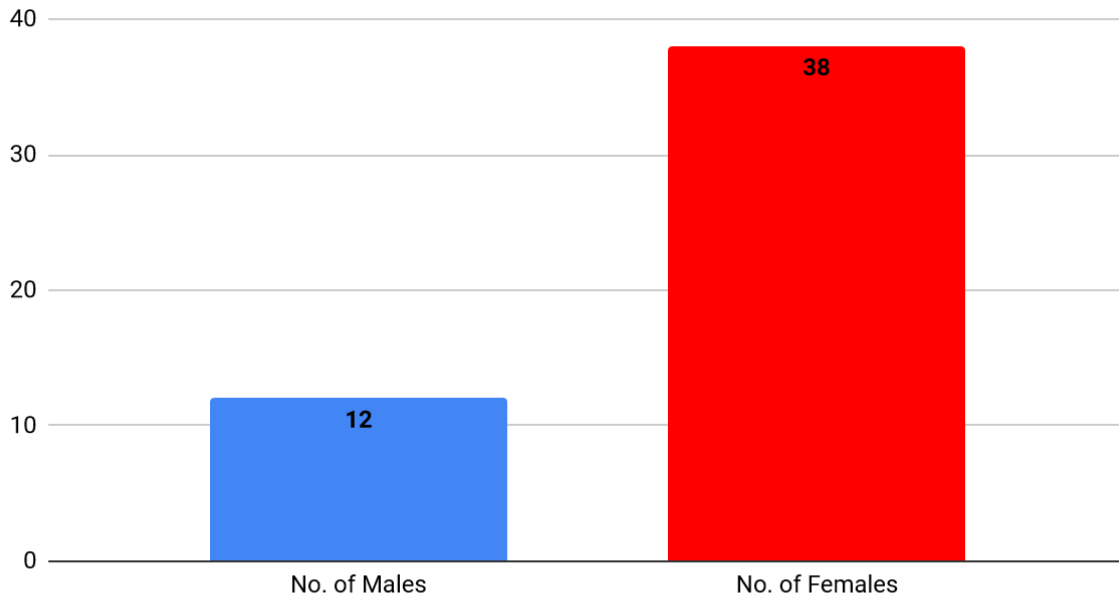


Fig. 1 Shows Survey Sample Size (50) of Males vs Females

It can be inferred through the data collected, that more than half of the student population that study either Spanish, French or Portuguese is attributed to females (76%), while males occupy the minority (24%). Additionally, upon further statistical analysis of data, it revealed that the age group for participants ranged from 18-30 years. Further analysis shows that amidst the three languages being offered by the DMLL, Spanish majors appear to be most preferred FL with a total of 25 out of 50 participants. While on the other hand, 11 out of the 50 participants prefer French.

Among the FL minors, again Spanish occupies the highest preference with 13 out of 50 participants, followed by Brazilian Studies- Portuguese with 3 participants and lastly with French occupying the least preference of 2 participants. These statistics represent the generalized results of the survey sample since there are overlapping of FLs being pursued by participants (See fig. 2).

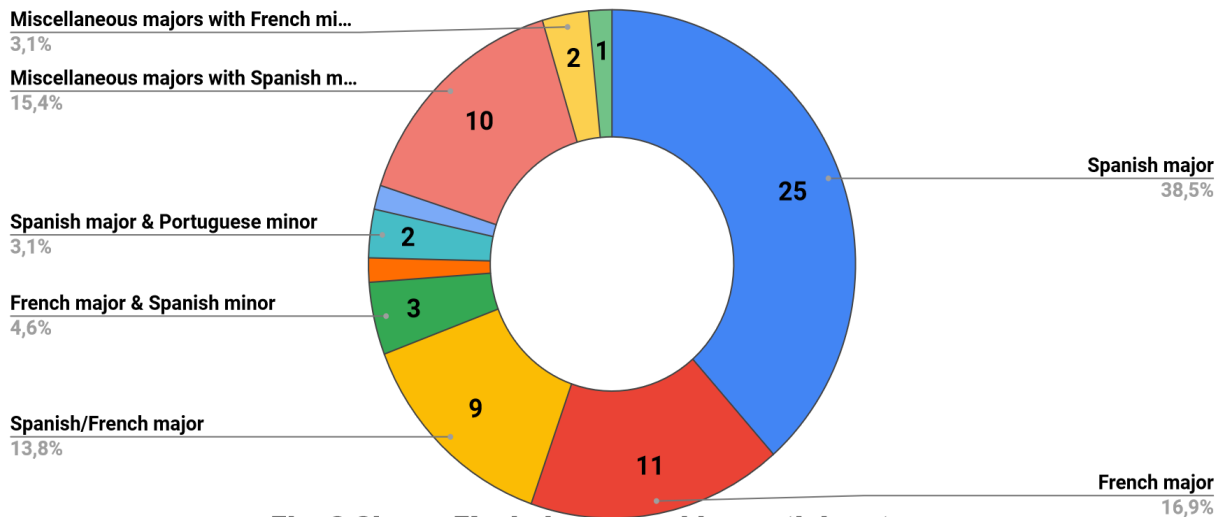


Fig. 2 Shows FLs being pursued by participants

Owing to the fact that there are only three FLs that one can pursue at the major and minor level, figure 2 illustrates these three FLs being pursued by participants across the UWI DMLL along instances of mixed departmental degree majors or minors. Moreover, specific combinations include; (a) double majors of French/Spanish, (b) major and minors in French/Portuguese, (c) major and minor in French/Spanish, (d) major and minor in Spanish/Portuguese. Further combinations include: (e) miscellaneous majors in Linguistics, Communication Studies, International Relations, Latin American Studies, Economics and Psychology with minors in French, Spanish and Brazilian Studies-Portuguese.

Additionally, as discussed in phase 1, when evaluating the personal factors attributed to the participants learning process, considerations must be given to the knowledge or lack thereof held

by the participant in an attempt to effectively evaluate it along the lines of learning. So, it was discovered in the QUAL phase that 2 out of 8 participants were unsure of their learning styles which meant that they were not clear as to how it can be evaluated. That being the case, this QUAN phase addressed those considerations by indicating exactly what are the 4 major learning styles in the questionnaires in an attempt to alleviate misunderstanding and to achieve a larger and generalized sample size (see fig. 3).

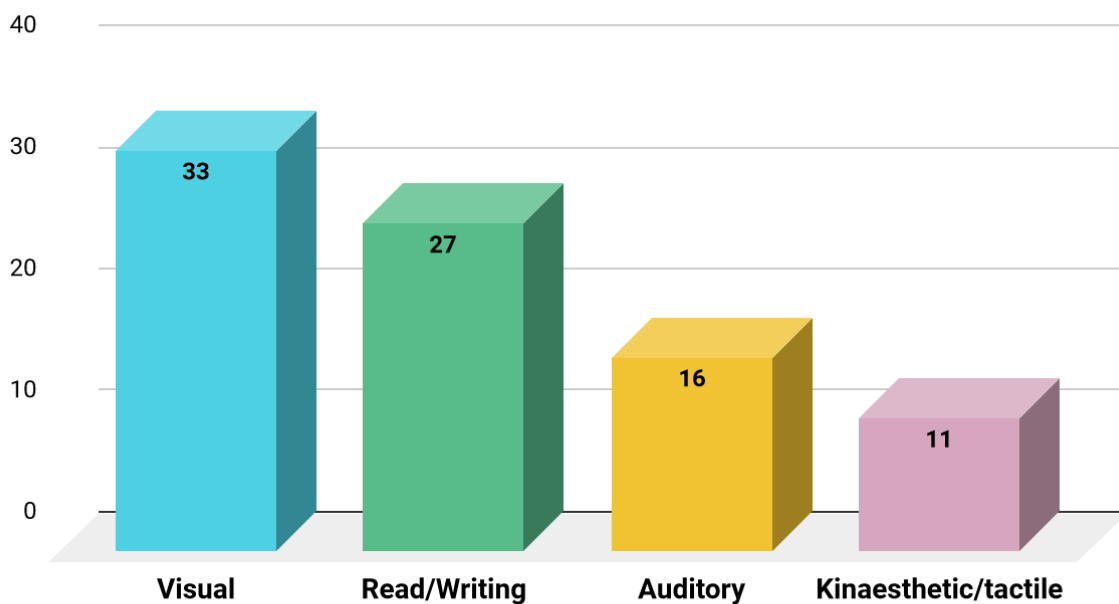


Fig. 3 Shows the preference among the four learning styles

Here, it is clear to deduce that the largest preference category belongs to the visual learning styles based on the selection of 33 out of 50 participants. Following, 27 out of the 50 participants accounted for reading/writing being the second most preferred learning style. Succeeding, the third preferred learning style across FLL is attributed to the auditory learning style which received a total of 16 out of 50 participants. The final and fourth preferred learning style belongs to the kinaesthetic/tactile field with a selection of 11 out of 50 participants. These results refer to the total sum of participants in the sample size making selections in excess of two per field. However, there

was a total of 26 out of 50 participants who selected one learning style as their predominant choice for learning. The breakdown, in order of their selection, (a) both the visual and reading/writing learning styles with a common selection of 10 participants in both cases, followed by (b) the kinaesthetic/tactile learning style with 4 participants selecting this field and finally (c) the auditory learning style with the lowest selection number of 2 participants.

A final area of personal interest to participants, unveiling their degree of focus placed on FLL categories. To this end, participants were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree to where they place their focus when learning a FL (see fig. 4). Having analysed the data from said question, it was strongly agreed that the category of speaking received the most amount of focus, followed by the category of listening and the least area of focused was placed on reading. In contrast, the area of highest level of disagreement was attributed to the said speaking category where one person could not have agreed or disagreed that focus is placed on speaking, following which 3 persons were unable to disagree or agree to placing focus on pronunciation and finally, 5 persons were unable to disagree or agree to placing focus on grammar.

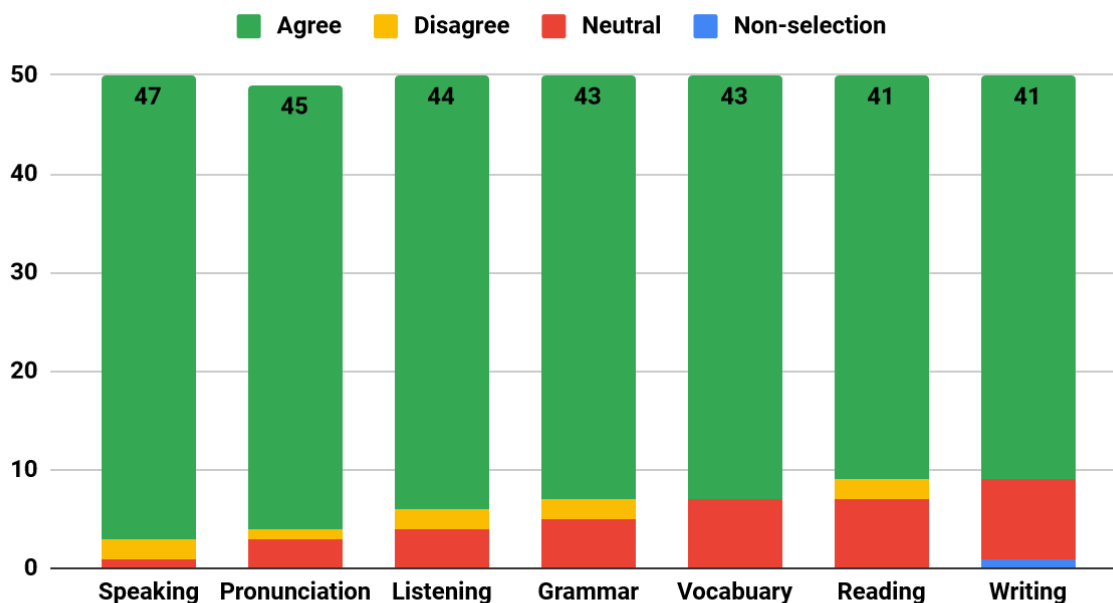


Fig. 4 Shows the degree of focus placed on FLL categories

Perception on how FLs should be taught

Generalizing the thematic findings from chapter 1, the researcher here, was able to analyse the data regarding how participants considered components of FLL be taught. Similar to the QUAL phase which revealed the ways in which languages should be taught, the following statistics were derived. Each category of FLL for all three language areas were separately analysed in order to interpret results clearly. Regarding the teaching of Spanish, French and Portuguese, two paired components scored the same value of participants who agreed to the way in which said components be taught and hereafter grouped in order of selection. Both the listening and speaking are normally taught together, upon separate analysis, proved to score the same value. The listening component, 38 participants agreed that listening should be taught through videos of varying speeds. Similarly, for the speaking component, 38 participants indicated that speaking be taught in class and with varied weekly discussion topics. The second paired category grammar and writing is not normally taught together. Usually, grammar is taught by itself and reading coupled with writing. However,

results from the analysis proved that grammar and writing received the same score value. For the grammar component, 35 participants believed it should be taught with greater emphasis on structure, constant practice and reinforcement through examples. Similarly, for the component of writing, 35 participants agreed that emphasis be placed on structure and actual practice. Lastly, the reading component stood alone as the lowest selected component, revealing that 32 participants believed that reading be taught aloud in class with teacher autonomy. (See fig. 5)

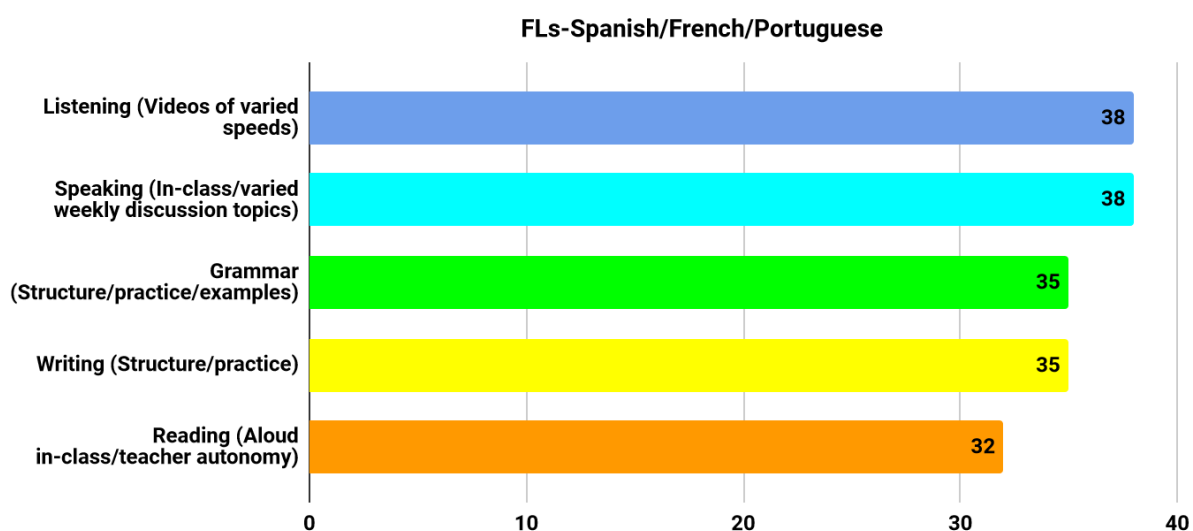


Fig. 5 Shows how participants (50) consider FL components should be taught

Having statistically analysed these findings, the researcher found that for each component of the FLs being taught and owing to the overlapping course participation that they make up, the results account for more than half of the sample size in every component. Areas for which students indicated the lowest level of emphasis regarding how FLs be taught are, online=10, through less focus on conventional approaches=4, focus on rules=4 and without native speakers=1. What this inferred was that participants prefer to be taught in more structured ways, in ways that allowed for

face to face interaction, examples, native FL speakers, varied multimedia and through the use of relevant topics that creates discussions or debates.

Perception on learning environments and effective FLL approaches

The researcher, upon analysis of the QUAL data from the first phase, deduced that learning environments are indeed important as a consideration when a student enters the process of learning. Moreover, four such learning environments were highlighted and their order of preference included: (i) face-to-face or traditional learning= 48 participants, (ii) hybrid or a mixture of traditional and internet/web-based instructional learning= 46 participants, (iii) outside of classroom learning environment= 46 participants and (iv) the online or internet/web-based learning= 32 participants (see fig. 6). In sum, the most preferred learning environment is attributed to the face-to-face environment, whilst the lowest is the online environment.

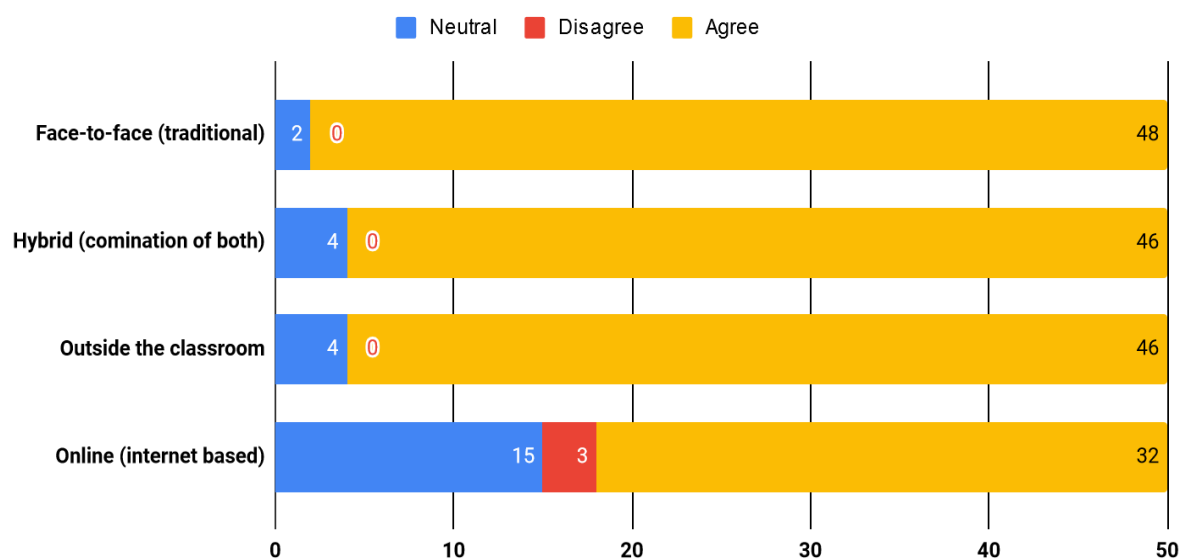


Fig. 6 Shows the degree of focus placed on learning environments

In the final analysis, the researcher statistically evaluated the final survey question- “What is the most effective approach to FLL?” In response, a myriad of approaches was revealed: immersion, passion, desire for FLL, constant practice, social interaction, exposure to media,

traveling, self-learning, and in-classroom and outside of classroom (see fig. 7).

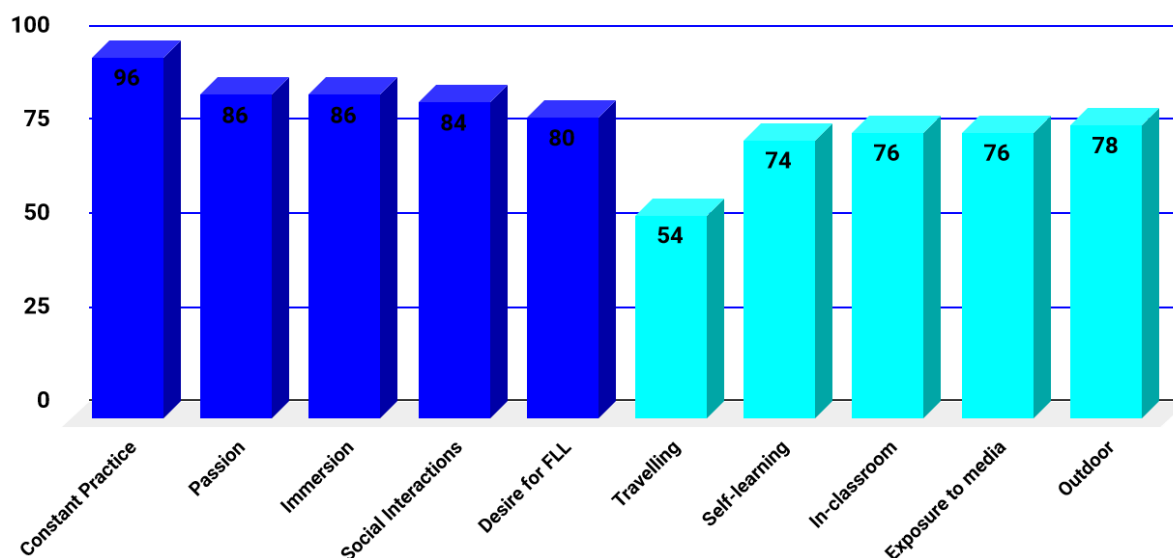


Fig. 7 Shows the most effective approach to FLL ■ %

Summarily, this data presented represents the considerations given by participants on the most effective approach to FLL. Therefore, an inference can be drawn indicating that the most effective approach is not singular but rather plural in nature as the findings here suggest very close values among the myriad of FL approaches. Ranking them in order, the researcher concluded that the most effective approaches are owed to constant practice, passion immersion, social interaction and desire for FLL. In contrast, the lowest approach areas included: travelling, self-learning, in-classroom, exposure to media and outdoor.

This chapter presented the qualitative and quantitative findings of statistical data through the exploration of the sequential exploratory mixed methods design. Further, throughout the next chapter, both qualitative and quantitative findings would be discussed and further analysed with a view of engaging relevant literature to thoroughly answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION

The objective of this investigation was to answer the research questions posed in the first chapter by the researcher. As such, this chapter seeks to outline the critically analysed responses of the research questions based on the qualitative and statistical findings derived. Additionally, focus will be placed on the considerations and findings of other literatures within similar or dissimilar fields of investigation.

Research problem and Importance of findings

Primarily, reintroducing the research questions with a view of providing explicit responses centred around the major findings of the research. (a) “How does students’ perceptions influence FLL?” (b) “What are some of the student’s approaches to FLL?” and (c) “What is the student’s most effective approach to FLL?” Secondly, this investigation is important and varies from others of a similar and dissimilar nature. This is so, as it specifically addresses the student’s perceptions on SLA/FLL in contrast to said perceptions on instruction by the teacher. An opportunity here, is created to further employ strategies that evaluate the impact of the students’ perceptions on the approaches they employ in FLL. Further, these approaches can be assessed along the models set out by SLA teachers.

Major findings and comparisons to other research findings

Firstly, on the account of the QUAL findings, which dictate that passion, family influence, continuation of FLL from secondary school, knack for LL and success record in FLL are held as some of the major perceptions of the student that influence FLL. These findings hold to be unique in nature as comparable findings in other researches were not accessible. Similarly, when evaluating the importance of FLL, seven such reasons were derived: (1) for creation of job opportunities, (2) for ease of communication among native L2 speakers, (3) when dealing with

migrant situations, (4) for business and trade relations, (5) for travel opportunities, (6) for learning different cultures and (7) for creating wider perspectives on life. Additionally, disclosing learning styles and its impact on FLL, 29 participants selected a medium range of impact when compared to 20 participants who evaluated their learning styles on a high range. The lowest category received 1 participant who ranged the impact of learning style as low, thus justifying the uniqueness of these QUAL findings that are not easily comparable to other research findings. In this regard, the students' perceptions on the research topic presents a major gap in research and as a result these findings can further guide research of a similar nature.

Secondly, when considering the findings attained from the QUAN phase, compared to the findings of existing research, there are some marked similarities and dissimilarities. For example, when considering how the category of listening and speaking is taught, major findings revealed that though the two are usually taught together, separate analysis proved that they share the same score value of participants=38. The combination of listening and speaking is a dissimilar finding when compared to the combination of practical learning skills, where receptive skills include listening and reading, and expressive skills which include speaking and writing (Stork, 1976). Consequently, an inference can be drawn that these research findings show a differing combination of learning skills where receptive skills are coupled with expressive learning skills (listening and speaking).

Thirdly, based on the finding that dictates that some learners are more effective than others owing to the messages transmitted by their teachers (Feuerstein et. al. 1991), a similarity in this research is observed based on QUAL findings. When asked to indicate how grammar should be taught, all eight participants indicated that it is being taught well and that no adjustments should be made. This finding was proved to have been in alignment with the findings of Feuerstein et. al.,

as it directly relates to the existing instructional models used by teachers. Owing to the history of these instructional models being used, they do impact the perception of the student regarding the specific LL category. Likewise, to the teaching approaches discussed in chapter 2, another area of comparison can be drawn when considering the findings on how the speaking component should be taught. Major QUAL findings here revealed that teaching should be done in class and with varied weekly discussion topics. Contrastingly, when considering instructional language teaching models, it summates that phonetic training be given to learners as an essential step in developing speech habits (Celce-Murcia et. al.). This finding is disproved to be similar in this research as it is not a mandate or prerequisite for the instruction of phonetics and students based on major QUAN findings suggested that preference was placed on debatable topics in a classroom setting.

Furthermore, when asked to indicate the most effective approach to FLL, students selected multiple options that were analysed as unique findings. These included: (a) direct immersion opportunities via exchange programmes at the university level or via personal travel, (b) personal passion, (c) desire for FLL, (d) constant practice, (e) social interactions, (f) exposure to media, (g) business or vacation, (h) independent/self-learning techniques, and (i) via in-classroom or outside of the classroom approaches. While there is literature that speaks to ways of improving and advancing FLL, for example through immersion programs, QUAL findings in this research highlighted a vast number of options that a student can incorporate in the process of SLA. The researcher understood the limitations of this research and acknowledged that all available literature on the research problem was not easily accessible or attainable. Therefore, the researcher suggested that based on the gaps observed in this field of research, that is specific to student perception, other researchers can now build on these unique findings for further development of research.

In a final comparison of the findings of this research to existing literature, the researcher examines the similarity of findings on the instruction of grammar with the developing dynamics of the student. There are major findings that show the developments within ML instruction. These guide the way teachers instruct in the FLL process and set standards that are measured along the lines of quality standards and best practices. In essence, the teacher and the FLs that they instruct have evolved and continue to evolve. In similar manner, when considering the perceptions and approaches behind student FLL, their considerations prove vital for successful learning. For instance, 35 students believed that the grammar component, should be taught with greater emphasis on structure, constant practice and reinforcement through examples. Similarly, for the component of writing, 35 students agreed that emphasis should be placed on structure and actual practice. Lastly, 32 students believed that the reading component should be taught aloud in class with teacher autonomy. Another area of discussion has always been centred around grammar teaching. In response, findings revealed that grammar should be taught explicitly through a formal presentation of grammatical rules or implicitly through natural exposure to meaningful language use (Hosseini Nassaji and Fotos). As a result of such contentious findings, there has been a number of changes in how grammar is taught. Firstly, through input-based options, where focus on grammar is sub-divided into the following groupings: (1) grammar through processing instruction, grammar through textual enhancement and grammar through discourse, (2) through interaction and output-based options where there is heavy focus on grammar. A further break down of grammar instruction included: (3) focus on grammar through interactional feedback where there is focus on grammar through structured grammar-focused tasks and focus on grammar through collaborative output tasks. Finally, through instructional contexts and focus on grammar where

there is a role of context in focusing on grammar and L2 classrooms. Therefore, in similar contexts, focus should be placed on students' perceptions regarding the most effective approach to FLL.

Conclusion

This investigation sought to unearth UWI DMLL student's perception on the most effective approach to FLL and as such examined three major questions. How does student's perception influence FLL? Additionally, what are some of the students' approaches to FLL? Finally, what is the students' most effective approach to FLL? Upon careful and critical qualitative and statically analysis of the topic and research questions, a myriad of options was derived.

Firstly, when considering how student's perception influence FLL, it reveals that a number of demographic and personal factors are instrumental in the reason for their pursuit in FLs, the importance that is held, the learning styles involved and the impact of said styles on the FLL process. The perception of the student creates a point of reference for focus and ultimate success of the student and as a by-product of effective instruction of L2 teaching.

Secondly, when considering some of the students approaches to FLL, among analysis of both QUAL/QUAN data, it reveals that there are approximately 10 selected student perceived learning approaches. They include but are not limited to immersion, passion, desire to learn a FL, constant practice, social interactions, exposure to media, travelling, self-learning, in-classroom or outside of classroom approaches.

Lastly, among the identifiable selections for FLL approaches, findings of the final question; what is the students' most effective approach to FLL? Indicate that there are multiple options or approaches. For the purpose of this investigation and out of a sample size of 50 participants, 100% of said sample size selected in excess of 3 approaches as most effective in the process of FLL.

Therefore, findings found prove to unveil that the perceptions of students toward the learning of a FL, are like that of the modifying of instructional models for teaching SLA, and thus, suggests that as grammar and other models of development is researched and implemented for effective SLA so too should there be more avenues of research and implementation of student

models of learning regarding FLL. Such research should explore a multifaceted scope as the instruction of MLs are modifying and so too the learning demands of the student.

Limitations

Some of the limitations of this research include, access to research material that sufficiently elaborates on the viewpoint of students when considering a FLL, limited access to Caribbean and International based research on similar topics of communication, small sample size for the given department (DMLL) in both phases of QUAL/QUAN phases which prohibited major generalisations, formulation of research aims may have been too broad and not enough limiting options given for certain questions and lastly, the scope of discussions based on limited experience in conducting research in general.

Recommendations

Based on both QUAL/QUAN findings of the research problem, it has been revealed that 100% of the sample size (50), more than 3 out of the 10 approaches were selected and considered as the most effective approaches to FLL. This being the case, findings of this research can be explored and development to further investigate the following:

- The mechanisms that can evaluate the effectiveness of student's opinions on FLL?
- The perceptions of SLA learners on the effective FLL approaches in international, local and regional contexts; and
- The positives and negatives of teaching L2 courses geared toward learning styles of students.

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APPENDIX A (Interview Questions)

Dear fellow student,

My name is Kareem Tinto, a final year student currently embarking upon the HUMN 3099- Caribbean Studies Project. I am interested in learning UWI students' perception on the most effective approach to foreign language learning. It is not a test nor is your response going to be considered as wrong or right. Your identity, as well as all of your responses, are going to be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and all that is required is your consent and honesty in participating in this interview to aid in development that will benefit you and future students. Thanking you in advance for your participation.

Do you give consent to participating in this interview?

Yes

No

1. How old are you?

2. What is your major?

3. What influenced you to pursue studies in Foreign Languages?

4. What are your thoughts on the importance of learning a Foreign Language?

5. For the learning of (Spanish/French/Portuguese) what techniques do you employ to enrich your learning experience?

6. How do you evaluate your learning style?

7. How does your learning style impact your language learning?

8. How do you think grammar should be taught?

9. How do you think reading should be taught?

10. How do you think writing should be taught?

11. How do you think listening should be taught?

12. How do you think speaking should be taught?

13. What do you believe is the best approach to language learning?

APPENDIX B (Questionnaire questions)

Questionnaire:

Dear fellow student,

My name is Kareem Tinto, a final year undergraduate student in the Department Modern Languages and Linguistics- at the University of the West Indies. In order to complete my degree, I am embarking upon the HUMN 3099- Caribbean Studies Project entitled, "U.W.I. DMLL students' perception on the most effective approach to foreign language learning."

This questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. It is not a test nor is your response going to be considered as wrong or right. Your identity, as well as all of your responses, are going to be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and all that is required is your honesty in participating in this questionnaire to aid in development that will benefit you and future students.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Section 1: Demographics and Personal History

1. Sex: Male Female

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your major/minor(s)? _____

4. How long have you been studying Foreign Languages? _____

5. **Why did you pursue studies in Foreign Languages?**

(Please tick all options that apply to you)

- General passion
- Influence of family history
- Continuity from secondary school
- Possess a knack for language learning
- More successful in language subject matters than other subject matters
- Interest in travelling and learning new cultures
- Opportunity through electives
- Other

Please specify: _____

What are your thoughts on the importance of learning a Foreign Language?

(Please tick all options that apply to you)

- Creates Job opportunities (locally, regionally & internationally)
- For ease of communication and comprehension (target speakers)
- Equips you to deal with migration situations (target language)
- Necessity in a globalised world
- Business and Trade
- Travel opportunities
- Learn different cultures

-
- Gives a wider scope and perception on life
 - Money making venture
 - Not really important
 - Other

Please specify: _____

6. What is your learning style?

- Auditory
- Visual
- Read/Write
- Kinaesthetic

7. To what extent does your learning style impact on your Foreign Language Learning?

- Low
- Medium
- High

8. Do you focus on the following categories of Foreign Language Learning? On a scale of 1-5, rate your level of agreement or non-agreement against the degree of focus placed on each of them.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	5	4	3	2	1
Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pronunciation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 2: Perception on how Foreign Languages should be taught

This section seeks feedback on the most appropriate teaching methods based on five language components of Spanish (S), French (F) & Portuguese (P) (Grammar, Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) For multiple language selections, please use the following key:

(S - F - P)

9. How would you recommend grammar be taught?

(Please tick all options that apply to you)

- S F P The conventional approach (focus on form)
- S F P The practical/ natural approach (focus on function)
- S F P More conversational
- S F P Less conversational
- S F P More focus on rules
- S F P Less focus on rules
- S F P With the use of technology
- S F P By showing you directly
- S F P By teaching you directly
- S F P With focus on development of academic competencies
- S F P With constant practice & reinforcement by examples
- S F P Emphasis on structure
- S F P Less emphasis on structure
- S F P Doesn't matter how

10. How would you recommend reading be taught?

(Please tick all options that apply to you)

- S F P Online
- S F P In class (aloud & with teacher-autonomy)
- S F P Separate from writing
- S F P Together with writing

-
- S F P With relevance to local community
 - S F P With Latin American relevance
 - S F P With relevance to Spain
 - S F P With relevance to France
 - S F P By leisure (self-autonomy)
 - S F P Variety of relevant to student interest material
 - S F P There is no way to teach reading

11. How would you recommend writing be taught?

(Please tick all options that apply to you)

- S F P Together with reading
- S F P Independent of reading
- S F P Online (distant/internet based)
- S F P In class (face-to-face)
- S F P Emphasis on actual practice
- S F P Emphasis on structure
- S F P Less emphasis on structure
- S F P Opportunity for creativity
- S F P Constant feedback
- S F P Writing cannot be taught
- S F P It does not matter how it is taught

12. How would you recommend listening be taught?

(Please tick all options that apply to you)

S F P Online

S F P In class

S F P Inclusion of music

S F P With more native input (e.g. language assistants)

S F P As an independent component

S F P Coupled with the speaking component

S F P With teacher autonomy

S F P With student autonomy

S F P With the input of native speakers

S F P Without the input of native speakers

S F P With videos of varied speeds

S F P It does not matter

13. How would you recommend speaking be taught?

(Please tick all options that apply to you)

S F P In class

S F P Outside of the class

S F P As an independent component

S F P Coupled with the listening component

S F P With teacher autonomy

-
- S F P With student autonomy
 - S F P With the input of native speakers
 - S F P Without the input of native speakers
 - S F P With a variety of weekly topics
 - S F P With limited topics spanned out
 - S F P In a relaxed setting
 - S F P In a rigid/formal setting
 - S F P Through discussions
 - S F P Through debates
 - S F P With mechanisms to foster creativity
 - S F P It does not matter

Section 3: Perception on learning environments and effective foreign language learning approaches.

This section seeks feedback on the most appropriate learning environments based on four (4) categories (Face-to-face, Online, Hybrid and Social Interaction)

14. On a scale of 1-5, indicate whether or not you place a lot of focus on the following learning environments?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	5	4	3	2	1
face-to-face (traditional)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online (internet based)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hybrid (mixture of both)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social interaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. What is the most effective approach to Foreign Language Learning?

(Please tick all options that apply to you)

- Direct immersion
- Individual passion
- Ultimate desire for foreign language learning
- Constant practice

-
- Social Interactions
 - Exposure to media
 - Travelling (vacations/business)
 - Self-learning
 - In classroom
 - Out of the classroom
 - It does not matter