LANGUAGE LEARNER MOTIVATION: COMPARING FRENCH CLASS ATTITUDES OF SCOTTISH AND CANADIAN SECONDARY PUPILS

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ABSTRACT

A survey and interviews conducted with 150 pupils (aged 13 to 15 years) studying French in a Scottish and a Canadian secondary school revealed many commonalities in the motivational profiles that emerged. However a stepwise discriminant function analysis also revealed some differences. The Canadian pupils' attributions of success and tendency towards negative attitudes to teachers suggest an overall higher degree of teacher dependency. They also showed a higher interest in foreign languages consistent with higher ratings for instrumental orientation, which may be linked with socio-political differences between the countries in the perceived value of learning another language. Group interviews conducted with volunteers from each sample provided qualitative data for the differentiated and the non-differentiated variables. Findings of the study, it is suggested, reinforce the importance of addressing the social aspect of foreign language study particularly among adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

International comparisons can be of value for detecting cultural influences that relate to educational practices and can also suggest which issues are of more universal scope. The present study used an international approach to throw some light on a major topic of interest in the classroom teaching and learning of languages other than the first, namely motivation. This emerged as a leading concern for a number of teachers of modern foreign languages (MFL) who were interviewed in urban and rural Scottish secondary schools (Diffey, 1995a). Underlying their concern was the assumption that a fuller understanding of motivation should provide a means of enhancing interest and achievement in an area where these are notably lacking. Since motivation can be assumed to play a key role in learners' decisions whether or not to continue in language courses beyond required minimum levels, teachers also have a professional interest in the question, beside the obvious broader economic and political importance of language study in the modern world.

Within the research domain most closely linked to language teaching, namely second language acquisition (SLA), motivation has been a major topic for some forty years, notably in Canada (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994a, 1994b; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). An excellent survey is provided by Dörnyei (1998), who traces the change of focus from Gardner's social-psychological construct that predominated through the seventies and eighties to the call for a broadening of the perspective to include insights from general learning theory (Dörnyei, 1994a, 1994b), and Gardner and Tremblay's (1995) response to this call. Overall this history has been characterized by a shift of focus from learners' motivation *to* study, an initial "orientation," which is either "instrumental" (the perceived practical advantages for work, education, travel, etc.) or "integrative" (the desire to integrate culturally and socially with speakers of the language), towards motivation *in* and resulting, positively or negatively, *from* varied and changing learning situations. Researchers look increasingly for connections between instructional contexts and outcomes likely to enhance intrinsic motivation, notably learner autonomy and self-efficacy. For example, in an as yet unpublished international study involving American and

French middle-school pupils (approximate age range: 10–13), Colville-Hall (2000) concluded that the French pupils had higher degrees of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation than their American counterparts.

The study reported here compares the motivation to study one MFL, namely French, of secondary pupils in Scotland and Canada, countries with evident similarities (primarily of historical origin) as well as differences in their social, cultural and educational contexts. In language instruction a potential difference is reflected in the terminological distinction often made in SLA research, particularly in North America, between "foreign languages" and "second languages." These terms are used in this paper (FL and L2 respectively), however they are not as uniformly understood as one may assume. A refreshingly practical distinction is made by Brown (2001, p. 116): "*Second* language learning contexts are those in which the classroom target language is readily available out there. … *Foreign* language contexts are those in which students do not have ready-made contexts for communication beyond their classroom." French or German taught in a Scottish school therefore appear to fall into the second category. However the established custom of referring to "French as a second language" in Canadian schools may be an example of Brown's observation (p. 116) that the "seemingly clear dichotomy … has been considerably muddied in recent years." The main "muddying" effect in Canada is political. Since French enjoys official language status it would be considered unacceptable to refer to is as a "foreign" language anywhere within the dominion. Its "second" language designation is conferred more by default than in the sense understood by applied linguists. This may be applicable to learners of French among the English-speaking minority of Quebec, however in the rest of the country, even in those areas containing significant French-speaking populations, the amount of French that is "available out there," as Brown puts it, will not extend beyond the availability of French TV and radio and bilingual texts in government communications and on commercial packaging. The decision whether or not to take advantage of these resources is a matter of personal choice rather than an issue of everyday survival. The Canadian pupils participating in this study were thus officially learners of "French as a Second Language" (FSL), however the context of their learning, though somewhat richer in out-of-class L2 exposure, was not as removed as one may assume from that of learners of French as a foreign language (FFL) in, say, Britain or the USA.

The study involved 86 Secondary 3 (S3) and Secondary 4 (S4) pupils from a single school in north-east Scotland and 64 Grade 9 (G9) and Grade 10 (G10) pupils in a Canadian secondary school in south-west Ontario (N =150). Both schools are located in small communities in proximity to large industrial areas and are of comparable socio-economic character. The Canadian school is characterized by new facilities and a positive ethos. The Scottish school was a recent recipient of a "Best Kept School Award." The similarities of gender and age are noted in the Statistical Results section below, while the issue of the socio-linguistic distinction (FSL *versus* FFL) has been discussed. The most significant difference therefore remains that of experience, the actual length of prior schooling in the target language. The Scottish pupils began their study of MFL in Secondary 1 (not having benefitted from the more recent introduction of primary MFL), while the Canadian pupils began FSL in Grade 1.

METHOD

Our intent was therefore to utilize different cultural and educational contests in the area of comparison research by examining Scottish and Canadian FL (or "L2") learning in the important aspect of motivation. Specifically, we were asking the question: What variables differentiate the two groups? The chosen procedure was to use a suitably modified version of the instruments developed by Gardner and

Tremblay (1995) to broaden the focus of SLA motivational research by combining the analysis of orientations with that of other motivational factors. The core questionnaires are based on the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) which has been widely used and routinely revised by the authors and other researchers for many years (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). One of many examples of the validity claims made by Gardner and associates is found in Gardner and Tremblay (1994b). The authors also state (p. 525) that items in the AMTB "are developed to be appropriate to the context in which the study is being conducted. Whenever individuals write requesting copies…, this point is made as clear as possible." With this caveat in mind the AMTB and those elements added by Gardner and Tremblay (1995) were carefully revised by the Scottish and Canadian researchers for the present study, in order to arrive at a uniform version requiring only minor lexical variations for the two groups (for example, "pupils" are known as "students" in Canadian schools). The questionnaire consisted of 193 statements on the topics shown in Table 1 with a seven-point Likert scale indicating degree of agreement.

In addition to the questionnaire, interviews were conducted with a volunteer sample of pupils from each group and two Canadian teachers. The interview questions were designed to promote discussion on (a) general reasons affecting decisions to continue language study, (b) environmental factors such as teacher's role, classroom anxiety, learning activities and learner input, and (c) perceived relevance of ability and gender. For practical reasons the Scottish interviews had to be conducted on the same day as the survey. With the Canadian participants, however, it was possible first to divide the participants in each grade level on the basis of their "motivational intensity" as measured by the surveys, resulting in two sub-groups for each grade: "m+" (ranking higher on the positive and lower on the negative items) and "m-" (*vice versa)*. In the following transcriptions pupils are sometimes differentiated by number ("P1"). The interviewer is indicated by (I).

STATISTICAL RESULTS

Table 1 provides the means and standard deviations for responses on the measures indicated for the Scottish S4 and the Canadian G9 pupils. The first analysis was limited to these groups as they were of similar gender distribution (Scot: 14 M, 22 F; Can: 15 M, 20 F) and mean age (Scot: 14.89; Can: 14.72). Despite this and the cultural dissimilarity the differences are relatively insignificant within most of the motivational variables measured. Moreover, while acknowledging that the dissimilarity in experience could be considered a possible confounding variable, it was considered less serious than controlling for exposure time which could introduce confounds related to age-based developmental differences.

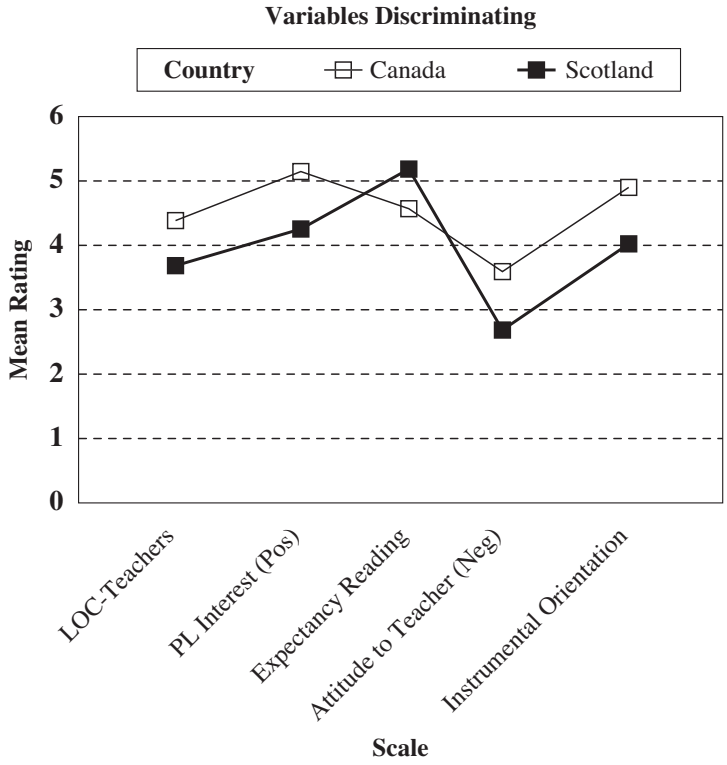
The results were further analyzed using a stepwise discriminant function analysis, a procedure which was viewed as the most informative. The dependent variable was group (Canadian, Scottish) while the independent variables were Locus of Control (ability, effort, luck, teachers), Motivation (desire to learn French, motivational intensity), Orientation (instrumental, integrative), Pedagogical attitudes (interest in foreign languages, positive attitude toward learning French, negative attitude toward learning French, French class anxiety), and People Attitudes (attitude to French Canadians or European French). In this form of analysis differences are considered to be treatment effects (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Consequently, those independent variables that are revealed to be related to group membership are assumed to be results of the group assignment. Moreover, so as not to rule out potentially important variables in the stepwise procedure the conservative selection criterion of .15 recommended by Costanza and Afifi (1979) as well as Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) was adopted.

Table 1: Questionnaire topics, mean scores and standard deviations for the Scottish and Canadian samples

	Scot. (N = 36) Mean	SD	Can. (N = 35) Mean	SD
Locus of Control—Ability	4.28	.68	4.20	.75
Locus of Control—Effort	5.55	.87	5.49	.96
Locus of Control—Luck	2.59	.84	2.83	1.14
Locus of Control—Teachers	3.70	.71	4.33	.97
Performance Expectation in Listening/Speaking	4.71	.86	4.40	1.40
Performance Expectation in Viewing	4.03	1.00	3.90	1.44
Performance Expectation in Reading	5.25	.96	4.65	1.31
Performance Expectation in Writing	4.95	1.04	4.79	1.42
Goal Salience—Specificity (Positive)	3.70	1.28	4.45	1.40
Goal Salience—Specificity (Negative)	4.16	1.10	3.69	1.25
Goal Salience—Frequency (Positive)	3.47	.97	3.89	1.19
Goal Salience—Frequency (Negative)	4.42	1.14	4.02	1.23
Instrumental Orientation	4.09	1.49	4.92	1.15
Integrative Orientation	4.41	1.38	4.44	1.35
French Class Anxiety (Positive)	3.49	1.05	3.49	1.31
French Class Anxiety (Negative)	3.82	1.23	4.16	1.05
French Use Anxiety (Positive)	4.06	1.17	3.81	1.26
French Use Anxiety (Negative)	3.90	1.17	3.74	1.12
Attention (Positive)	3.85	1.10	3.79	1.31
Attention (Negative)	3.91	.94	4.19	1.02
Persistence (Positive)	3.82	1.30	4.14	1.19
Persistence (Negative)	4.03	1.09	3.89	1.16
Motivational Intensity (Positive)	4.10	1.27	4.44	1.29
Motivational Intensity (Negative)	3.66	1.32	3.43	1.16
Desire to Learn (Positive)	3.82	1.45	4.08	1.23
Desire to Learn (Negative)	4.02	1.48	3.58	1.38
Attitude to French Course (Negative)	3.42	1.66	3.53	1.39
Attitude to French Course (Positive)	3.18	1.69	3.42	1.52
Foreign Language Interest (Positive)	4.29	1.43	5.10	1.29
Foreign Language Interest (Negative)	3.65	1.35	3.28	1.11
Attitude to Learning French (Positive)	3.76	1.70	4.14	1.66
Attitude to Learning French (Negative)	3.81	1.73	3.51	1.52
Attitude to Teachers (Positive)	4.30	1.58	3.87	2.03
Attitude to Teachers (Negative)	2.68	1.62	3.49	1.70
Attitude to Foreigners (Positive)	4.04	1.42	4.03	1.00

The Discriminant Function Analysis was conducted, and at step 1 Locus of Control Attributions to Teachers was included in the analysis (Wilk's Lambda = .87, $p = .002$), at step 2 Foreign Language Interest was included (Wilk's Lambda = .73, $p < .0001$), at step 3 Performance Expectancy in Reading was included (Wilk's Lambda = .63, $p < .0001$), at step 4 Attitude Towards Teachers was included (Wilk's Lambda = .59, $p < .0001$), at step 5 Instrumental Orientation was included (Wilk's Lambda = .55, $p < .0001$). The analysis yielded a Canonical Correlation of .67, and the percent of grouped cases correctly classified was 80.28 percent.

Figure 1: Discriminant Function Analysis of Five Key Sub-Scales



The mean responses for the variables which emerged as significant in the discriminant function analysis are reported in Figure 1, which reveals the following five areas of discrimination: locus of control (teachers); attitude to teacher (negative); foreign language interest (positive); instrumental orientation; performance expectancy in reading.

It is difficult to speculate on the reasons for the Scottish score (the second highest in Table 1) for reading expectancy compared with the Canadian. Perhaps Scottish schools invest more in the provision of reading resources and activities in accordance with the curriculum objectives of reading for enjoyment and information (SOED, 1993: 10), whereas the Ontario FSL curriculum seeks a balanced integration of strands for oral communication, reading and writing within thematic units (Ontario MET, 1999: 6). The other areas of significant differentiation give rise to somewhat broader questions of educational context.

The difference between Canadian and Scottish pupils on Instrumental Orientation is perhaps not surprising in view of the well-publicized career advantages for bilingual employees in Canadian society. The possibility of such a connection led to further investigation of the relationship between Instrumental Orientation and both Achievement and Motivational Intensity in the two countries, using the full sample (N = 150). Thus Pearson Product-Moment correlations were computed for these three variables. For Canadian pupils Instrumental Orientation was correlated with Achievement scores ($r = .38$, $p < .01$) and with Motivational Intensity ($r = .51$, $p < .001$). Similarly, Achievement was correlated with Motivational Intensity ($r = .38$, $p < .01$). For Scottish pupils, however, there was no correlation of Achievement and either Instrumental Orientation ($r = .12$, $p > .1$) or Motivational Intensity ($r = .13$, p

> .1), while Instrumental Orientation was correlated with Motivational Intensity ($r = .62$, $p < .001$). It would seem that Achievement is correlated with the particular motivational variables of Instrumental Orientation and Motivational Intensity with the Canadian but not the Scottish pupils. This raises the question whether the Scottish pupils may be more intrinsically motivated, which would be somewhat consistent with the Locus of Control difference indicating their lower reliance on the extrinsic attribution of the teacher.

AREAS OF DIFFERENTIATION AND THE INTERVIEW DATA

The statistical results, then, appear to indicate that Canadian pupils (1) show a higher interest in foreign languages, along with higher ratings for instrumental orientation, and (2) are more apt to attribute their success to the teacher, along with the potential to be more negative in their attitudes toward teachers. Can any insights into these two areas be gained from the interviews?

1. Examples of the relevant questionnaire items are: "I wish I could speak another language perfectly" and "Studying French is important because it will give me an edge in competing with others." An obvious causal link would be between interest in learning the language and its perceived practical benefits. Canadian pupils regardless of their motivational intensity seemed ready to articulate the career-related advantages of bilingualism, with such statements as: "It'd be helpful in getting a job when I'm older" (G9 m+), "You have to be bilingual, it helps a lot" (G9 m-), or:

   P1: I want to get into politics, and you need it especially in Canada since we're bilingual; … it's beneficial to … be fluent in … languages.

   P2: If you can speak French … it looks good on your resume. (G10 m-)

Parental reinforcement, too, plays a role: "Sometimes my parents always tell me that you need French" (G9 m-). At the non-compulsory G10 level the usefulness of the other official language was stated even more strongly. With this group ultimate usefulness was a significant motivator and explicitly linked to persistence: "You feel, like: 'Okay I'm just gonna give it up,' but then you learn more, you do better on the next test, and you think: 'No, it's gonna help me in a career one day, it's gonna pay off'" (G10 m+).

In contrast, reasons given by both the Scottish groups for persistence in language study tended to be stated without elaboration. When pushed, they mentioned holidays, visits, student exchanges and the like, or as one S4 pupil put it somewhat generally: "If it's gonna come in useful." Within the context of the European Economic Union, knowing a foreign-language is of obvious objective importance, but may not be emphasized in the schools or in public awareness generally to the same extent as in Canada.

Based on the results of the locus of control and attitudinal scales Canadian pupils appeared more likely to attribute their success to the teacher, concurrent with an overall greater tendency to negative attitudes towards teachers. A noticeable degree of teacher dependency was expressed in the interviews, especially by the "less motivated" pupils. "When I know I like a teacher I try to work harder to impress them, but if I don't like the teacher I just don't care, so I won't even try" (G10 m-). One of the Canadian teachers described the teacher-learner relationship thus:

> If you just … let them know that they're only a student who is in your French class and you're only going to relate to them through that French content, …I don't think your chances are very high of having them like the class and being comfortable in your class with you.

The need for such a symbiosis is underscored by the following pupil observations:

P1: She has to show that she cares about us learning instead of … just us being there for nothing.

P2: Her attitude should be positive … Just like a friend … (G10 m+)

Scottish pupils, when asked "How important is it to like the French teacher?", did not seem to perceive this as a major issue. After some reflection one S3 pupil volunteered: "It might be you're more likely to pay attention to the subject, … to what they're saying;" but the group did not see much difference between French and other school subjects in this respect.

While the statistical analysis showed for both groups a near identical result for the attribution of success to effort, the Canadian bias towards attributing success and failure to the teacher may not be encouraging for Canadian educators, who presumably would wish their pupils to acquire a degree of learner autonomy. Colville-Hall (2000) found a higher degree of self-efficacy among French learners than American ones, even though both groups shared an interest in continuing their L2 studies. The question remains whether the European, that is Scottish, cohort in our study have indeed benefitted from the official encouragement of learner autonomy in modern language learning (SOED, 1993: 5) or are instead displaying a cultural tendency to a "healthy indifference" towards teachers.

NON-DIFFERENTIATED FACTORS: THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Both the Scottish and the Canadian groups ranked equally high (4.41, 4.44 resp. in Table 1) for integrative motivation, which sees value in social interaction with target language speakers. It may be worth exploring the nature of this factor and its implications for practice. A sample questionnaire statement is: "Studying French can be important to me because I think it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people." Paradoxically, experiencing successful social encounters outside the classroom could pose an additional challenge for the teacher in terms of the perceived relevance of classroom instruction. Asked about possible spill-over effects into the classroom of positive experiences with French people a Scottish pupil advanced the notion that these could actually reduce classroom effort, since "you think you ken what you're doing, …when you're there [in France] you think that you've got … it sorted [out], so … you don't have to try so hard" (S4). Several Canadian pupils were quite eager to share anecdotes of successful encounters with French-speaking people, for example:

> I remember going to Disneyland, I was only … in grade five, and these people were there from Quebec, and they're all … confused, … and me and my friend were talking to them and stuff in French, and they just seemed so happy that … somebody knew how to talk to them. (G10 m-)

The motivation of adolescent language learners, whether in classroom activities or out-of-class contacts, may be well served by fulfilling a need among this age group to feel socially competent. At the same time the FL class can pose a threat to social competence, leading to a phenomenon well recognized in the research as "foreign language anxiety" (Ellis, 1994: 479-483), and for this there was close similarity between the groups on both the positive items ("I feel anxious if someone asks me something in French") and the negative ("It doesn't bother me at all to speak French"). In the interviews, frequent reference was made to a particular form of anxiety for adolescents, that of appearing foolish. According to Scottish interviewees, the language class poses a special threat since "you're more likely to get it wrong in French" than in other subjects (S3). At particular risk are "the quieter folk, …'cause

they think others are going to laugh at them" (S4). Canadian "m+" pupils had at least a vicarious awareness of this factor: "I could imagine … somebody who didn't feel comfortable with speaking or reading something in French might not … want to participate" (G9 m+). Those in the "m-" group were more likely themselves to have experienced anxiety, assigning a role, not surprisingly, to the teacher, who has the power to enhance or mitigate feelings of foolishness in performance situations, such as when pronunciation or comprehension skills are put to the test: "If I read something long … I start to feel dumb…'cause I'll probably mess up (G9 m-)."

P1: If the teacher says something funny and it's in French … and four people … are laughing their heads off…

P2: …you don't feel you're at the same level as the rest of the class then you feel …like kind of below them. (G10 m-)

There is an obverse relationship between feeling "below" one's peers and feeling competent, as underscored by the following: "I feel … I'm doing well in the class, and then when I take a test … my grade isn't … as good as I thought it would be, so sometimes that bothers me, I think: 'Why aren't I catching on as fast as everyone else?'" (G10 m+). When it comes to motivating pupils of this age, self-esteem is clearly one consideration the teacher cannot ignore:

> If you understand you feel proud of yourself, 'cause … you understand the concept and … you can go on and do the work by yourself independently. …That way it shows you that you do know what you're doing, and then it kind of … boosts your self-esteem a little bit. (G10 m-)

Integrative orientation and language class anxiety need to be understood in any account of SLA motivation, as positive and negative facets of language learner experience. This study suggests they are probably relatively unaffected by cultural and contextual variables. What may be helpful to language teachers in general is to view them as opposite poles of the *social* dimension of language learning. Adolescent pupils in particular may need to experience social success in their target language interactions. Theories of "communicative competence" as the global outcome of SLA often reflect such a social dimension (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980).

The social dimension also seemed to prevail with the question of gender, the belief that females are easier to motivate to language study than males (Callaghan, 1998). This belief did not resonate with either group, although the Canadian G9 pupils, unlike those in G10, felt that girls of their age are more easily interested in school work in general, whereas boys are prevented by the male adolescent image from displaying such interest: "Sometimes if you try to speak French you sound … kinda stupid" (Gr. 9, m-). The difference of opinion between the G9 and G10 pupils may be due to the fact that the former are of an age in which social self-image is most crucial. Why then was it less of an issue for their Scottish counterparts? A possible explanation may be that Canadian learners as a result of the earlier start have reached the stage in their development of communicative competence in which language is used for more complex social interactions. One of the teachers saw boys as more reluctant to answer questions in French because of a reluctance to "put themselves on [a] limb." The social dimension of language learning probably becomes more important for adolescents at the higher levels of study.

PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES

Language classes are notoriously unpredictable settings in which all manner of negative learning experiences associated with the complex difficulties of the subject matter itself as well as the potential threats to self-image are never far below the

surface. Consequently language teachers are particularly conscious of the need to maximize the positive, in other words, the "enjoyable" aspects of the many and varied classroom activities that make up their lessons. When this is lacking attrition is more likely to occur than in other parts of the curriculum. Other than the instrumental reasons noted earlier, a common reason given in the two settings for continuing language courses was "if you've enjoyed it or not" (S3); "I've always enjoyed it, so I'm going to continue to take it" (G9 m+). A commonly held view of language teachers that they must entertain as well as instruct seems to be confirmed by the prevalence of the word "fun" in these conversations.

> If she makes a lesson fun, …she'll really put the students into it, not just writing notes and listening to her, you know, just like really getting into the lesson, you know, just makes it easier to learn. (G9 m+)

Colville-Hall (2000) found that the American pupils were more likely than the French to expect "fun" in the language classroom. In the present study the Scottish pupils were willing to give examples of what one called "fun French things" (S4), such as matching pictures and words (S3), watching TV, dice games, and lotto (S4). A Canadian pupil mentioned: "playing games with French verbs and stuff like that, instead of just … making us copy them down" (G9 m-).

One exchange suggested that enjoyment may not in itself be a sufficiently strong motivator:

P1: I think if you don't like French you can't really be turned on to like it. …If you don't like it to begin with then there's … nothing you can really do.

P2: Someone told me once that opera is, like, you either have to like it or you don't and … I think … it's kinda like French, you either have to like it [or] you don't… (G10 m-)

However, assuming that teachers have some power to make their lessons more or less enjoyable they may be assisted by a knowledge of their pupils' preferences regarding different pedagogical activities. The questionnaires included one that was researcher designed listing twelve activities typical of current language teaching practice, ranging from formal knowledge (e.g., finding out more about how grammar works) to communication (e.g. talk French with our classmates). Pupils were asked to indicate the extent of their enjoyment (actual or anticipated) of such activities. The results, which are reported descriptively in Table 2, suggest that there are more areas of commonality than differences between the two groups.

It is tempting to conclude that Canadian and Scottish teenagers alike, despite having begun their language study at significantly different ages, tend to find the same kinds of classroom activities more or less enjoyable than others. Moreover, no activity received an overall negative rating within either sample. The emergence of games as the most popular activity overall accords with Chambers' (1998) study involving British and German pupils. If the order tells us anything it may be that activities which tend towards the communicative end of the range are preferred over those that focus more on formal language learning, namely the "four skills" and grammatical knowledge. The near unanimity with which finding out about the workings of grammar is relegated to the bottom gives little comfort to the proponents of "language awareness" in the language curriculum (Diffey, 1995b). In particular the Canadian students, with quantitatively more experience of the language classroom, mentioned formal exercises as activities liable to reduce their interest: "A lot of writing and … not really hearing … the language, just copying notes and having the teacher explain in English why these verbs, we have to use them, et cetera, et cetera" (G9 m+):

> She'll give us … ten verbs, … -ER verbs or so, and then we'll have to … conjugate them all when you know she can only give us … two, 'cause they're all basically the same, so why do we have to conjugate them all? (G10 m+)

One of the teachers was evidently aware of a resistance to grammar-focussed teaching:

> I believe I'm more of a grammarian, I would think, in the approach, because of the way I learnt it. …You know: "Sit down and we're gonna do page 51, we're gonna do page 52," that turns them off.

Table 2: Percentages for responses of total Scottish (N = 86) and Canadian (N = 64) cohorts to the question: "I'm likely to enjoy the French class if we… "

Activities		Disagree 1	Neutral 2	Agree 3	Sample	Mean	SD	(Rank)
play games in the language	Can	10.9	3.1	85.9	64	2.75	.64	(1)
	Scot	5.8	11.6	82.6	86	2.77	.55	(2)
do group work	Can	**15.6**	6.3	78.1	64	2.63	.75	(4)
	Scot	**4.7**	11.6	83.7	86	2.79	.51	(1)
correspond with French-speaking	Can	10.9	10.9	78.1	64	2.67	.67	(3)
students by letter or Internet	Scot	12.8	15.1	72.1	86	2.59	.71	(4)
apply the language to a real life	Can	9.4	9.4	**81.3**	64	2.72	.63	(2)
task, like planning a trip	Scot	16.3	22. 1	**61.6**	86	2.45	.76	(7)
learn more about the daily lives	Can	17.5	19.0	63.5	63	2.46	.78	(6)
of French teenagers	Scot	16.3	15.1	68.6	86	2.52	.76	(5)
choose our own tasks and	Can	25.0	15.6	59.4	64	2.34	.86	(7)
exercises	Scot	14.1	11.8	74.1	85	2.60	.73	(3)
respond to questions in French	Can	18.8	14.1	67.2	64	2.48	.80	(5)
	Scot	23.3	26.7	50.0	86	2.27	.82	(10)
experience French music and	Can	29.7	17.2	53.1	64	2.23	.89	(9)
songs	Scot	23.5	12.9	63.5	85	2.40	.85	(8)
practice writing correct French	Can	26.6	17.2	56.3	64	2.30	.87	(8)
sentences or compositions	Scot	23.3	20.9	55.8	86	2.33	.83	(9)
read French magazines	Can	36.5	11.1	52.4	63	2.16	.94	(10)
	Scot	16.3	20.9	62.8	86	2.47	.76	(6)
talk French with our classmates	Can	40.6	15.6	43.8	64	2.03	.93	(11)
	Scot	31.4	24.4	44.2	86	2.13	.87	(11)
find out more about how French	Can	40.6	15.6	43.8	64	2.03	.93	(11)
grammar works	Scot	33.7	29.1	37.2	86	2.04	.85	(12)

Differences (bold type in Table 2) were found in the areas of: group work, applying language to real-life tasks, choosing tasks, reading magazines, and responding to questions. To take some of these, more Canadians than Scots disagree that group work is enjoyable. While cooperative learning is officially endorsed in Canadian guidelines for French it may not be as well established in classroom methodology. The same may be said of choosing tasks and exercises, where a higher Scottish preference is indicated by the percentage differences for both disagreement and agreement. In the interviews each group was asked for its views on learner input in the planning and selection of classroom activities. In view of the Scottish FL curriculum support of learner autonomy, it is interesting that the S3 group claimed not to have freedom of choice - but the class next door did so! Canadian G9 (m-) pupils saw some attractiveness in being consulted ("It'd be pretty cool"), but stated they had no experience from which to judge. The G10 (m+) pupils saw potential problems with self-directed study, which, predictably perhaps, they viewed as a weakening of the teacher's role: "She kinda knows what we need to learn, so we can't just say: 'We want to do this, we wanna do that'." The interviewer told them about a French class he had observed in Scotland (Diffey, 1997), in which pupils chose their own activities from a series of cards. Again, teacher dependency emerged in the sceptical reactions to this scenario:

> They could just go to the corner, they could just talk with their friends, …so what's the point of being in the class if you're just going to fool around and not going to do what the card says. (G10 m+)
>
> P1: I think if we had that kind of freedom we wouldn't really…
>
> P2: …we wouldn't work.
>
> P6: …put in our own tapes.
>
> P2: Yeah.
>
> P6: …listen to a music tape.
>
> I: So you're quite happy to have teacher take charge and…
>
> Several: Yeah… (G10 m-)

Both Canadian teachers stated that offering choices was not their practice to any appreciable degree. One found the idea attractive, as long as the ratio of decision making did not change beyond 35:65 in favour of the teacher.

Beyond specific kinds of learning activities, the interviews raised some general issues of language pedagogy. Two which seemed important for both groups were comprehensibility and authenticity. Although it should seem self-evident to language teachers, the ability to understand what they hear and read is a big concern for learners.

> P1: Some teachers will just say: "Oh, you ken…"
>
> P2: "Get on with it."
>
> P1: "Just read that bit and you'll understand it." (S4)

In classroom interactions, the ability to comprehend is clearly linked to social competence. A Canadian teacher expressed her sensitivity on this issue: "I tell my kids that I have an accent, I speak like the Quebeckers, and I'll try to slow down … I let them know: 'If there's something that you don't know it's okay.'" Teaching resources also came in for criticism in this respect, as in Scottish pupil comments about audio-tapes with "stupid noises in the background" (S3.)

Authenticity, whether of language, situations or resources, measures the proximity of the classroom experience to real life. A S3 pupil staying with a French family had used the textbook word *car* for a "coach," which his hosts had thought "kinda ridiculous." Suggestions were forthcoming in both settings for authentic classroom activities ("normal learning stuff"), for example using "clubby books" (catalogues) (S4), "doing little skits … in front of the class," or bringing French people into the class (G9 m-).

Teaching language in authentic contexts is a tenet of current pedagogy and is related to another issue, the use of the target language as language of the classroom. This prospect appeared to cause some resistance among S3 pupils, but on closer examination the problem is again one of comprehensibility: "She says it so quickly". The S4 group mentioned a French teaching assistant who came in every day and spoke both languages in class. Several indicated that when she spoke French they made an effort to listen and understand. Canadian "m+" pupils had a definite preference for teacher use of the target language, as long as she made adjustments for those having comprehension difficulties:

> Some teachers just talk all in English and we don't even learn anything. …I myself really need to, to hear the French language. I know the written is important too, but it's important to hear what it sounds like. (G9 m+)

Grade 10 pupils articulated more reflective reasons for preferring French as the language of instruction:

> I like it when the teacher speaks French … more than she speaks English, because if I don't understand something or don't know something, it just makes me … learn more, makes me want to know what she's saying, so it makes me work harder, …so that next time she starts speaking French I'll know what she's saying all the time. (G10 m+)

Resistance to the classroom use of the target language, a frequent worry among language teachers, was not in evidence in these groups.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In the research on the many complex aspects of FL and second language learning, there appear to be proportionately fewer studies involving adolescent learners than those that utilize younger subjects on the one hand and adults on the other. While this was a small-scale study, the quantitative scales are well established in the literature, and statistically significant results have been reported as possible indicators of areas for further investigation. It is perhaps surprising in view of the contextual differences of geography, culture and learning experience that the two groups comparable in age (S4 and G9) showed considerably more similarities than dissimilarities in their motivational profiles, as did the total samples in their preferred learning activities. In two areas, perhaps the educational contexts can learn from each other. Canada as an officially bilingual country has an advantage when it comes to promoting the other language, whereas Scottish teachers may have to direct proportionately more of their energies to addressing the issue of the "perceived relevance" (Chambers, 1998: 254) of foreign languages. Canadian teachers and curriculum writers in turn may be advised to place more emphasis on ways of weaning pupils from the view that "it's up to the teacher," by looking, for example, at the implications of learner autonomy in the language classroom. Recent research suggests that language learners who perceive their teacher to favour control rather than autonomy are more likely to be extrinsically than intrinsically motivated (Noels, Clément and Pelletier, 1999). The Scottish pupils, with their higher degree of "indifference" towards the external factors of teachers and marks, appeared on

the quantitative measures used to be more amenable to intrinsic motivation than their Canadian counterparts.

The practical challenge to teachers in both countries of making language instruction "enjoyable,' thereby increasing the likelihood of learner persistence on both a daily and a long-term basis, may be served by an awareness of specific pupils' perspectives of the language learning experience. This may be particularly true of adolescents. The participants in this study are positively disposed towards the social dimension of languages and opportunities provided for real communication. They react negatively to situations which threaten self-image and competence, such as breakdowns in comprehension or self-expression, or being placed in situations of language use which are patently artificial or silly. Curiously, these are pedagogical concerns that have been identified in the professional literature for over twenty years, always against a backdrop of the ever threatening reaction calling for a return to the basics of formal grammar. In more than one country, it appears, the real basics of teaching another language to sceptical, but not overly hostile, adolescent learners may lie in the delivery of social and cultural meaningfulness to the language classroom.

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