

Reasons Students Take Courses in Less Commonly Taught and More Commonly Taught Languages

Dianna Murphy
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Sally Sieloff Magnan
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Michele Back
University of California, Riverside

Paula Garrett-Rucks
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Introduction

Although postsecondary enrollments in modern foreign languages in the United States continue to be dominated by the more commonly taught languages (CTLs), recent changes in enrollments, as documented in Furman, Goldberg & Lusin (2008), show encouraging trends for the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). The overall increase in foreign language enrollments from 2002-2006 was 12.1%, with almost all of the 204 LCTLs included in the report showing above-average increases in enrollments in that same time period. In comparison, the percentage increase in enrollments in CTLs was below average. (See Figure 1 based on Table 1a, Furman, Goldberg & Lusin 2008, p. 68).

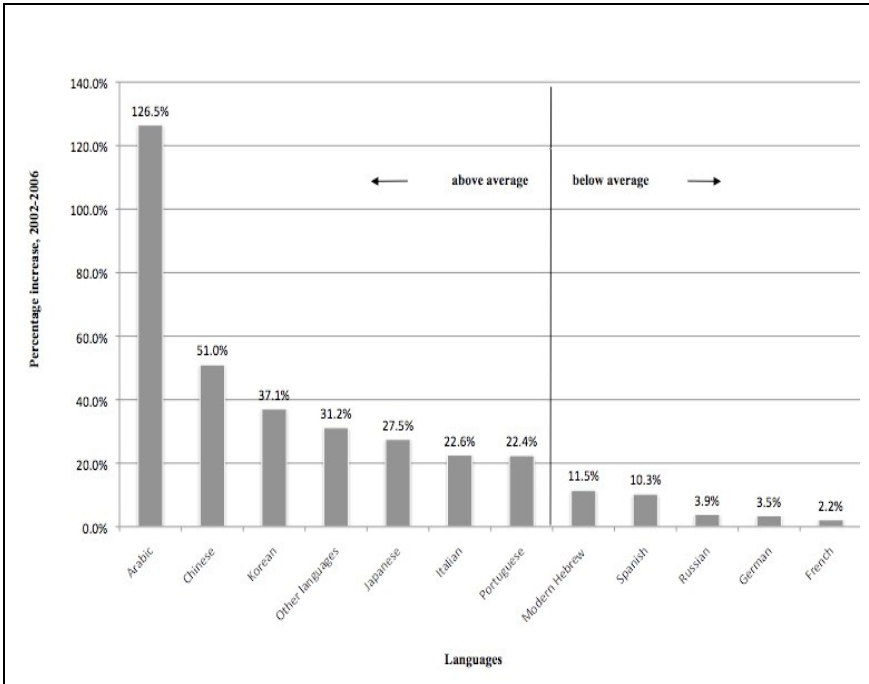


Figure 1. Change in Postsecondary Modern Foreign Language Enrollments, 2002-2006

Enrollment data from the MLA report are useful for understanding broad patterns and for tracking trends in enrollments over time, but do not provide insight into the reasons that students have for enrolling in foreign language courses in general, or for enrolling in a specific foreign language course. The differences in enrollment trends between LCTLs and CTLs documented in the report lead to questions about the reasons students enroll in LCTL and CTL courses: Why do students decide to enroll in beginning-level LCTL and CTL courses? Why do students continue to study LCTLs and CTLs beyond the first year? Are there differences between students of LCTLs and CTLs in their reasons for beginning and continuing to study the language? Brown (2009) rightly notes that “little empirical work has looked closely at the nature of students who enroll in university LCTL course and how they compare directly to students in CTL courses at the same university” (p. 408). This article hopes to begin to address this lack of empirical research by presenting findings from a study of students enrolled in undergraduate foreign

language courses at our university on their reasons for enrolling in beginning-level LCIL and CTL courses, and their reasons for continuing to study the language beyond the first year. The findings show significant differences between students of LCTLs and CTLs in their reasons for language study, which have important implications for recruitment strategies and curricular design.

Reasons for Studying Foreign Languages

Many foreign language educators recognize the importance of understanding why students take language courses and what they hope to learn from them (Oxford & Sheirin, 1994). This research is part of a large body of inquiry about student perspectives on language learning, which includes studies based on surveys (e.g., Andress et al., 2002; Ely, 1986; Husseinali, 2006; Lee, 2005; Mandell, 2002; Siskin, Knowles, & Davis, 1996; Stewart-Strobelt & Chen, 2003; Wen, 1997), questionnaires (e.g., Howard, Deák, & Reynolds, this volume; Ossipov, 2000; Williams, Burden, & Lanvers, 2002), and open-ended essays (e.g., Noels, Pelletier, & Vallerand, 2000; Price & Gascoigne, 2006; Roberts, 1992). Related research in motivation studies has indicated that students' opinions of foreign language study (e.g., Horwitz, 1988; Williams & Burden, 1999), as well as their attitudes toward specific cultures and languages (e.g., Gardner, 1985), can influence their motivation and success (for a review of motivation studies, see Dörnyei, 2003). Thus, understanding the interests, attitudes, and opinions of today's students can help language instructors develop teaching strategies and create meaningful educational environments to sustain and promote learning (Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Roberts, 1992; Tse, 2000). Perhaps most fundamental in this understanding is insight into why students enroll in courses and what goals they have for their own language learning.

Lantolf and Sunderman (2001), in a review of the changing rationale for foreign language study across the twentieth century, discovered four basic arguments made by educators for foreign language study: (a) national security; (b) utilitarian reasons; (c) humanistic benefits; and (d) intellectual development. These basic arguments address benefits both to the individual student and to the broader society: foreign languages may contribute to the development

of the humanistic development of students as well as “serve as tools for war ... and for building a society” (p. 8). Focusing only on students as learners, not on broader social implications, researchers working within the framework of motivation (dating back to work by Gardner and Lambert (1959), Gardner, Blikman, and Smythe (1978), and Gardner (1985) would associate such arguments with different types of motivation: instrumental motivation (utilitarian reasons such as getting a job) and integrative motivation (humanistic or interpersonal reasons usually related to identity and long-term commitments). The research literature shows great variation in the use of terms to describe student reasons for language study, and factors that might underlie these decisions. To avoid confusion in terminology and the use of theoretical frameworks from motivation research that distract from the basic research questions of this study, we have chosen to use the terms *humanistic* and *utilitarian* in describing student reasons for language study, as follows: humanistic reasons for language study include reasons such as personal enjoyment and an interest in the language and culture; utilitarian reasons include meeting a degree requirement and improving career prospects.

Reasons for Studying LCTLs

A review of the literature revealed few empirical studies on reasons for studying individual LCTLs and no empirical studies of large numbers of diverse LCTLs together. Studies that have been conducted to date focus on individual languages, e.g., Arabic (Husseinali, 2006, Seymour-Jorn, 2004) and Russian (Geisherk, 2004), or small groups of related languages, e.g., East Asian languages (Liu & Shibata, 2008). Taken together, however, these studies of individual languages do suggest that there may be commonalities among students of LCTLs in their reasons to study the language.

First, these studies suggest that humanistic reasons may be more important for students of LCTLs than utilitarian ones. A widely cited reason for studying a LCTL was an interest in better understanding the target culture and an interest in communicating with speakers (e.g., Husseinali, 2006; Yang, 2003). Other research (Belnap, 1987; Geisherik, 2004) likewise suggested that LCTL student reasons were less oriented to utilitarian reasons than to humanistic ones, although Kuntz and Belnap (as cited in Husseinali, 2006) found that utilitarian reasons were rapidly increasing in importance for

students of Arabic. Similarly, according to Yang (2003), fulfilling a foreign language requirement was less important to students of East Asian languages than for students of CTLs, with noted differences among students of Chinese, Japanese and Korean, the three languages included in her study.

Second, studies in LCTLs reveal that heritage affiliation with the language and culture is particularly important as a reason for language study for many students (Geisherik, 2004; Howard, Deák, & Reynolds, this volume) Liu & Shibata, 2008; Seymour-Jorn, 2004; Sung & Padilla). Indeed, heritage was the reason most often cited by those educators who participated in the 1996 LCTL Summit, organized by the LCTL Project at the University of Minnesota (Stenson, Janus & Mulkern, 1998, p. 41). In response to the question, “Why do students take courses in your language?,” 26 of 39 participants in the summit chose heritage; only 18 chose interest in the culture.

Finally, student reasons for LCTL study include the challenge of studying what students may perceive as a more difficult language than one of the CTLs. Discussing high school students of Japanese, for example, Oxford and Shearin (1994) included reasons such as “receiving intellectual stimulation, seeking a personal challenge, enjoying the elitism of taking a difficult language, showing off to friends... and having a private code that parents would not know” (p. 12).

Reasons for Studying CTLs

At the present time, the research literature documents many more studies on the reasons for studying CTLs than LCTLs. As with LCTLs, however, researchers investigating reasons for CTL study have focused on individual languages, not on CTLs as a group and not compared with LCTLs. Similar to findings in the LCTLs, studies in the CTLs show that interest, pleasure and desire to learn about the culture are the most important student reasons for studying the language (Price & Gascoigne, 2006; Roberts, 1992; for French [Siskin, et al., 1996], for German [Andress, et al., 2002]; for Spanish, [Ely, 1986]).

Unlike LCTLs, however, the second most commonly cited reason for foreign language study in CTLs was a more utilitarian

reason: interest in job or career success (Price & Gascoigne, 2006; Roberts, 1992). There is also evidence of variance in the importance of utilitarian reasons for language study across the CTLs. For example, a study by Ely (1986) in Spanish found that both “interest in culture” and “career” were important. Stewart-Strobelt and Chen’s (2003) study showed that “interest in the language/culture” ranked first among high school students enrolled in Spanish, French, German, and Russian, but when broken down by gender and subject, boys’ interest in the “language/culture” and “career advantages” were rated as equally important. For girls, however, “interest in the language/culture” was the most important factor (70%) and “career advantages” was significantly lower (53%). Likewise, Mandell’s (2002) study of first- and second-year university-level learners of Spanish in a location with a growing population of bilinguals indicated students’ desire to communicate with native speakers as their primary reason to study Spanish, rather than interest in culture.

The gap between “interest in culture” and “career advantages” appears to be much greater in students’ reasons for studying French and German as compared with Spanish. Magnan’s surveys (Magnan & Tochon, 2001) indicated that fewer than half of the beginning French students attributed their study of French to career objectives. Likewise, Siskin, et al.’s (1996) study revealed that greater numbers of students cited esthetic reasons and pleasure for studying French than Spanish. Ossipov (2000) reported that 50% of students believed that knowing French would give them an employment advantage.

German students, like French students, expressed a greater propensity for humanistic reasons for language study than utilitarian ones. Andress et al.’s (2002) study of high school students continuing to college indicated that the three most important reasons to study German initially were *interest* (71%), *fun* (60.3%), and *liking German* (53.7%) versus the two highest ranked more utilitarian reasons of *satisfying a college entrance requirement* (38.9%) or *possible career benefits* (31.9%). It appears, then, from the available data that humanistic benefits of French and German study to draw today’s students to courses more than career goals, whereas Spanish students are more equally divided between utilitarian and humanistic reasons for language study.

The reasons that students continue to study a CTL are linked to the reasons that they begin their study, but with greater emphasis on gaining proficiency. In Ossipov’s (2000) study on reasons for

continuing French, 91% of students aimed for increased fluency in the language, 82% planned to travel to Francophone areas, and 78% expressed interest in the culture. In addition, pleasure associated with the language learning experience appears to be a major factor in students' decision to continue study (Andress, et al., 2002; Kirkpatrick, 2002; Ossipov, 2000). From a more utilitarian perspective, career advancement was given as a reason by only 30.3% of the students, and there was a "surprising lack of enthusiasm for travel abroad and exchanges with German-speaking schools" (Andress, et al., 2002, p. 9). In contrast, Kirkpatrick's (2002) study revealed that utilitarian reasons were often cited as a reason not to continue studying French: 52% of the students felt that the language was not practical. These results contrast with those of Speiller (1998) who found that continuing students in French and Spanish indicated practical, utilitarian reasons (e.g., enhancement of college applications and language usage) as prime reasons for continuing their language study. Finally, Hamm (1988) found that major reasons for dropping French language study were lack of time and confidence.

Comparative Studies

At the present time, only Brown (2009) and Howard, Deák, and Reynolds (this volume), offer a comparative analysis based on empirical research of LCTL and CTL students. Focusing on demographic and academic profiles of 1,472 postsecondary students of 9 languages at the first and second year of study, Brown found significant differences between the profiles of students of LCTLs and CTLs: students of LCTLs were older than students of CTLs and had a higher self-reported grade point average. More relevant to this article, an item on Brown's questionnaire that elicited student reasons for enrolling in the language course revealed that personal interest was the reason for enrolling for only 17% of all students, with a significant difference between students of LCTLs and CTLs: 36% of LCTL students indicated that personal interest was their primary reason for taking the course, compared with only 13% of CTL students. For students in Brown's study, the foreign language requirement was much more important, again with a significant difference between students of LCTLs and CTLs: the foreign language requirement was the reason for enrolling in the class for 59% of all students; it was the

reason for 31% of students of LCTLs and 65% of students of CTLs. In addition to the surprising focus on the foreign language requirement more than on personal interest as a reason for language study, it is particularly necessary to follow up on the differences Brown found between students' reasons for studying LCTLs and CTLs. This difference warrants further investigation.

The Present Study

The present study investigates the reasons postsecondary students of LCTLs and CTLs enroll in foreign language courses. The study, based on written surveys of students enrolled in first- and third-semester university language courses, was designed to enable comparisons across groups of languages (LCTLs and CTLs) and across years of study (first and third semesters). The research was done at our home institution, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which has the capacity to teach 80 languages and regularly offers about 40 during the academic year.

Research Questions

Our research questions address two main goals: 1) to compare the primary reasons of postsecondary-level students for enrolling in LCTL or CTL courses, and 2) to compare the primary reasons for enrolling in LCTL or CTL courses between first- and thirdsemester courses.

We asked a series of four research questions. First, we asked the basic question:

RQ1. What are students' primary reasons for enrolling in first-semester language courses? In third-semester language courses?

Then, we looked at the responses of students of LCTLs and CTLs to ask:

RQ2. Is there a difference between LCTLs and CTLs in students' primary reasons for enrolling in first-semester courses? In third-semester courses?

Next, continuing to contrast the responses of students of LCTLs and CTLs, we considered possible differences in the reasons students enroll in different semesters of language study. The question was:

RQ3. In LCTL courses, is there a difference between the first and third semesters in students' primary reasons to enroll? In CTL courses?

Finally, we focused on the students in third-semester courses, asking a slightly different question to focus on why students continue to study the language. Our final question was:

RQ4. Is there a difference between LCTLs and CTLs in students' primary reasons for continuing to study the Language into the third semester?

Methods

Participants and Languages Studied.

Participants in this study were undergraduate, graduate, or non-traditional students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a large, public university with a language requirement for undergraduate students in the College of Letters and Science (4 semesters of one language or 3 semesters of one language and 2 semesters of another language for the BA degree; 3 semesters of one language for the BS degree) with only occasional requirements set by departments in majors in other schools within the university. Among the languages taught, 26 were selected because they were offered at both first-semester level and at the third-semester level when the data was collected. In these courses, the study involved 1,568 students in the first semester in the fall of 2004 and 1,251 students in the third semester in the fall of 2005, for a total of 2,819 students. (See Appendix A, Table 1 for numbers of students by semester and language.) Although many of the same students participated in both surveys, having progressed from first-semester to third-semester courses during the data collection period, others participated in only one survey or the other.

The profiles of students enrolled in the first-semester and third-semester courses were quite similar, with a larger number of females than males in both cohorts. For CTLs courses, there were more first-year students (freshmen) in the third-semester courses than in the first-semester courses, which is explained by the large number of students of CTLs who continue their study of the same language from high school. There were more seniors and graduate students in

LCTL courses than in CTL courses, at both the first- and third-semester levels. (See Appendix A, Table 2.)

Instrument.

The data for this study consisted of two questions from a larger (38 item) multiple-choice written questionnaire designed to elicit information about students' reasons for enrolling in the language course and, for the third-semester survey, for continuing to study the language. (See Appendix B for the two questions). One question was asked of both first- and third-semester students. It asked students to indicate their primary reason for taking the course by selecting one response from nine possible options: 1) *degree requirement*; 2) *personal interest, enjoyment, curiosity*; 3) *small classes and making friends*; 4) *societal responsibility*; 5) *family background*; 6) *use in my future career*; 7) *strengthen my application for graduate or professional school*; 8) *future travel, including study abroad*; 9) *other*. Students who selected items 1-8 indicated their choice on a scantron sheet; students who selected *other* wrote their reason for enrolling in the course on the survey itself. In addition to this question, another question was asked of students in third-semester courses. This additional question asked students to indicate their primary reason for continuing to study the language by selecting one of the following options: 1) *I became more interested in the language and culture after I started studying it*; 2) *It helps me to remain in contact with people I met through studying this language*; 3) *I am majoring in the language*; 4) *I need to take a second year of the language to fulfill a requirement other than a major*; 5) *I am doing well, so I thought that I would continue*; 6) *I want to become proficient enough to use the language in my career, in future research, or for personal enjoyment or fulfillment*; 7) *I believe that having more language in my credentials will be useful for graduate or professional study*; 8) *I am preparing for study abroad or another experience in a country where the language is spoken*; 9) *other*. We realize that students might well have several reasons and thus wish to select several options; however, on the items presented in this study, multiple selection was not possible except by the selection of *other*. We wanted students to prioritize their reasons and identify the most essential one to them.

Procedures

The survey was administered in-class by instructors during the first two weeks of the fall semester in 2004 (first-semester courses) and 2005 (third-semester courses). Students made their responses on scantron sheets, or, for the open-ended response items, directly on the surveys. Both the scantron sheets and the surveys were coded for language and course number. Completed surveys were returned to a central location and the data converted from the scantrons to files accessible by Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Analysis of the data included creating contingency tables and bar graphs showing percentages of responses (rounded to whole numbers), and running Chi-square tests for statistical difference in these responses. The alpha level was set at a conservative .01 level to avoid Type II errors possibly related to multiple tests. The research was approved by the Human Subjects Board at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Results

RQ 1: What are students' primary reasons for enrolling in first-semester language courses? In third-semester language courses?

For students enrolled in first-semester language courses, the primary reason given by the largest percentage of respondents was *personal interest, enjoyment and curiosity* (43%). (See Figure 2.) After personal interest, *meeting a degree requirement* (25%) was a distant second. The remaining reasons were chosen by relatively smaller numbers of students: *use in my future career* (13%), *future travel, including study abroad* (9%), *family background* (5%), and *strengthen my application for graduate or professional school* (3%).

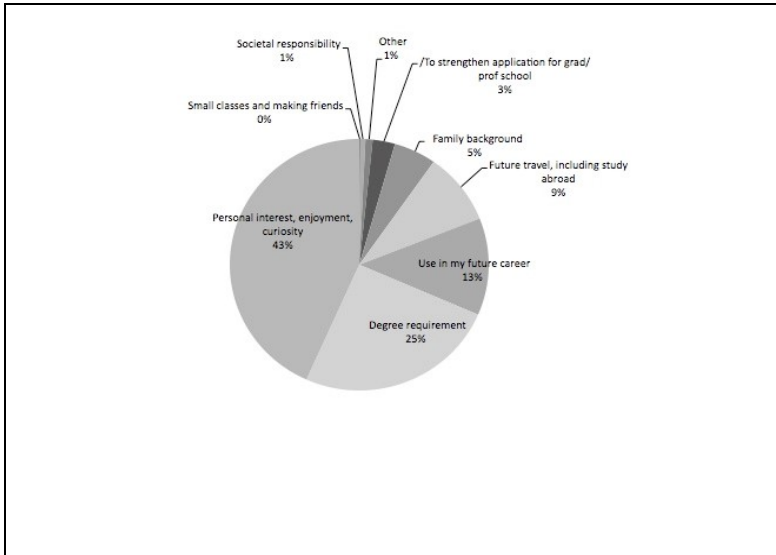


Figure 2. Primary Reason for Enrolling in the Language Course: First Semester (n=1,568)

For students in third-semester courses, the reason selected by the largest percentage of students was similar to the reasons of students in first-semester courses: *personal interest, enjoyment and curiosity* (32%), followed by *meeting a degree requirement* (21%). (See Figure 3.) We note that the overall percentage of students who selected *personal interest, enjoyment and curiosity* declined from the first to third semester, from 43% to 32%. (*Meeting the degree requirement* also decreased as a primary reason from first to third semester, from 25% to 21%, but not as precipitously as *personal interest and enjoyment*.) The largest increase in the primary reason to enroll in the course was found in *use in my future career* (21%), which increased from 13% in the first semester, perhaps indicating an increase in awareness of professional opportunities afforded by language skills as students progress beyond introductory courses.

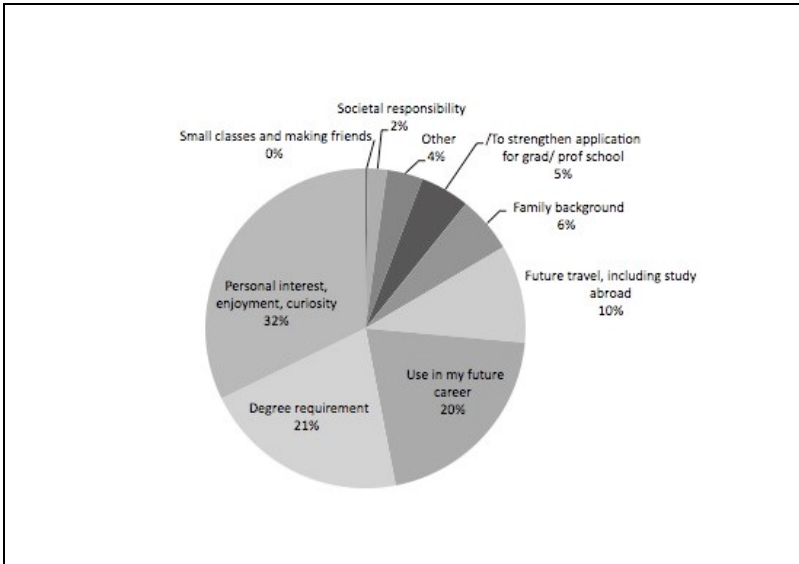


Figure 3. Primary Reason for Enrolling in the Language Course: Third Semester (n=1,251)

Of those students who selected the option *other*, the overwhelming majority indicated that they were taking the course to receive retroactive credits (receiving college credit for high school work after validating the high school work with a college course at the grade of B or higher). Several students wrote that they were motivated to take the course by more than one reason: personal interest, enjoyment and curiosity and to meet a degree requirement. Others noted personal reasons, such as a boyfriend or girlfriend who speaks the target language.

We note with interest that despite an emphasis in campus materials highlighting the intimate size and social nature of language classes, *small classes and making friends* (0%) was not the primary reason for enrolling in a language course for any students in either the first or third semester of language study.

RQ2. Is there a difference between LCTLs and CTLs in students' primary reasons for enrolling in first-semester courses? In third-semester courses?

For students of LCTLs and CTLs enrolled in first-semester courses, Chi-square tests revealed a significant difference ($p=.000$) in the primary reasons for enrolling in the course overall, as well as significant differences in three individual responses (significant differences are marked with a star in all figures): (a) *personal interest*,

enjoyment, curiosity ($p=.000$), selected as the primary reason for enrolling in the course by 48% of students of LCTLs and 37% of students of CTLs; (b) *family background* ($p=.000$), selected by 7% of students of LCTLs and 2% of students of CTLs; and (c) *degree requirement* ($p=.000$), selected by 19% of students of LCTLs and 32% of students of CTLs. (See Figure 4)

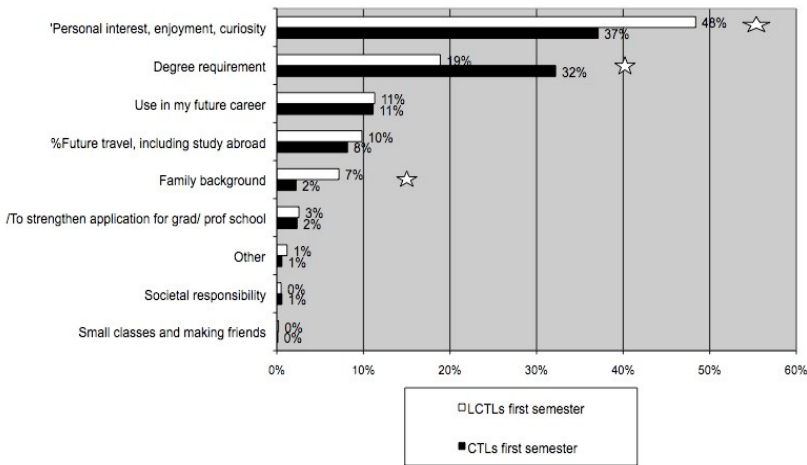


Figure 4. Comparison of Primary Reasons for Enrolling in LCTL and CTL Courses: First Semester (N=1,568, LCTLs n=1,107, CTLs n=551)

These findings provide empirical evidence that strongly supports beliefs that LCTL students are more likely than students of CTLs to be motivated to undertake language study by humanistic (*personal interest, enjoyment, curiosity; family background*) rather than utilitarian (*degree requirement*) reasons. Furthermore, they also support research implying that heritage status (*family background*) is particularly important for students of LCTLs. This finding also provides empirical evidence that student reasons for studying LCTLs are quite varied, and perhaps more diverse than characterizations of LCTL students by foreign language educators (e.g., Walker & McGinnis, 1995). For students of LCTLs and CTLs enrolled in third-semester courses, we found significant difference ($p=.000$) in students' primary reason for enrolling in the course. In individual items, significant differences were found for the following areas: (a) *future travel, including study abroad* ($p=.000$), given by 6% of students of LCTLs in the third semester of study as a primary reason and 12% of students of CTLs; (b) *family background* ($p=.000$), selected as the primary reason by 11% by students

of LCTLs and 3% of students of CTLs; and (c) *strengthen my application for graduate or professional school*, selected by 2% of students of LCTLs and 7% of students of CTLs. (See Figure 5.) These results show that by the third semester of study, whereas personal interest remains the most important reason for studying the language for all students, there is not a difference between students of LCTLs in CTLs. Similarly, by the third semester of study, we no longer find significant difference between students of LCTLs and CTLs in choosing to study the language to meet a degree requirement: for both groups, the degree requirement is the primary reason for approximately one-fifth of the students. In the third semester, we continue to see the relatively greater importance of family background for students of LCTLs in their primary reason for studying the language than for students of CTLs.

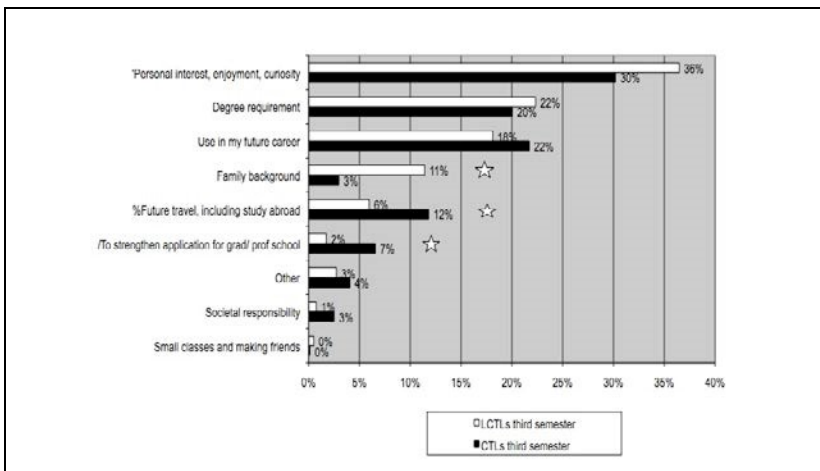


Figure 5. Comparison of Primary Reasons for Enrolling in LCTL and CTL Courses: Third Semester (N=1,251, LCTLs n=405, CTLs n=846)

RQ3. In LCTL courses, is there a difference between first and third semesters in students’ primary reasons to enroll? In CTL courses?

For students enrolled in LCTL courses, Chi-square tests showed significant difference ($p=.000$) overall between the first and third semesters in students’ primary reasons for enrolling in the course, and in the following individual responses: (a) *personal interest, enjoyment, curiosity* ($p=.000$), selected by 48% of students of LCTLs in

the first semester of study and 36% in the third semester of study; and (b) *use in my future career* ($p=.001$), given by 11% of students of LCTLs in the first semester and 18% in the third semester. (See Figure 6) Thus, for students of LCTLs, humanistic reasons of *personal interest, enjoyment, curiosity* decreased between the first and third semester of study, while the utilitarian reason of *use in my future career* increased. (See Figure 6)

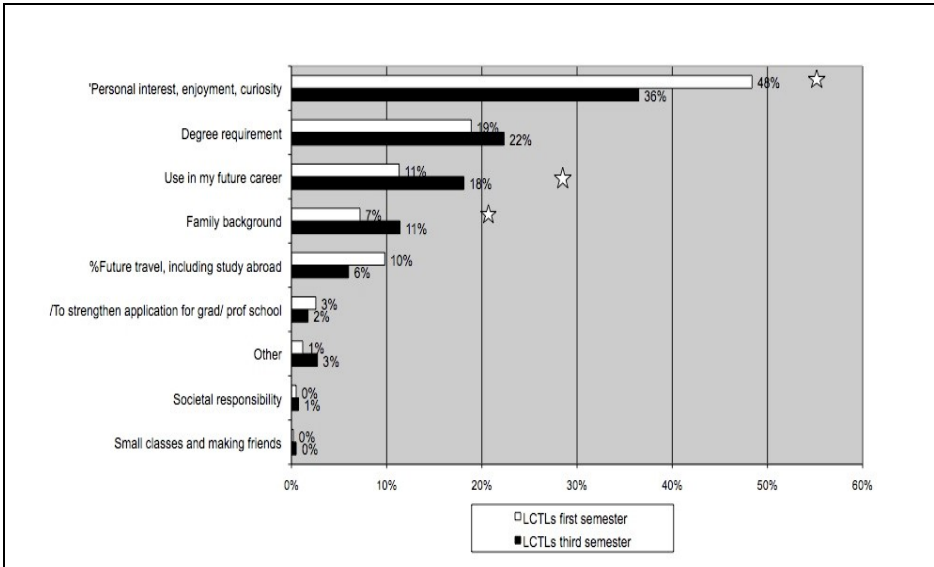


Figure 6. Comparison of Primary Reasons for Enrolling in First and Third Semester Courses: LCTLs ($N=1,422$, LCTLs first semester $n=1,017$, LCTLs third semester $n=405$)

For students enrolled in CTL courses, there was also a significant difference ($p=.000$) between the first and third semesters of study in students' primary reason for enrolling in the course. Chisquare tests on individual items showed significant difference in the following individual items: (a) *degree requirement* ($p=.000$), chosen as the primary reason by 32% of students of CTLs in the first semester compared to 20% in the third semester; (b) *use in future career* ($p=.001$), selected by 11% of students of CTLs in the first semester compared to 22% in the third semester; (c) *societal responsibility* ($p=.032$), selected by 1% of students of CTLs in the first semester and 3% in the third semester; (d) *strengthen my application to graduate/professional school* ($p=.007$), selected by 2% of students of CTLs in the first semester and 7% in the third semester; and (e) *other* reasons ($p=.000$), selected by 1% of students of

CTLs in the first semester and 4% in the third semester. (See Figure 7.) For students of CTLs, we thus see a decrease from the first to third semester in taking the language primarily for the degree requirement, but an increase in other utilitarian reasons such as earning retroactive credits, and an increase in use in future career. Results of the survey show a decrease in *personal interest, enjoyment and curiosity* as the primary reason for enrolling from the first semester (37%) to third semester (30%), but this difference is not statistically significant.

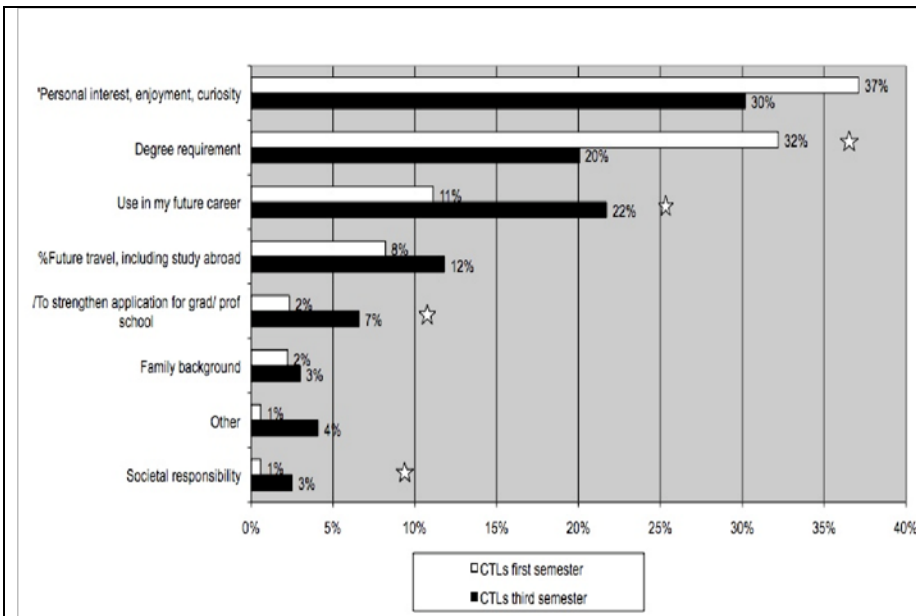


Figure 7. Comparison of Primary Reasons for Enrolling in First and Third Semester Courses: CTLs (N=1,397, CTLs first semester n=551, CTLs third semester n=846)

RQ4. Is there a difference between LCTLs and CTLs in students' primary reasons for continuing to study the language into the third semester?

This question on the survey asked specifically about why students decided to *continue* language study into the third semester. This research question then, which aims to contrast responses from students of LCTLs and CTLs, complements RQ1, which asked all students why they initially enrolled in either a first- or third-semester language course.

A Chi-square test revealed a significant difference ($p=.000$) in the primary reasons for continuing language study given by students of LCTLs and CTLs. Further analysis on individual items with Chisquare tests revealed significant differences on the three items marked with a star in Figure 8. Students of CTLs (48%) were significantly more likely than students of LCTLs (39%) to want to become proficient enough to use the language in their careers, in future research, or for personal enjoyment/fulfillment ($p=.010$). Students of LCTLs (14%) were significantly more likely than students of CTLs (6%) to become more interested in the language and culture after they started studying it ($p=.000$). Students of CTLs (7%) were also significantly more likely than students of LCTLs (3%) to study a language in order to have credentials for graduate or professional study ($p=.008$).

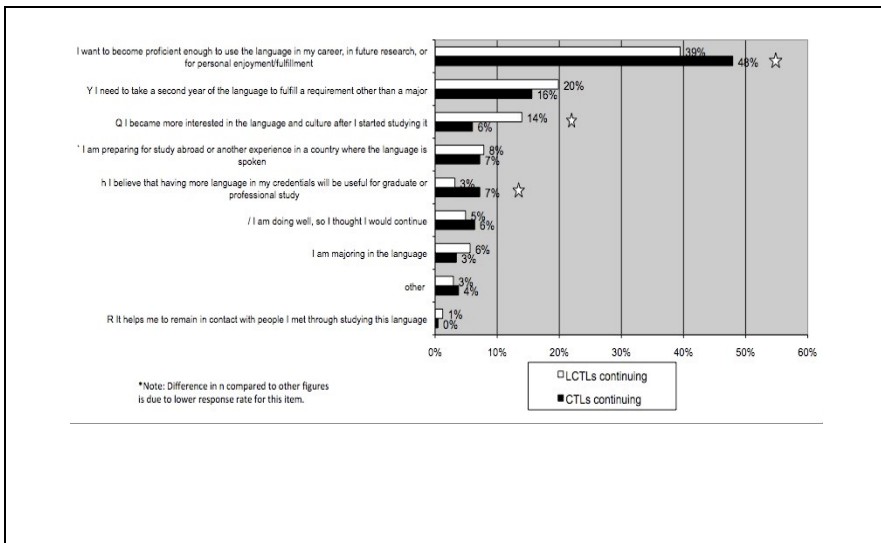


Figure 8. Comparison of Primary Reasons for Continuing to Study the Language Into the Third Semester (N=1,241, LCTLs n=405, CTLs n=838)

Conclusions

First and foremost, the findings of this study are encouraging: the greatest number of students of both LCTLs and CTLs were enrolled in first- and third-semester language courses primarily for personal reasons of enjoyment and curiosity. This finding is in line with those of several previous studies (e.g., Andress, et al., 2002;

Belnap, 1987; Husseinali, 2006; Magnan & Tochon, 2001; Price & Gascoigne, 2006; Roberts, 1992; Siskin, et al., 1996; Yang, 2003), suggesting that the low response for personal interest in Brown (2009), may be particular to the institution in which that study was conducted. Similar to Brown, however, our study confirms that there are important differences between the reasons students take LCTLs and CTLs classes. LCTL students were more likely to have personal interest as a primary reason for language study than students of CTLs. In contrast, students of CTLs were more likely than students of LCTLs to enroll in first-semester courses to satisfy a degree requirement, to enroll in third-semester courses to prepare for travel and for applications to graduate and professional school, and to continue into the third semester to become more proficient to meet career objectives and gain credentials for graduate and professional schools. Students of LCTLs were more likely to enroll in both first and third-semester courses for heritage reasons. Approximately one quarter of all of the students, LCTL and CTL, enrolled primarily for a degree requirement, giving rise to worries of negative attitudes toward FL study more generally (c.f. Price & Gascoigne, 2006), and perhaps also active resistance toward instruction (Worth, 2006). As students continue into the third semester, however, the relative importance of the degree requirement decreased.

For continuing language study into the third semester, LCTL students were more influenced by their developing interest in the target language and culture than were CTL students. Both LCTL and CTL students aimed to improve their proficiency to use the language, as their study continued into the third semester, with LCTL students less likely to identify increased proficiency as a primary reason for continuing study. An increase in career-oriented motivation in both LCTL and CTL students in the third semester might suggest that students come to see long-term value in language study as they develop some proficiency.

Implications

Although we should not lose sight of the important fact that the reasons students study languages are very diverse, as are the students (Gardner, 1985), these differences, especially between LCTLs and CTLs, could suggest somewhat different recruitment

strategies for the two groups. Student recruitment into language courses has become a major task of instructors, especially for the LCTLs, where small enrollments leave programs vulnerable (Schleicher & Everson, 1996), despite the increases noted in the MLA report. In recruiting students into courses, LCTL instructors might highlight aspects of the language and culture that would appeal to the interests of students. We also might stress family connections and the potential for personal enjoyment (see Howard, Deák, & Reynolds, this volume, for a more detailed portrayal of heritage learner motivation). Recruiting materials might promote language use in careers more for second-year enrollment than for first-year.

How might this tailoring of recruitment efforts be accomplished? Flyers for language courses could target different reasons for language study according to the audience they aim to reach and the specific languages and cultures they are promoting. Recruitment videos, to be shown at incoming student orientations or placed on university web sites, could feature students in different languages talking about the reasons for language study that may appeal to large groups of potential students in that language. Student profiles, for web sites or other promotional materials, describing “why I learned a language and how it positively affected my life” could be written around the themes presented by the most common reasons for which students enroll in either LCTLs or CTLs. At our institution, a successful program for recruiting students into both LCTL and CTL courses has been a visiting lecture series, *Language for Life*, which brings alumni to campus to talk about the languages they learned at the university and how these languages shaped their professional lives. We target one disciplinary focus per session (e.g., Languages and Law, Languages and Journalism) and often have panels of presenters who represent different languages. The findings of this study suggest that both LCTLs and CTLs would be well served by such efforts.

Another recruitment strategy based on an understanding of student reasons for language study might be to try to expand student horizons and promote language study precisely for reasons that students have not yet identified for themselves. For example, students may not be aware of study abroad opportunities or career applications, for example, in many LCTLs. Results from this study suggest that students might be encouraged to study a foreign language by knowing that such programs exist. Other responses found through the survey in this research might be used to help better design and carry out

targeted recruitment strategies for building enrollments based on an understanding of student reasons for language study.

Once students are enrolled in our courses, we might find out what brought them to us. As action research, LCTL instructors could survey their own students (on paper as was done in this study or by interviewing them) about why they enrolled in the course and what they expect to get from it. Instructors might encourage students to share their reasons with their classmates as a way of broadening students' thinking and as a way of explaining why this one class needs to meet different student objectives. Through such discussions, instructors could come to understand better what "interest" or "enjoyment" means for language students, and what stimulates their curiosity.

As we better understand the students in our courses, we can adjust the curriculum, even in small ways, to respond to student goals, as suggested by their reasons for language study. We might incorporate new readings throughout the course that relate to students' interests and goals. We could personalize instruction through individual or group projects that allow students to relate their reason for studying to their work for the project. Strong projects might be featured on future recruitment videos or websites to show how students do work in classes that respond to various reasons for language study.

In addition to taking into account the reasons that bring students initially to language courses, instructors need to acknowledge how students' reasons for language study change over time. This research suggests that students may initially be drawn to study the language because of personal interest, but, at a later date, might find themselves more motivated by their interest in the culture and by possible career applications. To respond to these changing reasons for language study, instructors might continue to integrate culture learning into their language courses at all levels, while at the same time providing students with examples of possible professional opportunities. The MLA report "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World" (2007) suggests multiple paths to the major, which could provide increasingly focused study toward different career objectives. For current and potential majors, departments might host a major's festival at which instructors, alumni, and students talk about various ways to use the language

beyond course work and after graduation. The involvement of instructors in these events and in curricular and lesson planning toward multiple objectives will sensitize instructors to the fact that students come to language learning and continue it for different reasons. It will thereby help instructors question their personal assumptions, which might be faulty (c.f., Stenson, Janus & Mulkern, 1998), such as believing that most students come to language classes primarily to meet a degree requirement. It is imperative then that teacher training materials and workshops make instructors aware that the reasons students decide to study a language may change over time and that they provide options, such as those suggested here, for teachers to use with different groups and individuals.

Future Research

Future research should involve students at more institutions and look at differences among particular languages, as well as at the interrelationship between other factors, such as year in school and family background, that influence students' reasons for language study. In addition to continued survey exploration, future work would benefit from qualitative studies, such as Shedivy (2004), that focus on the complexity of student goals rather than reducing student motivations to a dyad or even a continuum. In particular, we need research about how students' learning goals correspond with goals that the profession has set for them. As more professional organizations in the LCTLs develop standards based on the *National Standards for Language Learning* (1996, 1999, 2006), for example, we need to ask if the goals of the Standards do, in fact, address the goals of students of LCTLs. Do these Standards, and other curricular plans, fit the diversity of students and the diversity of languages we offer?

The complexity of choices of individual learners is difficult to describe in categories, as this study as well as many that preceded it, have attempted to do. Understanding both the individual's and the group's reasons for language learning in both LCTL and CTL courses is imperative for creating language learning experiences that are responsive to student needs.

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Appendix A

Participant Profiles

Table 1.

Participants, by Language and Course

Language	First-semester courses	Third-semester courses
<i>CTLs: Commonly taught languages</i>		
French	180	199
German	109	107
Spanish	262	540
<i>CTLs Sub-total</i>	<i>551</i>	<i>846</i>
<i>LCTLs: Less commonly taught languages</i>		
Arabic	45	25
Chinese	51	20
Danish	7	10
Dutch	29	12
Filipino	6	4
Hebrew, Modern	66	29
Italian	257	91

Japanese	101	54
Korean	27	11
Latin	96	10
Norwegian	30	20
Polish	18	4
Portuguese	98	44
Russian	97	25
Sanskrit	14	2
Serbo-Croatian	13	3
Swahili	20	9
Swedish	19	9
Tibetan	3	4
Turkish	7	2
Urdu	2	4
Vietnamese	7	8
Yoruba	4	5
<i>LCTL sub-total</i>	<i>1017</i>	<i>405</i>
Total	1568	1251

Note. This study included two survey questions. These figures respond to the question with the greater number of responses: What is your PRIMARY motivation for taking this beginning language course? The total responses for the other question, (What is the PRIMARY reason you decided to **continue** studying this language for a second year?) had 10 fewer responses for third semester students: 838 CTL and 403 LCTL.

Table 2.

Participants by Year in School

Year in	First-semester courses		Third-semester courses	
	LCTLs	CTLs	LCTLs	CTLs

Freshman	28%	29%	6%	61%
Sophomore	22%	31%	30%	18%
Junior	18%	21%	23%	9%
Senior (4 th or 5 th year)	20%	15%	29%	11%
Graduate Student	9%	3%	10%	1%
Special Student	3%	1%	2%	0%
<i>Total</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%

Appendix B

Questions from Survey Used in Analysis

First-semester and third-semester surveys

What is your PRIMARY motivation for taking this beginning language course?

- 0. degree requirement
- 1. personal interest, enjoyment, curiosity
- 2. small classes and making friends
- 3. societal responsibility
- 4. family background
- 5. use in my future career
- 6. to strengthen application for graduate or professional school
- 7. future travel, including study abroad
- 8. other, write in here _____

Third-semester survey only

What is the PRIMARY reason you decided to **continue** studying this language for a second year?

- 0. I became more interested in the language and culture after I started studying it
- 1. It helps me to remain in contact with people I met through studying this language
- 2. I am majoring in the language

3. I need to take a second year of the language to fulfill a requirement other than a major
4. I am doing well, so I thought that I would continue
5. I want to become proficient enough to use the language in my career, in future research, or for personal enjoyment or fulfillment
6. I believe that having more language in my credentials will be useful for graduate or professional study
7. I am preparing for study abroad or another experience in a country where the language is spoken
8. other, write in here _____