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“Crêpes on Friday”: Examining Gender Differences in Extrinsic Motivation in the French as a Second Language Classroom

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Despite growing evidence that males are less motivated than females to learn second languages, research in this area has yet to investigate gender differences in two of the most well-known elements of motivational theory: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Using data from a large-scale study by Kissau (2006), the researcher further explores the issue of male disinterest in second language studies by investigating gender differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation amongst adolescent students studying French in Canada. A total of 490 students studying French as a second language in Grade 9 completed a survey. The quantitative data from the surveys were then further explored in interviews with students and teachers. Results suggest that one's motivational orientation is an important factor in the decision to study French and that boys are perceived to be less intrinsically and more extrinsically motivated than their female peers. Due to the suggested benefits of an intrinsic orientation, suggestions for how to develop intrinsically motivated behaviors amongst boys in the second language classroom are discussed.

In an era of multiculturalism and globalization the importance of being able to communicate in a second language is evident. People who speak more than one language are found to have increased job prospects (Canadian Parents for French, 2001), earn more money (Aubry, 2003), and be more culturally tolerant (Graddol, 2004) than their monolingual counterparts. Despite these many benefits, numerous studies have shown that adolescent males in English-speaking countries are lacking motivation to learn a second language (Carr, 2002; Carr & Pauwels, 2006; Jones & Jones, 2001; Kissau, 2006; Netten, Riggs & Hewlett, 1999; Pavy, 2006; Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002).

In a study involving approximately 500 Grade 9 students in Canada, Kissau (2006) provided evidence of male disinterest in learning French. In this study, which investigated gender differences in motivation to learn French, almost 70% of the students who planned to drop French from their studies the following year were male. Similar findings were reported in an earlier Canadian study by Netten, Riggs, and Hewlett (1999). The results of the study indicated that boys were less likely to study French in senior high school. While 59% of the 380 Grade 9 participants indicated a desire to continue studying French in Grade 10, the majority of these participants were female by almost a 3 to 1 ratio. Of the students dropping French the following year, approximately two-thirds were male.

The problem of unmotivated males in the second language classroom is not unique to Canada. Numerous studies have also shown adolescent males in

other English-speaking countries around the world to be less interested than their female counterparts in learning a second language (Carr, 2002; Jones & Jones, 2001; Pavy, 2006; Williams, Burden, & Lanvers, 2002). Data from a study conducted by Carr and Pauwels (2006) involving over 200 boys aged 12 to 18 in Australia and the UK indicated that males represent only 23%-35% of students studying foreign languages at the most advanced levels of secondary school. Pavy (2006), in a study involving Catholic secondary schools in Australia, reported that of 5,804 students enrolled in a language other than English in Victoria, fewer than 10% were boys.

Despite the growing number of studies investigating gender differences in second language motivation, an extensive review of literature reveals that no related research has been conducted specifically on one of the most well-known components of motivational theory, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are ones that individuals perform to receive some extrinsic reward, such as money, good grades, or teacher praise. Intrinsically motivated activities are ones for which there is no anticipated reward except the activity itself. Intrinsically motivated people engage in activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000).

While both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be beneficial in the classroom (Dörnyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994), a study by Harter (1981) involving over 3,000 American students in Grades 3 through 9 revealed a number of advantages associated with an intrinsic orientation. Using a self-report scale on intrinsic versus extrinsic orientation in the classroom, the researcher found that children with an intrinsic orientation reported a greater knowledge of the factors that controlled their successes and failures in school and were apt to report that the source of these factors was internal. In addition, the intrinsically oriented child was found to have a higher perceived competence than those children who were more extrinsically motivated. Greater perceived competence and internal sources of control, often referred to as self-determination, have both been reported to enhance second language motivation (Harter, 1978; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000).

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, has traditionally been seen as something that can undermine intrinsic motivation. Bruner (1966) stated that one of the principal flaws of extrinsic motivation is that it can be addictive. Once lured by an immediate reward, we can become dependent on those extrinsic rewards, even to the point that their removal can eliminate the desire to learn.

The problem with pitting intrinsic motivation against extrinsic motivation is that the two concepts are not believed to be in isolation from each other, and in fact, are thought to exist on a continuum. For example, in spite of the above-mentioned study by Harter (1981) indicating that the intrinsically oriented learner has greater internal control of achievement, extrinsic motivation does not necessarily imply a lack of internal control. As pointed out by a number of

researchers (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000; Vallerand, 1997) different types of extrinsic motivation can be classified along a continuum according to the extent to which they are internalized into the self-concept. Three levels of extrinsic motivation have been classified from the highest level of internal control to the lowest.

External regulation, considered to have the lowest level of internal control, is characterized by those activities that are determined by external sources. If the reason for studying the language, such as to obtain a specific job, were taken away, there would be no incentive to continue in the endeavor. Introjected regulation refers to a second type of extrinsic motivation which is more internalized in the learner's self-concept. An example would be a student who is learning French out of a wish to please his or her parents. Although the source of the desire to learn is more internal, it is not self-determined because the learner is reacting to external pressure, not personal choice. Identified regulation is the third type of extrinsic motivation, the one in which the learner has the most internal control. The learner is taking part in an activity because of reasons that are important to him or her (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002). For example, a high school student may have a strong desire to pass an exam because the student wants to do well in the course and later go on to university.

The apparent implications of such research are that teachers should not look unfavorably upon all forms of extrinsic motivation. Instead, they need to promote types of extrinsic motivation that are more internalized by the learner. Strong extrinsic motives can serve as very effective goals in the second language classroom. What is key is that the goals are valued and internalized by the students and not externally regulated, for example, by parents or teachers.

While both intrinsic and extrinsic motives may have their associated benefits in the second language classroom, common sense would indicate that students who have an internal curiosity and interest in pursuing the language are more likely to persist with the language and be successful than are those who need constant enticements and rewards. With this in mind, the findings of a study by Thibert and Karsenti (1998), which investigated the effect of teachers on the degree of motivational change in boys and girls, are troubling. Significant differences were reported between the sexes in regard to extrinsic/intrinsic motivation. As part of the study, 6 teachers in the Montreal area were chosen to work with 173 Grade 6 students (87 girls and 86 boys). Three of the teachers were chosen for their teaching practices that promoted student intrinsic motivation. The 3 other teachers were randomly selected. Half of the students spent 10 weeks being taught by the 3 "effective" teachers, and the other half was taught by the remaining 3 teachers. The results of the study showed that the girls from both the experimental and control groups scored significantly higher on both pre-tests and post-tests for intrinsic motivation, whereas the boys scored significantly higher on tests for extrinsic motivation.

While the above-mentioned study by Thibert and Karsenti (1998) does not pertain specifically to a language learning environment, its implications may

extend to the second language classroom. Some of the causes of male disinterest in learning a second language, as reported in recent research, seem to underscore the possible implications of an extrinsic orientation. Carr (2002), for example, demonstrated that many male students perceive languages to be irrelevant to career aspirations. More recently, Carr and Pauwels (2006) found that boys in their study perceived second and foreign languages to be soft options. It was believed by these boys that knowledge of a foreign language would not lead to a lucrative career, as may the study of math, science or law. If males are more extrinsically oriented than females, as was suggested by Thibert and Karsenti (1998), the perceived absence of a tangible reward like a high paying job may be discouraging extrinsically motivated boys from studying second languages. Further, if a relationship exists between an extrinsic orientation and decreased perceptions of competence and internal control over successes and failures, as was reported by Harter (1981), this too may help explain why extrinsically motivated boys lack interest in second language studies. Using data from a large-scale study investigating gender differences in second language motivation (see Kissau, 2006), this article will explore whether male students are more extrinsically motivated in the French as a second language (FSL) classroom than their female counterparts.

METHOD

Participants

As reported in the original, large-scale study by Kissau (2006), all Grade 9 students from a school district in Ontario, Canada, actively enrolled in core French as a second language (FSL) were invited to participate in the study. Grade 9 core French¹ students were chosen as participants for a number of reasons. The core approach to learning French continues to be the dominant instructional mode in Canada despite the current interest in French immersion. In Ontario elementary and secondary schools in 2000-2001, for example, there were 907,795 students enrolled in core French compared with 117,985 students in French immersion (Canadian Parents for French, 2002). Furthermore, studies have shown that intermediate level students, such as those in Grade 9, tend to express negative attitudes toward FSL (Dörnyei & Clément, 2001; Williams, Burden, & Lanvers, 2002). It is these students in Grade 9 who are given the choice of whether or not to continue French studies. In Ontario, Grade 9 is the last year when students are required to take a course in French. An alarming number of students, in particular, males, are deciding not to continue studying French after this mandatory year (Netten, Riggs, & Hewlett, 1999). There is a need to better understand why so many 14-15 year old students in Canada are losing interest in learning French.

From the students who agreed to participate in the initial phase of the study, stratified random sampling was used to select an equal number of males and females to participate in follow-up interviews. The students were selected from urban, rural, inner-city, and suburban high schools in an effort to ensure

the sample was more representative of the population. Grade 9 FSL teachers whose students took part in the study were also asked to participate in interviews. As the study involved only 10 different secondary schools and some of these schools had only one teacher actively teaching Grade 9 FSL at the time of data collection, the number of teachers contacted was relatively small. The students and teachers who participated in the interviews were chosen to help explain and elaborate on the results obtained from the student questionnaires.

Questionnaire

Data were collected from the student-participants with the use of a questionnaire. Although the questionnaire sought information pertaining to a variety of motivational factors, for the purpose of this article the focus will be on the information obtained pertaining to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students were required to circle a number on a 7-point Likert scale that best represented their response to a number of items. An answer of 7 would indicate strong agreement and an answer of 1 strong disagreement. Harter's (1981) *Self-Report Scale of Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Orientation in the Classroom* was used in the study. The three sub-scales used to measure intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, along with their respective assessments of internal consistency reliability coefficients (in brackets), are Challenge (.86), Mastery (.63), and Curiosity (.65). The first sub-scale (Challenge) measures a preference for challenging work versus a preference for assignments that can be easily completed. According to Harter (1978), intrinsically motivated students seek activities that are both interesting and challenging. The successful completion of challenging tasks allows these students to experience a sense of internal satisfaction and self-efficacy. The second sub-scale (Mastery) measures a student's preference for mastering concepts independently instead of relying heavily on the teacher for help. The third sub-scale (Curiosity) measures the degree to which student behavior is motivated by curiosity as opposed to desire to please the teacher or get good grades. A student with a high score in these sub-scales is revealing that he/she prefers challenging work over easy work, that he/she prefers to work independently and not rely on external support, and that his/her learning is not motivated by a desire to please the teacher or get good grades, but rather to satisfy an internal curiosity. In other words, a student with a high score is intrinsically motivated. Each sub-scale contains a total of six items. The 18 items are listed below under their respective heading.

Challenge (.86)

1. I prefer hard, challenging work.
2. I like difficult problems.
3. I like to learn as much as I can.
4. I do not like new, difficult work.
5. I find difficult work interesting.
6. I do not like hard school subjects.

Mastery (.63)

1. I like to figure things out myself.
2. I usually ask my teacher to help me with my mistakes.
3. I prefer to ask for assistance when solving hard problems.
4. I usually try to figure out assignments on my own.
5. I prefer to plan things myself when completing assignments.
6. I often seek out help when completing school work.

Curiosity (.65)

1. I usually read because I have to and not because I am interested.
2. I sometimes do extra projects to learn.
3. I like to work to learn new things.
4. I rarely ask questions when I want to learn new things.
5. I enjoy working on solving problems.
6. I like learning about things that interest me.

Student and Teacher Interviews

Fourteen one-on-one interviews were conducted (eight student and six teacher). Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Questions pertaining to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the French classroom followed a very similar format. Students and teachers were initially asked what gender differences, if any, they noticed in regard to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in their FSL classroom. The participants were then asked to speculate why possible gender differences may exist in regard to this area and what they feel can be done to address such possible differences.

DATA ANALYSIS

A MANOVA was conducted on the data obtained from the questionnaires to check for significant differences in levels of perceived intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the FSL classroom. In the data analysis, each sub-scale (Challenge, Mastery, and Curiosity) was analyzed separately. Sex of the student was the independent variable.

The data provided by the interviews were analyzed using content analysis procedures. Student and teacher responses in regard to pre-determined categories were analyzed with emphasis on quantification of data. Inferences were also made about the content of the responses.

RESULTS

Demographic Information

In total, 490 students completed the survey. Of these 490 students, 254 were females and 236 were males. Although the ages of the students ranged from 13 to 18, the majority of the student-participants were 14 years old at the time of the study. Approximately 25% (122 students), indicated that they planned to study French the following year in Grade 10. Two hundred and two students had not yet decided (41.2%), and 166 students (33.9%) stated that they did not intend to continue studying French after Grade 9. From the 490 students who completed the survey 8 (4 females and 4 males) also agreed to participate in follow-up interviews. Of these 8 students, 5 were planning to continue studying French in Grade 10, 2 were intending to drop French after Grade 9, and 1 student had not yet decided. Two of the students were 13 years old at the time of the interviews and the remaining 6 were 14 years old. For a more detailed description of the student-participants see Kissau (2006).

Six teachers (three females and three males) were interviewed. These teachers represented a very diverse sample of professionals. They were diverse not only in their work locations but also in their ages, experiences, and responsibilities. Total teaching experience among the six teacher-participants equaled 93 years of teaching French, and individually ranged from as little as three years of experience to over 30 years. Three of the teachers were language department heads and one teacher also taught German. Of the six teachers, two taught at large inner-city schools, two worked at smaller rural schools, and two worked in a suburban setting.

Quantitative Data

As demonstrated in Table 1, the results of the MANOVA indicated significant differences in regard to two of the three sub-scales used to measure intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. The female-participants perceived themselves to prefer challenging work and to be driven by an internal curiosity more so than did the male-participants. The results did not, however, suggest that one sex is more motivated to learn than the other for personal satisfaction, to get good grades, or to please the teacher. The means and standard deviations of responses for both sexes, as well as their significance levels, are provided below. The groups were reliably separated (Wilks' Lambda = 0.673, Chi-square = 188.44, $df = 19$, $p < .001$) with a successful classification rate of 76.2% (using a .05 entry criterion).

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Significance Levels for Intrinsic/Extrinsic Motivation

	Male		Female		Sig.
Factors	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	p
Intrinsic/Extrinsic Motivation					
Challenge	3.73	1.51	4.23	1.45	.000

Mastery	4.23	.97	4.23	.90	.992
Curiosity	4.15	1.04	4.68	1.02	.000

Note: A higher score indicates a more intrinsic orientation.

In addition to the entire sample of student-participants, students were also examined based on their responses (Yes, Unsure, or No) to the question of whether or not they intended to continue studying French in Grade 10. Using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with Sex (Male, Female) and Continuation Plans (Yes, Unsure, No) as the independent variables, the variables were examined. As the measure for intrinsic/extrinsic motivation was composed of sub-scales, a MANOVA was also conducted on the data with Sex and Continuation Plans as independent variables in order to analyze the entire measure as a whole.

When all three sub-scales were analyzed together, the results of the MANOVA were significant for Sex, $F(3, 482) = 5.47$, $p < .01$, indicating that the males in Grade 9 FSL perceived themselves to be more extrinsically motivated than their female peers. In addition, the results were significant for Continuation Plans, $(6, 966) = 16.92$, $p < .001$, indicating that the group that planned to continue studying French the following year perceived itself to be more intrinsically motivated than the “Unsure” group, which in turn perceived itself to be more intrinsically motivated than the group that did not plan to study French in Grade 10. The results of the MANOVA also showed an interaction effect for Sex and Continuation Plans, $F(6, 964) = 2.14$, $p < .05$. This interaction effect, however, was not evident in the subsequent univariate analyses of the three sub-scales (Challenge, Mastery, and Curiosity). Only when all three sub-scales were combined did the interaction effect become apparent.

Significant differences for Sex were also not as evident during the subsequent univariate analyses. Only in regard to Curiosity did females score significantly higher than males. Significant differences for each sub-scale were, however, reported for Continuation Plans. In each case, the “Yes” group reported higher scores and thus perceived itself to be more intrinsically oriented than the “Unsure” group, which in turn reported higher scores than the “No” group. The results from the univariate analyses following the MANOVA for each of the three sub-scales are reported in more detail below.

Challenge

The results of the ANOVA showed no significant sex differences for Challenge when examining the three groups of students, $F(1, 484) = .04$, $p > .1$. The females in these groups did not perceive themselves to be more interested in challenging work than their male peers. It would appear that the addition of the Continuation Plans variable masks the sex difference. Challenge did, however, appear to be functionally related to Continuation Plans, $F(2, 484) = 55.28$, $p < .001$. As demonstrated in Table 2, those who planned to continue studying French in Grade 10 reported higher scores for Challenge than did those who were unsure,

and those who were unsure reported higher scores than those who did not plan to study French the following year. As previously mentioned, there was no interaction effect for Sex and Continuation Plans with respect to the sub-scale Challenge, $F(2, 484) = 1.42$, $p > .1$.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations for Challenge

Factors	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Yes	5.08	1.30	4.91	1.31
Unsure	3.90	1.49	4.22	1.33
No	3.19	1.31	3.12	1.28

Note: A higher score indicates a more intrinsic orientation.

Mastery

Similar results were found with respect to Mastery when examining the three sub-groups of students. Irrespective of their decision whether or not to study French in Grade 10, the results of the ANOVA indicated no significant sex differences, $F(1, 484) = 2.09$, $p > .1$. As revealed in Table 3, the main effect for Continuation Plans (Yes, Unsure, No) did indicate significant differences between the three sub-groups, $F(2, 484) = 4.95$, $p < .01$. Students in the “No” group did perceive themselves to be less motivated to learn for their own satisfaction than those in the “Unsure” group, who in turn perceived themselves to be less interested in learning for their own satisfaction than the students in the “Yes” group. There was no interaction effect for Sex and Continuation Plans with respect to the sub-scale Mastery, $F(2, 484) = 2.74$, $p > .05$.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations for Mastery

Factors	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Yes	5.08	1.30	4.91	1.31
Unsure	3.90	1.49	4.22	1.33
No	3.19	1.31	3.12	1.28

Note: A higher score indicates a more intrinsic orientation.

Curiosity

Only with respect to Curiosity did the ANOVA reveal significant sex differences when examining the three groups of students, $F(1, 484) = 8.33$, $p < .01$. As shown in Table 4, whether the students were planning to study French the following year or not, the female students, more so than the males, perceived themselves to be learning in order to satisfy an internal curiosity. Furthermore, the main effect

for Continuation Plans (Yes, Unsure, No) also indicated significant differences $F(2, 484) = 36.99, p < .001$. The “No” group reported lower scores for Curiosity than the “Unsure” group, which in turn showed lower scores than the “Yes” group (see Table 4). Again, there was no interaction effect for Sex and Continuation Plans with respect to the sub-scale Curiosity, $F(2, 484) = 2.08, p > .1$.

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations for Curiosity (Sub-groups)

Factors	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Yes	4.80	.84	5.20	.82
Unsure	4.22	1.07	4.63	.98
No	3.91	.99	3.92	.98

Note: A higher score indicates a more intrinsic orientation.

Qualitative Data

The data obtained from the interviews were intended to validate the quantitative findings, to elaborate upon these findings, to explore the reasons behind these findings, and to provide possible solutions. Questions pertaining to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation addressed only two of the three sub-scales used in the quantitative phase. Due to time limitations imposed by the participating school district, the questions asked were based solely on the significant differences reported in the data analysis of the questionnaires. As such, student and teacher perceptions were not sought in regard to the sub-scale Mastery. Responses to questions relating to Challenge and Curiosity were reported separately.

Challenge

Upon being asked if one sex preferred harder work than the other in French class, five of the eight students interviewed stated that girls, more so than boys, preferred challenging work. Among these five students the general consensus (four of five) was that adolescent males are lazy and just want what one female stated as “the easy way out.” Another female student, however, offered a different explanation for the sex difference in Challenge:

I don’t know if girls prefer harder, more challenging work, they just do it. I find that girls just do what they are given. They just do it because they were told to. I don’t know of many people in my Grade 9 French class who want extra challenging work, but if there were some, it would definitely be girls, I would say.

Of the three students who did not feel that females preferred harder work than males, all felt that both sexes preferred to have easy work. All three of these students were males.

Upon being asked if one sex preferred harder work than the other in French class, 3 of the 6 teachers felt that girls preferred more challenging work than boys. Two of the teachers perceived no difference between males and females in Grade 9 French, and one felt that he could not comment. Of the three teachers who felt girls were more up for the challenge, one female commented:

The girls will accept the challenges more than the boys. The boys want to get the easy stuff done fast. There are about four boys in my class who will do the challenging stuff, but the rest of them will say, "No, I don't know how to do this stuff. It's too hard."

Curiosity

Half of the students (two boys and two girls) felt that girls were more curious in French class. They felt that girls enjoyed learning new things more than the boys. As demonstrated in the following quotation from a female student, however, the perception of girls as more curious to learn new things does not pertain uniquely to the study of French: "I don't know about all of the girls, but I do enjoy learning new stuff. I don't like learning the same stuff over and over again. I don't think boys care too much about learning new stuff, in any class, not just French." A male student added, "I'd say girls enjoy learning new things more than guys. I don't know why, but I have that impression, pretty much in all subjects, except for maybe Phys. Ed. I think guys like learning new things in Phys. Ed." The remaining four students who did not perceive females to be more curious than males all reported that both sexes are equally interested in learning new things.

When asked if one sex was more interested than the other in learning new things in French class, two of the six teachers (both females) felt that girls were more curious than boys to learn new things. On the other hand, three of the teachers thought that neither sex was too interested in learning new things. In fact, two of these three teachers thought that the question was rather funny and began to laugh. One female department head thought it depended on the topic.

Before asking questions specific to the two sub-scales, students and teachers were asked what differences, if any, they noticed in their Grade 9 French class in regard to intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. More specifically, they were asked whether one sex needed to be enticed by external rewards more so than the other. In response to this question, six of the eight students (three males and three females) emphatically stated that males need more enticement to work than females. Three of these six students felt that food and competition worked well to get boys motivated in French class. One male had the following comment:

Competition is good for boys. That's my experience up to now. When the French teacher plays this game, two people have chalk and they run to the board and conjugate a verb at the same time, and whoever does it the fastest wins, you hear a lot more boys than girls cheering and getting into

it. And if the winner gets a prize, the boys will like go crazy.

The teachers also responded quickly and emphatically to this question. To demonstrate their strong opinions, the teachers used modifiers like “absolutely,” “definitely,” “huge,” and “always.” All three female teachers admitted to using food (candy or crêpes) to entice their students, particularly the males. A female department head with over 30 years experience said, “Yes, absolutely, food and boys is a huge motivator. I tell my boys that if they work hard all week, we’ll make crêpes on Friday, and you know, they will work like dogs for it.” The male teachers, on the other hand, mentioned competition and rewards, such as watching movies, as definite enticements for males, but not so much for females. A male department head responded, “Boys like my word games, my vocabulary games, things like that. Oh yah, I play a version of BINGO, the boys like that. It’s play time if you want in French.”

When asked why males in Grade 9 often need rewards or prizes to work in French class, a male student offered a simple, yet to the point, explanation, “I think it is because we don’t like French, so you have to entice us with stuff to do the work.” A female peer, however, commented that this male behaviour is not exclusive to the FSL classroom:

I think boys, when they do something they expect to get something for it. Like, “I’m trying now, so I expect to get something for it.” Or if we play games, they’ll be like, “If we get it right, what do we win? What do we receive, if we get perfect on the test?” Everything they do, they expect to get something for it, other than just learning.

DISCUSSION

In support of the previously mentioned study by Thibert and Karsenti (1998), the findings of the quantitative analysis provided significant evidence to suggest that males are more extrinsically motivated than their female counterparts. Sex differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were also evident in the qualitative phase. Eight of the 14 participants who were interviewed perceived females to prefer more challenging work than males, and six of the 14 who were interviewed perceived females to be more curious to learn new things than their male peers. It is significant to note that no participants perceived males to prefer more challenging work or to be more curious to learn than females and all but two of 16 felt that males needed to be enticed by external rewards in French class more so than females.

Adding further significance to these findings, all three sub-scales of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, Challenge, Mastery and Curiosity, were found in the statistical analyses to be functionally related to a student’s decision whether or not to study French the following year. Students who planned to study French the following year perceived themselves to prefer challenging work more so than did their peers who were undecided or who were planning to drop French

from their studies. These same students also perceived themselves to be more motivated to learn for their own satisfaction and to satisfy an internal curiosity than did their peers who were unsure of their plans for the following year or who had decided to no longer pursue studying French.

Given the previously reported benefits of an intrinsic orientation by Harter (1981), the finding in this study that the male students perceived themselves to be less intrinsically motivated and more extrinsically motivated than their female peers is noteworthy. However, it must once again be emphasized that not all forms of extrinsic motivation are negative. As previously mentioned, research has shown extrinsic motivation to exist on a continuum of internally to externally regulated behaviors. Internally regulated extrinsic motives are believed to be more beneficial than externally regulated extrinsic motives (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand 2000; Vallerand, 1997). With this in mind, the key question then becomes whether or not these perceived extrinsically motivated male behaviors are internally regulated by the students or externally regulated by the teacher.

Unfortunately, the findings of earlier mentioned research do not suggest extrinsically motivated behaviors exhibited by boys in second language classrooms to be internally regulated. In an attempt to increase male motivation in the classroom it has become common practice amongst second language teachers to offer rewards to students who actively participate. In the study by Jones and Jones (2001), for example, the researchers reported that second language teachers often use tangible incentives such as candy and stickers to generate participation and appropriate behavior amongst adolescent male students. The French teachers in the study by Kissau (2006) also reported to rely heavily on incentives such as the possibility of watching videos, playing games, and eating candy to motivate their male students to learn French.

Well-meaning second language teachers, in their attempts to improve participation and motivation amongst their male students, may in the end do more harm than good. By encouraging young male students to complete tasks in the second language classroom for the sole purpose of obtaining a reward, teachers may actually be further developing externally regulated motives amongst their male students. As demonstrated in the research by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2002), behaviors that are externally regulated are problematic in that if the external reward were removed, there would be no incentive to continue the behavior. Young male students who become accustomed to receiving tangible rewards such as stickers and candy from the teacher for their active participation in language classrooms may in the end lose all motivation to pursue the language in later grades when the teacher deems such incentives to be no longer appropriate.

IMPLICATIONS

While again emphasizing that not all forms of extrinsic motivation are negative, we ideally want our second language students to be motivated to learn due to an internal interest or curiosity in the language, not because they are being bribed or enticed to do so. When asked what could be done to develop an intrinsic orientation amongst boys to study French, one male student suggested that teachers need to learn about the interests of their male students and use these interests more in the classroom: "The teacher could like talk about different sports, a lot of boys like sports." In general, however, the students were at a loss for what could be done to get boys more interested in learning French without the need for external rewards.

It was also suggested by three of the 6 teachers that if we want to increase intrinsic motivation amongst males studying French, more needs to be done to tap into their interests. A female teacher discussed a textbook being used by a different school district that she felt was more appealing to male interests. "They have a lot more things on like sports teams, and athletes. They geared the program towards things that were more interesting for boys. The last unit in our text was on genetically engineered corn. Like give me a break."

An interesting suggestion was also made by a male teacher with just three years experience. He thought that since males enjoyed the analytical nature of math and science, perhaps teachers could make French more analytical. "I have taken a whole grammatical approach to this, and they like it. Every single male student has told me, 'This is just like math class.'"

The remaining three teachers were somewhat more pessimistic in this endeavour. Two of these teachers felt that societal attitudes toward French need to change before males will become intrinsically motivated to learn the language, and the other felt that there was little or nothing that could be done. "No idea. I think the game is just about over when they first come in the door." Ironically, this same teacher, while discussing gender differences in a different variable, did mention that he occasionally has his students, males and females, set goals for the semester in French class. He then, periodically, would challenge them to check their progress against their initial goals. He went out to state how this challenge seemed to have an effect on his usually apathetic male students. "Some of the guys really get into it. Even if their goal is pretty low, when they get a mark back and it has met or exceeded that goal, they let everybody know about it."

This comment calls to mind the previously mentioned work of Dörnyei (1994). Dörnyei stated that tests and exams function as proximal sub-goals and markers of progress that provide feedback to students and help to maintain their effort. Dörnyei went on to state that proximal goal setting can contribute to intrinsic motivation through the satisfaction derived from attaining the specific goal. Following this line of thought, a possible means of developing an intrinsic

orientation amongst all students, but particularly males, is to encourage them to establish personal goals. As made evident in the above quote, students who set and later achieve short-term goals begin to develop intrinsic motivation due to the satisfaction they receive from achieving the goal.

CONCLUSION

In recent years a number of international studies have publicized the lack of male motivation to learn second languages in Australia and the United Kingdom. While the problem of male disinterest in language learning is not unique to these English-speaking countries, very little research has been conducted on the topic in North America. Furthermore, although intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are well-known elements of motivation theory, to the best of this researcher's knowledge no attempt has been made to connect intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to male under-representation in second language classrooms. In both respects, the present study has helped to fill a void in the research. The Canadian boys in the participating Grade 9 FSL classes were perceived by students and teachers to be less intrinsically and more extrinsically motivated than their female peers. In addition, the study provided evidence suggesting extrinsic motivation to be an important variable to consider when examining student enrollment in second language studies. In light of the suggested benefits and importance of internally regulated behaviors, it is recommended that second language teachers refrain from over-emphasizing extrinsic rewards such as candy and games to entice their male students to participate. Instead, teachers should attempt to promote behaviors in their students that are more internally controlled by means of incorporating student interests into the second language classroom and having students set short-term goals.

NOTE

¹ Core French classes are similar to those offered in many secondary schools in the United States, in which French is taught as a subject for one period each day or several periods each week. Approximately 90% of English-speaking students studying French in public schools in Canada are enrolled in a core French program. The remaining 10% of this same population study French in French immersion programs (Canadian Parents for French, 2006).

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