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What Drives Student Passion for French in Indonesian High Schools?

Selpiana Marischa  and Pavel Kharisma Ramadhanita 

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What Drives Student Passion for French in Indonesian High Schools?

Selpiana Marischa* and Pavel Kharisma Ramadhanita

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Abstract

This study investigates the interest of students in learning French as part of the extracurricular foreign language program at Senior High School (SMA) Muhammadiyah 1 Metro. Utilizing a quantitative approach with a survey method, data were collected from 25 students through a Likert-scale questionnaire covering ten key aspects influencing their interest. The results indicate that 56% of students are highly motivated, and 72% express strong liking towards learning French. Additionally, 92% of students recognize the importance of French, with 80% showing high enthusiasm and frequent use of the language. A significant 92% of students oppose the suspension of the program, reflecting its value to them. Furthermore, 68% of students find the material easy to understand, and all students express a strong desire to encourage their peers to join the program. Despite the overall positive findings, challenges remain, with 20% of students feeling less motivated, 28% less active in class, and 20% struggling with comprehension. These results suggest that while the extracurricular French program is successful in engaging students, there are areas needing improvement to enhance its effectiveness. The study provides valuable insights for the development of strategies to further support student interest and participation in learning French.

Keywords: Interest in Learning; French Language; Extracurricular; Foreign Language

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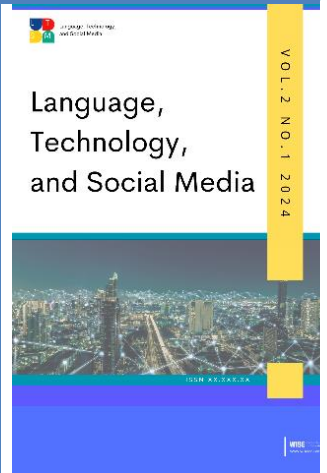
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INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalization, mastering foreign languages has become an essential skill for individuals to thrive in an interconnected world. Foreign language proficiency not only facilitates cross-cultural communication but also opens doors to a wealth of knowledge, technology, and international career opportunities [1]–[3]. Within Indonesia’s educational landscape, foreign language instruction has evolved to become an integral aspect of the curriculum, both in formal education and through extracurricular activities [7], [8]. Among foreign languages, French holds significant global importance, offering a range of personal and professional benefits [9].

French is spoken by over 220 million people across five continents, making it one of the most widely used languages worldwide. It is the official language in 29 countries, including France, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, and several African nations [10]. Furthermore, French is a working language in prominent international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the World Health Organization (WHO) [11]. Mastery of French enhances one’s ability to participate in global discussions and expand professional networks. The value of learning French is also evident in the academic domain. Renowned institutions such as Sorbonne University and Sciences Po, among others, offer programs that either require or strongly recommend proficiency in French [12]. Many prestigious scholarships and international programs, like Erasmus+, also set French proficiency as a key qualification [13]. Additionally, multinational corporations often prioritize candidates with French language skills, further increasing job prospects for French speakers.

French is not only a practical language but also a gateway to a rich cultural heritage, encompassing literature, philosophy, art, and science [14]. Figures like Victor Hugo, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre have contributed to the global intellectual landscape through works written in French, offering insights into humanism, existentialism, and humanitarianism. The cultural influence of France in areas such as fashion, gastronomy, and the fine arts also underscores the relevance of the language in understanding and appreciating these global contributions. In an increasingly competitive global job market, multilingualism is a valuable asset. French, as one of the most widely studied languages after English, provides an edge in sectors such as diplomacy, tourism, translation, education, and international trade [15]. The ability to communicate in French can also facilitate business ventures in French-speaking markets, particularly in Europe and Africa. French-speaking countries, such as those in Africa, are pivotal to the global economy and international relations [16]. Research indicates that learning a foreign language, including French, can also enhance cognitive abilities, including memory, critical thinking, and multitasking. French, with its complex grammar and rich vocabulary, offers intellectual challenges that contribute to overall cognitive development [15].

Muhammadiyah 1 Metro Senior High School, an institution committed to fostering human resources through education, recognizes the importance of foreign language acquisition. While English dominates as a global language, the school offers French as part of its extracurricular program to equip students with an additional international language skill [17]. The choice of French is driven by its global significance, including its use in major international organizations such as the UN, EU, and OECD [18]. Despite its strategic global value, the French language often faces low interest among students at Muhammadiyah 1 Metro Senior High School, as evidenced by the limited number of students enrolled in the French extracurricular program. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon, such as the perception that French is more difficult to learn

compared to other foreign languages, limited awareness of the language's long-term benefits, and insufficient learning resources [19]. Moreover, in Indonesia, French is less popular than English or Japanese, languages more frequently used in business, education, and entertainment [20]. This disparity in popularity leads to lower motivation among students to engage with French, which directly affects participation in the extracurricular program. Interest in learning plays a critical role in the success of any educational program [21]. A lack of interest can undermine the teaching and learning process, resulting in disengagement, reduced participation, and subpar learning outcomes [22]. Therefore, it is essential to understand the factors influencing students' interest in learning French to improve the effectiveness of this extracurricular program.

This study aims to investigate the factors influencing students' interest in learning French at Muhammadiyah 1 Metro Senior High School. By identifying these factors, the study will propose strategies to enhance student engagement in the program. The findings will contribute to refining extracurricular programs at Muhammadiyah 1 Metro and other schools offering similar language programs. Ultimately, this research supports the broader goal of improving foreign language education in Indonesia, ensuring that students are well-prepared to meet global challenges.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive correlational survey method to measure and analyze students' interest in learning French within the extracurricular program at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro [23]. The research design was crafted to assess the relationship between students' learning interest and various influencing factors, such as motivation, perceptions of the French language, environmental support, and learning experiences. The study population comprised all students participating in the extracurricular French program at the school, with a total sample of 25 students selected through total sampling.

Data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 20 items, designed to assess various aspects of learning interest using a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Before being administered, the questionnaire underwent content validity testing with the involvement of two educational experts and reliability testing using the Cronbach's Alpha method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.85, indicating good internal consistency. The data collection procedure began with a briefing session to inform the participants about the research objectives and procedures. The questionnaire was administered online over the course of one week, with participants provided a link to access the questionnaire via Google Forms. After data collection, an initial data processing was conducted to ensure completeness and accuracy. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to illustrate the frequency distribution of each variable, and correlational analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation to determine the relationships between students' learning interest and the other factors.

The research process commenced with the preparation phase, which included the preparation of research instruments and a pilot test on a small sample to ensure the clarity and appropriateness of the questions. Following this, the data collection was carried out according to the established procedure, and the data were subsequently analyzed statistically to test the research hypotheses. The results of the analysis were then interpreted and compared with findings from previous studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding. The entire research process concluded with the preparation of a final report that detailed the methodology and findings.

Table 1. Instrument for Measuring Students' Interest in Learning French

Measured Aspect	Question	Answer
Learning Motivation	How motivated are you to learn French?	1. Strongly unmotivated 2. Unmotivated 3. Moderately motivated 4. Motivated 5. Strongly motivated
Interest in Learning French	How much do you enjoy learning French?	1. Strongly dislike 2. Dislike 3. Moderately like 4. Like 5. Strongly like
Perceived Importance of Learning French	How important do you consider learning French for your future?	1. Not important at all 2. Not important 3. Moderately important 4. Important 5. Very important
Learning Enthusiasm	How enthusiastic are you when attending French lessons?	1. Not enthusiastic at all 2. Unenthusiastic 3. Moderately enthusiastic 4. Enthusiastic 5. Very enthusiastic
Frequency of French Usage	How often do you use French outside the classroom?	1. Very rarely 2. Rarely 3. Occasionally 4. Frequently 5. Very frequently
Attitude Towards Program Suspension	Do you agree if the extracurricular French program is suspended?	1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Moderately agree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Material Comprehension	How easy is it for you to understand the material taught in French lessons?	1. Very difficult 2. Difficult 3. Moderately easy 4. Easy 5. Very easy
Class Participation	How active are you in participating in French class activities?	1. Very inactive 2. Inactive 3. Moderately active 4. Active 5. Very active

Measured Aspect	Question	Answer
Willingness to Encourage Friends	How willing are you to encourage your friends to learn French?	1. Not willing at all 2. Unwilling 3. Moderately willing 4. Willing 5. Very willing
Perception of Teacher's Explanation	How easy is it for you to understand the teacher's explanations in French lessons?	1. Very difficult 2. Difficult 3. Moderately easy 4. Easy 5. Very easy
Confidence in Mastering French	How confident are you that you can master French well?	1. Not confident at all 2. Not confident 3. Moderately confident 4. Confident 5. Very confident

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines students' interest in learning French through 11 questions in a questionnaire completed by 25 participants of the extracurricular program at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro. The study found that the majority of students (56%) demonstrated a very high motivation to learn French, while 20% reported feeling unmotivated. This indicates the presence of a group of students who require additional attention to boost their motivation. The enjoyment of learning French was also high, with 72% of students expressing a strong liking for the subject, though 20% were less enthusiastic, indicating variability in individual interests. Students also showed a high awareness of the importance of French, with 92% of them considering learning the language to be very important. This high level of awareness could serve as a strong motivational factor in the learning process, in line with expectancy-value theory. However, there are some challenges that need to be addressed, such as 20% of students struggling with material comprehension. This suggests the need for more adaptive and interactive teaching methods to improve students' understanding. The desire of students to encourage their peers to learn French was extremely high (100%), indicating that the program has strong social appeal and the potential to expand further if supported by appropriate teaching strategies.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Respondents Based on Interest in Learning French

Aspect	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Moderately Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Learning Motivation	56%	24%	0%	20%	0%
Enjoyment of Learning the Language	72%	0%	8%	20%	0%

Aspect	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Moderately Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Perceived Importance	92%	0%	8%	0%	0%
Learning Enthusiasm	80%	0%	12%	8%	0%
Use of the Language	80%	0%	0%	20%	0%
Attitude Towards Program Suspension	92%	0%	8%	0%	0%
Material Comprehension	68%	0%	12%	20%	0%
Classroom Participation	52%	0%	28%	20%	0%
Willingness to Encourage Peers	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Perception of Teacher Clarity	60%	0%	20%	20%	0%
Confidence in Mastering French	92%	0%	4%	4%	0%

The findings of this study reveal several key insights into the interest in learning French at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro, based on an analysis of responses from 25 students participating in the French extracurricular program. Overall, students' interest in learning French appears positive, though there is significant variation among individuals.

Learning Motivation

Out of 25 students, 14 (56%) reported having a very high motivation to learn French, while 6 students (24%) felt moderately motivated, and 5 students (20%) indicated they were not motivated at all. These findings suggest that while the majority of students are strongly driven to learn, approximately 20% of students exhibit low motivation, which could negatively impact their learning outcomes. In the context of motivation theory, these results can be interpreted through the expectancy-value approach, where students who understand the long-term benefits of mastering French are more likely to have higher motivation. However, for those who are less motivated, additional interventions, such as providing positive feedback or adjusting teaching methods, may be necessary to enhance their motivation.

Enjoyment of Learning French

A majority of students (72%) reported a high level of enjoyment in learning French, with 18 students expressing a strong liking for the subject. Conversely, 2 students (8%) indicated a moderate liking, and 5 students (20%) showed less enthusiasm. This variation in enjoyment levels suggests that while French holds intrinsic appeal for the majority, there are challenges in crafting an instructional approach that can engage all students. The high level of enjoyment could be linked to relevant and engaging teaching methods that connect the material to the students' personal interests.

Awareness of the Importance of Learning French

In terms of awareness of the importance of French, the study found that 23 students (92%) considered learning French to be very important for their future, while 2 students (8%) viewed it as moderately important. No students perceived it as unimportant. This high level of awareness is a positive indicator that students recognize the strategic value of mastering French in a global context. This aligns with expectancy-value motivation theory, where the awareness of future benefits acts as a powerful driver of learning motivation. However, it is important to note that high awareness does not always translate into higher motivation or classroom engagement.

Learning Enthusiasm and Use of French

A total of 20 students (80%) reported being very enthusiastic about learning French, with 3 students (12%) feeling moderately enthusiastic, and 2 students (8%) being less enthusiastic. On the other hand, the frequency of French usage outside the classroom showed that 20 students (80%) frequently used French, while 5 students (20%) rarely used it. The consistent use of French outside the classroom reflects that learning is not confined to the classroom but is integrated into students' daily lives. However, for those who rarely use French, strategies may be needed to encourage language use outside academic settings, such as through group activities or community-based projects.

Attitude Towards Extracurricular Program Suspension

Students' attitudes towards the possible suspension of the French extracurricular program also reflect their commitment to the program. A total of 23 students (92%) opposed the suspension of the program, indicating that they highly value and benefit from it. Conversely, 2 students (8%) were indifferent to the program's continuation. The strong opposition to program suspension suggests that the program holds significant academic and social value for the students.

Material Comprehension and Classroom Participation

Regarding material comprehension, 17 students (68%) reported finding the material very easy to understand, 3 students (12%) found it moderately easy, while 5 students (20%) struggled with comprehension. The difficulty experienced by 20% of students indicates the need for more adaptive approaches, such as utilizing more visual or practice-based teaching methods, as well as providing more accessible supplementary materials. In terms of classroom participation, only 13 students (52%) reported high levels of participation, while 7 students (28%) were less active, and 5 students (20%) were not active at all. This data highlights the need to create a more interactive and participative learning environment to boost engagement among all students.

Willingness to Encourage Friends and Perception of Teacher's Clarity

All students (100%) expressed a strong willingness to encourage their peers to learn French, reflecting the positive impact of the program in fostering a vibrant learning community. However, students' perceptions of the teacher's clarity varied, with 15 students (60%) finding the teacher's explanations very clear, while 10 others (40%) felt the explanations were less clear or even unclear. This indicates a need to evaluate and potentially adjust the teaching methods to better meet the needs of all students.

Confidence in Mastering French

Lastly, students' confidence in their ability to master French was relatively high, with 23 students (92%) feeling very confident, while 2 others were less confident or not confident at all. This high level of confidence indicates that the majority of students possess strong optimism regarding their abilities, which is a positive indicator in the context of long-term learning.

Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into students' interest in learning French as part of the extracurricular program at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro. The results indicate that 56% of students show high motivation to learn French, which reflects the program's initial success. Motivation plays a significant role in language acquisition, as it drives students to actively engage with the content and persist through challenges [24]. The finding that a majority of students are motivated to learn French suggests that the program has sparked their interest and demonstrated its relevance. However, 20% of students report low motivation, pointing to areas that require attention. These students may not see the immediate benefits of learning French or may struggle with the language's complexity. To address this, strategies such as differentiated instruction, which tailors teaching methods to various proficiency levels and learning styles, could be beneficial. Additionally, incorporating real-world applications, like cultural exchanges or virtual interactions with French speakers, could increase the perceived value of the language and help motivate this subgroup of students.

The study also reveals that 72% of students enjoy learning French, which suggests that the current teaching methods are effective in maintaining student interest. Enjoyment in learning is closely linked to intrinsic motivation, which leads to deeper engagement and sustained effort [24]. However, 20% of students remain less enthusiastic, potentially due to differences in learning preferences. To address this, teachers could diversify instructional approaches by incorporating multimedia resources, interactive language games, and group activities to appeal to different learning styles. Research has shown that a variety of teaching methods, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic approaches, can help engage students more effectively [25]–[28]. Furthermore, integrating cultural elements such as French literature, music, and art could enhance students' enjoyment by connecting language learning with real-world cultural contexts, making it more engaging and meaningful [29].

An encouraging aspect of the study is that 92% of students recognize the value of learning French for their future careers. This highlights the success of the program in communicating the long-term benefits of French proficiency. To maintain this motivation, it is essential to continually emphasize the practical advantages of learning French, such as opportunities in international relations, business, tourism, and higher education. The program could invite guest speakers from various industries, share alumni success stories, or offer career counseling sessions that highlight the importance of multilingualism in today's global job market. By connecting the language to real-world career opportunities, students are more likely to remain motivated and committed to their language learning.

The study also indicates that 68% of students find the material easy to understand, but 20% struggle with comprehension. This suggests that while the program is effective for most students, additional support is needed for those who find the material challenging. Implementing scaffolding techniques where complex content is broken down into smaller, manageable parts could help

struggling students. Furthermore, offering tutoring, supplementary materials, or peer-assisted learning programs could provide extra support and boost students' understanding. Additionally, 52% of students reported low participation in class, which highlights the need for more inclusive and engaging classroom activities. To improve participation, teachers could implement strategies such as think-pair-share, where students reflect on questions individually, discuss them with a partner, and then share their thoughts with the class. This approach encourages all students to engage with the content, fostering a more collaborative and dynamic classroom environment.

In conclusion, while the French extracurricular program at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro has demonstrated considerable success, there are areas for improvement to enhance its effectiveness. Addressing challenges related to student motivation, material comprehension, and classroom participation can lead to a more inclusive and engaging learning experience for all students. By implementing differentiated instruction, incorporating real-world applications, and diversifying teaching methods, the program can better cater to the diverse needs of students. Furthermore, continuing to emphasize the long-term benefits of French proficiency and offering additional support for struggling students will ensure that the program continues to foster an environment conducive to learning. Ultimately, these improvements will help maximize the educational benefits of French language instruction and provide students with the skills they need to succeed in an increasingly globalized world.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study indicates that the level of student interest in the French extracurricular program at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Metro is relatively high. Among the 25 participating students, 56% are highly motivated to learn French, and 72% express a strong liking for the subject. Additionally, 92% of the students perceive learning French as very important, with 80% showing great enthusiasm for their studies and frequently using French in their daily lives. Interestingly, 92% of the students disagree with the suspension of the extracurricular program, reflecting a high level of appreciation for it. The comprehension of the material is also commendable, with 68% of students finding the lessons very easy to understand. Furthermore, all students are eager to encourage their peers to learn French, demonstrating that the program has a strong appeal. However, there are several challenges, such as 20% of the students feeling less motivated, 28% being less active in class, and 20% struggling with material comprehension, which require further attention. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that the French extracurricular program at this school successfully attracts student interest, with figures showing high levels of appreciation and participation, though there is still room for improvement in certain areas.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. The sample size of 25 students may not fully represent the wider student population, and it was conducted at only one school, limiting the generalizability of the findings. The use of self-reported surveys could lead to response bias, as students' perceptions may not reflect their actual behaviors. Additionally, the cross-sectional design does not allow for establishing cause-and-effect relationships. Future research could use a larger, more diverse sample and a longitudinal design to track changes in motivation and interest over time. Qualitative data, such as interviews, could also provide deeper insights into the factors influencing student engagement.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Authors

Selpiana Marischa – Department of French Language Education, Universitas Lampung (Indonesia);

 orcid.org/0009-0004-6089-5886

Email: selpiana.marischa@gmail.com

Authors

Selpiana Marischa – Department of French Language Education, Universitas Lampung (Indonesia);

 orcid.org/0009-0004-6089-5886

Pavel Kharisma Ramadhanita – Department of French Language Education, Universitas Lampung (Indonesia);

 orcid.org/0009-0004-3313-9604

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

S.M. was responsible for conceptualizing the study, conducting data collection, performing the initial analysis, and drafting the manuscript. P.K.R. contributed to the development of the methodology, supervised the data analysis, and undertook the critical review and editing of the manuscript. Both authors provided theoretical guidance, validated the analysis, and led the final revision of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors utilized ChatGPT to assist in enhancing grammar, language accuracy, and overall writing flow during the preparation of this manuscript. All content generated by AI was thoroughly reviewed and revised by the authors to ensure the integrity and originality of the work. The authors affirm that the use of AI did not replace human authorship and that they retain full responsibility for the content and findings presented in this publication.

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