

**« CONNAITRE UNE AUTRE LANGUE ET SAVOIR LA PARLER EST  
QUELQUE CHOSE DE MERVEILLEUX »**

French university students' attitudes to and perceptions of using EFL

Bachelor's thesis

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<b>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</b> <p>Kieliasenteita on tutkittu aktiivisesti jo 1960-luvulta lähtien. Tämä tutkimus pohjaa pääosin asennetutkimukseen pyrkiessään selvittämään ranskalaisten yliopisto-opiskelijoiden suhtautumista ja asenteita englannin kielen käyttöä kohtaan, sekä niiden muutosta ja sen syitä.</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin internetissä kyselylomakkeena, johon vastasi 14 ranskalaista opiskelijaa. Lomake sisälsi sekä suljettuja että avoimia kysymyksiä, joista tässä tutkimuksessa laadullisen analyysin kohteena ovat erityisesti avoimet vastaukset. Lomake ja analyysi toteutettiin ranskaksi, ja vastaukset on käännetty englanniksi tulosten esittämistä varten.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että lomakkeeseen vastanneiden ranskalaisten opiskelijoiden suhtautuminen englannin kielen käyttöön oli pääasiassa positiivista. Negatiiviset asenteet johtuivat pääosin huonosta kielen ja opetuksen tasosta. Muutokseen positiivisemmaksi oli vaikuttanut tärkeimpänä kielen aktiivinen käyttö, kielitaidon tason nouseminen ja kokemukset ulkomailla asumisesta ja ulkomaisista ystävistä.</p> <p>Tutkimus tarjoaa jatkotutkimusmahdollisuuksia eritoten englanninopetuksen tasosta Ranskassa sekä asenteiden muutoksesta ja niiden sukupolviakohtaisuudesta.</p>	
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

According to old stereotypes, the French are not keen on using English as a foreign language (EFL). They are traditionally seen as proud French speakers, who are not too interested in communicating in languages other than their own. The truthfulness of these claims can and should however be debated. Being a student of English, French and intercultural communication, and having spent an exchange period in France, I find this topic particularly interesting. Personally I do not have many experiences that would reinforce these views, which is why I wanted to explore the reasons for such impressions and give the French themselves an opportunity to explain their views and behaviour. As the resources for the present study were limited and I found it to be a natural starting point for such research from my point of view, the main focus of the study is on French university students.

In short, the present study aims to explore French university students' attitudes to and perceptions of using English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The theoretical background of the study can be found in social sciences, mostly psychology and sociolinguistics, including attitudinal studies and theories. Language attitudes have been studied quite much since the 1960s (Kalaja 1999:46), particularly attitudes to English. French natives' attitudes have previously been studied, for example, by Flaitz (1988), where she found that against her hypothesis, the French attitudes to English were mainly positive. Anglo-French relations and language policies have previously been studied and discussed in other French-speaking, mostly bi- or multilingual countries, such as Canada (Lightbown 1988) and Switzerland (Durmuller 1989).

The present study will provide more up-to-date results on French-speaking students' views. The goal of the study is to find varied attitudes and perceptions, and particularly to explore the reasons behind them. I also aim to look into the question of attitude change to see if there have been recent changes in the ways French students perceive the English language.

In the first section, the theories behind the views of the present study are presented. First, attitudes and attitudinal studies in general, then the focus will be moved to language attitudes in particular. In the last subsection, the current situation of the relation of French and English

is briefly presented. Chapter 3 presents the data and methods of the present study, and finally, the results are explored in chapter 4, categorised based on the theoretical background.

## **2 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES**

In this section, I will briefly explore some definitions of attitudes, then concentrate on language attitudes and how they are and have been studied, and finally briefly explore the past and present status of the English language in France.

### **2.1 Attitude and attitude change**

Attitude is a term widely used and studied. Oskamp (1991:6) uses the term “posture of the mind”, from the terminology of social sciences, to define an attitude. Baker (1992:10) prefers to call it a “hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour”. According to Ajzen (2005:1), the concept of an attitude is useful in describing reasons and underlying ideologies behind human action and performance. It is a term often used by scientists, but also non-scientists alike, to explain everyday behaviour (Oskamp 1991:2), because people are prone to explaining human behaviour by bigger, more stable qualities (Baker 1992:10). Ajzen (2005:2) notes that unlike physical features, it is important to realize that attitudes are latent, hypothetical characteristics inferred from a person’s behaviour in its context, which can be misleading. According to Baker (1992:15), behaviour can, at times, be deliberately altered to hide true beliefs or opinions, which leads to the necessity of a certain level of criticism in attitudinal studies.

As noted above, attitudes are individual features that are not directly visible to the human eye, which means different measures have to be used for defining them (Ajzen 2005:3). To ensure systematic and accurate scientific research on attitudes, they need to be measured on a scale or categorised in some way (Oskamp 1991:48). One of the most popular divisions dates back to Plato, and has been supported by many scientists (see Baker 1992, Ajzen 2005, Maio and Haddock 2009) since. In this division, as Baker (1992:12) illustrates, responses can be divided into three categories: cognitive responses (beliefs, perceptions), affective responses (evaluations and feelings) and conative responses (behavioural intentions and actions); each

can then be divided again into verbal and nonverbal responses. Maio and Haddock (2009:25) call it *the multidimensional model* and refer to a component similar to conative responses as behavioural.

According to Ajzen (2005:4), **cognitive responses** are perceptions or beliefs of an object that reflect the subject's attitude. Verbal cognitive responses can be expressions of beliefs, such as positive or negative beliefs of certain professions or language groups. Nonverbal cognitive responses are harder to assess, but can be realized, for example, as reactions and interpretations of an image of a profession. Maio and Haddock (2009:25) point out that a cognitive response alone can often be the primary reason for an attitude: a certain characteristic of the attitude object, for example a politician, causes us to perceive the whole object in a positive or a negative light.

**Affective responses** are expressions of feelings toward the object, such as gratitude or admiration (Ajzen 2005:4). Affective responses affect attitudes through the feelings that attitude objects arouse in us, for example a negative attitude can be caused by being scared of the attitude object, as explained by Maio and Haddock (2009:25). Facial expressions and other physical responses (for example heart rate, blood pressure) are seen as affective responses of the nonverbal kind.

According to Ajzen (2005:4), **conative responses** are behavioural intentions and actions as regards to the attitude object, expressed verbally as intentions or plans, or nonverbally as inclination to act in a certain manner towards an object or an object group. In short, verbal responses are more directly measurable and visible, whereas nonverbal responses would need to be studied by making conclusions based on people's actions and reactions in a certain situation. In Maio and Haddock's (2009:25) definition the **behavioural** aspect affects our attitudes through past experiences and behaviour in relation to the attitude object, which, in certain cases, we infer to attitudes towards the object.

In spite of the variety of response types, Ajzen (2005:3) notes that attitudinal studies are characterized by the fact that the responses reflect either a positive or a negative evaluation of the object. Maio and Haddock (2009:26) show that these three components are distinct from each other, but not necessarily always independent: they can overlap. The three responses can

also have different implications for the same object: one causing a positive evaluation, while another causes a negative one. However, separately or together, each of the components has the same end result: an attitude towards an object.

Maio and Haddock (2009:87-136) show that attitude change can happen through any one of the three components. Some of the most important models of persuasion are based on cognitive attitude change. The change often happens through changing the underlying beliefs about the object, and adding beliefs can often be easier than changing them. The effect depends on the power of the message, which is affected by its source, content, audience and presentation. The affective perspective to attitude change shows that attitude can change through **exposure**: for example, habituation can cause an attitude to turn more positive, because strange stimuli are generally seen as threatening. However, in contrast, boredom can lead to negativity. They also suggest that attitudes can be modified through behavioural change, for example role plays or self-perception. Change can also happen through an increase in motivation or ability.

## 2.2 Studying language attitudes

Kalaja (1999:46) defines language attitudes as attitudes that people have either towards a certain language or towards a group of language users in their social and/or historical context. They are seen as an individual's inner state, caused by stimuli and leading to a reaction. According to Cooper and Fishman (1974, cited in Knops and van Hout 2011:1-2), language attitudes can be defined either as a separate concept, or in terms of the effects and consequences that they carry. Oakes (2001:31) remarks that language attitudes were often seen as one-dimensional in the past. Most contemporary researchers, such as Gardner and Lambert (1972:14), prefer to see them as multidimensional, consisting of *instrumental* and *integrative* dimensions. The instrumental dimension includes self-oriented, pragmatic motives, such as wanting to learn a language to integrate or to find employment, whereas the integrative dimension shows interpersonal motives such as wanting to integrate to or identify with a certain language group. However it must be noted that, according to Muchnick and Wolfe (1982, cited in Oakes 2001:31), these two dimensions are not always clearly distinguished but can overlap.

Language attitudes have been studied since the 1960s. One of the first studies was about Canadians and their attitudes to English and French, conducted by Lambert in 1960. Language attitudes are often divided in the same way as attitudes in general, and therefore they can also be measured and categorized similarly. According to Kalaja (1999:47), language attitudes have a social background and hence they have to be studied by making conclusions of people's thoughts and perceptions based on their actions, for instance their answers to an attitude scale. Language attitudes can be studied by *direct methods*, like questionnaires or interviews, or *indirect methods*, for example using the *matched guise* technique where subjects are asked to react to language extracts. When collecting data by asking the subjects to self-evaluate or self-report, there is always a certain chance of the responses being biased or modified in some way, which is why some caution is necessary when interpreting the results (Oakes 2001:177).

### 2.3 English versus French

Holmes (2012:410) claims that attitudes are strongly influenced by political and social factors, and people tend to develop attitudes that project their thoughts and views of the people who speak a certain language. Clearly, the English and the French have a long and complex history together. However, Adamson (2007:1) remarks that most native English-speakers have never felt the need to defend their language. In contrast, the French language is, and has always been, a vital part of the French national identity (Brulard 1997:191-194) and the topic of linguistic and political debate ever since the 16th century (Adamson 2007:1). As Brulard (1997:191-196) illustrates, great measures, including governmental actions and the formation of L'Académie française, an institution to supervise correct language use, have been taken to ensure appropriate usage of the language. This has also been reflected in the way the public worries about the language being degraded by English. Laws have been made to ensure the use of French in official and unofficial circumstances, and loaning words and expressions from English has been greatly opposed. In spite of the governmental concern and its status, together with English, as the official working language of the United Nations, French seems to be the secondary international language. According to Adamson (2007:27), the French language's diminishing value as the working language of several bodies of the European Union has been a concern for the French starting from the 1990s.



In addition to French losing its status as the world language to English, Flaitz (1988:10) supposes that one reason for the status of English in France might be the cultural values it carries, which clash with the French culture. She suggests that the French may see the English language as a threat, because the French language has been seen as the symbol of the nation and its ideologies, and they might fear that the English language carries and tries to establish its own values in the world. Yet there is not much empirical evidence to support any of these speculations. Still today, different associations and agencies are working in defence of the French language (Adamson 2007:18).

Despite cultural differences, similar issues seem to be current in French-speaking Canada as well, as illustrated by an example given by Holmes (2012:247): “An English Canadian who was fluently bilingual in French and in English aroused considerable hostility when a French-speaking group he was talking with realised he could speak perfect English too.” She also remarks that a person using English in Montreal because of lacking French skills might be much more warmly received than someone who speaks both fluently, but chooses to use English (2012:249).

### **3 DATA AND METHODS**

#### **3.1 Research questions**

The goal of the present study is to explore the attitudes that French university students have towards using the English language, and particularly the diverse reasons behind them. The aim is to show that the French have varied attitudes towards using English, and explore the causes of the stereotypes and of the interpretations of their attitudes. Finally, possible changes in their attitudes towards English are also presented to see if a shift towards a differing attitude might be in progress.

In short, the present study is looking to find answers to the following questions:

- 1) Are French university students' attitudes to EFL mostly positive or negative?
- 2) What are the reasons for these attitudes?

- 3) What kinds of factors have caused or could cause a change in their attitudes?

## 3.2 Methods

According to Kalaja (1999:47-49), language attitudes can be studied by making conclusions based on actions. Sociolinguists and social psychologists focus on measuring attitudes from the viewpoint of a community or an individual. This is the direct method, as defined by Kalaja (1999:49), chosen in the present study: the subjects themselves are given a chance to describe the thoughts and feelings that portray their attitudes. This can be done by interviewing or collecting answers in written form. Because of their many advantages, questionnaires are one of the most common ways of collecting data for second language research (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010:xiii).

Because the data of the present study was collected from another country, an online questionnaire was the most efficient way of doing it. An anonymous questionnaire was chosen as the method of data collection to get as many and as honest responses as possible. For the above reasons and for the comfort of the respondents, the questionnaire was realized and answered completely in French. The questionnaire was conducted based on the research questions and the background reading on the use of questionnaires in language and particularly second language research (Alanen 2011, Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010). In such a setting, and particularly when reaching out to different cultures in a foreign language, it is important to make sure the questionnaire and its content are phrased in a way that asks exactly what it is aiming to ask. The questions were formulated based on the theoretical background. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1 or 2) consisted of three background questions, two multiple choice questions and three open-ended questions, one *descriptive* of the respondents' feelings and two *explorative* of the reasons behind the attitudes (Alanen 2011:147). The questions were made very simple and general to minimize the risk of misunderstandings, and also to give the respondents enough space to answer in their own words, according to their own understanding of the issue. Questions can often be misleading, misunderstood or loaded, particularly when forming a questionnaire in a foreign language. To ensure the validity and accuracy of the questionnaire and to avoid any unintentional misinterpretations, it was piloted by two French university students before the actual data collection, and modified according to their feedback. The pilot respondents were at the time on their Erasmus exchange in Finland,

and their answers made it even clearer that the respondents of the study should be mostly students currently living and studying in their home country, in order to get a more general view of French students' opinions and to avoid answers biased by currently being in an environment that is, albeit Finland or any other not natively English-speaking country, mainly English-speaking for them.

The answers were given and analysed anonymously. The background information of the respondents and the multiple choice questions were analysed quantitatively and organized in tables. Open-ended questions were analysed qualitatively and separately and categorized into three subgroups based on the theoretical framework (Baker 1992, Ajzen 2005): cognitive responses (beliefs, perceptions), affective responses (evaluations and feelings) and conative responses (behavioural intentions and actions). The division that was chosen as the basis is one of the most influential ones in social psychology, and provides a clear-cut theoretical background for such a qualitative study. The answers were analysed in their original French, and where necessary, translated into English for presentation in the study. In its nature, the approach to analysis in the present study is mainly qualitative. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009:20) call qualitative research understanding research, because it aims not to explain, but to understand a certain phenomenon, which is the case in the present study as well. The focus of the analysis is primarily on the data acquired from the open-ended questions, focusing on individual perceptions, but also on the similarities between the answers. Results are presented reflecting the theoretical background, meaning that the categories for the answers were decided before the analysis, making it theory-based qualitative analysis.

### 3.3 The data

After the questionnaire had been piloted and was finalised, the data was collected in May-June 2014 by sending the online questionnaire (see Appendix 1 for original questions in French or Appendix 2 for questions translated into English) to French university students through an acquaintance. Figures 1 and 2 present the demographic of the respondents.

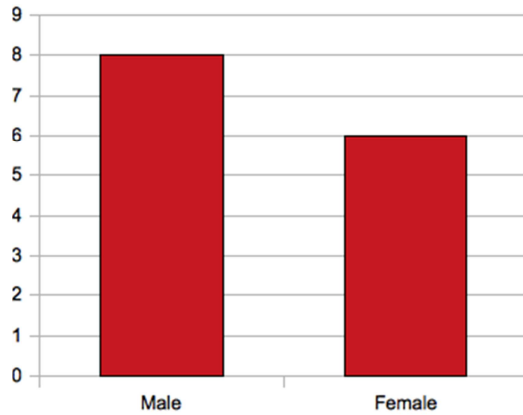


Figure 1. Gender

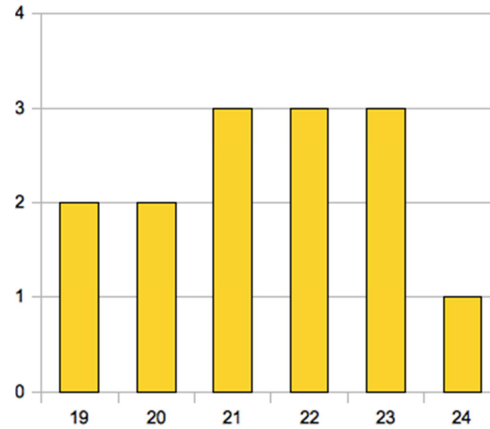


Figure 2. Age

The questionnaire was answered by 14 French university students. As Figure 1 shows, eight of these students were male and six female. Figure 2 shows their ages that varied from 19 to 24 years. In the analysis, the respondents are referred to as M1-M8 (males) and F1-F6 (females). Most of the respondents were students in one of the many universities in Paris, with only two exceptions, one studying in a smaller town nearby Paris, and another in a bigger town in South-Western France. Two of the respondents did not finish the questionnaire, so 12 people in total filled in the whole questionnaire, including the three open-ended questions. Because of the small amount of data and the fact that most of the respondents were from the same area, the results cannot be generalised to represent the opinions of all the French university students, but they give a general overview of some of the possible perceptions.

Respondents were asked to rate the frequency of their use of English (13 people answered) and their overall attitude to English (again 13 people answered), answers to which are presented below in Figures 3 and 4. Most of the respondents said they use English, and have a generally positive attitude to the language.

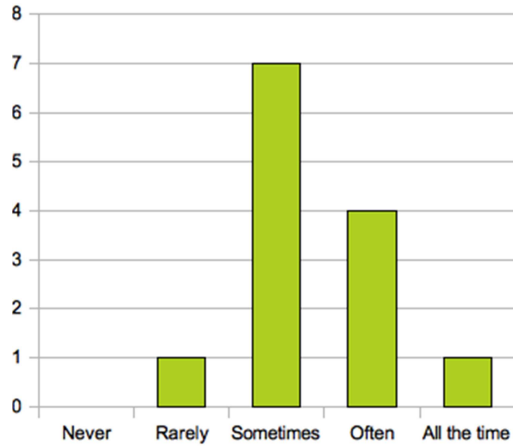


Figure 3. Frequency of using English

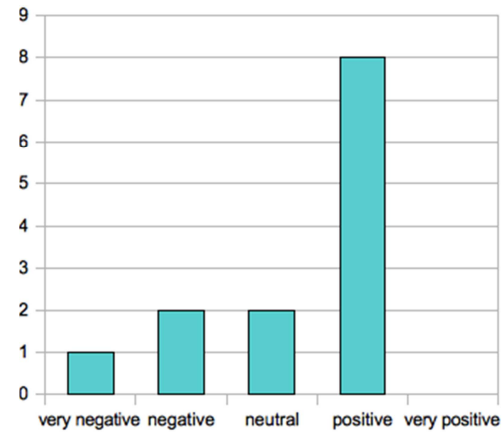


Figure 4. Overall attitude to English

As can be seen in Figure 3, all the respondents said they use English, most (7) selecting the option “sometimes”. Four people said they use English often, two people all the time and one rarely. No one said they never use English.

Eight of the respondents said they have a positive attitude to using English. Two reported having a neutral attitude, two a negative one and one very negative. From these answers it can be concluded that most of the participants of this study had a positive overall attitude to English, with only a few exceptions. Only 3 people out of 13 answered that they have a negative or a very negative attitude to English. The overall positivity towards English shows also in their answers to the open questions.

#### 4 REASONS FOR AND CHANGES IN ATTITUDES

As Gardner and Lambert (1972:12) phrase it, “language is a means to an end rather than an end itself”. This can be concluded from the analysis of the present study as well. The data revealed more positive than negative attitudes to English, and several different reasons for them, all of them including an end other than feeling positive to use English just for the sake of knowing it. In this section, the answers are presented: first the reasons for attitudes, categorized based on the division into cognitive, affective and conative responses (Baker 1992, Ajzen 2005), and in the final section of the chapter, changes in attitudes and reasons for them.

## 4.1 Cognitive responses

Applying Ajzen's (2005:4) and Maio and Haddock's (2009:25) definitions, cognitive responses to language are beliefs, reactions and interpretations of the language or its users, which reflect either positively or negatively to the attitude object, in this case the English language.

The reason given most often for a negative attitude was the quality of English teaching in France: *L'enseignement en anglais en France est catastrophique* (M4, 'Teaching in English in France is catastrophic'). This is how M5 described it:

-- l'apprentissage de l'anglais en France a pour seul but de nous faire comprendre l'anglais professionnel -- Je peux tenir de longues discussion avec des américains sur un sujet scientifique, mais je suis incapable de faire plus de 2 phrases fluides à un amis qui parle anglais ou pour acheter quelque chose dans une boutique.

(' - the only goal of learning English in France is to make us understand professional English - - I can have long discussions about scientific topics with Americans, but I am incapable of forming more than two fluent sentences to a friend who speaks English or in order to buy something in a boutique')

These can be categorized as cognitive responses (Ajzen 2005), possibly stemming from a negative belief or reaction to English teachers or teaching in general in France, which causes for the respondents to feel negative about the English language as well.

Another reason given for a negative attitude was the respondent's (F3) own accent, which could be interpreted as a belief of what is 'correct English', a need to conform to a majority's accent (for instance American or British) and therefore feeling inadequate with a French accent. M1 also mentioned that he feels that it is a personal challenge to see if his accent reveals his origins to the one he is speaking with, but he did not specify if he sees it as negative or positive if he is recognized as French.

Many of the respondents mentioned being surrounded by the language as having a positive effect, showing that they have positive cognitions either of the language, or of the culture that goes hand in hand with it. M6 mentioned American culture and TV series as factors which he feels affect his attitude in a positive way.

## 4.2 Affective responses

Many of the responses of the participants can be categorized as affective responses (Ajzen 2005), feelings towards the language or its users. The answers varied from having no problem speaking English to being completely uncomfortable with it. M5 felt that his discomfort is caused by the language education in France which is not *optimal*. Negative attitudes were mostly caused by insufficient language skills: F6 (attitude: negative) said *je le comprends mais ne le parle pas* ('I understand it but don't speak it') whereas M4 (attitude: very negative) said *Je peux parler et écrire mais je ne comprend rien a ce qu'on me raconte* ('I can speak and write but I don't understand anything of what is said to me'), so clearly the difficulties that cause negative attitudes lie in different areas of the language. However, poor language skills did not cause a negative attitude for all the respondents: F4 reported that her English level is not great, but she has a feeling of still always managing to be understood, leaving her feeling positive about using English.

Highly stressful language situations mentioned included situations where there is a greater pressure to speak correctly, for instance a job interview, a discussion about subjects other than the respondent's own field of study (meaning a less familiar vocabulary or topic), and talking to a native speaker. Those who were happy with their level of English expressed no stress about using it, whereas respondents who felt their level to be weaker also mentioned experiencing more stress when having to speak English. Using English in a classroom or with friends, in a situation where the topics are more familiar and asking for help is possible, seemed to cause less anxiety.

Using English seems to evoke both positive and negative emotions, even in the same people. M1 mentioned being proud of and excited about being able to speak English, even though using English felt embarrassing to him at times, particularly when trying to joke and realizing the jokes did not work in English. M8 had a generally positive attitude, but admitted to being frustrated by the language at times. Being bored at seemingly similar language classes was also mentioned as a cause for negativity by M4, who reported having a neutral attitude to the language, having both positive and negative feelings about it.

Reading handbooks in English, and studying something that demands constant language use were also mentioned as positive influences. As illustrated by Maio and Haddock (2009:116), people generally like or start to like things that they are familiar with, so the more they use and hear the language, the more comfortable they become with it, which in turn makes them feel more positively about it.

### 4.3 Conative or behavioural responses

Ajzen (2005:4) defines conative responses as reactions, intentions or inclinations to act in a certain way in response to an object. Maio and Haddock's (2009:25) definition stresses the value of past experiences and behaviour. Both views can contribute to the formation of language attitudes.

Some conative responses appeared in the answers, such as meeting and being able to communicate with foreigners abroad, in the street or at work, as illustrated by M2: *Sans l'anglais je n'aurai jamais pu parler à des russes ou des portugais(es)* ('Without English I never could have spoken with Russians or Portuguese'), which has led to a positive image of the value of the English language. The reaction of the other person and even who that other person is seems to have a crucial role in the comfort of speaking English for some of the respondents, which shows that either a bad past experience or one's own perception of his or her language level or of the receiver can lead one to expect a certain reaction to his or her English, adding to the highly stressful language situations presented in point 4.3.

M6 described the difficulty caused by English like this: *Un entretien en anglais est particulièrement difficile pour moi, il faut réfléchir à ce qu'il faut déjà dire en français puis le traduire* ('An interview in English is particularly difficult for me, I have to first think about what I have to say in French and then translate it'). He seems to be uncomfortable with English mainly because he realizes the amount of work that comes with it, having to think in two languages before talking, and possibly also because he realizes the expectations for his performance in such a situation.

Current and past situations in life clearly have an effect, as was shown in the results: being abroad to work or study and therefore having the need to constantly use the language was



mentioned more than once as well. This adds again to the attitude change caused by habitation (Maio and Haddock 2009), discussed in 2.1.

In general, the participants of this study found English to be more of an asset than an issue. M1 summarised the behavioural value of knowing English like this:

Connaître une autre langue et savoir la parler est quelque chose de merveilleux. Cela ouvre des horizons immenses et permet de communiquer avec plein de monde !

(‘To know another language and to be able to speak it is something marvellous. It opens immense horizons and allows communication with so many people!’)

#### 4.4 Changes in the attitudes

As Maio and Haddock (2009:87) conclude, the reason for attitude change can be one of many things, or a combination of several factors. Most of the respondents of the present study either said that their opinion had already changed in the past, or it could possibly change in the future. The only one who said that his opinion will not change was M4, who had a very negative overall attitude to English. The most popular reason given for a change (for positive) was an increased use of English, or an increase in the respondent’s own language skills: *Il évolue au fur et a mesure que ma maitrise de la langue se développe !* (M8, ‘It [opinion] develops as my language skills develop!’). A language course abroad was also mentioned twice (F1, F6) as a possible way of changing the attitude for better. Both of these answers are consistent with the theory of exposure.

The quality of English teaching was mentioned as a reason for negative attitudes by several respondents, and for example F2 proposed a change to this: - - *une pratique de l’anglais plus fréquente au cours de notre scolarité baisserait notre stress.* (‘Practising English more frequently during our education would lessen our stress’), again adding to the exposure theory. Such a negative cognition of English teaching and teachers in France could possibly be modified through a pleasant teacher, a feeling of accomplishment, or a change in curriculum.

According to Holmes (2012:410), people tend to better understand a language spoken by someone they like or look up to. The data of the present study shows that people who have English-speaking friends or study or work in an English-speaking environment have more positive attitudes to English. M2's negative attitude, obtained at school, had only turned positive later because of friends and travel. In addition to them having to use English more, admiring their friend's or colleague's English can therefore also help change their attitudes to it. One respondent (F3) said that finding someone, a person, who would be capable of changing her mind could make her feel more positive about English.

Only one person (M1) mentioned a scenario where their positive attitude could turn negative; if English were to become obligatory and the only world language, thus completely dethroning French as the official language of the European Union for example. So even though the attitudes seem to generally be positive, there is still a certain sense of national pride present: *J'estime que ma langue natale ne vaut pas moins que la leur (qui s'est pourtant imposée comme langue mondiale)*. ('I think my native language is not less valuable than theirs (which is however established as the world language)').

## 5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore, explain and understand the attitudes that French university students carry towards the English language. It stemmed from a sociolinguistic and psychological background, using a three-dimensional model of attitudinal responses, dividing them into cognitive, affective and conative responses, to categorize and analyse the answers, which were collected through an online questionnaire. Additionally, the study aimed to explore possible changes in the attitudes.

Much like Flaitz in her study of the French in 1988, the present study found that French university students' attitudes to and perceptions of English are mainly positive. Some had been negative in the past, but had turned more positive for various reasons, mainly because of English-speaking friends and developed language skills. Negativity was primarily caused by discomfort and poor language skills, which may or may not be a reflection of the poor language education mentioned by some of the respondents. Because the data of the study was relatively small and a level of criticism is always necessary when collecting self-observed or

self-reported data through a questionnaire, the results are not generalizable to a larger audience, but can be used as an instance of the origin of such attitudes. The findings of the study fit the categorisations presented in the theoretical background, making it successful as theory-based research.

As the present study was just a brief look into the topic at hand, there is definitely demand for more research on the subject. Possible future research could include exploring the differing opinions of different generations to see if there is change in progress, or researching the reasons why so many of the respondents felt that English teaching in France is *catastrophique*, causing poor language skills and negativity, and what could be done to amend the situation.

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## **Les attitudes des étudiants des universités françaises et leurs perceptions par rapport à l'EFL (English as a Foreign Language)**

Ce sondage étudie les attitudes et perceptions des étudiants français par rapport à l'emploi de l'anglais comme langue étrangère. Les réponses seront traitées anonymement. Merci de votre participation !

Annika Selander

Anglais / Département des langues

Université de Jyväskylä, Finlande

1. **Sexe** homme / femme
  
2. **Âge**
  
3. **Votre université**
  
4. **Utilisez-vous l'anglais souvent ?**  
  
jamais / rarement / parfois / souvent / tout le temps
  
5. **Quelle est votre attitude par rapport à l'emploi de l'anglais?**  
  
très négative / négative / neutre / positive / très positive
  
6. **Avec vos propres mots, décrivez vos sentiments dans une situation où l'emploi de l'anglais est nécessaire. Par exemple dans un entretien, dans une rencontre avec un(e) étranger(e), avec des amis, à l'étranger, dans une classe de langue.**
  
7. **Quels sont les principaux facteurs qui influencent votre avis ?**
  
8. **Est-ce que votre avis a considérablement changé ? Pourquoi ? Sinon, qu'est-ce qui pourrait vous faire changer d'avis ?**

Merci de vos réponses !

## APPENDIX 2

## **French university students' attitudes to and perceptions of using EFL (English as a foreign language)**

This survey studies French university students' attitudes to and perceptions of using English as a foreign language. The answers will be handled anonymously. Thank you for your participation!

Annika Selander

English / The Department of Languages

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

1. **Gender** male / female
  
2. **Age**
  
3. **Your university**
  
4. **How often do you use English?**  
  
never / rarely / sometimes / often / all the time
  
5. **What is your attitude to using English?**  
  
very negative / negative / neutral / positive / very positive
  
6. **In your own words, describe your feelings in a situation where it's necessary to use English. For example in an interview, when meeting a foreigner, with friends, abroad, in a language classroom.**
  
7. **What are the main factors that influence your opinion?**
  
8. **Has your opinion changed considerably? Why? If not, what could make you change your mind?**

Thank you for your answers!