

Study on Interest Level in French Language Learning Among Indian Children of Delhi NCR and Quebec

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Abstract – The study investigates interest level of Indian children for French language in two different learning contexts, Delhi NCR, India and Quebec, Canada from the perspective of Gardner's socio-educational model and attitude motivation test battery (AMTB). The uniqueness of the study is to compare the affective dimension of interest in learning French as an international language in Delhi NCR, India and second language, Quebec, Canada. A total of 42 in Delhi NCR and 30 in Quebec, participated in this survey study. Though, statistically, no significant difference was found in the interest level of children learning in different contexts, the responses to the survey questionnaire provided an insight on certain similarities and differences. The term "interest in foreign languages", is a component of Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition and is measured by AMTB. This affective measure is part of Gardner's composite variable "integrativeness" which was focused on learners' orientation towards language learning in his experiments. The components according to Gardner were, "General interest in foreign groups, especially through their language, and favourable attitudes toward the target language group." (Gardner, 2005). The paper examines the status of french language learning among Indian children. This paper will consider possible suggestions for french language professionals to reconceptualize and re-approach children's interest to study french.

Keywords: Interest, Second and Foreign language learning, French, Indian children

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INTRODUCTION

To communicate ideas, opinions, emotions and expressions verbally or non-verbally, language is learned. In our childhood, learning of the native or mother language takes place naturally, whereas, second or more languages are acquired under learner's varied conditions which comprise of social and family environment, plus professional and educational needs are the reasons of second language acquisition. Dawn of globalization created a platform of international integration among all nations for the free and open flow of information, trade, culture and language. The impact of international unions and migration motivated every human to learn language(s) of other countries. As learning foreign language come with strings of better career prospects, it augments the interest level for foreign language learning. This article moves a step forward by discussing the responses of the Indian children on their interest level which decides learners' motivation towards successful learning.

To be successful in learning anything, it's not just the aptitude which is required, but interest of the learner matters too, as it aides in improvising the innate

natural ability, i.e. the aptitude of the learner, to keep learning and performing well. Here, the educator plays an important role to keep learners' interest level high and positive through using innovative ideas or teaching methods in the classroom. In the domain of language education, as the interest towards learning second or foreign language is transitory and it is challenging for the educators and language trainers to find ways to keep the learner's interest intact. If the interest level reduces, the learner won't feel motivated enough to learn further and will quit. Therefore, measurement of interest of the learner has special significance in educational and vocational counselling. Understanding theoretically, "interest" is a subjective attitude motivating to do certain task like learning language and it gives pleasure and satisfaction bringing definite change in the learner's behaviour. The paper aims to study interest of Indian children for french language from the perspectives of two different learning contexts, as an international language and as second language with Gardner's socio-educational model. In Delhi NCR, french language is taught as foreign language and in Quebec, french is the official

language of Canadian province and is taught as second language to Indian children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding 'interest' and 'language learning': Some of the definitions of interest by the theorists provide clearer picture, like Bingham stated, "An interest is a tendency to become absorbed in an experience and to continue it while aversion is a tendency to turn away from it to something else." (Bingham, 1926) As per Murphy, "Interests are conditioned stimuli related to goal objects and expressed as likes or dislikes of activities, objects or characteristics of people in the environment." Drever believed that interest is disposition in its dynamic aspect. Jones described interest in two distinct forms as intrinsic interest and extrinsic interest. Intrinsic interest is the basic and real attraction without any external reason. It is constant and permanent, even if the immediate goal is reached. Extrinsic interest is connected with a purpose or goal of an activity like career, fame, money, victory, which would die as soon as the goal is achieved. The three classifications of interests as expressed interest, manifest interest, and measured interest, where 'expressed interest' expresses personal likings through such sentences as 'I love learning french. Although, it is the first source of knowing the interest of a learner but not reliable and prone to vary from time to time depending upon the maturity of the person. "The expressed or specific interests of children and adolescents are unstable and do not provide useful data for diagnosis or prognosis." (Fryer, 1931). Manifest interest is the interest that is not expressed but observed by others while the person is engaged and absorbed in an activity and last, the measured interest, revealed by some psychological tests or interest inventories. (Fryer, 1931). There are tools for measurement of interest are of two types – formal and informal. The formal methods are specialized and standardized measuring instruments such as interest inventories, interest test batteries. The field of motivation and interest are interrelated and the concept of interest and motivation was brought forward by Super and Carter. Super related Interest and motivation to the process of personality adjustment. On the other hand, Strong viewed interest as less agreeable to environmental pressures. He emphasized the inherent forces like drives and needs contributing to the formation of interest. Thus, interest was considered by him as an independent factor which can be accounted for or measured separately.

Language learning: Behaviorists consider language learning as a process of conditioning and the expected goal in learning is achieved by a series of stimulus and responses. In 1930s and 40s, linguists were influenced by Behaviourism and consequently publication of teaching materials was based on behaviourist theory. Cognitive scholars considered language learning as a 'meaningful process' where

the learner understands the new input and connects it with previous experiences. In the domain of second language learning or acquisition research, the ideas of Corder and Selinker refuted the behaviorists' concept of learning. In 1980s, the theories of Stephen Krashen had become the prominent paradigm in SLA and also had a large influence on language teaching.

Gardner's socio-educational model and Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB): In the field of second and foreign language learning, Gardner affirmed the generalizability of the socio-educational model and Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), "Concept has been defined in many different, but related, ways by some researchers but that from the perspective of the socio-educational model of second language acquisition, it has a very definite and predictable meaning which is applicable equally to situations involving second and foreign language acquisition." (Gardner, 2005). His work has been based on the affective attributes of motivated learners. The model provides a paradigm to understand the role of motivation in second language acquisition. As per Gardner, language acquisition was influenced by number of factors like environmental characteristics and characteristics of the student. The socio-educational model is concerned primarily with motivation and how these factors were responsible in affecting the motivation of the learner. In the socio-educational model, "the individual's motivation to learn second language is related to two classes of variables. One is Attitudes toward the Learning situation. The nature of the learning situation will influence a student's level of motivation." (Gardner, 2005). In the learning situation, the skills of the teacher along with well-planned lesson plan and evaluation procedures could promote higher levels of motivation in a language classroom.

The Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was developed with an attempt to identify variables for language learning. Gardner et al. did several experiments and made use of a construct oriented approach and potential items were written and. Once the scales were administered, item analyses were conducted and the items selected were those that correlated more highly with their intended scale than with the other scales. (Gardner & Smythe, 1975). It comprised of 11 scales measuring five constructs. The five constructs are Attitudes toward the learning Situation (ALS), Integrativeness (INT), Motivation (MOT), Language Anxiety (ANX), and Instrumental Orientation (INO). (Gardner, 2005). The variable of Interest in foreign languages was proposed by Gardner as one of the measure of AMTB, to assess learner's interest level in foreign languages which contributes in assessing the construct of integrativeness of the learner towards the target language and target community. He derived integrativeness from

Mowrer (1950) construct of identification in children while learning their mother tongue from parents. Children gets motivated to embrace the verbal behaviour of parents, which consequently, led to children's identification to their parents.

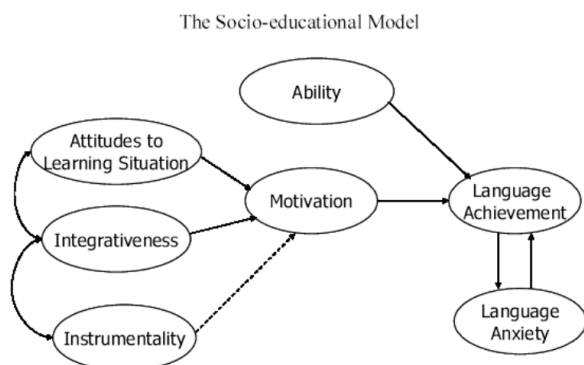


Figure 1. Gardner's socio-educational model

Gardner construct of integrativeness was argued by Dörnyei (1994) by stating that the terms integrative motive/motivation, integrativeness and integrative orientation were confusing and interchangeable. The definition of integrativeness vary slightly from time to time. For instance, it referred to an individual's willingness and interest in social interaction with members of other groups (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, p. 159). In Gardner's another article, the definition reflected integrativeness to be "a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community" (Gardner, 2001, p.5). To resolve the confusion Gardner tried to explain integrativeness in two ways. One, integrativeness refers to openness towards other cultural groups and at the other way, it involved "complete identification with the community (and possibly even withdrawal from one's original group)." Gardner (2001, p.1) himself also pointed out that the term has "slightly different meanings to many different individuals."

Studies on french as second language and as an international language: There are numerous studies that has been carried out by Gardner and his associates past many decades with French and English as second and foreign languages with school and college level learners across the globe. In one of the Canadian studies by Gardner & Lambert (1959) on French learning as a second language in relation to the learners' motivation to learn the french language and their attitudes toward French Canadians. In another research, Gardner & Lambert in 1972, affirmed that attitudes and motivation were associated with achievement in a second language. In the study, the construct of Integrativeness, reflected the learner's willingness and interest in interacting socially with french community by assessing three scales, the attitude toward the french community, interest in foreign languages or french language and integrative orientation for the language study.

METHODOLOGY

The section discusses research design of the study which includes the participants, method, data collection and analysis. Participants: The study involves Indian children learning french as foreign language at St. Thomas school in Delhi NCR and Indian children living in Montreal, Quebec , learning french as second language in french public schools.

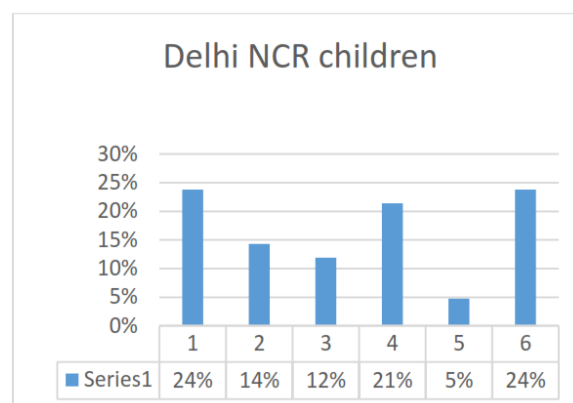
Method: To conduct the experiment, the survey questionnaire was prepared and tested. To assess the interest in french language of the Indian children; the questions/items were adopted from Gardner's AMTB (1985, 2004) scale of interest in foreign languages.

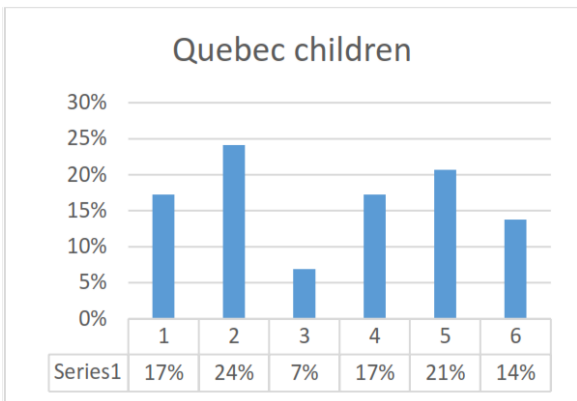
Variable of the questionnaire under study	Questions	Objective	Questionnaire Sources*
Interest in French Languages (IFL)	six	To assess general interest in studying foreign languages.	Gardner (AMTB, 1985,2004)

Data collection and analysis: The questions based items have 6 points scale is 1 to 6 distributed from 'Very much' to 'Not at all' and last point if the child didn't understand the question. 1= very much; 2= quite lot; 3= a little; 4= so-so; 5= not so much; 6= not at all. X-axis: scale of interest /likeness (1 – very much; 2-quite a lot; 3-a little; 4- so-so; 5-not so much; 6- not at all; and y- axis is response percentage from the sample population.

Variable: Interest in French Languages (IFL). The data was collected and compared and the following findings were collected as graphical presentation of the responses to the questionnaire.

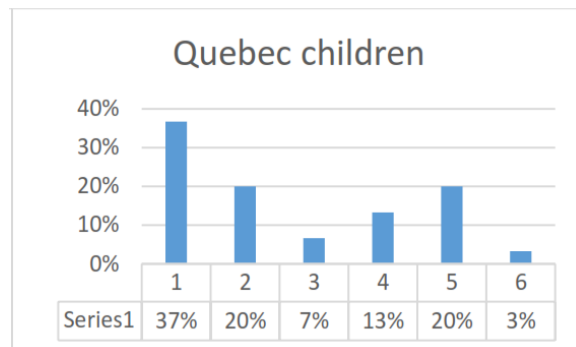
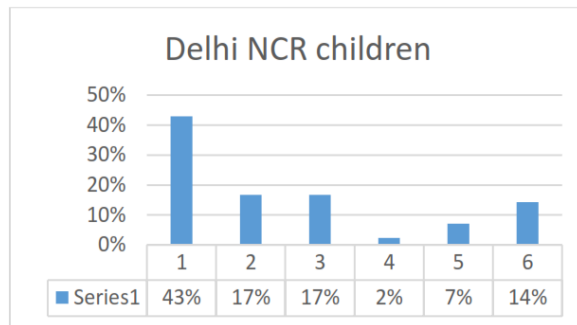
*** I want to read the literature in French rather in translation.**





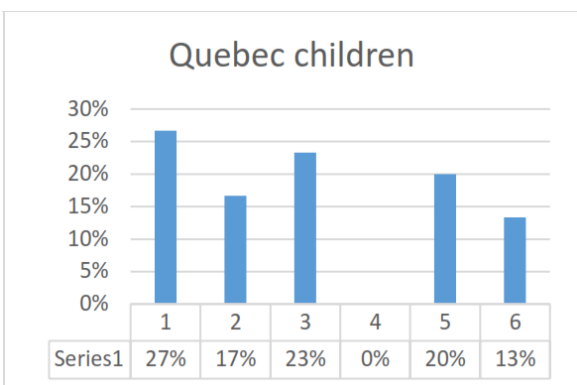
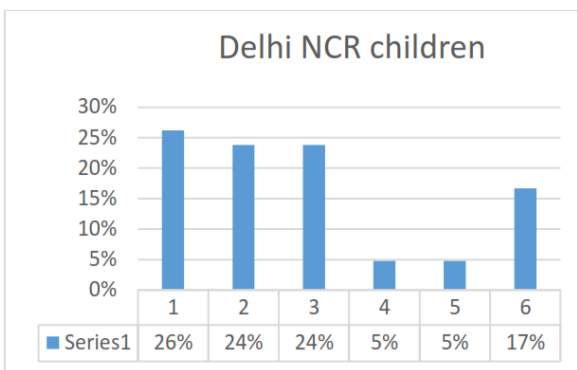
Interest in foreign languages: Survey graphs shows 41% learners of Quebec and 38% learners of Delhi NCR agree to the statement, shows interest in French literature.35% learners of Quebec showed disinterest in comparison to31% learners of Delhi NCR who aren't interested in French literature.

***I often wish I could read newspapers and magazines in another language.**



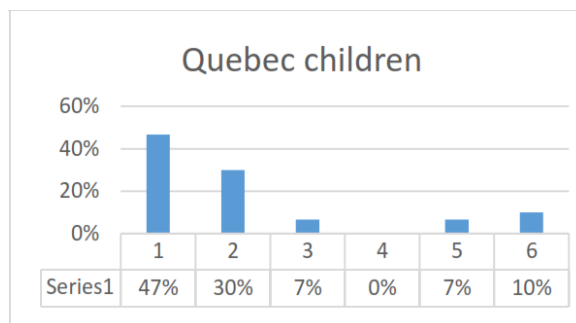
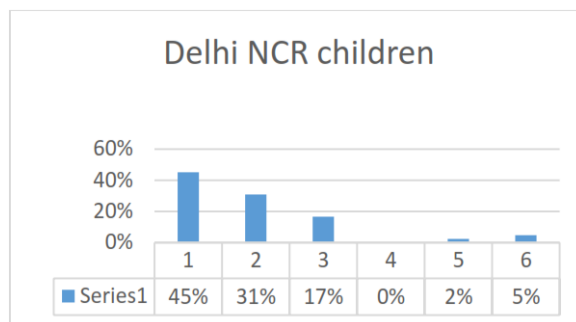
Interest in foreign languages: The survey graph shows that 60% of Delhi NCR Children and 57% of Quebec children shows maximum interest in learning many foreign languages. Only 21% of Delhi NCR Children and 23% of Quebec children shows no interest in learning many foreign languages.

***If I plan to stay in another country, I'd learn the local language of that country, even though I can speak English.**



Interest in foreign languages: Survey graphs shows 44% learners of Quebec and 50% learners of Delhi NCR agree to the statement, shows interest in French magazines and newspapers.33% learners of Quebec showed disinterest in comparison to22% learners of Delhi NCR who aren't interested in neither French language magazines nor newspapers at all.

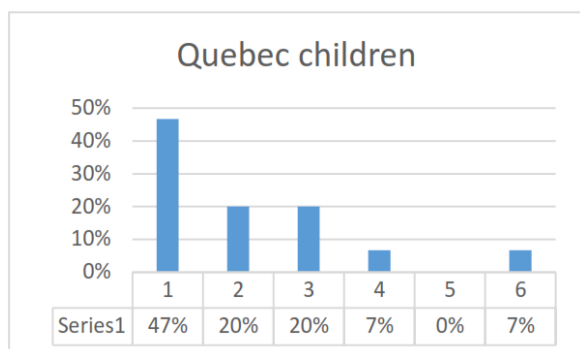
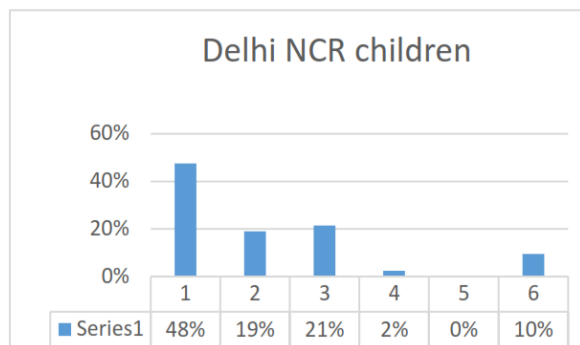
***I'd really like to learn many foreign languages.**



Interest in foreign languages: Survey graphs shows 77% learners of Quebec and 76% learners of Delhi NCR agree to the statement, shows interest in French.17%learners of Quebec showed disinterest

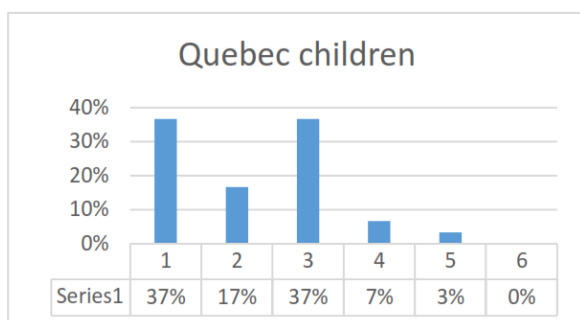
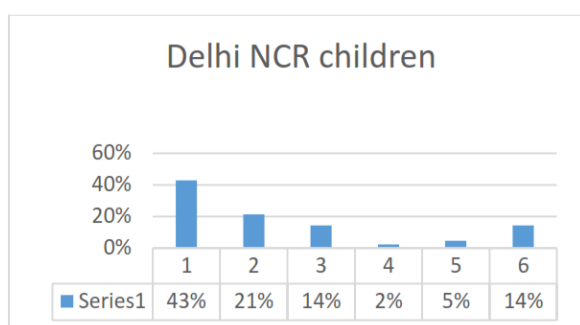
in comparison to 7% learners of Delhi NCR who aren't interested in French language.

***When it comes to French homework, I work very carefully, making sure I understand everything.**



Interest in foreign languages: Survey graphs shows 67% learners of Quebec and 67% learners of Delhi NCR agree to the statement and they do french homework carefully. 7% learners of Quebec aren't careful disinterest in comparison to 10% learners of Delhi NCR.

***I enjoy meeting and listening to people who can speak many languages.**



Interest in foreign languages: Survey graphs shows 54% learners of Quebec and 64% learners of Delhi NCR agree to the statement. No learners of Quebec showed disinterest in comparison to 19% learners of Delhi NCR who aren't interested in foreign languages.

CONCLUSION

The statistical findings of the Mann Whitney U Test concluded that there was no significant difference in the interest level of Indian children of Delhi NCR and Quebec, but from the graphical analysis of the responses, it shows the overall interest level of Delhi NCR children is comparatively higher than the Quebec children. Delhi NCR children were more interested in meeting french people, as they liked meeting and meeting people of other cultures. Both groups of children were interested in connecting with the foreign communities and learning french languages, thereby, developing a bicultural identity as described in Arnett (2002). As per Arnett (ibid.) globalization has become the most important trend in the world, an individual is under pressure to develop two identities. One is local identity and the other is a global identity. The positive interest level towards foreign languages help in developing acceptance and likeness for other cultures, while maintaining their own. The study shows that Indian children in both learning contexts have positive interest in french language and for foreign languages. The learning contexts do influence the interest pattern of the learner, therefore, role of skilled educator is of immense importance to keep the learners' interest level high through innovative lesson plans, teaching techniques and well prepared evaluating measures in the classrooms.

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