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**MNSU French Students' Perspectives on Classroom Testing, Feedback Practices and their
Impact on Learning**

By Gaudence Uwamahoro

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science
In
French

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

November, 2023

Date: **11/17/2023**

This thesis has been examined and approved.

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Abstract

This research aims to examine MNSU French students' perspectives on classroom testing, feedback practices and their impact on learning. Using an online questionnaire, data were collected from 18 students enrolled in French 102, French 202, French 404 and French 452. The results indicated that the students in the French program at MNSU positively perceived the classroom testing and feedback practices. They understood the purposes and benefits of classroom testing and feedback provision as these encouraged them to study in order to retain the content, tracked and checked their learning progress in relation to their learning objectives, and provided them with feedback that they utilized to improve. They also recognized that both the classroom testing and feedback had a positive impact on their learning. On the one hand, classroom testing required them to review the course materials for better retention, and on the other hand, feedback pointed out their mistakes, clarified the points they misunderstood and helped them to close up the gap between their performance and desired goals. However, a low percentage of the participants reported that they needed to spend more time on chapters to successfully process the content. They also suggested that quizzes and exams should be more spaced out.

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Dedication

To:

My loving husband Jean Bosco Ntirenganya

Our wonderful children Ora Anna Ihimbazwe Kirezi, Amati Ishimo Migisha and Angelo

Igiraneza Ganza

My father, my late mother, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces and in-laws

Father Leonidas Karekezi Habarugira

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Minnesota State University, Mankato

November 2023

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my special and heartfelt gratitude to my academic advisor, Dr. Evan J. Bibbee, for his availability, continuous encouragement, professional and wise guidance, timely and constructive feedback, and endless patience throughout my MS French studies in general and while assisting me with this thesis in particular. I also express my sincere gratitude to other committee members, Dr. Glen Poupore and Dr. Adriana Gordillo, for their availability to read the final version despite their busy schedules.

In addition, I thank Minnesota State University, Mankato (Department of World Languages and Cultures - French program) for the teaching assistantship I was offered. The assistantship was an invaluable opportunity in my studies both professionally and financially. I thank the students I was privileged to teach and from whom I learned much as well.

Next, I am immensely thankful to my beloved husband Jean Bosco. Your love, patience, encouragement, and support have gotten me through my degree, and for that I could not thank you enough. You have done more than your share of housework and babysitting to give me the time to complete this goal. Similarly, my gratitude goes to our children, Ora Anna, Amati and Angelo, for giving me enjoyable times full of fun and laughter. I deeply recognize the contribution of my family members and in-laws thanks to their sacrifice and prayers.

I am also grateful to my fellow classmates Amanda, Jeremy and Isaac for their friendship and cooperation. I cannot ignore the support from Collins, Gabby, the families of Phil Stone, Pastor Johnathan, Alex and Saurav.

Finally, I would like to convey my appreciation to all the students of the departments of World Languages and Cultures in the French program who willingly completed the online survey for this study.

Many thanks to everyone who, in one way or another, helped me to complete this program as well as this research study. May God bless you all!

Chapter I

Introduction

Language teaching comprises a variety of components including testing tied with feedback provision. When properly developed, administered and interpreted, testing is one of the most essential educational tools, and it is as powerful as the teaching methods in the sense that it helps understand what students are learning, determine the effective teaching methods to use and influence the teaching decisions based on the students' scores. In addition, effective teaching cannot take place in the absence of learning (Guskey, 2003) which is measured through assessment. Testing is important in terms of measuring, reporting and promoting learning (McTighe & O'Connor, 2005). When testing meets the teachers' and learners' requirements and expectations, it plays a great role in the learning process. Therefore, diagnostic and formative assessments, which are two types of ongoing assessments, are beneficial and considered as feedback for learning (Black, Harrison. et al., 2004 as cited in McTighe & O'Connor, 2005) because they help attain the maximum performance of learning. In other words, testing accompanied by effective feedback guides both learning and teaching, and shows students their strengths and weaknesses while also helping to shape teaching methodology. To be successful, teachers "need to see their assessments as an integral part of the instruction process and as crucial for helping students learn" (Guskey, 2003, p. 7). In fact, teaching without testing or providing feedback would result in little in the way of motivation and learning.

Similar to classroom testing, feedback practices are a key to learning. In education, feedback supports formative assessment and provides additional guidance on a student's overall performance and comprehension of course material (Eraut, 2006). Feedback can be positive or corrective. As a way of facilitating learning, positive feedback stresses students' strengths,

contribution and effort while corrective feedback or feedback instruction helps them identify their learning problems (Guskey, 2003) and figure out how to solve them. However, feedback can only be useful when students understand its value and use it to empower their learning (Gamlem & Smith, 2013). Unfortunately, students sometimes do not pay attention to the feedback they receive from their instructors, a problem compounded by the fact that “feedback by itself may not have the power to initiate further action” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 82). Therefore, feedback can only be accepted, modified or rejected by the receiver.

Background of the Study

Theories of Language Testing

Language testing is always linked to language ability, its teaching and learning. Like teaching pedagogy, language testing has been one of the priorities in the academic language education research area. It has always been influenced by different teaching pedagogies developed throughout the history of language education. In order to assess each of the six language skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar and vocabulary) the way it is taught, psychometric experts and linguists matched teaching methods with their corresponding testing methods or test types. For that reason, Spolsky (1978) grouped the history of assessment into three distinctive but overlapping trends—*pre-scientific*, *psychometric-structuralist* and *integrative sociolinguistic*—following different teaching methods of the time.

The first period, called *pre-scientific*, was characterized by a lack of statistical data, objectivity and reliability. Though difficult to score fairly and objectively, the grading in this era relied on an experienced teacher’s ability to tell what mark to assign after just reading students’ essays or listening to their conversation. Thus, “testing the learning of words and grammatical accuracy [mostly] through writing exercises” (Giri, 2003, p. 55) required the use of extensive

writing activities such as translation, essays, grammatical structures, literature, composition and other writing and reading activities. In the second period or *psychometric-structuralist* era, both the educational measurement specialists and structural linguists wanted to make testing more “precise, objective, reliable and scientific” (Spolsky, 1978, p. vi). The psychometric specialists, in particular, were more concerned with the objective measurements that would assure the reliability and the validity of tests. However, though objective, the test items used in this trend were limited to reading and listening comprehension, and they did not favor the use of language. Still, this trend resulted in many achievements including the development of standardized tests that are still being used by Educational Testing Service (ETS), the improvement of traditional tests by adding reliability and face validity to subjectivity, and the introduction of oral proficiency tests though requiring time and expert testers. The third period is known as *integrative sociolinguistic*. This trend incorporates a view of language competence in which psycholinguists believe that discrete test items are not enough to ascertain the overall language proficiency knowledge and a standard of communicative competence in which sociolinguists prioritize integrative testing by “[adding] a functional dimension to language testing” (Spolsky, 1978, p. viii). Although Giri (2003) thinks the communicative approach to language testing falls in the psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic trend, he seems to add it as the fourth trend that appeared several years after Hymes’ teaching model of communicative competence that focused on linguistic and sociolinguistic elements. Based on that, several scholars (Morrow, 1979; Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990) advocated for language testing that would include both competence (knowledge about language form and appropriate use) and performance (actual language knowledge and use in meaningful contexts). According to Bachman and Palmer (1996 as summarized in Giri, 2003), a communicative test consists of “four dimensions: (1) specificity

of context, (2) authenticity of materials, (3) authenticity of test tasks, and (4) simulation of real life situation” (Giri, 2003, p. 61). The communicative test also refers to four competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. Table 1.1 summarizes the three trends as associated with their teaching methods and the types of tests.

Table 1.1

Three Testing Periods Associated With Their Teaching Methods and the Types of Tests

Teaching methods	Testing trends/periods	Types of test
Grammar Translation Teaching Methods and reading comprehension	Pre-scientific	Open-ended written examinations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Translation into or from the foreign language, - Free composition, - Selected items of grammatical, textual and cultural interests.
Audio-lingual and related methods (mimicry-memorization, oral-aural, oral structural methods)	Psychometric -structuralist	The development of short items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple choice (standardized tests), - Objective tests, - Discrete-point tests.
Cognitive and communicative language teaching	Integrative sociolinguistic	Communicative language ability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cloze tests and dictation, - Interviews, - Extensive reading tasks.

Theories of Feedback

In regard to the use of feedback in educational contexts, it is generally viewed as crucial to improving knowledge and skill acquisition (Moreno, 2004) as well as a factor that motivates learning. In the history of the study of learning, the role of feedback has always been central. According to Mory (2004), thanks to some studies dating back to the early 1900s, the three definitions and understandings of feedback are similar to the ones currently used. Kulhavy and

Wager (1993) present them as the “feedback triad” (p. 5) and insist on how they are still applicable in today’s contexts. Mory (2004) summarizes the three definitions as follows:

First, feedback served as a motivator or incentive for increasing response rate and/or accuracy. Second, feedback acted to provide a reinforcing message that would automatically connect responses to prior stimuli—the focus being on correct responses. Finally, feedback provided information that learners could use to validate or change a previous response—the focus falling on error responses. (p. 746)

Feedback can be corrective information, an alternative strategy, an encouragement or praise, and information to clarify ideas. Apart from encouragement or praise, feedback needs to provide information specifically related to the task or process of learning that fills a gap between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood (Sadler, 1989). This restructures the students’ understanding and confirms to them whether the answer is correct or incorrect. According to Cohen (1980), feedback “[...] is one of the more instructionally powerful and least understood features in instructional design” (p. 33). On one hand, some students do not feel confident when they see their work full of comments or feedback. On the other hand, teachers might sometimes wait too long to provide feedback, meaning it is no longer needed or, once it is provided, students might ignore it.

Student Assessment in the French Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato

The purpose of assessment in education is to improve its quality in terms of instruction and student learning (Koloi-Keaikitse, 2012) by helping instructors monitor their students’ learning progress and adjust their teaching strategies to their students’ needs. Therefore, at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU), it is required to teach, test and assess foreign languages taught at this institution because assessment is regarded as “an integral part of

teaching and learning process” (Koloi-Keaikitse, 2012). As far as the university’s introductory French courses (French 101/102) are concerned, teaching and testing follow the following patterns:

The French program uses an open educational resource (OER) textbook entitled *Français Interactif* published by the Center for Open Educational Resources in Language Learning (COERLL) at the University of Texas. This textbook contains thirteen chapters, of which seven are covered in French 101, and the remaining chapters are included in French 102. Each chapter is taught within two to three weeks, and the six or seven chapters are learned in one semester. In addition to daily homework assignments, a quiz is administered near the middle of the chapter while an exam is given at the end of it. A cumulative or summative exam is also scheduled at the end of the semester. Classroom evaluations are normally made by individual instructors, and their content deals with topics and points covered in the chapter. While a quiz covers just few targeted grammar and/or vocabulary points, exams always comprise four or five sections: (1) listening comprehension, (2) grammar and vocabulary items, (3) Francophone culture, (4) written communication, and (5) a reading passage with comprehension questions. Teachers are responsible for all elements of testing: they control the classroom environment, assess their students, set the time and frequency of testing, and choose how they provide corrective or encouraging feedback (Koloi-Keaikitse, 2012). The results of the tests are used for both teaching and learning improvement as well as assigning a grade.

Problem Statement and Purpose of the Study

I was driven to conduct this research due to the fact that some students enrolled in introductory courses in the French program—French 101/102—at MNSU complained about the workload, with many quizzes and exams in addition to daily homework assignments. Some also

seemed to suggest the time frame used to cover a chapter was not long enough to effectively process and acquire the new concepts and chapter content. Normally, the way students perceive classroom testing may influence how they study, the way they use feedback they receive, and how much they learn (Struyven et al., 2005; Brown & Wang, 2013). That is to say, both testing and feedback practices can be effective if students' perspectives are in alignment with them. In this case, as Struyven et al. (2005) state, students will give effort to their learning and be responsible for it; hence the enhancement of their learning and retention.

Therefore, by involving a wide range of students who have been part of the French program, this study aims to explore how, from a student perspective, tests and feedback contribute to their learning in the French program. In case some students might not have taken French 101/102 at MNSU, their data would be used to compare the programs they attended to those in the MNSU program. Findings would be useful in reconsidering the French 101/102 content in teaching, learning and testing.

To achieve the stated objective, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the French program students' opinions and concerns related to classroom testing and test preparation?
2. What is the impact of classroom testing on learning?
3. What are the French program students' opinions and concerns on feedback provision?
4. How do students use feedback to improve their learning?

Definition of Key Terms

To make the study specific, it would be important to define terminologies frequently used. These defined terms convey the key concepts of the study.

Assessment: It is a general umbrella term and a broader range of procedures than testing and includes both formal and informal measures. It refers to any procedure (e.g., interviews, observations, questionnaires, reviewing students' work) teachers use to determine the effectiveness of their teaching and of the materials they use (Richards, n.d.). According to Salvia et al. (2010), assessment is a process of collecting data for the purpose of making decisions about students or schools. In addition, beyond the test event, assessment covers a much broader cycle of activities, namely: (1) deciding on the content of the test, (2) scoring the performance, (3) deciding on the meaning of the scores obtained, (4) and deciding on the justification of the use of the score; for example, to admit into a course, to award a certificate, etc. (Green, 2014). Assessment is therefore used to meet important learning goals and directly “connect assessment to ongoing instruction” (Shepard, 2000, p. 8) that guides the daily teaching.

Classroom Assessment: It is a process of gathering evidence of what a student knows, understands, and is able to do. It can also help to identify students' learning needs and provide teachers and learners with feedback information that would trigger adjustments in teaching or learning strategies. Therefore, classroom assessment is effective when it is used in the middle of the teaching and learning process instead of being scheduled at the end-point of the instruction period (Shepard, 2000).

Testing: It is included in assessment and focuses on eliciting a specific sample of performance. Primarily, testing supports and enhances learning (Shepard, 2000). As Richards defines a test, it is one form of assessment that refers to procedures used to measure students' learning at a specific point in time. Moreover, testing often involves collecting information in numerical form (Richards, n.d.) and assigns a grade or a score. For Green (2014), the “test is just one step in a sequence of events which together make up a cycle of assessment” (p. 7). This step is regarded

as a during-step; the reason why, when considering the large-scale proficiency tests, some applied linguists use this term to refer to the “construction and administration of formal or standardized tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)” while they understand assessment as “school-based tests” (Clapham, 2000, p. 150). Moreover, Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) state that tests are prepared and administered “at identifiable times in a curriculum” (p. 3) and their primary purposes are to measure the learners’ capacities, abilities and knowledge.

Feedback: It is defined as information about reactions to a product or a person's performance of a task used as a basis for improvement. Being an essential part of education, feedback helps learners to maximize their potential efforts, raise their awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, and identify actions to be taken to improve performance. For Mory (1992) in Peterson and Irving (2008), feedback is performance information provided to promote learning, “a consequence of performance” (Peterson & Irving, 2008, p. 81) or any kind of dialogue that supports learning (Askew & Lodge, 2000 as cited in Peterson & Irving, 2008). Feedback is used to improve a student's confidence, self-awareness and enthusiasm for learning.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2 will contain a review of empirical studies related to the classroom testing, feedback practices and how they impact students’ learning. Chapter 3 includes a description of the population, the context of the study, the data collection procedures, and data analysis and interpretation methods. The fourth chapter presents the data and interprets the results, while the fifth chapter discusses limitations of the study and presents key results and their pedagogical implications for improving or restructuring the teaching and testing methods in introductory courses of the French Program at MNSU, Mankato.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

As introduced in Chapter 1, classroom testing and feedback practices have been proven to be important to both language teaching and learning. In order to provide effective support for learners, teaching goes hand in hand with testing and feedback to determine whether students are meeting the prescribed expectations and standards. This chapter reviews (1) students' perceptions of the classroom testing and feedback and (2) the use and impact of classroom testing and feedback practices on students' learning.

Classroom Assessment Practices

While classroom assessments consist of formative and summative assessments, some scholars argue that classroom assessments are different from summative assessments in the sense that they are administered during the instruction time and do not affect student grades, which seems to fit better formative assessments. Even though it takes significant time (33% of the teachers' professional time) to assess students in classrooms (Stiggins, 1998), the benefits that come with testing and feedback are not to be ignored or minimized. Thanks to feedback provided by the instructors, classroom assessments can have a positive impact on student learning.

Assessments administered in the classrooms are considered to best suit the purpose of improving students' learning (Guskey, 2003) and measuring their progress (Brualdi, 1998). Frey and Schmitt (2010) recommend three best classroom practices supported in research: (1) *performance-based assessment*: this requires observation and professional judgement when determining student achievement, (2) *teacher-made tests*: teachers have all the information about the class: curriculum, topics covered and how they were covered; therefore, teacher-made tests can promote learning, and (3) *formative assessment*: administered during instruction, they affect

learning because they are accompanied by feedback. Classroom testing does not work in isolation; it is a crucial part of the teaching and learning process that “includes measurement, feedback, reflection and change” (Koloi-Keaikitse, 2012, p. 2). As effective teaching requires an awareness of what students know and need to know, classroom testing steps in and gives the teachers the information they need.

Purposes of Assessment

Tests or quizzes are not just scheduled and administered. Rather, there is a reason behind such actions, and a test’s goals have to correlate with those of the course. If they were not important to learning, tests and quizzes would be ignored or left out because, as Cohen (1980) states, they may be frightening to both teachers and learners. For Cohen, teachers might feel uncomfortable creating tests or quizzes due to concerns about fairness and appropriateness, while learners are afraid of *the unknown* and *the consequences* of the results such as “being put to the test, [...] being exposed, and possibly [... failing]” (1980, p. 1). However, when the objectives of testing are clear, teachers feel comfortable and are able to reduce students’ fears. Otherwise, fearing and misunderstanding the purpose of the assessment would negatively affect students’ test-taking motivation, learning, behavior and outcomes (Brown & Wang, 2013).

In spite of the respective discomforts that tests or quizzes may cause to both teachers and learners, Rahman et al. (2011) insist that classroom assessments support instruction and promote more effective evaluation of achievement. Moreover, Cohen (1980) suggests four reasons why testing is important to learning and teaching: (1) testing contributes to and encourages meaningful class participation of students by helping them to become actively engaged in learning, (2) it is a great opportunity that pushes students to pay closer attention to and review the learning material, (3) it requires teachers to provide feedback that helps students to be aware

of their strengths and weaknesses, and (4) test results serve as feedback to teachers by demonstrating how well students mastered the learning material, signaling any discrepancies between classrooms expectations, course learning goals and actual performance. This feedback loop can trigger a reevaluation and adjustment of instructions. While Black and Wiliam (2009) discuss the importance of assessment for learning and how it guides both teaching and learning, they affirm:

Practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited. (p. 10)

In the same spirit, for Koloji-Keaikitse (2012), classroom assessment plays a significant role in decision making and promotes learning improvement, which helps students refine and deeply understand what they study. For teachers, test results show a picture of their students' achievement and learning challenges. For example, the teacher may reteach areas with which students struggled on a quiz or test. As a result, they would be more likely to fill in the gaps through tutoring and remediation time and thus helping to ensure that those gaps do not become barriers to learning.

Apart from the purposes of assessment described by Cohen (1980) and Koloji-Keaikitse (2012), Green (2014) classifies the purposes of assessment into two categories: educational and proficiency. Educational assessment is connected to language learning and its progress. That is, it is based on the content that has been taught or will be taught (Green, 2014). Therefore, the purpose of educational assessments are mainly to collect data about language learning by assessing the progress toward learning goals.

Proficiency assessment tests the capacities required “to satisfy some predetermined need or standard” (p. 13) such as the ability to carry out a job, study academic subjects, etc. It is related to specific or general purposes used for *gate-keeping* decisions. In fact, the test does not cover what the assessee has been taught before it is taken. On the contrary, it is associated with “a person’s current functionality rather than with their learning” (Green, 2014, p. 13).

Proficiency assessment is not a classroom-based test, and it does not focus on learning processes or outcomes of a particular course. It refers to accomplishment in terms of actual language use.

Based on Cohen (1994) and Madsen (1983), Giri (2003, p. 62) summarizes the purposes of testing as follows in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1

Purposes of Testing

General	Specific	Description
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General - Placement - Certification - Promotion - Selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowing learners’ general ability in the language - placing learners in ability groups - providing proof of language ability - promoting learners to a higher level - selecting able learners for a purpose
Instructional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivation - Diagnosis - Prognosis - Evidence of progress - Feedback to examinee - Improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - encouraging learners to learn - ascertaining areas of difficulties in the language - determining learners’ readiness for a course - checking whether learners are making progress - monitoring learners’ progress - evaluating teaching or a course
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation - Experimentation - Knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviewing programme achievement - finding more about language and its learning - knowing about communication and learning strategies

It should be noted that the purposes of testing (assessment) are not exclusive to each other: one form of assessment may be used for multiple purposes.

Categories of Classroom Assessments

There exist many types of classroom assessments, and the most popular are categorized into formative and summative assessments.

Formative Assessment

This type of assessment takes place concurrently with instruction and provides specific feedback regarding teaching and learning. It is an internal method for judging the worth of an educational program while it is still in progress, and focuses on developing and improving the program's activities (Gottlieb, 2016). Formative assessment guides teaching and improves learning by using formal and informal methods such as ungraded quizzes, oral questioning, teacher observation, draft work, think-alouds, student-constructed concept maps, learning logs, classroom polls, portfolio reviews, think-pair-shares and exit/admit tickets, to name a few. For Rahman et al. (2011), formative assessment is appropriate for classroom assessments, and they explain that in the following statement:

Formative assessment is more valuable for day-to-day teaching when it is used to adapt the teaching to meet students' needs. Formative assessment helps teachers to monitor their students' progress and to modify their teaching strategies accordingly. It also helps students to monitor their own progress as they get feedback from their peers and the teacher. Students also find opportunities to revise and refine their thinking by means of formative assessment. Formative assessment is also called [educational] assessment and classroom assessment. (p. 101)

In other words, formative assessment is effective when it is used to tell teachers and learners what they are doing well and what needs to be adjusted in order to enhance learning.

Summative Assessment

This is an evaluation that comes at the end of an instructional segment. It is an external or independent method of judging the worth of a program at the end summation of its activities, and determines the extent to which a program's goals have been met (Gottlieb, 2016). This evaluation's feedback consists of scores or grades from the tests, final exams, performance tasks, culminating projects and work portfolios. Summative assessment results are ascribed a value and appear on the student report card and transcript. Although they are useful in teaching and learning, summative assessments are not effective tools for maximizing and improving learning. Indeed, it would not be safe to rely solely on summative assessments since they are administered too late in a learning segment to find out how well students have learned. Table 2.2 summarizes the main differences between formative and summative assessments based on the role they play in learning.

Table 2.2

Features of Formative and Summative Assessment Within a Classroom Context

Formative Assessment Feature	Summative Assessment Feature
Monitors student progress	Evaluates student progress
Occurs internal to instruction	Occurs toward the end of an instructional cycle or on a predetermined basis (e.g., quarterly, annually)
Provides ongoing descriptive feedback	Provides feedback that may take the form of grading
Co-occurs with learning	Demonstrates learning
Is process oriented	Is product or outcome oriented
Informs instruction	Gauges instructional effectiveness

Assessment Approaches

Classroom assessments can be looked at from the perspective of how consumers use the data, the primary use of assessments being to gather information to help teachers make decisions that benefit students, teachers and other educational stakeholders. In this sense, classroom assessments would be classified in the following categories as discussed by Gottlieb (2016), Berry (2008):

Assessment AS Learning (Metacognitive)

This is a process of metacognition for students and has a strong connection with constructivism as well as cognitive science. It is the most personalized type of assessment and recognizes students as an important data source. It occurs when students reflect on their academic and linguistic learning products and gradually move toward taking responsibility for their learning in order to become independent and capable thinkers. It is compared to the Gradual Release of Responsibility grounded in the 1978 Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Gottlieb, 2016) because it places special emphasis on the role of the learner and increases the learners' ability to control their own learning. Through an assessment as learning, students own and share their learning through self-correction and collaboration that they undergo during the test to minimize anxiety related to individual assessment (Rowe, 2012; Gupta, 2016). Moreover, students monitor and critically review their learning, positively affecting their performance and retention.

Assessment FOR Learning (Formative)

This type of assessment is very much connected with day-to-day classroom assessment and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998a,b), and is considered to be an assessment in support of learning. As Swaffield (2011) puts it, assessment for learning is "integral to teaching and

learning and indeed a powerful form of learning itself” (p. 436) with everyday practice. Its primary intent is to improve students' achievement by assessing their learning in context-based and authentic situations (Brooks & Brooks, 1999) through learning that takes place in the common tasks of the normal school day or as part of take-home assignments. Assessment for learning supports learning and displays the teachers' role in making everyday decisions from instructionally embedded data.

The assessment *FOR* learning is an umbrella for any type of learning demonstration and observation that supports and enhances ongoing learning. In assessment for learning, the learner's academic performance is assessed on a regular basis to determine the impact of instruction and teacher intervention on student achievement in order to identify any needed adjustments.

Assessment OF Learning (Summative)

Assessment *OF* learning has as an objective to find out what students have learned in alignment with the curriculum or grade-level standards by means of exams, portfolios, final projects and standardized tests. It “uses evidence of student learning to make judgements on student achievement against goals and standards” (Berry, 2008, p. 46), with feedback appearing in the form of marks or grades. Just like summative assessment, assessment *OF* learning uses evidence obtained at the end of the learning cycle. It is sometimes referred to as “surface learning” due to the fact that it requires students to provide correct answers to items by reproducing them from memory. Assessment *OF* learning affords administrators a sense of their school's or district's position in relation to standards-referenced data. Table 2.3 gives some more details on the assessment AS, FOR, OF learning.

Table 2.3*Assessment AS, FOR, OF Learning*

Assessment <i>AS</i> Learning	Assessment <i>FOR</i> Learning	Assessment <i>OF</i> Learning
Generates data used to foster students' metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness	Generates data used for formative purposes	Generates data used for summative purposes
Occurs on an ongoing basis, facilitated by teachers until self-regulated by students	Occurs on an ongoing, continuous basis between teachers and students	Occurs at designated time intervals, as in the same month each year
Is internal to student learning	Is internal to instruction and teacher learning	Is associated with the culmination of an instructional cycle or year and accrued learning
Is individualized for students	Is individualized for classrooms and, at times, across classrooms	Is standardized or standard in administration for schools, districts, or states
Encourages co-construction by students and teachers of criteria for success	Encourages teachers to create tasks and determine shared criteria for success with students	Encourages departments, programs, districts, or states to create or select measures
Uses original student work as data sources	Uses student work coupled with a variety of instructional methods and response formats as data sources	Uses testing as the primary data source, with multiple-choice, short-answer questions or constructed-response formats
Is intrinsically motivated	Is instructionally bound	Is accountability driven
Relies on students as assessors, based on jointly constructed criteria for success	Relies on immediate feedback to students	Relies on a quick turnaround of scores

Feedback Practice and its Importance

Many scholars have given various definitions of feedback according to its purpose and use. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) defined feedback as “actions taken by an external agent to provide information regarding some aspects of one’s task performance” (p. 235). These authors put an emphasis on performance as connected to the learning, the attitude and the achievement of the target task. Green (2014) defines feedback as a way of “pointing out what [learners] are doing well and what they are doing poorly in order to help them improve” (p. 8). In other words, feedback is information that a teacher provides to a student to decrease the gap between the student's performance and a desired goal (Sadler, 1989). Feedback is an important and possibly

the most valuable part of the assessment process because of the impact it has on the student learning and the instructor's teaching. As Ovando (1994) states, "Feedback has emerged in the literature as a means to facilitate both the learning process and teaching performance" (p. 19). It is one of the pedagogical practices that allow students to know how well they are doing, how much effort they need to make for improvement, and it also motivates students in terms of ameliorating their work while teachers may modify or re-plan for their upcoming classes. In education, feedback has powerful influences on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timberly, 2007), and providing feedback to learners constitutes a crucial characteristic of successful teaching (Akter, 2010).

For feedback to be effective, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) present seven principles of good feedback practices and their contribution toward teaching and learning:

1. Help clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
2. Facilitate the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;
3. Deliver high quality information to students about their learning;
4. Encourage teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
5. Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
6. Provide opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
7. Provide information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching. (p. 205)

Similarly, Brookhart (2008) discusses the qualities of good feedback:

- Good feedback guides students in their learning in the forms of the *cognitive factor* (information about where they are and what to do next) and the *motivational factor* (the feeling they gain leading them to control and own their learning);

- Good feedback contains comprehensible information at the level of the students for them to use;
- Good feedback is integrated in classroom assessment and has constructive remarks indispensable for everyday learning practice;
- Good feedback should be accompanied with the opportunities to improve.

Feedback provision is a routine that requires firm, regular practice. According to Brookhart (2008), “Giving good feedback is one of the skills teachers need to master as part of good formative assessment. [...] Feedback can be very powerful if done well” (p. 1-2). That is, feedback delivery needs to follow some specific strategies and criteria.

Types of Feedback

Various sources provide different types of feedback that may be presented in a dichotomous way:

Informal Feedback and Formal Feedback

Informal feedback is provided spontaneously any time during the moment of action, and its effectiveness relies on the rapport built between instructor and student. Formal feedback, on the other hand, is planned and systematically integrated into the assessment tasks and process.

Negative Feedback and Positive Feedback

Negative feedback allows learners “to monitor their performance and change their strategies in order to improve subsequent performance” (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Holroyd & Coles, 2002). Depending on the learner’s abilities such as commitment, performance orientation and self efficacy, negative feedback is strongly beneficial at self level (Binu, 2020) because they utilize this feedback to learn from their mistakes. Moreover, it provides the necessary information to help them to modify their learning approaches. Nevertheless, negative feedback

can trigger negative emotions such as frustration and anxiety that could be a barrier to intrinsic motivation. Therefore, it is imperative to minimize the type of negative feedback that leads to negative emotions to attain optimal levels of learning. As for positive feedback, this improves student's academic confidence and motivation. According to Hovington (2018), positive feedback “[has] a huge impact on a student’s perception of themselves and [... influences] their effort and grades” (High School and University section, para. 3). Positive feedback also promotes student retention.

Oral Feedback and Written Feedback

Oral feedback is any kind of dialogue or interaction between learners and teachers or learners and learners with the objective of improving students’ learning. This type of feedback is given primarily during a lesson or a task. Though it is considered less formal than written feedback, it is still very powerful because it is immediate, timely and happens naturally (Hadzic, 2016). As its name suggests, written feedback is comprised of written comments on student work. It is usually provided after the task has been completed, giving the teacher time to think about the focus of the feedback (content, organization, grammar or vocabulary).

Direct Feedback and Indirect Feedback

Direct feedback is feedback in which a teacher provides the correct version of the response. The teacher detects the error, corrects it and presents the correction to students immediately and unambiguously in relation to their original answer. This easily shows students the gap they have (Westmacott, 2017). For indirect feedback, the error is indicated but not corrected. The error may be shown using codes, signaling the location of the error or simply giving the number of errors in each line. Direct feedback works better with grammatical forms while indirect feedback improves the accuracy of non-grammatical concepts (Westmacott, 2017).

Descriptive Feedback and Evaluative Feedback

Descriptive feedback provides specific information that the student needs to improve their learning whereas evaluative feedback may be in the form of grades or a general comment that does not require the student to make any changes for improvement.

Peer Feedback and Self-Feedback

Apart from teacher feedback, students offer each other advice and suggestions to each other's work. While it used to be the teacher's responsibility to give feedback and students' responsibility to passively receive it, both teachers and students must be actively engaged in the feedback process today (Nicol, 2007) so that students take ownership of their learning. This makes student to student feedback a valuable aspect of learning as they build their collaboration skills through reviewing others' work. Additionally, students learn to pay attention to details and apply the grading criteria as they work to understand their peer's work and use the suggestions provided by peers to revise their own work (Binu, 2020). Self-feedback consists of giving detailed information on performance or task completion to oneself, and does not take the place of feedback received from others, but simply strengthens it. Self-feedback allows students to develop self-motivation, self-regulation, confidence, and commitment (Binu, 2020). Moreover, this type of feedback teaches students to self-monitor and identify strategies that help them progress in their learning after realizing their level and where they need to be.

Directive Feedback and Facilitative Feedback

These two terms describe varying functions of feedback. Directive feedback gives specific instructions and highlights what needs to be revised or corrected while facilitative feedback offers advice and suggestions that guide the students in their revisions (Black & William, 1998a; Shute, 2007; Evans, 2013).

In addition to the feedback types described earlier, some scholars discuss different types of feedback. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), there are four types of feedback: (1) task feedback, which is focused on clarifying aspects of the learning task, (2) process feedback that deals with the way students tackle the task and what they do about it, (3) self-regulation feedback, referring to metacognitive elements accompanied by the students' ability to monitor and evaluate their learning strategies, and (4) self feedback, which deals with the student's individual characteristics. Based on the feedback types Hattie and Timperley (2007) presented, Nelson and Schunn, as summarized in Evans (2013), discuss the importance of assessment feedback as “(a) motivational—influencing beliefs and willingness to participate; (b) reinforcement—to reward or to punish specific behaviors; and (c) informational—to change performance in a particular direction” (p. 72). Feedback seems to help students keep moving despite the challenges they might encounter in school.

While discussing the students' views toward assessment and feedback, Peterson and Irving (2008) recall three types of feedback that research considers to be external: (1) outcome feedback—it implies the knowledge of results, (2) corrective feedback—this is related to the provision of the correct responses), and (3) process feedback—this is about the adaptation of study strategies). Outcome feedback and corrective feedback are typically linked with summative assessments because they measure students' progress. As far as process feedback is concerned, it is connected with formative assessment because its objective is to improve teaching and learning and close the learning gap.

Feedback Strategies

There are several feedback strategies to take into consideration for the feedback to be effective. Brookhart presents (2008) them in the following dimensions:

Timing

The objective of feedback is to improve learning. Therefore, providing immediate feedback allows students to use it while they still remember the topic, the assignment or the learning goal the feedback goes with. Timely feedback is needed even when students do not have to revise their work.

Amount

Even though teachers might tend to want to fix every error they see, it is always productive to choose “a usable amount of information that connects with something students already know and takes them from that point to the next level” (Brookhart, 2008, p. 12). To judge the right amount of feedback to give, the topic, the learning target, the learning progressions and the individual student should be considered.

Mode

There exist a variety of modalities used to give feedback such as written, oral, and demonstration, and conversation. The decision about delivering oral or written feedback depends on the students’ reading or listening abilities, especially when they are younger or second-language learners. Although oral feedback is preferable, the written modality is also used due to time limitations that would prevent a teacher from speaking with each one of their students after each assignment.

Audience

As it works in all other communication, feedback should be given to the appropriate audience, and its content should be based on what individuals can understand. This shows students that the teacher cares about them because they read and thought about their work in a careful and conscientious manner.

Criteria of Feedback

Taking into account the feedback types and the feedback strategies mentioned before does not, however, suffice for boosting learning. Brookhart (2008) discusses the following criteria that should accompany every feedback:

Clarity

Feedback should be clear in order to be interpreted as intended. In order to achieve this clarity, the teacher should take care to account for a given student's profile such as their cultural background and language level.

Specificity

Feedback should be neither too narrow nor too broad, and should show which revisions the student needs to make. If the teacher wants the student to write more; for example, they should clearly indicate which part of the work requires revision and what additional content will help to improve their performance.

Tone

Tone influences how the feedback message will be heard. As Brookhart (2008) states, "Tone can inspire or discourage" (p. 34), a double-edged linguistic sword that requires carefully choosing the words and style to use in feedback. Although the tone should be encouraging, it should remain honest. One should not, for example, say "Well done!" where criticism is needed. Otherwise, students would think what they did was correct, or good quality does not matter.

Assessment and Learning: Impact of Testing on Learning

Testing is a vital component that improves education (teaching and learning). It not only assesses what students know and how much they have learned, but also enhances later retention (Akresh-Gonzales, 2015) that will be part of their active and long-term knowledge. Before

enough research was conducted, it was believed that testing stimulates rehearsal of the learning material; thus even though it occurs prior to feedback, it has a clear purpose of later retention (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991). The popularity of such a belief is explained by the fact that testing allows learners to practice and strengthen their memory ability in order to facilitate retrieval of learned materials. According to Akresh-Gonzales (2015), some studies showed that testing allows learners to recall 50% more information than just studying. In other words, while studying consists of reviewing material already learned, testing, also called *active recall or retrieval practice*, asks the brain to retain information, thus helping it become recallable for later use in the future as a process of learning.

In their review of results from 16 research studies on the effects of frequent classroom testing, Bangert-Drowns et al. (1991) found that not all testing demonstrated positive effects on students' achievement. While eight of the studies confirmed testing to have an effective impact on students' learning, six of them demonstrated mixed or no effects, and the remaining two studies reported negative effects on learners' performance. For Noll (1939), too much testing leads to negative effects. Also, learning improvements based on the effects of testing may also be tied to the specific types of testing used. For example, use of adjunct questions where tests are levelled (simplified) and divided into small, short and simple units, or when the mastery testing is used as a diagnostic tool with remedial help definitely improves learning. However, ordinary classroom testing differs from these two testing styles, especially in terms of its large amount, complexity, variety of test presentation (lecture, text, audiovisuals, exercises, ...), lack of corrective feedback, and failure to provide opportunities for second chances. For these reasons, ordinary classroom testing still contributes to learners' achievement and performance. Therefore,

increasing frequent testing would increase examination scores and retention (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991).

In a similar way, the study conducted by Olsen et al. (1968) showed that there was no significant difference between students who were quizzed regularly and students who were not. What is contradictory is that other studies found testing to be an effective method of teaching because it stimulates the review of learning material to be tested and through which students test their learning and correct misunderstandings. For Downs (2015), students who test have a far better chance to remember the information tested when they retake the test than those granted extra study time. The best way to benefit from testing is to create an opportunity for test-takers to deeply and cognitively interact with the learning materials.

Feedback and Learning: Impact of Feedback on Learning

Learning and mastering a new skill such as a sport or a musical instrument requires taking into consideration feedback received during training and practice. Therefore, feedback given to students about their performance assists them in improving their learning and taking responsibility for it (Erin, 2016). In their study about the effect of feedback on learning, Vollmeyer and Rheinberg (2005) found that feedback increased strategy systematicity and improved learning acquisition as well as its application. In their research, they explain that, “The mere expectation of feedback triggered deep processing of the learning material [... and] an announcement of feedback encouraged participants to choose a more systematic strategy, which then affected motivation during learning.” Not only does feedback impact learning, but when students anticipate receiving it, it also plays its role even before they receive it.

The learning improvement that many scholars attribute to feedback provision is not endorsed by all. For Truscott (1999), it is difficult to provide feedback and, demonstrating its

effectiveness is not always possible. He therefore opts for abandoning feedback provision. However, a number of classroom studies shows that giving corrective feedback is not only feasible, but it is also effective and necessary for enhancing learning (Lyster et al., 2000). Some other studies argue that feedback is not always helpful. On the contrary, they affirm that withholding feedback from the learner is beneficial (Bjork, 1994; Rosenbaum et al., 2000; Schmidt & Bjork, 1992) even though they do not present strong evidence for their claim. They state that feedback works better during practice or performance training but not in real learning. However, the results of the study about the effect of feedback on long-term recall showed that “Although withholding feedback may be useful in certain motor learning contexts, it is likely to be counterproductive in discrete verbal learning tasks requiring explicit cued recall” (Pashler et al., 2005, Practical and Theoretical Implications section, para. 1). As learning contexts differ, teachers might be advised to decide how to manage feedback provision based on their students’ specific learning circumstances.

Students Perspectives About Classroom Assessment and Feedback Practices

Perspectives or conceptions represent the ideas or descriptions of individuals and their experiences (Pratt, 1992 in Solomonidou & Michaelides, 2017). In this study, it is all about students’ views and interpretations of the classroom assessment and feedback practices as related to their learning performance. Some research studies demonstrate that students have both positive and negative views and opinions on assessment and feedback. According to Cohen (1980), students often complain about taking tests even though they benefit from them. Their criticisms are based on the belief that tests are difficult, time-consuming in terms of preparation, cause of failure, etc. Though educators do not teach in order to test, testing is still an integral part of students’ learning and teachers’ instructional goals.

As it has been argued, classroom assessment that embeds corrective feedback has a significant impact on students' performance (Struyven et al., 2005; Mussawy, 2009; Brown & Wang, 2013). However, that impact, whether positive or negative, as well as their learning strategies are also influenced by the students' understanding of the assessment's purpose, its content and the skills required to take it (Struyven et al., 2005; Solomonidou & Michaelides, 2017) and how they use feedback. In their study that aimed to identify patterns in Hong Kong students' conceptions of assessment from 26 participants, Brown and Wang (2013) classified the results into eight categories. Students conceive assessment as:

pride and pleasure (i.e. positive affect in relation to achievement), negative emotions (i.e. emotions such as fear or anxiety), being monitored (i.e. a sense of being watched or controlled), competitive images (i.e. athletic images to do with persistence, effort and exertion), lifelong (i.e. the experience that assessment begins at an early age and continues throughout the life-course), marks (i.e. the use of numeric scores to indicate proficiency), inaccuracy (i.e. the inability of assessment to accurately evaluate a person) and burden (i.e. the pressure of assessment upon the learner). (p. 1045)

The results showed that the three most frequent categories were “negative emotions” (13), “being monitored” (11) and “competition” (8). This illustrates an evaluative aspect and a controlling role of assessment. The researchers seemed to be surprised by the negative images of assessment that participants (including successful students from elite Hong Kong universities) had. However, students do not always view assessment as negative, because even those who fail might see their failure as resulting from a “lack of sufficient effort or insufficient personal worth, rather than [as] deficiencies of the teacher or system” (Brown & Wang, 2013, p. 1052). What seems less than encouraging is that when students misunderstand the importance of assessment in their learning and/or misuse feedback they receive, this could lead to weak academic achievement.

New Zealand studies based on a questionnaire investigating students' attitudes and conceptions about assessment discusses four major conceptions: (1) *affect* conception—motivation to learning and class participation, (2) *improvement* conception—an improvement to both learning and instruction especially when accompanied by feedback and information about students' progress and performance, (3) *external* attribution mechanism—school evaluation, reflection and prediction of learners' personal future capacities, and (4) *negative* process—negative impacts of assessment such as unfairness, subjectivity, inaccuracy and irrelevance (Solomonidou & Michaelides, 2017).

In various studies, as discussed by Solomonidou & Michaelides (2017), researchers found that students associate assessment with a wide variety of terms, namely:

- a. a means to determine measurement and certification (Dochy & McDowell, 1997)
- b. a tool for learning (Dochy & McDowell, 1997)
- c. a guide or control of learning with strong alignment between learning, instruction and assessment (Biggs, 1996)
- d. an enhancement or hindrance of students' learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Wiliam, 2011)
- e. a beneficial experience that help students understand their levels (Solomonidou & Michaelides, 2017)
- f. a means of being supportive, collaborative though sometimes competitive among students (Solomonidou & Michaelides, 2017)
- g. an obstacle bringing stress and anxiety that are harmful to motivation in the classroom and can create a disappointment in case of a failure occurred at the beginning of the course (Solomonidou & Michaelides, 2017).

Using a questionnaire and interviews with 599 students from 11 Cypriot schools to identify the students' conceptions on assessment purposes, Solomonidou and Michaelides (2017)

found that students understand how assessments (1) improve their learning by “tracking their progress, determining how much they have learned from teaching and checking their progress against objectives and standards” (p. 38), (2) further their learning by using feedback mechanism to regain the lost knowledge, (3) positively affect class through collaboration, and (4) affect students’ near future (promotion to the next class level), or future employment.

In the same spirit, 41 New-Zealand students confirmed that assessment information or feedback helps them know what and how to improve, shows learning progress, documents formal events leading to a grade, provides information that is used as a reassessment and keeps the learning cycle going. However, there was not enough information related to how students use feedback independently or how failure often makes them drop everything and not bother trying later.

The present study investigates MNSU students’ perceptions regarding classroom testing, feedback practices and the impact they have on learning, and it aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the French program students' opinions and concerns related to classroom testing and test preparation?
2. What is the impact of classroom testing on learning?
3. What are the French program students’ opinions and concerns on feedback provision?
4. How do students use feedback to improve their learning?

In order to answer these questions, Chapter 3 develops the procedures used in participant recruitment, data collection methods, and data analysis. Once the data are reported in Chapter 4, the answers to the above research questions will be discussed.

Chapter III

Methodology

In order to examine the research questions set in the previous chapters, students in the French program at MNSU were surveyed. The present chapter outlines the procedures used to carry out this research in order to obtain the essential information pertaining to the impact of classroom testing and feedback provision on MNSU students' learning in the French program. It also presents a description of the participants, the data collection methods and techniques, the data collection instrument and its administration, and the data analysis methods, presentation and interpretation procedures.

Setting, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of this study was composed of MNSU students enrolled for the spring semester 2017 in French courses other than French 101. Convenience and purposive sampling approaches were used to select the French courses to be involved in the study. Convenience sampling technique is a non-probability technique that consists of using a convenient and easily accessible population (Sedgwick, 2013;). Purposive sampling is also a non-probability sampling strategy where the researcher handpicks the participants based on her judgment regarding the informants that suit the purpose of the study (Nunan, 1992; Cohen, Manion et al., 2007; Etikan et al., 2016). From this perspective, the students in the French program were the only potential pool of participants for this study based on its focus. In the present study, the French 101 students did not take part because they were not familiar with the components being researched; that is, testing and feedback as they are managed in this particular academic program. Participants were from four different courses: French 102, French 202, French 404 and French 452. As the French program at MNSU is small, it was not necessary to draw a sample of the population from these

courses. In other words, every student who was in a French course other than French 101 was invited to complete the survey. At the time the research was carried out, the program's enrollments were 45 undergraduate (including French 101) and three graduate students. Registrations in the targeted French classes were as follows: 10 students in French 102, 9 students in French 202, 11 students in French 404, and 5 students in French 452.

Participants

All the students in the French program were asked to participate in the research except the students in French 101 due to the fact that they were new to the program. However, since the participation was voluntary, everyone did not return the survey. Among 35 students from the targeted classes, 23 participants began the survey. However, data were successfully collected from only 18 informants. Participants came from four different courses taught by three different instructors who were contacted by email (see Appendix A) with a request for permission to talk to their students about the research study at the beginning of a class session. After the short talk, a link to the questionnaire was sent to the instructors in order to post it on the class learning management system (LMS) for the participants to have access to the questionnaire. Consequently, no contact whatsoever was between the researcher and the participants. Table 3.1 illustrates the number of participants and courses to which they were registered.

Table 3.1

Participants

Course	Enrollments (n = 35)	Number of Participants (n = 18)
French 102 Elementary French II	10	10
French 202 Intermediate II	9	2
French 404 French Syntax	11	5
French 452 French Literature III	5	1

Instrument for Data Collection

To obtain answers to my research questions, data were collected using an online anonymous questionnaire composed of 47 five-response option Likert scale items, 15 open-ended questions, two of which being follow-up questions of closed-ended questions, one frequency question and one yes/no question. The online questionnaire was chosen as a means to collect data for three main reasons: (1) to cover a considerable number of participants in a limited time and enable the collection of a large amount of information (Dörnyei & Tagushi, 2010), (2) to get information from many participants at one time and in an economic way (Jaeger, 1988; Perry, 2011), and (3) to allow enough time to respondents to think or change their answers (Perry, 2011).

Questionnaire. This questionnaire (see Appendix C) was divided into five parts: (1) information about the participants, (2) their opinions and concerns on classroom testing and their test preparation, (3) the impact of classroom testing on learning, (4) their opinions and concerns on feedback provision (quality, quantity and timeliness), and (5) the impact of feedback on their learning. The first part of the questionnaire included demographic topics about participants' age, gender, experience with French at MNSU or elsewhere, courses they are taking, and where they took French 101 and 102 (if applicable), while the last four parts were based on the research questions of this study and its theoretical framework as described in the literature review. The majority of questions in the last four parts were 5-point Likert scale closed-ended statements that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These four parts also contain some open-ended questions that prompted participants to express opinions not covered by the closed-ended questions. As Nunan (1992) states, despite the ease of collecting and analyzing data from closed-ended items, it is still indispensable to utilize open-ended questions to gather responses

from the participants' real perspectives. In other words, open-ended items allow participants to expand their thinking and elicit other feelings and understandings that are unable to be expressed through Likert questions.

In order to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, pilot testing was utilized. The questionnaire was pilot-tested by two MNSU students who had taken French in the previous years but were not enrolled in program courses at the time of the survey. Pilot testing is important in the sense that it "predict[s] accurately the effectiveness of survey instruments, plans for distribution and receipt of survey materials, the proportion of a target sample that will participate in a survey, and the time necessary to complete the survey" (Jaeger, 1988, p. 323). Thanks to pilot-test takers' feedback, revisions were made regarding the clarity of questionnaire items and instructions. Pilot testing also gave an indication of how much time participants would need to complete the survey, judged to be approximately 30 minutes. After all adjustments were made, the link to the questionnaire was prepared by means of an online survey program (www.qualtrics.com) and distributed by the respective classroom instructors through the university LMS. It should be noted that the first page of the questionnaire contained the institutionally required consent form (Appendix B), and proceeding to the questionnaire itself meant that the participants had read and agreed to the content of this consent form.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data retrieved from Qualtrics.com were already organized into the five major sections outlined above in "Instrument for Data Collection", and "Questionnaire". They were analyzed in order to comprehend participants' perceptions on classroom testing and feedback as well as the impact they have on their learning. All the questions were analyzed in the same order in which they appear in the survey questionnaire. The demographic data were presented one by

one using percentages while mean and standard deviation (SD) were also included for age. In addition, all questions from Likert scale items were analyzed in terms of percentages and summarized in a table (where mean and SD were added) presented at the end of each question or each set of questions if they were combined. Some individual questions were presented in charts without mean and standard deviation. Based on the nature of certain questions and for the sake of facilitating interpretation, some individual responses were grouped. During the statistical presentation, scales were combined to ease the interpretation. Therefore, the two positive perceptions (strongly agree and agree) as well as the two negative perceptions (strongly disagree and disagree) were put together while the neutral/undecided position remained unchanged. Frequency and yes/no questions were also analyzed as percentages and illustrated in charts without mean or SD. Data in the tabular forms and charts kept the original scales separate.

Open-ended questions were also downloaded and analyzed qualitatively according to the order they appear in the questionnaire. Based on participants' responses, data from open-ended items were sampled and presented in the form of summaries, paraphrases, direct quotes or tables. After all data were presented, they were compared and contrasted in the discussion. Moreover, the survey findings were related to the previous studies explored in the literature review. Chapter 4 presents the study findings.

Chapter IV

Findings of the Study

This study aimed to measure students' perceptions of classroom testing and feedback as well as their impact on learning. The present chapter describes the results obtained after analyzing the data elicited from eighteen participants. Presentation of the results follows the main parts of the questionnaire: (1) the participants' demographic details, (2) the students' opinions and concerns on classroom testing and their test preparation, (3) the impact of classroom testing on learning, (4), the students' opinions and concerns on feedback provision (quality, quantity and timeliness), and (5) the students' use of feedback to improve learning.

Participants' Demographic Information

This section presents 6 demographic features about the participants: (1) age, (2) gender, (3) French courses being taken, (4) the number French courses already taken at MNSU or elsewhere, (5) French courses already taken at MNSU or elsewhere, and (6) the university or school where participants studied their first and second semester of French. In this section, the *E* in front of the number stands for *element*. Table 4.1 depicts all the details about the participants' demographic elements in terms of raw numbers, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

E1. Age. The age of a great number of the participants extends from 18 to 25. Apart from this group, the study data were also collected from two students aged 42 and one student aged 71. All the informants were classified into four groups with 50% being aged from 18 to 21 years old, 33.33% aged from 22-25, 11.11% aged 42, and 5.56% aged 71. The mean is 25.83 and the standard deviation (SD) is 13.33. This SD demonstrates that the range of the participants' age is very large.

E2. Gender. Regarding gender, the survey was completed by a balanced number of males (44.45%) and females (55.55%).

E3. French courses being taken during the study. At the time of data collection, 57.89% of the participants were taking French 102, French 404 was being studied by 26.32%, there were 10.53% in French 202, and 5.26% in French 452. It should be noted that all the students were taking one French class except one who was studying 2 French courses.

E4. Number of French courses already taken:

- a. at MNSU.** In relation to the number of French courses participants have already taken at MNSU, every student has at least studied one class (55.55%). 22.22% have completed two courses, and 22.23% have already done between 3 and 12 courses.
- b. Elsewhere.** The majority of the participants (61.13%) have not taken any French class outside MNSU. Among those that took them somewhere else, 27.77% had done 4 years of French in high school that I considered as 4 courses while 11.10% did one to two classes.

E5. French courses already taken:

- a. at MNSU.** As far as the courses already taken at MNSU are concerned, they vary from 100 to 400 level courses totaling 12 courses. 46.67% of the respondents studied French 101, 10% did French 201, and the rest of the courses (10 courses) share 43.33% with a percentage of 6.67 or 3.33% each. Details of courses and their specific percentages are in Table 4.1.
- b. Elsewhere.** Many participants (57.89%) have not taken any courses outside MNSU, 26.30% completed Beginner's French or French 1-4 in High School, and

others courses (French 201, French 202 and French composition) were taken by 5.27% each.

E6. University or school where they took

- a. First Semester of French.*** Participants indicated that they took their first semester of French at three different universities/schools such as MNSU (66.67%), Edina High School (5.55%), Chad University (5.55%), and 22.23% took and passed the placement test.
- b. Second Semester of French.*** For the second semester of French, 44.45% of the informants said they did not take it anywhere. This is because 57.89% were taking their second semester during the time of data collection. Those who had their second semester of French before mentioned two universities: MNSU (38.88%) and Chad University (5.55%). 11.12% tested out of French 102 after taking the placement test.

As Table 4.1 indicates, three elements (French courses being taken at the time of the study, French courses already taken at MNSU, and French courses already taken elsewhere) counted more than the number of the participants because some participants were taking or had taken more than one course.

Table 4.1*Demographic Information*

Variables	%	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
<i>E1 - Age</i>		18	25.83	13.33
18-21	50%	9		
22-25	33.33%	6		
42	11.11%	2		
71	5.56%	1		
<i>E2 - Gender</i>		18		
Male	44.45%	8		
Female	55.55%	10		
<i>E3 - Courses being taken at the time of the study</i>		19		
French 102 - Elementary II	57.89%	11		
French 202 - Intermediate II	10.53%	2		
French 404 - French Syntax	26.32%	5		
French 452 - Literature III	5.26%	1		
<i>E4a - # of French courses already taken at MNSU</i>		18		
1 course	55.55%	10		
2 courses	22.22%	4		
3 courses	5.55%	1		
4 courses	5.56%	1		
8 courses	5.56%	1		
12 courses	5.56%	1		
<i>E4b - # of French courses already taken elsewhere</i>		18		
0 course	61.13%	11		
1 course	5.55%	1		
2 courses	5.55%	1		
4 courses	27.77	5		
<i>E5a - French courses already taken at MNSU</i>		30		
French 101 - Elementary I	46.67%	14		
French 102 - Elementary II	6.67%	2		
French 201 - Intermediate I	10%	3		
French 202 - Intermediate II	3.33%	1		
French 216 - Conversation	3.33%	1		
French 302w - Composition	6.67%	2		
French 304 - Third Year Grammar Review	3.33%	1		
French 305 - France Today	3.33%	1		
French 323 - Phonetics & Applied Linguistics	6.67%	2		
French 350 - Introduction to Literature	3.33%	1		
French 366 - Oral Communication	3.33%	1		
French 404 - Syntax	3.34%	1		
<i>E5b - French courses already taken Elsewhere</i>		19		
0 French course	57.89%	11		
Beginners' French / 1-4 High School	26.30%	5		
French 201	5.27%	1		
French 202	5.27%	1		
French Composition	5.27%	1		
<i>E6a - University/School where first semester of French was taken</i>		18		
MNSU - Mankato	66.67%	12		
Edina High School	5.55%	1		
Chad University	5.55%	1		
Placement: Tested out	22.23%	4		
<i>E6b - University/School where second semester of French was taken</i>		18		
0 University/School	44.45%	8		
MNSU - Mankato	38.88%	7		
Chad University	5.55%	1		
Placement: Tested out	11.12%	2		

Students' Opinions and Concerns on Classroom Testing and their Test Preparation

This category includes questions and statements about (a) classroom testing and (b) test preparation. It is composed of 13 items analyzed quantitatively. Twelve items were statements created using a 5-point Likert scale between Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree and one item was a frequency related question. This category also has three qualitative questions. Classroom testing section has 6 scaled questions (Q7-Q12: one of the statements has 11 sub-statements) while test preparation has 7 (Q15-Q21). The classroom testing part ends with two open-ended questions (Q13 and Q14), and test preparation closes with one open-ended (Q22).

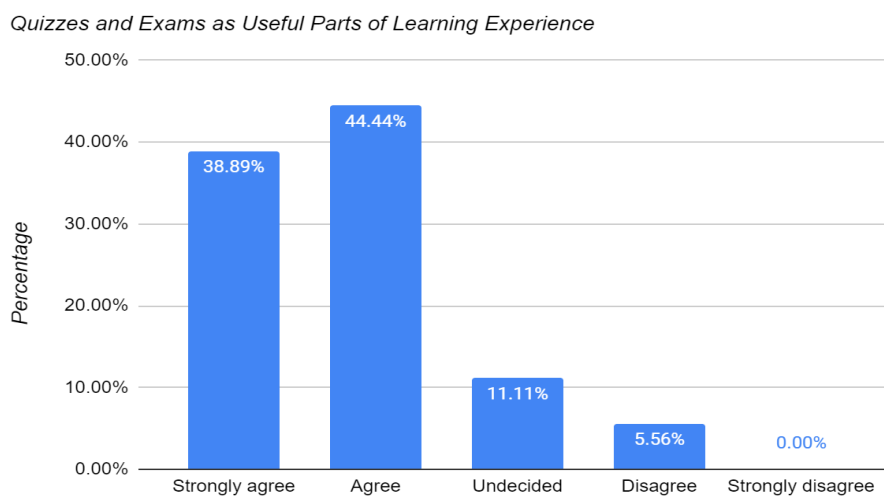
Classroom Testing

Q7. Quizzes and exams are useful parts of the learning experience.

The study results about whether quizzes and exams are useful parts of the learning experience demonstrated that most participants (83.33%) agreed with the statement. 11.11% were neutral whereas 5.56% rejected the statement. Figure 4.1 summarizes the results regarding this statement.

Figure 4.1

Quizzes and Exams as Useful Parts of the Learning Experience



The statement about the quizzes and exams being useful parts in learning experience had a follow-up question that asked the participants the reason why they chose their responses. A great number (61.12%) stated that quizzes and exams encouraged them to revise and therefore learn their course materials while the remaining participants (38.88%) said they are fair ways to evaluate and provide feedback to both learners and teachers. The following are some sample reasons participants provided to support the statement:

- “They help or push students to study and revise their course, otherwise they’d just ignore most of the class materials.”
- “They are important in making me actually learn the information and remember it without referring to a textbook or online sources.”
- “Quizzes are helpful because they prepare you for the exam.”
- “They allow you to formally recall the information you learned.”
- “Exams or quizzes are good ways of assessing students and promoting learning.”
- “It is a great chance to know my current level.”
- “That sets targets for students and gives instructors a way to gauge learning.”
- “I think it is a fair way to evaluate students and give them feedback.”

Some respondents touched a different area of testing such as oral language. They said:

- “Quizzes and exams are good for memorization, but I find having more opportunities for oral conversation more beneficial.”
- “They test your knowledge of application of skills but they don't actually test your fluency.”

Q8. Classroom Quizzes and Exams help me:

This question has 11 suggested statements (from a-k). The results showed that all the statements were endorsed. In other words, 8 statements were supported by more than 70% with 72.23% (3 statements: b, j and k), 77.78% (2 statements: a and e), 83.34% (2 statements: d and f) and 88.89% (1 statement: c). Three statements to the question regarding the helpfulness of classroom quizzes and exams that received less than 70% count 66.67% (1 statement: h), and 55.55% being the lowest (2 statements: g and i). The three statements that were most supported affirmed that classroom quizzes and exams help students (1) *receive personal feedback on their work* (88.89%), (2) *assess their own performance* (83.34%), and (3) *discover their learning difficulties* (83.34%). The three statements that had the least percentage stated that classroom quizzes and exams help students (1) *determine their learning strengths* (66.67%), (2) *improve their performance* (55.55%), and (3) *develop better learning strategies* (55.55%). The percentage of all the statements' rejections varied between 5.56% and 16.67% while those with neutral responses were between 5.56% and 33.34%. The three statements with the highest neutral responses claimed that classroom quizzes and exams help students (1) *develop better learning strategies* (33.34%), (2) *improve their performance* (27.78%), and (3) *set their learning goals* (22.22%). Table 4.2 demonstrates all the details on findings about what classroom quizzes and exams help students do.

Table 4.2*Helpfulness of Classroom Quizzes and Exams*

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD					
a. demonstrate what I have learned in class.	38.89%	7	38.89%	7	11.11%	2	11.11%	2	0.00%	0	4.05	0.99
b. set my learning goals.	16.67%	3	55.56%	10	22.22%	4	5.56%	1	0.00%	0	3.83	0.78
c. receive personal feedback on my work.	27.78%	5	61.11%	11	5.56%	1	5.56%	1	0.00%	0	4.11	0.75
d. assess my own performance	27.78%	5	55.56%	10	5.56%	1	11.11%	2	0.00%	0	4.00	0.90
e. measure how much I have learned at the end of a lesson or chapter.	44.44%	8	33.33%	6	11.11%	2	11.11%	2	0.00%	0	4.11	1.02
f. discover my learning difficulties	33.33%	6	50.00%	9	11.11%	2	0.00%	0	5.56%	1	4.05	0.99
g. improve my performance	22.22%	4	33.33%	6	27.78%	5	11.11%	2	5.56%	1	3.55	1.14
h. determine my learning strengths	27.78%	5	38.89%	7	16.67%	3	16.67%	3	0.00%	0	3.77	1.06
i. develop better learning strategies.	22.22%	4	33.33%	6	33.34%	6	11.11%	2	0.00%	0	3.66	0.97
j. evaluate the level of my competence at the end of a course program.	22.22%	4	50.00%	9	11.11%	2	16.67%	3	0.00%	0	3.77	1.00
k. have specific information about my strengths and weaknesses	27.78%	5	44.44%	8	16.67%	3	11.11%	2	0.00%	0	3.88	0.96

Q9, Q10, and Q11. Please select a response that best reflects your opinions and understanding for each item.

The questions #9, #10 and #11 asked about the predictability and appropriateness of the quizzes and exams' scheduling, the clarity of the tests' content and the clarity and fairness of the grading criteria. The results demonstrated that a majority of the participants (more than 80%) consented to all three statements. They agreed that tests' scheduling was appropriately planned (83.34%), the tests' content was clear and announced beforehand (88.89%), and 83.33% affirmed

that the grading criteria were clear and fair. This implies that less than 20% rejected the statements or were undecided. Table 4.3 shows the data in regard to the statements.

Table 4.3

Tests's Scheduling Predictability, and Appropriateness, Tests' Content Clarity and Fairness and Clarity of Grading Criteria

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD					
Q9. The scheduling of quizzes and exams was predictable and appropriate.	27.78%	5	55.56%	10	5.56%	1	5.55%	1	5.55%	1	3.94	1.05
Q10. The content of the tests was clear and announced in advance.	55.56%	10	33.33%	6	0.00%	0	11.11%	2	0.00%	0	4.33	0.97
Q11. The criteria used in grading were clear and fair.	33.33%	6	50.00%	9	11.11%	2	5.56%	1	0.00%	0	4.11	0.83

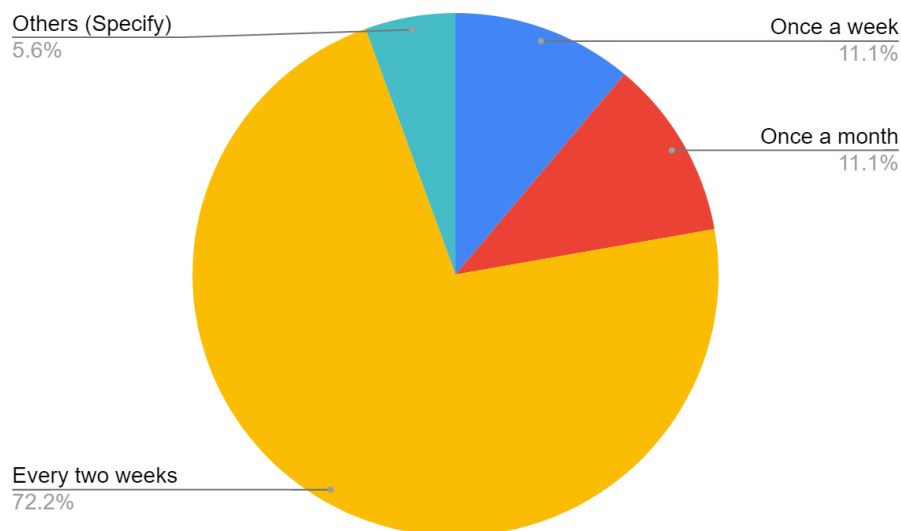
Q12. How often did you take quizzes and exams in your first or second semester of French?

(Mark one option that best describes how often you were tested)

This question prompted participants to remember how many tests they took when they were taking the French course in their very first semester and second semester. The vast majority (72.22%) shared that they were tested once every two weeks. 11.11% were tested every week, 11.11% said their tests were monthly and 5.6% chose the option “Other” because they could not remember precisely how many tests they used to take when they studied the French course as beginners. Figure 4.2 illustrates the statistical information regarding how often students were assessed in their first and second semesters of French.

Figure 4.2

The Frequency of Tests in the First and Second Semesters of French



Q13. How did you feel about the number of the tests and quizzes you took in your first or second semester of French?

Based on the frequency of the tests participants took, the objective of this question was to find out how they felt about that frequency. Three categories were identified: (1) those who felt good and okay, (2) those who said the tests were a lot but needed, and (3) those who did not like that situation. A considerable number of participants (83.34%) said they felt good and alright because the number of tests was decent, appropriate and reasonable. Some of them added the following comments:

- “Tests were not too many but enough to test my knowledge.”
- “Tests covered a lot of content and were difficult to complete within one class period.”
- “It may be helpful to spend more time on the chapters.”

The second category was composed of 11.11% of participants who stated the tests were way too numerous, and one of them commented that having a lot of tests “was needed for the first and second semester to start learning French or any other new language.” The third category comprised 5.55%, and they asserted that they were frustrated and stressed by such an extremely large number of quizzes and tests.

Q14. What else would you like to say about your feelings, opinions and experiences about your First or Second Semester of French quizzes and tests?

To conclude the section on classroom testing, participants were given an opportunity to share anything else they did not get to say regarding their feelings, opinions and experiences with classroom testing in their first and second semester of French. Their responses were sorted into three groups that are recorded below:

A. Positive responses regarding testing and general course evaluation that suggest changes

- “At Mankato, I think there are a good amount of tests and quizzes.”
- “I would prefer to take more frequent tests over less material each time.”
- “For French 101, I think the course should be slowed down. It was way too overwhelming at the beginning.”

B. Negative responses about testing

- “Too much homeworks! I am stressed by all the daily homework.”
- “The quizzes and the tests were too many. I would strongly recommend either a quiz or a test. Or else reduce the number of exams to three.”
- “Too much homework. Way too much homework! It's too much to the point where it's bad because we don't even go over the homework in class. Also our homework is based on things we haven't learned yet (we learn the homework we did the day after the homework). It's been proven to be more effective if you go over the material first, and then assign the material as homework.”

C. Relevant information but not related to testing

- “I wish there were more chances to incorporate conversations in French instead of simply studying the material.”
- “There should be more oral practice.”

Test Preparation

The findings of the study indicated that the majority of the participants approved 5

statements out of 7 about test preparation rating from 66.67% to 77.77%: (1) *learning selected content and still doing well* (66.67%), (2) *studying regularly in order to do well* (66.67%), (3) *putting in many hours when quizzes and exams are scheduled* (66.67%), (4) *studying only topics to be covered on the test* (72.22%), and (5) *getting help from the quizzes to be prepared for the test* (77.77%). Rejections related to those statements vary between 5.55% to 22.22% and the neutral responses range from 5.55% to 27.78%. The percentages of agreement with the remaining two questions (*using same weekly study time with or without a test* and *easily passing the class without taking much time to review for the test*) were 44.44% which is below 50%. For these same statements, 27.78% disagreed with them and 27.78% were undecided. Table 4.4 gives further statistical information on the participants' test preparation.

Table 4.4

Test Preparation

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD
Q15. I study the same amount each week, regardless of whether a test is scheduled or not.	16.66%	3 27.78%	5 27.78%	5 27.78%	5 0.00%	0 3.33	1.08
Q16. When preparing for a test, I can be quite selective about what I study and learn and still do well.	27.78%	5 38.89%	7 11.11%	2 22.22%	4 0.00%	0 3.72	1.12
Q17. I only study things that are going to be covered in the tests.	38.89%	7 33.33%	6 16.67%	3 11.11%	2 0.00%	0 4.00	1.02
Q18. I have to study regularly if I want to do well on the course.	50.00%	9 16.67%	3 22.22%	4 11.11%	2 0.00%	0 4.05	1.10
Q19. In my first or second semester of French course, it was possible to do quite well without taking much time to review for the tests.	22.22%	4 22.22%	4 27.78%	5 5.56%	1 22.22%	4 3.16	1.46
Q20. On weeks when the quizzes and exams are scheduled, I put in many more hours studying in preparation for them.	38.89%	7 27.78%	5 27.78%	5 5.55%	1 0.00%	0 4.00	0.97
Q21. I get help from quiz taking to be prepared for the actual exam.	44.44%	8 33.33%	6 5.56%	1 16.67%	3 0.00%	0 4.05	1.10

Q22. What else would you like to say about how you prepare your quizzes and tests in French?

After 7 closed-ended questions about test preparation, an open-ended question was asked to allow participants to comment on anything about this section. The following are some of their responses:

- “Typically, I felt like I had a good understanding of the material. I studied vocabulary and briefly grammar.”
- “Depending on the content, I didn't spend much time studying; just reviewing.”
- “I tended to study more when I had a test or quiz coming up, and sometimes, I would even talk to the French tutor. But if there wasn't a quiz or test coming up, I'd just briefly go over my notes.”
- “I made a study guide.”
- “Most of the things coming on exams were more predictable than the quizzes which I always did badly on despite the hard study.”
- “I needed to increase the amount of listening activities and oral activities to do well on tests.”
- “As other classes became more difficult, I found myself spending less time weekly on French, and my grade slightly suffered.”

The Impact of Classroom Testing on Learning

This section comprises 5 Likert scale questions and 5 open-ended questions that prompted the respondents to reflect more on the role classroom testing plays in their learning. It covers Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27 (closed-ended), Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, and Q32 (open-ended).

Q23 - Q27 Please select a response that best reflects your opinions and understanding for each item.

The statement describing test taking as a way of developing a variety of skills in French

was positively endorsed by 72.22% of the participants, 22.22% were neutral while 5.56% declined. For the statement that asked whether participants learn more from doing homework than from studying for the quizzes and tests, 50% approved the statement, another considerable number (38.89%) took an undecided position, and 11.11% disagreed with the statement. The next item inquired whether participants could get high scores without understanding the course materials. The majority of them (55.55%) rejected the statement, 22.22% agreed whereas another 22.22% decided to stay neutral. The item regarding the test's successful response not at all being clear, a large number of participants (66.67%) disagreed with the statement, 22.22% supported it, and 11.11% were neutral. The last item was about whether the quizzes and tests do not challenge the participants very much. The overwhelming majority of the participants (72.22%) reported their disagreement, 11.11% supported the statement while another 16.67% took a neutral attitude. Table 4.5 demonstrates all the statistical data regarding the impact of testing on learning.

Table 4.5

The Statistical Data of the Impact of Testing on Learning

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD					
Q23. Taking tests really makes me think and develop a variety of skills (speaking, listening, writing, reading) in French.	44.44%	8	27.78%	5	22.22%	4	0.00%	0	5.56%	1	4.05	1.10
Q24. I learn more from doing the homework assignments than from studying the course material for quizzes, and tests.	27.78%	5	22.22%	4	38.89%	7	0.00%	0	11.11%	2	3.55	1.24
Q25. In taking the tests I can get away with not understanding and still get high scores.	16.67%	3	5.56%	1	22.22%	4	55.55%	10	0.00%	0	2.83	1.15
Q26. When I take a test, it is not at all clear what would count as a successful answer.	11.11%	2	11.11%	2	11.11%	2	61.11%	11	5.56%	1	2.61	1.14
Q27. The quizzes and tests are not very challenging.	5.55%	1	5.56%	1	16.67%	3	61.11%	11	11.11%	2	2.33	0.97

Q28. Comment on how taking regular tests contributed to your language learning.

When prompted to comment on the contribution of quizzes and tests on their language learning, the participants provided a variety of opinions. Most responses (61.11%) emphasized how testing encouraged them to stay on top of what they were learning, motivated them to review their learning materials and enhanced their retention, while 22.22% wrote comments on how testing provides them with feedback. It should be noted that 16.67% did not respond to this item. The following are samples of statements shared by respondents:

- “Tests motivate me to study more, allow me to set a rhythm in my study, and they are good for a review.”
- “Regular test taking requires me to always be on top of what we are learning in class.”
- “Quiz and test taking allows me to retain a lot from what I learn for future use.”
- “Testing is a great opportunity to use my skills and my knowledge without notes.”
- “Regular tests are the most reliable form of feedback for me, and they clarify things I didn’t understand in class.”

Q29. Comment on how taking regular tests hindered your language learning.

This question allowed the participants to comment on any impediment to their learning that they felt was caused by test taking. The results showed that only 27.77% thought that testing is important and always needed for learning to take place, especially in beginning language classes. The majority of the participants (72.23%) mentioned some problems that are categorized as follows:

1. *Being stressed*: 22.22% shared that French tests stressed them to the point they wanted to give up.
2. *Studying to pass*: 16.66% worried about the grades and studied to pass rather than studying to learn and improve their skills in French.

3. *Moving through the materials quickly*: 16.66% explained how running through the French course materials, as a new language, did not give them time to effectively process the content. They suggested that spacing out the tests would be more beneficial.
4. *Having limited areas to test*: 11.11% said that quizzes and tests do not cover all the concepts, especially the practical language.
5. *Utilizing the first language in the instructions*: 5.55% stated that, for French 101 or French 102, the language used for the test instructions should be in English to allow the test takers to understand what is being asked.

The following are sample sentences of the participants:

- “Tests made me very stressed. They made me not want to study because I felt like I couldn’t keep up.”
- “They pressured me to focus on certain things, memorize certain aspects like vocabulary and grammar forms that I quickly forgot after the test.”
- “I spent all my time studying to pass tests in worries of my grades rather than studying to know French, which was quite sad.”
- “Occasionally, there have been times when I crammed for the test and did not retain information.”
- “Learning a language is very hard and I don't think running through the material is helpful. Spacing out the tests more will help.”
- “The tests seem to evaluate grammar more than real language skills that would make me successful in a french environment such as actually speaking the language.”
- “For a beginning French class, there should be some English instructions. Sometimes students don't answer correctly NOT because they don't know the answer, but because they read the question wrong, or don't understand the question. If the question is all in

French, they might know the answer, but can't understand the question.”

- “Taking regular tests and studying regularly will never hinder language learning. They boost the content and language mastery instead.”

Q30. What kind of classroom quizzes or tests helped you improve your French language learning?

After the questions that asked respondents to comment on how classroom quizzes and tests contributed to or interfered with their language learning, it was necessary to know which kinds of quizzes or tests helped them improve their French language learning. The dominant type was the non-graded/practice quizzes with 27.77%, the vocabulary words counted 22.22%, the writing portion was 16.66%, the speaking test totaled 16.66%, and 11.11% of the participants mentioned that any type of quiz or test enhances their learning. It should be noted that 5.55% did not talk about what helps them in learning. They did refer to the listening test as the type of test that does not contribute much to their learning because it is difficult. Table 4.6 summarizes the five kinds of tests that help them learn the French language better.

Table 4.6

Kinds of Classroom Quizzes or Tests that Improved the Participants' French Language Learning

Type of Classroom Quiz/Test	%	Sample Comments
1. All quizzes/tests	11.11%	- “I enjoy the writing portions of the test, they allow you to demonstrate what you know in a more open-ended way that more accurately examines your fluency.”
2. Vocabulary words	22.22%	- “Essay questions tend to help me the best and really test what I know and don't know.”
3. Writing portion	16.66%	- “Regular oral/speaking tests improve my conversational skills in French.”
4. Oral test	16.66%	- “The quizzes before the actual exam help.”
5. Non-graded/practice quizzes	27.77%	- “Classroom activities and meeting after class with my professor really were the only things that helped me learn the language.”

Q31. What kind of classroom quizzes or tests did not help to improve your French language learning?

When participants were asked the kinds of the quizzes or tests that did not contribute to their French learning skills and improvement, 50% emphasized that everything was helpful, 11.11% found classroom repetitive activities and after class meetings with the instructor useful for their language learning and practice whereas 38.89% provided various responses. Table 4.7 illustrates the results regarding this item.

Table 4.7

Types of Classroom Quizzes or Tests that Did not Improve the Participants' French Language Learning

Type of classroom quiz/test	%	Sample comments
1. Online grammar quizzes/tests	11.12%	- "Although I understand and agree on the importance of oral exams, I felt stressed and anxious at the lack of preparation I was able to do.
2. Listening test	11.12%	Having an idea of what was to be on the test seems fairer if you must
3. Oral speaking test	5.55%	be graded."
4. Any tests with multiple choice questions	5.55%	- "Listening to French people speak videos did not help me at all."
5. Homework	5.55%	

Q32. What else would you like to say about the impact of testing on your French learning?

The objective of this question was to trigger additional opinions related to the impact of testing on French learning. The findings revealed that 77.78% had experienced a positive impact of testing on their learning, while 22.22% did experience little or no impact. The following are some samples responses:

Table 4.8*Comments About the Impact of Testing on French Language Learning*

Impact	Sample Responses
Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Testing had a positive impact on my French learning in all ways.” ● “Testing is important in order to retain information.” ● “I can’t imagine mastering any course content without being tested.” ● “In my opinion, tests are always necessary for a person who is really trying to learn French and taking the course for a grade.” ● “Together with feedback, testing helps me understand what we are learning.” ● “It was more beneficial when quizzes were closely related to the exams. I used the feedback from the quizzes to prepare the actual tests.” ● Writing was very helpful because it was how I could express my knowledge best at that early stage in my French education.
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “It has some impact, but it's not a big impact.” ● “Testing did not and does not help my language learning.” ● “When it came to the listening or oral exams, I struggled somewhat as I didn’t feel prepared. Briefly, these kinds of tests did not improve my learning.” ● “In a perfect world, there would be no tests or quizzes. People would simply take classes because they want to better themselves in that course.”

Students’ Opinions and Concerns on Feedback Provision (Quality, Quantity and Timeliness)

This section covers the items related to the third research question. It consists of 13 Likert scale questions (Q33 - Q45) and one open-ended question (Q46) that incites the participants to share any opinions and concerns in relation to feedback provision.

Q33 - Q45. Please select a response that best reflects your opinions and understanding for each item.

The survey findings related to the participants’ opinions and concerns on feedback provision revealed that more participants agreed than disagreed with the following statements:

- Q33. Feedback on my work has been prompt. (83.34% agree, 11.11% undecided, 5.55% disagree)
- Q41. The feedback shows me how to do better next time. (83.34% agree, 11.11% undecided, 5.55% disagree)

- Q42. Once I have read the feedback, I understand why I got the scores I did. (83.34% agree, 16.66% undecided)
- Q40. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand in the first place. (77.77% agree, 22.23% undecided)
- Q45. I receive feedback in time to help me improve. (77.77% agree, 16.66% undecided, 11.12% disagree)
- Q34. I have received detailed comments on my work. (72.22% agree, 27.78% undecided)
- Q37. I would learn more if I received more feedback. (72.22% agree, 22.22% undecided, 5.56% disagree)
- Q39. The feedback mainly tells me how I am doing. (66.66% agree, 22.22% undecided, 11.12% disagree)

The majority of the survey participants disagreed with the following statements as follows:

- Q36. When I get things wrong or misunderstand them I don't receive much guidance in what to do about it. (66.67% disagree, 11.11% undecided, 22.22% agree)
- Q35. There is hardly any feedback on my assignments, quizzes and tests when I get them back. (61.11% disagree, 22.23% undecided, 16.66% agree)
- Q44. Based on the feedback I receive, I don't know what I need to do to improve. (61.11% disagree, 16.67% undecided, 22.22% agree)
- Q38. Whatever feedback I get comes too late to be useful. (50% disagree, 27.78% undecided, 22.22% agree)
- Q43. I don't understand some of the feedback. (44.44% disagree, 27.78% undecided, 27.78% agree)

Table 4.9 compiles all the results about the participants' opinions and concerns on feedback provision.

Table 4.9*Participants' Opinions and Concerns on Feedback Provision*

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD					
Q33. Feedback on my work has been prompt.	38.89%	7	44.45%	8	11.11%	2	5.55%	1	0.00%	0	4.16	0.85
Q34. I have received detailed comments on my work.	27.77%	5	44.45%	8	27.78%	5	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.00	0.76
Q35. There is hardly any feedback on my assignments, quizzes and tests when I get them back.	11.11%	2	5.55%	1	22.23%	4	61.11%	11	0.00%	0	2.66	1.02
Q36. When I get things wrong or misunderstand them I don't receive much guidance in what to do about it.	11.11%	2	11.11%	2	11.11%	2	55.55%	10	11.12%	2	2.55	1.19
Q37. I would learn more if I received more feedback.	22.22%	4	50%	9	22.22%	4	5.56%	1	0.00%	0	3.88	0.83
Q38. Whatever feedback I get comes too late to be useful.	11.11%	2	11.11%	2	27.78%	5	38.89%	7	11.11%	2	2.72	1.17
Q39. The feedback mainly tells me how I am doing.	22.22%	4	44.44%	8	22.22%	4	11.12%	2	0.00%	0	3.77	0.94
Q40. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand in the first place.	22.22%	4	55.55%	10	22.23%	4	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.00	0.68
Q41. The feedback shows me how to do better next time.	16.67%	3	66.67%	12	11.11%	2	5.55%	1	0.00%	0	3.94	0.72
Q42. Once I have read the feedback, I understand why I got the scores I did.	16.67%	3	66.67%	12	16.66%	3	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.00	0.59
Q35. I don't understand some of the feedback.	16.66%	3	11.12%	2	27.78%	5	38.88%	7	5.56%	1	2.94	1.21
Q44. Based on the feedback I receive, I don't know what I need to do to improve.	11.11%	2	11.11%	2	16.67%	3	50%	9	11.11%	2	2.61	1.19
Q45. I receive feedback in time to help me improve.	22.22%	4	50%	9	16.66%	3	11.12%	2	0.00%	0	3.83	0.92

Q46. What else would you like to say about your understanding of feedback practices?

Responses regarding participants' understanding of feedback practices were given by 66.66% of them. Most of them (50%) focused on the understanding or the role of feedback in the learning while 16.66% gave some suggestions for feedback to work effectively. Here are some responses:

- “Feedback really helps especially if given on time.”
- “I have not had any issues with feedback, and I always need them to do better.”
- “The feedback is helpful on homework, but it is more helpful on tests.”
- “Feedback clarifies things and helps guide students in the right direction to improve in French.”
- “I need more feedback on why something is the way it is in order to keep it or correct it in the future.”
- “I wish feedback could be more prompt, especially on oral examinations.”
- “I think it is important to go over homework, quizzes and tests to provide feedback directly in class because the office hours or tutoring sessions don't work with some people's schedules.”

Students' Use of Feedback to Improve Learning

This is the last section of the questionnaire, and it includes 7 five-point Likert scale questions (Q47-Q53), one Yes/No question (Q57) with an open-ended follow-up question and 4 open-ended questions (Q54-Q56 and Q58).

Q47 - Q53. Please select a response that best reflects your opinions and understanding for each item.

The survey results in regard to the way students use feedback they receive to improve their learning showed that a significant number of participants endorsed the following statements

above 60%.

- Q47. I read the feedback carefully and try to understand what the feedback is saying.
(100% agree)
- Q48. I use the feedback to understand my answers (whether they are correct or incorrect).
(94.44% agree, 5.56% undecided)
- Q50. The feedback prompts me to go back over material covered earlier in the course.
(66.66% agree, 27.78% undecided, 5.56% disagree)
- Q53. I use the feedback I receive to improve my overall French skills in the targeted areas
(speaking, listening, writing, reading). (77.7% agree, 16.67% undecided, 5.56% disagree)

Most of the participants rejected the following statements above 50%:

- Q49. The feedback does not help me with any subsequent assignments, quizzes or tests.
(66.66% disagree, 16.67% undecided, 16.67% agree)
- Q51. I do not use the feedback for studying or completing the future assignments. (50% disagree, 27.78% undecided, 22.22% agree)
- Q52. I tend to only read the scores. (50% disagree, 22.22% undecided, 27.78% agree)

Table 4.10 presents the participants' use of feedback in terms of bettering their learning.

Table 4.10*The Use of Feedback to Improve Learning*

Question	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	SD
47. I read the feedback carefully and try to understand what the feedback is saying.	55.55%	10	44.45%	8	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.55	0.51
48. I use the feedback to understand my answers (whether they are correct or incorrect).	50%	9	44.44%	8	5.56%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.44	0.61
49. The feedback does not help me with any subsequent assignments, quizzes or tests.	5.56%	1	11.11%	2	16.67%	3	55.55%	10	11.11%	2	2.44	1.04
50. The feedback prompts me to go back over material covered earlier in the course.	33.33%	6	33.33%	6	27.78%	5	5.56%	1	0.00%	0	3.94	0.93
51. I do not use the feedback for studying or completing future assignments.	16.66%	3	5.56%	1	27.78%	5	38.89%	7	11.11%	2	2.77	1.26
52. I tend to only read the scores.	16.66%	3	11.11%	2	22.22%	4	33.33%	6	16.66%	3	2.77	1.35
53. I use the feedback I receive to improve my overall French skills in the targeted areas (speaking, listening, writing, reading).	27.77%	5	50%	9	16.67%	3	5.56%	1	0.00%	0	4.00	0.84

Q54. What kind of feedback helps you most to improve your French language learning?

The participants provided the types of feedback that improve their French language learning. The first three types that participants evoked were: direct feedback (38.88%), descriptive feedback (33.33%) and oral feedback (27.77%). Table 4.11 displays all the kinds of feedback mentioned as well as the informants' sample comments.

Table 4.11*Types of Feedback that Improve Learning and Sample Comments*

Types of Feedback	Percentage	Sample Comments
• Informal feedback	5.55%	• “Specific direct or descriptive feedback on what I did wrong and why it was wrong helps me to never make the same mistake twice.”
• Negative feedback	5.55%	• “Detailed written and direct feedback on grammar and pronunciation tells me what to do.”
• Positive feedback	5.55%	• “I like to know exactly what I did wrong and how I can improve that.”
• Oral feedback	27.77%	• “Feedback when we're speaking French in class is very crucial.”
• Written feedback	11.11%	• “More one-on-one oral feedback about how I am doing. As long as it shows me where I'm standing, it doesn't matter whether it's positive or negative.”
• Direct feedback	38.88%	• “Any feedback helps in my opinion. It is always better than nothing.”
• Indirect feedback	11.11%	• “Meeting after class to go over the feedback is also helpful.”
• Descriptive feedback	33.33%	
• Directive feedback	11.11%	
• All/any feedback	11.11%	

Overall, the majority of the feedback types were referred to by a certain percentage except formal feedback, evaluative feedback, peer/self-feedback and facilitative feedback.

Q55. What kind of feedback is less helpful for your French language learning?

To discover what kind of feedback does not help or helps the participants less in their French language learning, some information was gathered. According to the survey findings, 61.11% mentioned feedback types in their responses while 22.22% described feedback strategies or criteria. Table 4.12 highlights specific feedback types, strategies and criteria participants wrote in their comments. It should be noted that one comment can describe more than one feedback type.

Table 4.12*Types of Feedback that Are less Helpful for Language Learning and Sample Comments*

Types of Feedback	Percentage	Sample Comments
● Formal feedback	16.66%	● “Positive feedback is great, but I don't learn much from it.”
● Positive feedback	5.55%	● “Comprehensive feedback was kind of hard to understand.”
● Written feedback	22.22%	● “Poor grades make me feel discouraged.”
● Indirect feedback	22.22%	● “Indirect feedback on various nuances of grammar sometimes confuses me.”
● Descriptive feedback	16.66%	● “Just writing out a paragraph on what I did wrong.”
● Evaluative feedback	16.66%	● “When feedback is just check marks on a rubric.”
		● “When it's just a number at the top.”
● Feedback Criteria: Clarity	5.55%	● “Notes on an exam or a test at the end of a section or a chapter.”
● Feedback Criteria: Specificity	5.55%	● “If feedback is not clear.”
		● “Feedback that is not given right away.”
● Feedback Strategy: Timing	5.55%	● “Less or no feedback does not tell me what to keep working on. More feedback showing revisions needed is better.”
● Feedback Strategy: Amount	5.55%	

Q56. How does feedback you receive help you to determine your strengths and weaknesses?

In terms of how feedback helps participants know their strengths and weaknesses in the course, they all (100%) wrote about how feedback shows them what they did well or wrong and how to go beyond that learning stage. The following are sample responses:

- “Feedback helps me see what I need to work on: what I understand and don't need to spend much time on vs. what I really need to focus on.”
- “It shows me where I need to improve and, if I've done a good job, it tells me I am doing something right.”
- “Good feedback points out the areas I need to work on.”
- “It shows me what I should remember to do for next time.”
- “When it's direct, it helps me see what areas I need to work on.”

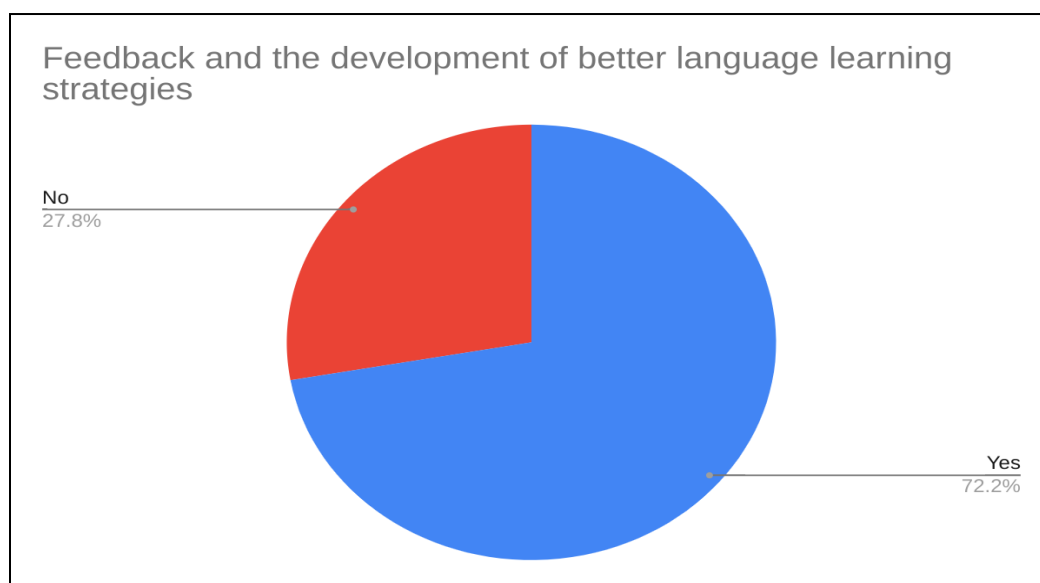
- “It helps me to see the mistakes I make.”
- “I’m told what I’m doing wrong and how to fix it.”
- “I see what areas I am stronger in and weaker in. I then study to reduce/eliminate my weaknesses.”
- “Feedback points out what you need to do to boost your skills in the course you are learning.”

Q57. Does feedback help you develop better language learning strategies?

Responses to this question revealed that a total of 72.2% of the survey respondents use feedback to develop better learning strategies, and 27.8% reported not to benefit from feedback in terms of developing their language learning strategies.

Figure 4.3

Feedback and the Development of Better Language Learning Strategies



This question has a follow-up question for the 72.2% participants who confirmed that they use feedback to come up with or strengthen their language learning strategies. This question asked them to explain how they use feedback. Only 50% responded to the question with the following sample responses:

- “I rely heavily on feedback to determine what I know well and what I don't know well.”
- “If the feedback is negative, I know that I need to adjust the way that I studied for or completed that test or assignment.”
- “If I know what I did wrong, then I'm able to go back and improve that.”
- “It helps me see the mistakes I make so I can focus on improving what I am not as proficient at.”
- “It helps me to understand what I don't understand.”
- “It helps me develop a new study skill and take control of my learning.”
- “It helps me adjust my studying practices.”
- “Knowing what I did wrong helps me to correct my mistakes for later.”

Q58 - What else would you like to say about the impact feedback practices have on your learning?

In regard to additional information about the impact of feedback practices on learning, only 50% of the participants provided their responses to the question as follows:

1. “I think I could benefit from more feedback. I'm never quite sure how I stand within the class as a whole.”
2. “If there was no feedback on any assignments or tests, it would be very difficult to grow and learn more.”
3. “Feedback is always helpful; however, it should always be prompt.”
4. “Feedback is very helpful. I made many learning decisions, revised my learning strategies and enhanced my language skills based on feedback I received.”
5. “Feedback has really helped me and guided my French language learning.”
6. “Telling me in person what I did wrong is more helpful.”
7. “Without feedback it would be hard to succeed in the course, especially the elementary language course.”
8. “I would like to have more individual conferences to be able to better understand.”

Chapter V

Discussion of the Results and Conclusion

The present chapter discusses the findings, presents the study limitations and recommends some areas for further research. In order to learn about students' perceptions of classroom testing and feedback as well as their impact on learning, four research questions were posed:

1. What are the French program students' opinions and concerns related to classroom testing and test preparation?
2. What is the impact of classroom testing on learning?
3. What are the French program students' opinions and concerns on feedback provision?
4. How do students use feedback to improve their learning?

The present discussion reports the findings, the extent to which they answer the research questions and relates the survey results with the previous studies presented in the literature review chapter.

What are the French program students' opinions and concerns related to classroom testing and test preparation?

Classroom Testing

The survey findings have shown that MNSU-Mankato French program students positively viewed the classroom testing in the sense that at least from 55.55% to 88.89% of the participants understood the purposes and the benefits of classroom testing, such as improving students' learning (Guskey, 2003), measuring their progress (Brualdi, 1998), pushing them to review the learning material and giving them feedback (Cohen, 1980). Students also considered quizzes and exams to be useful parts of learning experience, admitting that testing encouraged

them to learn course material for later retention and gave them feedback to improve their language skills. In their own words, they stated that “[tests] help or push students to study and revise their course, otherwise they’d just ignore most of the class materials.”, “They are important in making me actually learn the information and remember it without referring to a textbook or online sources.”, “I think it is a fair way to evaluate students and give them feedback.”, “[Testing] is a great chance to know my current level.” Additionally, one of the participants observed that testing “sets targets for students and gives instructors a way to gauge learning” which highlights its ability to shape the teaching methodology after identifying any discrepancies between the classroom expectations and the students’ performance (Cohen, 1980).

While examining what quizzes and exams helped students do in terms of classroom assessment, learning goal setting and feedback, all eleven statements were endorsed and eight were between 72.23% and 88.89%. The three most supported statements claimed that quizzes and exams helped students: (1) receive personal feedback on their work (88.89%), (2) assess their own performance in class (83.34%), and (3) discover their learning difficulties in class (83.34%). This concurs with the objectives of testing. The least supported statements asserted that testing helps students: (1) determine their learning strengths in class (66.67%), (2) develop better learning strategies (55.55%), and (3) improve their performance in class (55.55%). This could mean that receiving positive feedback showing students' strong points does not necessarily improve their learning, as one of the informants’ comments argued. Also, using feedback to work on learning strategies or enhance performance does not seem to be part of the top priorities. One could wonder whether feedback is really utilized if it does not affect performance. However, the explanation could be that students do not think the testing and feedback they receive affect their performance since they do not take the quizzes or tests twice on the same content topics.

With regard to the quizzes and exams in the French program, students reported that the scheduling of quizzes and exams was predictable and appropriate (83.34%), the content topics of the tests were clearly announced in advance (88.89%) and the criteria used in grading were clear and fair (83.33%). As the majority of students reported to have taken their first and second semesters of French at MNSU, the question about the frequency of the tests showed that 72.22% of the students took the French exams every two weeks, which matches with the typically prescribed frequency of the French tests at MNSU. Most participants (94.45%) shared that they had no problem with that frequency of testing because it was decent, appropriate and reasonable, and some thought that even though tests were too many, they still were essential for learning to take place. However, when they got the opportunity to say what they could not share before, their comments showed different feelings many had about testing frequency and courses in general. Here are three sample examples: (1) “For French 101, I think the course should be slowed down. It was way too overwhelming at the beginning.”, (2) “The quizzes and the tests were too many. I would strongly recommend either a quiz or a test. Or else reduce the number of exams to three.”, and (3) “I would prefer to take more frequent tests over less material each time”.

Test Preparation

The interpretation regarding test preparation demonstrated that quizzes served as a useful tool to get students prepared for exams (77.77%). This endorses the quizzes MNSU French 101 and 102 students take before each chapter exam and highlights their role in test preparation. In relation to what students studied to prepare for the French tests and how regularly they studied, the majority of the survey participants affirmed that they studied only test topics or learned selected content and still did well. It should be noted that the test content topics were announced beforehand (which allowed students to know what topics to focus on) and they appreciated

having access to that information. The survey participants also said they regularly reviewed the posted course content, and put in many hours whenever quizzes and exams were scheduled. This justified the fact that some of the participants did not use the same weekly study time or manage to pass the class without reviewing for the tests. As second language beginner learners, the course material review schedule appeared to be appropriate, and it is understandable to allot more hours for quiz or test preparation. In other words, it is necessary to review the course regularly so as not to be overloaded or unable to master all the content and increase the study hours when needed.

One qualitative question in this section consisted of sharing additional opinions and concerns that were not covered in closed-ended questions regarding test preparation. Comments from participants confirmed three points: (1) content of exam topics well announced in advance, (2) regular review of the course, and (3) increased study hours when quizzes or exams were scheduled. Some informants also mentioned their learning or review strategies such as making a study guide, doing listening and oral activities, talking to the French tutor, and practicing new vocabulary words and grammar concepts.

What is the impact of classroom testing on learning?

Based on results from the closed-ended questions in the present study, quizzes and exams had a positive impact on the students' learning. That is to say, the survey participants confirmed that test taking made them develop a variety of skills (speaking, listening, writing, reading) in French, understanding the course materials was always needed to get high scores, which required them to review the content learned to save it in the long-term memory and reinforce the retention (Akresh-Gonzales, 2015) for the future use. A good number of the participants also claimed that quizzes and tests were challenging enough to take them to the next level in their learning. This

was due to the fact that review time and good comprehension of the learning materials were essential to perform well on the tests. Moreover, participants bore in mind that what counted as a successful answer was clear for all questions, and this motivated them to put in extra hours for quiz and test preparation in the aim of increasing both test scores and retention (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991). However, while comparing the learning intake from doing homework and studying for quizzes and exams, half of the participants shared that they did not learn as much from studying for quizzes and tests as they did while doing homework. This could be caused by homework assignments being practice activities that did not count for a very high percentage of the total score, could be simply graded as "completed" or "not completed", and covered one topic at a time. That is to say, as long as they did their best, students were not worried about losing many points, stressing them less.

In response to the open-ended questions, the survey respondents recognized the contribution of regular testing to their learning of French. They asserted that testing (1) encouraged them to remain informed about course content, (2) pushed them to review their learning materials, (3) increased retention of chapter material, and (4) worked as feedback that clarified things they had failed to comprehend well before. For this, four types of classroom tests that contributed to the improvement of participants' learning were identified. Apart from a low percentage that stated any types of quizzes and tests made their learning better, the majority mentioned four different testing types including testing of vocabulary, writing, speaking and non-graded/practice quizzes. The first three types fit in the summative assessment category that comes at the end of a learning segment (Gottlieb, 2016) with feedback being in the form of scores or grades. However, they can also be used as practice activities for formative assessment, the category that goes hand in hand with day-to-day teaching and learning and helps both

teachers and learners to monitor learning progress and adjust their strategies accordingly (Rahman et al., 2011).

Regarding how regular testing might have contributed less to or even hindered French language learning, the survey informants noted five types of problems connected to testing such as (1) *being stressed*—French tests stressed out students especially when they had fallen behind, (2) *studying to pass*—students memorized the learning material to pass the tests rather than studying to learn, improve skills and retain information that enrich their French language use, (3) *moving through the materials quickly*—students find it hard to understand the content of the entire chapter (with all new concepts) in two weeks. They would have enough time to process the content and learn better if the teaching were slowed down by including more practice time and quizzes and tests were more spaced out, (4) *having limited areas to test*—quizzes and tests do not deal with all concepts taught in class; for example, the conversational language is not regularly tested, and (5) *utilizing the first language for the instructions*—test takers wish to have the test instructions in their first language or lingua franca to allow them to understand the questions and provide the responses. While passing, it should be mentioned that test instructions in the elementary French courses at MNSU are provided in English although the same information about other schools or colleges lacks. In addition, questions such as the listening and reading comprehension questions, as well as questions about Francophone culture instruct students to respond in English to enable them to accurately express their understanding without having to struggle with doing so in a new language.

When it came to the types of tests students believed were responsible for their lack of improvement in French, the majority of the participants (61.11%) wrote about the importance of testing instead. They replied that all kinds of quizzes and tests were essential for their learning,

and some added that the repetitive activities done in class as well as meetings with their instructors outside of class sessions were extremely productive. This supported the participants' responses that confirmed that testing was needed and that it positively impacted their second language learning. The remaining 38.89% commented on the types of classroom quizzes and tests that did not help with their French language learning. Each of the five types was cited by 11.11% or 5.55%, and those types were: (1) online grammar quizzes/tests, (2) listening tests, (3) oral speaking tests, (4) multiple choice question tests, and (5) homework. Note that only 5.55% touched on the fact that they did not learn by completing their homework assignments.

Additional remarks for this section showed that class tests had a positive impact on learning French (72.23%). Three ways in which testing assisted learning were confirmed: (1) generate and maintain motivation to study the course materials, (2) help retain information, and (3) provide feedback. The participants also mentioned the significance of quizzes as a crucial strategy to prepare for the tests. Here are some example comments from the participants: "Testing is important in order to retain information.", "I can't imagine mastering any course content without being tested.", "Together with feedback, testing helps me understand what we are learning.", "It was more beneficial when quizzes were closely related to the exams. I used the feedback from the quizzes to prepare the actual tests." These supplementary details from the participants complement with and conform to their responses from the closed-ended questions. Furthermore, they correlate precisely to the literature review where it explains testing being able to stimulate the course content rehearsal and the long-term retention even before feedback is provided (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991).

What are the French program students' opinions and concerns on feedback provision?

This question covered students' understanding of feedback, its importance, strategies and criteria. The participants reacted positively to feedback provision in the French elementary courses, with percentages ranging from 66.67% to 83.34% for the positively-worded statements. They claimed that they received feedback promptly and used it as a suitable key to better themselves in the future in terms of language skills and to improve both their learning strategies and scores. It is important to point out that timely feedback is always essential and improves learning, even when the revision of the assignment is not needed or a revision option is not available. Prompt feedback is favorable to learners because they receive it when the topic they are learning is still fresh in their memory (Brookhart, 2008). The survey participants also recognized that before they could make any progress in their French learning thanks to feedback, it helped them to understand how they were doing in the course (Green, 2014) and served to clarify content concepts they had failed to understand and master in the first place. That is, feedback allowed students to mitigate or eliminate the gap between their performance and desired goals (Sadler, 1989). Apart from the fact that feedback showed learners their level, the survey participants also asserted that feedback explained and justified the score or grade they earned, which avoided any confusion related to the grading methods. In terms of quantity, survey participants indicated that they preferred more detailed comments, as the more feedback they received, the clearer things were and the more they felt they learned.

For the negatively-worded statements, the percentage of disagreement rated from 44.44% to 66.67%. More specifically, over 50% of the participants rejected statements that said they hardly received any feedback on their quizzes or exams. This corroborates their claims about the detailed feedback as discussed in the previous paragraph. Moreover, participants

disagreed that feedback did not help them know what they needed to do to improve their French language skills or that they didn't receive much guidance to correct themselves based on what they had misunderstood during testing. Similarly, survey respondents also disagreed with the suggestion that feedback being provided to them was too late to be helpful to their learning. The only statement that obtained a percentage below 50% said that the participants did not understand some of the feedback.

In their responses to the open-ended question that prompted participants to share additional comments, students reinforced results from closed-ended questions. They stressed how feedback was used to improve learning and clarify misunderstood concepts. For feedback to fulfill its purposes, the students mentioned that it was indispensable to be provided in a timely manner. From this perspective, the survey participants wished to always receive feedback promptly on all tests including the oral exam. They also suggested receiving feedback on homework, quizzes and tests in class by going over the questions together.

Overall, students in the French program have a good understanding of feedback as well as its purposes. Their responses demonstrate that feedback strategies such as timing and amount were respected. As for the feedback criteria, the survey data indicate that clarity and specificity were met.

How do students use feedback to improve their learning?

The presentation of the data in relation to the use of feedback by the participants shows that the percentage of agreements varies between 50% and 100%. Although some survey participants affirmed that they tended to only read the scores they earned on their French quizzes and tests, it was encouraging to find out that they all carefully read their feedback and tried to understand its meaning. This feedback reading was a good starting point that preceded its real

and productive use. The survey findings indicated that the participants utilized their feedback to understand why their answers on the quizzes or exams were correct or incorrect. They viewed feedback as a stimulus that encouraged them to go back to their work and check what they did correctly or incorrectly in order to know what to do to improve in the future. In other words, they used feedback for studying or completing their future assignments, quizzes and tests, thereby allowing them to move from one level to another. Likewise, they leveraged feedback to improve their learning (Lyster et al., 2000; Erin, 2016) in the four language skill areas such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Subsequently, it was important to look into the types of feedback that improved the participants' French language learning. Many varieties were mentioned at a low percentage (5.55% or 11.11%). However, 27.77% or more wrote down three feedback types: oral feedback, descriptive feedback and direct feedback. With these types of feedback, it is clearly noticeable that the students preferred receiving feedback that was immediate and timely and that happened naturally (Hadzic, 2016). They also favored feedback that explicitly showed the correct version of the answer, narrowed down any ambiguity and easily pointed out their gaps in relation to the topic they were working on (Westmacott, 2017). On top of that, they enjoyed receiving feedback with specific information regarding what they needed to improve their French language proficiency. Typically, the feedback types that participants named supported the responses that discussed their opinions on feedback.

As far as the less helpful feedback kinds were concerned, the participants shared five kinds with a percentage between 16.66% and 22.22%: written feedback, evaluative feedback, indirect feedback, formal feedback and descriptive feedback. The sixth type was positive feedback which was only mentioned by 5.55%, and the participant claimed "not to learn much

from it". Apparently, the first three feedback types are dichotomously opposite to those that contribute to their learning as explored in the previous paragraph. Undoubtedly, this confirmed the survey participants' preferred types of feedback. Additionally, it is possible that formal feedback was less helpful for learning because it requires some planning such as having to meet outside the class time and often comes at the end of the task. Surprisingly, descriptive feedback was mentioned as both helpful and less helpful. Explanations from the participants' comments showed that they did not like comprehensive feedback as well as written paragraphs that do not highlight what they did wrong in their work. It should be noted that some less helpful kinds of feedback as identified by the participants regarded feedback strategies and criteria. That is to say, they did not benefit from feedback because it was not clear, timely, specific and detailed enough.

Regarding how feedback helps determine strengths and weaknesses, all the participants asserted feedback showed them how well or poorly they were doing (Green, 2014), and it also pointed out their major mistakes as well as any areas of improvement. In addition, it helped them to improve their learning and to attain a new level of proficiency by providing them with the information they needed to identify and fix the mistakes they made. Thanks to feedback, the survey participants became aware of whether or not they were attaining their learning goals. In the event they recognized a gap between their performance and their individual learning goals, they could thus strive to close that gap.

While analyzing whether feedback helped the survey participants develop better language learning strategies, the findings revealed that 72% used feedback for this purpose. This question had an open-ended follow-up question that incited participants to give more insight into how they used feedback to enhance their learning strategies. They reported that feedback guided them in terms of adjusting the way they reviewed course material, studied for quizzes and tests and

completed assignments. Moreover, they stated that feedback put them on the right path and reminded them to focus more and take personal control of their learning (Erin, 2016).

Lastly, the participants were prompted to share any additional information related to the impact feedback practices have on their learning. They answered that feedback reassured them about their standing in the course. They also declared that feedback directed their learning decisions including their review of course material and adjustments to their learning strategies. They added that feedback promoted their learning growth and success and boosted their language skills. However, some insisted that feedback was helpful only when it was prompt. Note that the majority of the participants claimed in the earlier discussion that feedback was timely, which would imply that students in the MNSU-Mankato French program successfully benefited from the feedback provision.

Controversially, some scholars do not endorse feedback as a learning enhancement strategy. They argue that its provision is difficult, its effectiveness is not easily demonstrated (Truscott, 1999), and its usefulness is not always assured; therefore, withholding it from the students would work better for their learning (Bjork, 1994; Rosenbaum et al., 2000; Schmidt & Bjork, 1992). In this study, it is important to note that none of the participants commented on the fact that the feedback provided did not benefit them. On the contrary, they shared that it guided them and made noticeable contributions to their learning and achievement. They also stated that receiving more detailed, frequent, prompt and direct feedback was beneficial because the more feedback they were given, the more opportunities they had to correct their misunderstandings, thereby enhancing their learning experience and achievement.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study pertain to the following elements:

1. The low number of 18 participants: A larger sample including students from other universities may have yielded different results.
2. The questionnaire as a data collection tool: Two main problems are connected to the use of a questionnaire: (1) the social desirability bias—participants may provide desirable, acceptable and expected answers rather than honest ones, and (2) the simplicity and the straightforwardness of the questionnaire—responses collected may be simple and superficial eliciting little or no insightful information.
3. The data collection procedure: A combination of a questionnaire and another data collection tool (e.g., interviews) may have provided broader, more reliable and more accurate information.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Apart from fixing the problems explained in the limitations section, there are some other questions related to this topic that were not answered in this study. Therefore, the following are suggestions for future research reached through the results obtained in the study:

1. The impact of French oral skills testing and feedback provision on learning.
2. The French teachers' perceptions on classroom testing and feedback practices in the United States.
3. The impact of grammar teaching/testing and feedback on French conversational language learning.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Email to French Classroom Instructors

Dear French Instructors at MNSU,

I am writing this email to request permission to talk to your students at the beginning of the class session regarding my research project. The study I am conducting aims to examine the MNSU French students' perspectives on classroom testing, feedback practices and the impact they have on their language learning. This permission will allow me to introduce the project to them and invite them to take part in the online anonymous survey. The link to the questionnaire will be sent to you so that you share it with your students via your learning management system (LMS).

Should you have any question about the research, do not hesitate to contact Dr. Evan Bibbee at evan.bibbee@mnsu.edu or Gaudence Uwamahoro at gaudence.uwamahoro@mnsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Gaudence Uwamahoro

Appendix B: Online / Anonymous Survey Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates the impact of classroom testing and feedback practices on French students' learning.

This study is supervised by Dr. Evan J. Bibbee and conducted by Gaudence Uwamahoro, an MS French graduate student in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Minnesota State University, Mankato, USA. You are kindly requested to be a participant in this study because you are a MNSU student enrolled in the French Program in the spring 2017 semester. This questionnaire is expected to take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete. You will be asked to answer questions related to your understanding, opinions and experiences about classroom testing and feedback practices and the impact they have on your learning.

Please note that any information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. The results will be kept on a secured laptop. However, as the data collection will use online technology, there might always be the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. For more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks caused by online surveys, contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager or email servicedesk@mnsu.edu.

The risks of participating are no more than are experienced in daily life. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There is no direct cost or benefit to you for participation in this project. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with the Minnesota State University - Mankato, or with the investigators. If you have any questions regarding the treatment of human participants and Minnesota State University, Mankato, contact the IRB Administrator, Dr. Barry Ries, at 507-389-1242 or barry.ries@mnsu.edu. The IRB (Institutional Review Board) case number for this project is 1006019.

If you choose to participate, clicking the “next” button below will indicate that you have read and understood the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time after starting or completing the questionnaire but before hitting the submit button. Should you choose to discontinue participation in this study, simply log out without completing the questionnaire. Submitting the completed survey will indicate your informed consent to participate and your assurance that you are at least 18 years of age.

Please do not hesitate to print a copy of this page for your future reference.

Should you have any questions about the research, feel free to contact Dr. Evan Bibbee at evan.bibbee@mnsu.edu or Gaudence Uwamahoro at gaudence.uwamahoro@mnsu.edu.

Date of MSU IRB approval: March 2, 2017

Appendix C: Online Survey Questionnaire

About the questionnaire

This survey is designed for MNSU students enrolled in French courses (from French 102 to 400 level courses). It aims to explore your perspectives and perceptions on classroom testing and feedback practices and the impact they have on your learning improvement.

This survey comprises five parts: (1) information about you, the participant, (2) your opinions and concerns on classroom testing and your test preparation, (3) the impact of classroom testing on learning, (4) your opinions and concerns on feedback provision (quality, quantity and timeliness), and (5) your perception of the impact of feedback on learning. Note that there is no wrong response to any of the questions. Please answer honestly and based on your opinions and understanding at this time, as only this will guarantee success of the investigation and the accuracy of its conclusions. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you very much for your help!

Part I – Participants' personal information

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: Male Female

3. Which French course(s) are you taking this semester? _____

4. How many courses of French have you already taken?

a. At Minnesota State University, Mankato _____

b. Elsewhere _____

5. Which French course(s) have you already taken?

a. At Minnesota State University, Mankato _____

b. Elsewhere _____

6. At which university/school did you take the following French courses?

a. First Semester French (example: Fren 001; Fren 101; Fren 111; Fren 1001; Fren 1101; etc.): _____

b. Second Semester French (example: Fren 002; Fren 102; Fren 112; Fren 1002; Fren 1102, etc.): _____

Part II – Students’ opinions and concerns on classroom testing and their test preparation

a. Classroom Testing

Please select a response that best reflects your opinions and understanding for each item.

7. As a student, quizzes and exams are useful parts of my learning experience in the course.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Why? _____

8. Classroom quizzes and exams help me:

a. demonstrate what I have learned in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

b. set my learning goals.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

c. receive personal feedback on my work.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

d. assess my own performance in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

e. measure how much you have learned at the end of a lesson or chapter.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

f. discover my learning difficulties in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

g. improve my performance in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

h. determine my learning strengths in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

i. develop better learning strategies.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

j. evaluate the level of my competence at the end of a course program.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

k. have specific information about my strengths and weaknesses in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

9. The scheduling of quizzes and exams was predictable and appropriate.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

10. The content of the tests was clear in advance.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

11. The criteria used in grading were clear and fair.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

12. How often did you take quizzes and exams in Fren 101/102? (Mark one option that best describes how often you were tested)

a. once a week

b. once a month

c. every two weeks

d. twice a term

e. about every lesson

f. other (specify).....

13. How did you feel about the number of the tests/quizzes you took in Fren 101/102?

14. What else would you like to say about your feelings, opinions and experiences about 101/102 quizzes and tests?

b. Test preparation

Please select a response that best reflects your opinions and understanding for each item.

15. I study the same amount each week, regardless of whether a test is scheduled or not.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

16. When preparing for a test, I can be quite selective about what I study and learn and still do well.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

17. I only study things that are going to be covered in the tests.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

18. I have to study regularly if I want to do well on the course.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

19. In the French 101/102 courses, it is possible to do quite well without taking much time to review for the tests.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

20. On weeks when the quizzes and exams are scheduled, I put in many more hours studying in preparation for them.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

21. I get help from quiz taking to be prepared for the actual exam.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

22. What else would you like to say about how you prepare your quizzes and tests in French?

Part III – The impact of classroom testing on learning

Please select a response that best reflects your opinions and understanding for each item.

23. Taking tests really makes me think and develop a variety of skills (speaking, listening, writing, reading) in French.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

24. I learn more from doing the homework assignments than from studying the course material for quizzes, and tests.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

25. In taking the tests I can get away with not understanding and still get high scores.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

26. When I take a test, it is not at all clear what would count as a successful answer.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

27. The tests are not very challenging.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

28. Comment on how taking regular tests contributed to your language learning.

29. Comment on how taking regular tests hindered your language learning.

30. What kind of classroom quizzes/tests helped you improve your French language learning?

31. What kind of classroom quizzes/tests did not help you improve your French language learning?

32. What else would you like to say about the impact of testing on your French learning?

Part IV – Students’ opinions and concerns on feedback provision (quality, quantity and timeliness)

Please select a response that best reflects your opinions and understanding for each item.

33. Feedback on my work has been prompt.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

34. I have received detailed comments on my work.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

35. There is hardly any feedback on my assignments, quizzes and tests when I get them back.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

36. When I get things wrong or misunderstand them I don’t receive much guidance in what to do about it.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

37. I would learn more if I received more feedback.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

38. Whatever feedback I get comes too late to be useful.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

39. The feedback tells me how I am doing.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

40. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand in the first place.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

41. The feedback shows me how to do better next time.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

42. Once I have read the feedback, I understand why I got the scores I did.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

43. I don't understand some of the feedback.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

44. Based on the feedback I receive, I don't know what I need to do to improve.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

45. I receive feedback in time to help me improve.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

46. What else would you like to say about your understanding of feedback practices?

Part V – Students' use of feedback to improve learning

Please select a response that best reflects your opinions and understanding for each item.

47. I read the feedback carefully and try to understand what the feedback is saying.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

48. I use the feedback to understand my answers (whether they are correct or incorrect).

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

49. The feedback does not help me with any subsequent assignments, quizzes or tests.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

50. The feedback prompts me to go back over material covered earlier in the course.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

51. I do not use the feedback for studying or completing future assignments.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

52. I tend to only read the scores.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

53. I use the feedback I receive to improve my overall French skills in the targeted areas (speaking, listening, writing, reading).

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

54. What kind of feedback helps you most to improve your French language learning?

55. What kind of feedback is less helpful to your French language learning?

56. How does feedback you receive help you to determine your strengths and weaknesses?

57. Does feedback help you develop better language learning strategies?

Yes

No

If yes, how?

58. What else would you like to say about the impact that feedback practices have on your learning?
