

## INTRODUCTION

In AP French at Gunn High School, 85% of a student's grade is made up through three different participation assessments: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational, as identified in Fig. 1 below.

Research has proven that in-class participation has helped with acquisition of a language. In the example of in-class presentation it is said that because the student has to teach others a certain material or subject, it is forced upon them to learn the material in order to explain it to others. (Haber, 2010; Alshare, Hindi, 2004)

Although it has been shown that in-class participation is beneficial to learning a language, this does not necessarily mean all French-Language students see its benefits. The aim of this project is to get a better look at if PAUSD French students see the significance of student participation in a French classroom.

Type of Participation:	Interpersonal	Interpretive	Presentational
Examples in the Classroom:	Simulated conversation, Debates in French	Responding to a Teacher's question, Responding to a prompt with previous knowledge that has been taught in class	Presentation to the class, pre-prepared speech in front of the class

Fig. 1: Participation assessments in AP French (Dumontier, 2017)

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

In order to get an idea of whether or not students see a connection between student participation in the French classroom and their learning of the language, I conducted a survey to gather information on how students perceive benefit of participation in language classes.

The survey focuses on how students feel about their proficiency in certain aspects of their language acquisition, what teaching methods they most enjoy, which they think were most effective in helping them learn French, and their overall comfort level with different aspects of the class.

These results will reveal what types of participation students find most effective in helping them learn French. This can be compared to what they like most, then determine whether students are more biased towards what they enjoy versus what may be more helpful for them.

**Participation in French Class**

**French class confidence**

This section asks about your confidence in your French Speaking ability. Don't overestimate but also definitely don't under estimate. Compare yourself from when you started learning French to where you are now, not to fluent French speakers.

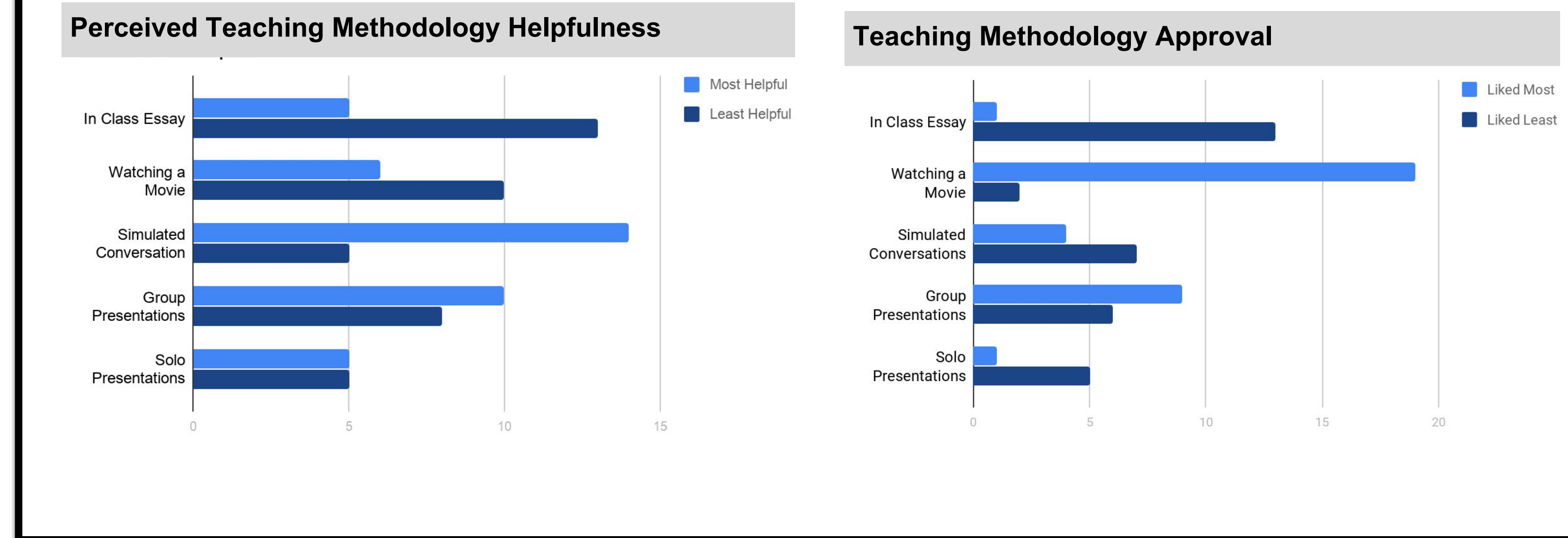
Rank how well you feel you understand (on average) when your teacher when they give VERBAL instructions

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I cannot understand them at any point           I have no difficulty understanding my teacher's verbal instructions at any time

Survey sample size:  
14 French 1 Students (Middle School)  
15 AP French Students (High School)

## DATA AND FINDINGS



## DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

The responses to the survey came from 14 students in French 1 and 15 students in AP French. They were asked about teaching methods they thought were most effective and least effective, teaching methods they liked most and least, what their comfort level with their classmates and teachers were, whether or not they had a fear of public speaking and if they felt it affected their presentation skills or not, and whether or not they thought the teaching methods being used in class were effective in helping them learn French.

The four teaching methods that garnered the most eye-catching results when students were asked about them were In-Class Essays, Watching a Movie, A Simulated Conversation, and Presentations, both Solo and Group. Here, Simulated Conversations and Presentations are methods that fall under the category of student participation.

When asked about In-Class Essays 48.1% of respondents said they did not enjoy the method and when asked about how much they felt it helped them learn 46.4% said it was unhelpful with learning French. This shows a connection between a lack of enjoyment of the method and how much the student perceived it helped them in learning French.

Watching a Movie in class was by far the most enjoyed teaching method, with over 73% of respondents saying they enjoyed watching a movie in class. However, only 23.1% of people said that they found the activity helpful in their acquisition of French and 35.7% of respondents said it was the least helpful. This disproves the theory that if a student enjoys a teaching method they will automatically see it as more helpful for learning French and vice versa for not liking the material.

Simulated Conversations were only enjoyed by 15.4% of respondents and 25.9% of respondents said they disliked simulated conversations. However, over 53% of respondents said that they felt that Simulated Conversations helped them learn French, even though few enjoyed it and about a ¼ of respondents said it was unenjoyable. This also helps disprove the aforementioned theory: this is an example of a teaching method being unpopular but being accepted as having positive results.

Opinions on presentations were extremely split for the most part among all categories. 38.5% of respondents felt that group presentations were helpful with French acquisition and 28.6% felt they were unhelpful. 19.2% of respondents said solo presentations were helpful and 17.9% said they were unhelpful. Comparing this to what students enjoyed most and least enjoyed, group presentations were enjoyed by 34.6% of respondents and disliked by 22.2%. Solo Presentations had an outlier with only 3.8% of respondents saying they enjoyed group presentations and 18.5% saying they disliked it. This shows a strong divide between group presentations and solo presentations. This could be due to the fact that some people feel less comfortable speaking in front of others and it may then make the material not as useful for them because they cannot focus on their task at hand.

In addition we measured whether or not people had a fear of public speaking and whether or not they felt it affected their performance in presentations they gave. Those who responded that their apprehensiveness about public speaking was very detrimental to their speaking ability all rated their comfort levels with both teachers and classmates 5 or lower on a scale of 1-10. This could be explained by the fact that if a person is afraid of public speaking, they aren't comfortable in an environment where they have to actively engage in it.

## CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

It is important to keep in mind that the results from this survey are all opinions and are not based on how well the student speaks French or how effective the teaching method was in helping them acquire French language skills by any objective metrics.

The results from the survey lead to mixed conclusions. In some cases, there is a connection between what students do not enjoy doing and what they perceive to be less helpful for them to learn French. However, there are also examples where a teaching method is more enjoyable to students, but they admit that it may not be as beneficial to their French acquisition... or the opposite, where an activity they find unenjoyable is constructive for their learning of French.

This most likely could be solved through an increase in sample size and survey responses. From an increased pool of data, there would be more to work with and thus more conclusive results.

A connection that seems to be very strong, however, is the connection between students who said that their fear of public speaking was "very detrimental" to their presentation abilities and their answers for how comfortable they felt around their classmates and teachers. All respondents who said that their fear of public speaking was very detrimental to their presentation abilities ranked their comfort level with both teachers and students at a 5 or lower. This shows a connection between fear of public speaking and comfort level which could lead to one of the following conclusions: The student feels uncomfortable around their peers and thus has a lack of confidence in their speaking ability and then feels the detrimental effects as a result, OR the student could have the fear of public speaking and as a result feels uncomfortable when asked to give presentations in class and thus feels uncomfortable around their peers.

Although this project is a good start, it does require more in-depth research to get more conclusive results. Some things that could be improved upon are increasing sample size and location. All the results from the survey were from French students in Palo Alto Unified School District, and thus it is fair to say that expanding out to other school districts for results could give a more in-depth look at responses. Another way to get a more diverse pool of responses is by sharing the survey with classes other than just AP French and French 1 to see if there are subtle differences between responses over the years and if the difficulty of the class influences responses.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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