

報告

Do academic examination requirements match students' expectations?

SAUZEDDE Bertrand / KISHIMOTO Seiko

Abstract

Teachers often have a rather clear idea on the kind of examinations that are most effective to evaluate their students. Nevertheless, from a purely didactical point of view, it is sometimes useful to reverse the roles and to focus on those who are actually involved, the students. Looking into the way they consider exams and what they expect from them may allow us to rethink the role of examinations. We will first introduce the results of a survey conducted on several classes of second and third-year French language students. We will then focus on the students' opinions about the various exams they took and discuss whether it is possible to realign the evaluation process required by academia with French learners' expectations.

Keywords

Evaluation, Examination, Motivation, Learner-centered teaching, Expectation

1 Introduction

1.1 What to evaluate?

Foreign language teachers at the University are often faced with a dilemma. They are dedicated to making their students' progress by using a teaching method that promotes learning strategies. Yet, at the same time, they also have to comply with academic rules and university policies. Learning strategies are a set of operations implemented by learners to acquire, integrate and reuse the target language (Cyr 1998). It has been proven that the multiplication of learning strategies maximizes success in learning a foreign language among students.

Assessment, among other class activities, plays a part in the teaching method. It allows teachers to regulate learning by correcting, redirecting and improving learning conditions (Groupil & Lusignan 1993). However, this definition of evaluation is somewhat utopian in a place – the university – where assessment often amounts to the validation of the minimum level required to obtain a credit.

Thus, formative assessment is often opposed to summative assessment. The former assesses the

progress made by students and involves qualitative feedback to improve both teachers' methods and students' learning process, while the latter evaluates students' achievements by comparing them against predefined standard (Rey 2012). Of course, in an academic environment, summative evaluation is usually preferred at the end of the semester. However, this does not preclude proceeding with some form of formative assessment during classes.

Whatever the type of assessment used, the process of acquiring skills has gained significant importance in French speaking countries over twenty years. However, it is safe to say that the adoption of a standard key-skills framework by the European Union (2006) as well as the implementation of various educational reforms, have helped such a concept of skill acquirement take on a prominent place in the evaluation system. Assuming that the main purpose of any evaluation is to assess skills and competence, how then should a competent student be defined? According to Carette (2009), a competent student is that who is able to solve complex and new tasks requiring the selection and combination of learned procedures.

Concretely, such a process consists of several steps (Rey 2012). The first one consists in having a student face a complex task such as the elaboration of a dialogue corresponding to a given situation. In the second phase, the complex task is decomposed into basic procedures (subtasks) to check the student ability to identify relevant resources. With regard to the elaboration of a dialogue, the student has to identify which register to use, the most preferable speech act, etc.

Finally, the third step aims at verifying the mastery of basic procedures. In other words, the proper use of linguistic knowledge, phonetics, etc. The purpose here is to check when the student encounters difficulties and, as social constructivists have shown, to assist the student in the acquisition of cognitive processes.

As explained earlier, the notion of competence is not necessarily opposed to that of knowledge. Competence can be defined as the ability to use knowledge in various situations (Meuret 2012). Of course, it is always possible to argue that at the university, assessing what is not within the purview of knowledge or objectified knowledge is sometimes difficult. However, current academic criteria already take partially into consideration such elements as academic behavior (attendance, lateness, discipline and attention) or even social behavior (cooperation, initiative). Thus, in the context of a class, learning situations require students to cooperate or to work in groups, making it difficult for the teacher to assess students individually. However, by focusing on skill assessment, it becomes possible to draw a student's skill-learning curve. As explained by Moirand (1982), several types of skills have to be taken into account:

- Language: knowledge and use of different phonetic, lexical, grammatical and textual language structures.
- Discursive: knowledge and use of different types of speech according to a given situation.
- Referential: knowledge of the world and the relationship between space and time.
- Pragmatic: knowledge and appropriation of social conducts and interaction standards.

Such skills can be learned through different methods. It is thus necessary to distinguish four

language skills: reading comprehension, listening comprehension, written production and oral production (Veltcheff & Hilton 2003).

1.2 Learner-Centered Teaching

Recently, teaching has been focusing on a learner-centered approach instead of a teacher-centered approach. Such a focus derives directly from the constructivist movement (80's). Several research evidences are supporting the implementation of a learner-centered approach, stressing out the fact that, involving learners actively, generates more interest. Thomson Kinoshita (2008) elaborates on the learner-centered teaching by quoting Nunan: "The key difference between learner-centered and traditional curriculum development is that, in the former, the curriculum is a collaborative effort between teachers and learners" (Nunan 1988). The way students are assessed will impact how and what they learn. The assessment process is a part of teaching, and it also concerns learner-centered teaching. Self-assessment is a representative example of different possible approaches, such as peer assessment, or the use of a portfolio. Self-assessment, to some extent, gives learners some autonomy, by letting them set their own goals, identify related contents and choose learning methods. Peer assessment refers to the practice whereby classmates evaluate each other's work. Letting learners take part in the evaluation process is probably a good way to make them feel they have a role to play in class, and motivate them.

1.3 Relations between examinations and motivation

It appears that action occurs in response to an external stimulus (Isoda 2006). Subjects react to a stimulus by cognitive process. This cognitive process is described by Eccles (2005), who established a model based on the dichotomous principle : "expectation(s)/value(s)". Learners establish a cognitive representation of the expectations and values of the task they deal with, and which drive them to act. In this case, the cognitive process corresponds to a cognitive evaluation (appraisal). Expectations refer to the probability of carrying out a given task as well as to the evaluation of its difficulty and the skills it requires. Values are based on various psychological factors and can be divided into 4 points.

- Intrinsic value: it is the value that students find in an activity for itself. It has therefore to do with the pleasure they derive from doing the activity.
- Attainment value: it refers to the importance students attach to the task. It relates to how they conceive of their identity and ideals or their competence in a given domain.
- Utility value: it refers to the future benefit that can be obtained when doing an activity
- Cost: it points out to the stress and efforts required to achieve a task. Cost tends to decrease the perceived values

For Isoda (2006), expectations and values are subjective notions. They vary from one learner to the other, and can also fluctuate according to the language studied. In Japan, French Language is not associated with a very high utility value since it is not very usefull when looking for work. However, attainment value is relatively high because learning French is not very common. A perfect command of

the language is rare so that the speaker enjoys a very positive image within his community. Considering that examination is a task, when learners are taking exams, they unconsciously perform an estimation of the expectations and values.

However, no research has been conducted on the evaluation process from a learner-centered point of view in French language teaching. The situation is very different with English for two distinct reasons: first, most students start to learn French as a new language when they enter the university, so that researchers tend to focus more on the teaching methods rather than the evaluation process. This is also the reason why evaluation is not used as a placement test whereby classes are made up according to language level. Secondly, for most students, the acquisition of French hardly leads to a specific work after graduation, and is therefore not directly linked with the field they will be involved in. Yet, as in English teaching, there is also a noticeable development in French teaching techniques and abundant discussions from various points of view as far as course design and class performance are concerned. Considering that class contents and examination are mutually complementary, and that examination has to appropriately reflect what has been reviewed in class, it needs to be considered in accordance with the development of teaching method. This paper, based on a survey conducted on university students, is therefore a first attempt at looking at the examination process from a learner-centered point of view by looking at what the students feel and think about the exams they are taking.

The survey was conducted on second and third-year students who took French classes as a minor course in Ritsumeikan University. Taking into account that the university was enrolled in the Super Global University programs of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology for the year 2014, and that it offers to the students the opportunity to thoroughly learn a second language through a minor course; conducting our research in Ritsumeikan University should offer a good illustration of the present situation as far as French language teaching in Japan is concerned. It will thus provide an interesting benchmark case against which studies about the situation in other universities could be compared. We have chosen second and third-year students for two reasons. To begin with, first-year students have not taken enough French language exams to look back and comment on them. Secondly, some of the first-year students are not really keen to study French, their goal is only to get the credit, which makes it difficult to obtain valid findings.

2 Method

2.1 Subjects of the investigation

75 students from Ritsumeikan University were involved. They consisted of 33 second-year students and 42 third-year students who had chosen to continue learning French after their freshman year. They were therefore students with high motivation, whose French skills ranged between level A2 and B1 of the DELF examinations.

2.2 Survey content

The survey, written in Japanese, consisted of 8 main questions with sub-questions for a total of 95 questions to answer. It was a multiple choice questionnaire whose objective was to get a clearer understanding of what the students felt about the tests they took during their freshman year in the various French courses they were registered in. In order to increase objectivity and the rates of return, the survey was a multiple choice questionnaire and was anonymous. This allowed a rate of return of 100%.

2.3 Conduct and analysis of the survey

The survey took place during the last class of the second semester (2013) in the various classes involved. The aim of the survey was to get a clearer understanding of the students' opinions about the various French exams they took since their first year. This survey was also intended to measure values and expectations of each examination type, for the purpose of having a better understanding of the cognitive evaluation learners execute when they are faced with a task. To measure expectations, we asked learners to evaluate themselves in various skills. The benefits (values), which are divided into four (as explained above), were measured according to various questions: one about the students' appraisal of examinations (intrinsic value), one question about stress, one about the frequency of examinations, and one about teachers' severity (cost), and finally the question about the progress attained through examination (attainment value). We have purposely left out the utility value because it is difficult to quantify and is not directly related to the issue of evaluation.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Result of the survey

3.1.1 Self-assessment of students' personal level (question 1)

The first question concerned the level students thought they had in the four main language skills: written production (WP), oral production (OP), reading comprehension (RC) and listening comprehension (LC) (Figure 1).

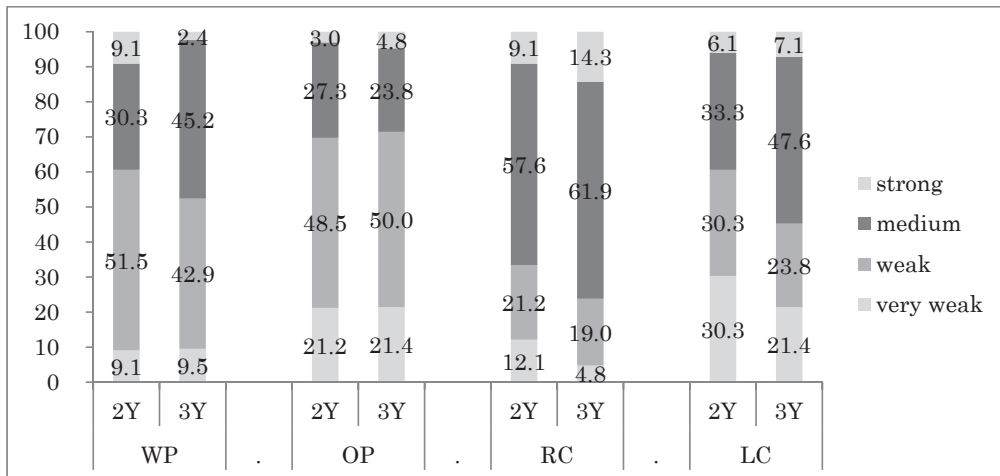


Figure 1 Students' Level according to self-evaluation in four skills: written production (WP), oral production (OP), reading comprehension (RC) and listening comprehension (LC) (School year (2Y: second year, 3Y: third year), percentage of students (%))

This chart offers valuable information. First, if we refer to the percentage of students who evaluate themselves as very weak or weak, reading comprehension seems to be the area they feel better at. Only 33.3 percent of second-year students, and 23.8 percent of third-year students think their level is weak in reading comprehension. However, for the three other skills, a majority of second-year students feel weak or very weak, with respectively 60.6 percent who believe that they have an insufficient level in written production, 69.7 percent in oral production and 60.6 percent in oral comprehension. Except for oral production, the feeling of having an inadequate level disappears among third-year students (52.4 percent for WP, 23.8 percent for EC, and 45.2 percent for LC). Students do feel an improvement between the second and the third year. As far as oral comprehension is concerned, a majority of third-year students feel they have a correct level (medium and strong), which was not the case for second-year students. The graph highlights the fact that it takes more time to get a feeling of improvement in oral comprehension than in reading comprehension, the latter of which students feel they can master in their second year. However, even at the end of the third year, students feel they have insufficient production skills. What reason can the difference between comprehension and production be attributed to? Is it related to class activities? Or to the type of tests implemented by teachers? To better understand these issues, we have analyzed the results of other survey questions that focused on students' feelings about examinations.

3.1.2 Strictness of the examination process (question 2)

The second question aims at understanding how strict the evaluation process was perceived by the students. It appears that 30.3 percent of second-year students judged that evaluation was strict (too strict or quite strict) (Figure 2). This feeling decreases largely among third-year students, with only 9.5 percent of them who thought that their assessments were quite strict.

Do academic examination requirements match students' expectations?

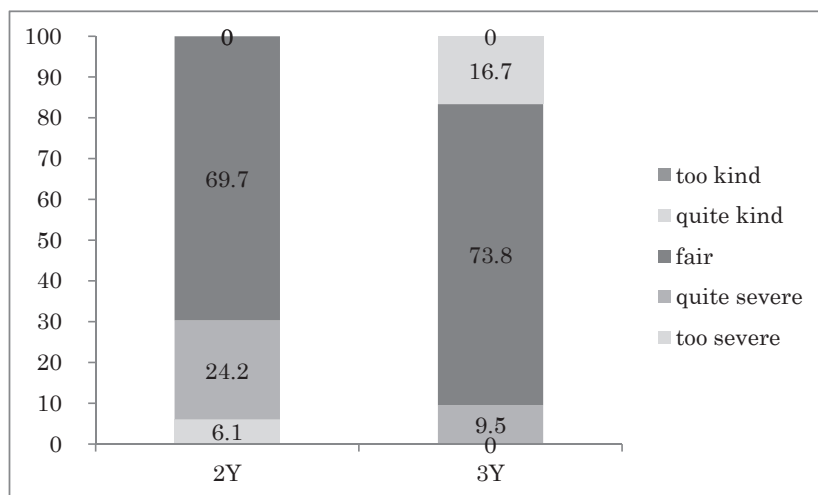


Figure 2 Perception of the teachers' strictness (School year (2Y: second year, 3Y: third year), percentage of students (%))

This decrease in the perception of the assessment strictness is probably due to the fact that students tend to get used to the evaluation process, which allows teachers to be more demanding, so that the level gap between the third year and the second year is not as important as between the first and the second year. Although examinations for second and third-year students were not standardized to fit a particular level, difficulty is increasing over the different semesters, according to the syllabi. For instance, as far as second-year courses are concerned, the goal is to make the students reach DAPF level 3 or 2 bis. As far as the third-year courses are concerned, students are aiming at DAPF level 2.

3.1.3 The place given to class attendance in the evaluation process (question 3)

In most universities in Japan, class attendance accounts for a large part of the grade. It can become a problem since a number of first-year students think that attending to a class – even in a passive way – is enough to get a credit. Thus, the answers to the third question (Figure 3) show that nearly 70 percent of second-year students would expect attendance to account for between 40 and 75 percent of the points required to obtain a credit. Roughly 60 percent of third-year students answered in the same way, a result that is still very high and reveals how much students are used to being awarded only through attendance. The decrease of 10 percent observed may be explained by several factors. During the third year, students have to start job-hunting and miss a great number of classes. Awarding too many points to attendance is not to their advantage and some students prefer to have more points awarded to exams and homework.

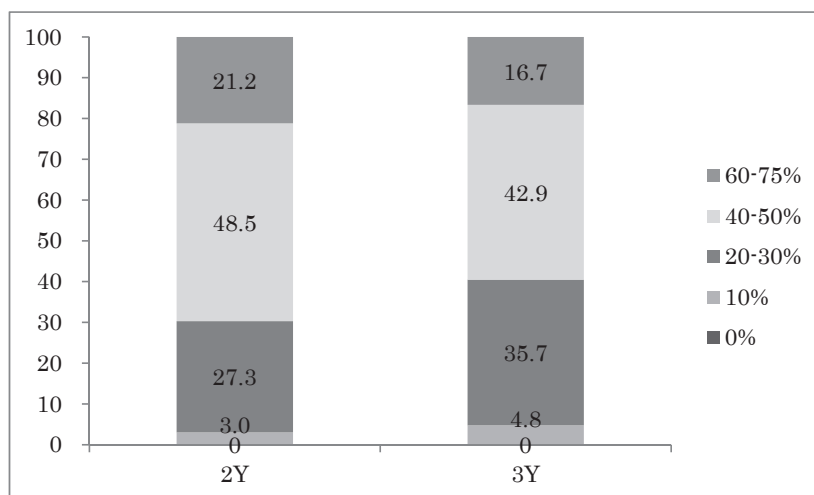


Figure 3 Expected proportion of attendance in the final grade (School year (2Y: second year, 3Y: third year), percentage of students (%))

Another way of explaining it would be to take into consideration the fact that students acquired self-confidence and want their skills and productions to be taken more into account in the final grade.

3.1.4 Students' feelings about examinations (questions 4-8)

The following 5 questions are the most important part of the investigation. Each of them was divided into 17 sub-questions conforming to the various types of possible exams. Such a list is of course not exhaustive but shows the most commonly performed tests in the university students belong to. Exams were classified according to the 4 language skills (Table 1.f).

The 5 questions aimed at gaining a better understanding of what students thought of the various exams they took. For that purpose, five criteria were taken into account. The first criterion, corresponding to question 5, aimed at determining the extent to which students liked or disliked the exams they had to take. The second criterion chosen pertained to the frequency of examinations, that is, whether the students judged they took many exams. The third criterion was related to the amount of stress felt by students. The fourth criterion aimed at measuring the preparation time required for each exam. The last criterion was designed to assess how much students thought they improved, and if some types of exams helped students improve more than others.

For each question, students had to choose between 6 answers. For instance, with regard to the first criterion that corresponds to the appraisal of exams, students could choose from the following answers: *not at all*, *not a lot*, *well*, *a lot*, or *never took such an exam*. As far as the results are concerned, a value was assigned to each answer. The answer *not at all* corresponded to the value -2, *not a lot* to -1, *medium* to 0, *well* to +1 and *a lot* to +2. By weighting the groups according to their number, different relative rankings could be established for each criterion. Concretely, we divided the score obtained by the number of responses and multiplied it by 100. Doing that, we were able to compare the results

Do academic examination requirements match students' expectations?

Table 1 Classification of different types of examination in 2 groups according to the chosen criterion

a) Appraisal of exams (from best to least)

Total		2Y		3Y	
Exam	Score	Exam	Score	Exam	Score
7	112.3	7	106.5	7	116.7
2	60.6	11	45.2	2	92.9
11	40.9	16	28.1	9	65.8
9	37.1	5	15.6	1	48.8
16	36.8	6	15.2	5	45.2
5	32.4	2	13.8	16	44.4
6	27.0	15	12.0	11	37.1
10	19.7	10	11.5	6	36.6
15	14.6	4	3.1	10	25.7
4	11.7	9	3.1	14	23.5
1	4.2	13	0.0	4	21.4
14	1.6	8	-17.9	12	19.4
13	-2.2	14	-23.3	15	17.4
12	-9.5	17	-44.0	13	-4.0
3	-26.9	12	-48.1	3	-5.7
17	-30.2	3	-50.0	17	-17.9
8	-35.3	1	-54.8	8	-56.5
average	17	average	1	average	30
σ	35.2	σ	38.9	σ	39.3

b) Amount of exams (from too frequent to not frequent enough)

Total		2Y		3Y	
Exam	Score	Exam	Score	Exam	Score
1	18,1	1	38,7	7	7,1
3	11,1	3	36,7	1	2,4
7	11,0	4	25,8	5	-2,4
4	10,2	2	25,0	2	-2,4
2	8,7	9	21,9	4	-7,1
9	5,7	7	16,1	9	-7,9
5	1,3	6	9,1	3	-12,1
8	-2,1	8	7,7	8	-13,6
11	-4,8	11	6,7	15	-14,3
6	-6,7	5	6,1	14	-14,7
16	-7,9	10	3,8	16	-14,7
12	-11,9	16	0,0	11	-15,6
10	-12,7	12	-4,0	12	-17,6
15	-13,6	17	-5,0	6	-19,0
14	-14,5	13	-6,3	10	-27,6
17	-18,2	15	-13,0	13	-28,6
13	-18,9	14	-14,3	17	-29,2
average	-3	average	9	average	-13
σ	11,3	σ	15,9	σ	10,1

c) Stress felt (from most to least stressful)

Total		2Y		3Y	
Exam	Score	Exam	Score	Exam	Score
3	53.1	12	95.8	3	21.9
8	51.0	3	84.4	12	17.6
12	50.0	8	82.1	8	13.0
4	37.3	1	80.6	4	0.0
11	18.5	4	68.8	11	-5.9
10	12.5	2	60.7	10	-9.7
1	8.5	13	50.0	13	-22.7
13	7.9	11	45.2	5	-24.4
9	1.5	10	40.0	6	-24.4
5	-2.7	14	37.5	9	-27.0
15	-4.5	9	35.5	17	-39.1
6	-6.8	15	31.8	15	-40.9
2	-7.4	5	24.2	14	-42.4
14	-8.8	6	15.2	1	-47.5
17	-26.2	7	-3.2	2	-55.0
7	-43.1	17	-10.5	16	-55.9
16	-45.0	16	-30.8	7	-73.2
average	5.6	average	41.6	average	-24.4
σ	28.9	σ	34.5	σ	26.7

d) Preparation time (min.)

Total		2Y		3Y	
Exam	Score	Exam	Score	Exam	Score
11	85.4	11	91.8	2	93.8
10	85.0	8	90.9	7	81.8
2	83.8	10	90.0	10	80.8
7	81.3	1	81.8	11	80.0
1	78.5	7	80.6	6	78.0
6	76.7	6	75.0	12	78.0
8	76.5	5	74.1	5	77.3
5	75.8	4	72.7	13	77.0
12	71.5	9	72.7	1	75.8
9	69.9	2	71.8	9	67.5
4	69.6	3	71.8	4	66.9
13	69.6	12	63.6	3	66.5
3	69.0	13	60.9	17	64.6
17	60.0	16	56.1	8	63.9
16	59.6	17	54.2	16	62.2
14	57.5	14	53.2	14	60.7
15	54.8	15	51.0	15	57.7
average	72	average	71.3	average	72.5
σ	9.4	σ	12.9	σ	9.3

e) Improvement felt (from best to least)

Total		2Y		3Y	
Exam	Score	Exam	Score	Exam	Score
5	120.3	5	113.3	6	128.2
6	115.9	7	113.3	1	126.3
7	114.5	6	100.0	5	125.6
1	111.8	1	93.3	12	116.1
2	95.6	4	93.3	7	115.4
4	94.7	2	89.7	17	113.0
12	89.1	8	82.1	3	105.9
9	88.2	10	76.9	14	103.2
3	85.9	9	74.2	2	100.0
10	83.6	3	63.3	9	100.0
17	83.3	12	54.2	13	100.0
8	82.7	17	47.4	4	96.3
14	74.5	16	45.8	15	95.2
16	69.6	11	41.4	10	89.7
13	68.6	14	37.5	16	87.5
15	67.5	15	36.8	11	86.7
11	64.4	13	31.3	8	83.3
average	88.8	average	70.2	average	104.3
σ	17.4	σ	26.8	σ	13.9

f)

WP	1	Japanese into French translation
	2	Essay with dictionary
	3	Essay without dictionary
	4	Essay on new topic
	5	Grammar
	6	Vocabulary
RC	7	French into Japanese translation
	8	Summary of French text
	9	Text reading and questions
OP	10	Oral presentation (cultural theme)
	11	Role playing with other students
	12	Oral interview with professor
LC	13	Memorizing and Reciting
	14	Listening and questions
	15	Video watching and questions
	16	Listening and filling in blanks
	17	Dictation

from the second and third-year students. For example, if we look at the results related to stress (Table 1.c), we see that *Essay without dictionary*, the most stressful exam for third-year students, has actually a lower value of stress than for second-year students, even though it is only ranked in second position for the latter.

Looking at the classification of the different exams based on the students' appraisal (Table 1.a), students seem not to have preconceptions about the various language activities. They appreciate both production activities and those based on comprehension, whether written or oral. Some teachers tend to favor certain types of activities, arguing that students like to write more or to speak more, that they prefer active production or that they enjoy comprehension activities more. Such arguments are nothing but misconceptions that we must fight. Japanese students are no more averse to oral than to written activities.

If we now compare the results for exams appraisal by second-year students and third-year students, the most remarkable item, with the points increasing in proportion with the years of study, is *Japanese into French translation* (from -54.8 to 48.8). Next, we find *Essay with dictionary*, *Interview with professor*, *Text reading and questions*. Reversely, the item where a decrease can be noticed is *Summary of French text*. The third-year students seem therefore to enjoy conveying in French what they think and feel in Japanese. Even though *Interview with teacher*, is ranked rather low among third-year students, and is a task that generates a lot of stress, as we will see after, students seem to overcome the difficulties of this type of examination as they learn French.

Moreover, despite the fact that students enjoy being evaluated according to different language skills, they consider written examinations to be too numerous. The results showing the answers of both second and third-year students (Table 1.b) show that the 7 most frequent exams are all related to writing. Conversely, the 7 least frequent exams are exclusively oral examinations. This is clearly an element that teachers should reconsider. Students are not averse to the idea of taking more oral examinations, whether they are related to production or to comprehension. The third-year students seem to feel that, in almost all types of tasks, exams are not frequent enough, only *Listening & questions* and *Video watching & questions* shared the same frequency perception for students of both years. This reflects well the fact that teachers tend to avoid imposing too many exams on third-year students, who are looking for work at that time, and need therefore to focus on their own specialization (major). It seems however, that students might wish for more frequent exams. Moreover, such an observation is corroborated by the fact that students do not consider listening exams as stressful (Table 1.c). Thus, among the 4 least stressful activities, 3 correspond to listening activities if we look at the answers of both second and third-year students. In contrast, oral production represents an expected significant proportion of the exams considered stressful. However, as Table 1.a indicates, students do enjoy some oral activities such as conversations and group presentations. It is rather activities such as interviews where students are confronted to the teacher alone, or recitations that are found most stressful. What bothers students is not the activity in itself, but rather their lack of confidence and certainly their lack of training. We will now look into the scores regarding stress. We see that third-year students tend not to feel the same amount of stress for all types of examinations. They do not feel a lot of stress when it comes to *Japanese into French translation* and *Essay with dictionary*. On the contrary, *Listening and filling in blanks* and *Dictation* did not show any remarkable gap between second and third-year students. Such results illustrate a sharp contrast between tasks involving written material (less stressful) and tasks involving oral material (more stressful).

Regarding students' feeling of improvement (Table 1.e), grammar, vocabulary and translation exercises are activities that are thought to provide the greatest benefits. Such a result is revealing of a very traditional teaching methodology. Second-year students do not think they have reached a sufficient oral level to feel an improvement. This is not surprising because students frequently showed their frustration at not being able to express themselves orally compared to written expression. In third year, they finally consider that interviews with the teacher, listening exercises and dictation may help them improve. This feeling might appear and grow faster if education focused more on oral activities.

However, teachers alone are not to blame for such a lack of confidence in students' oral capabilities. Students acknowledge that they study less for activities related to listening comprehension. The results show that third-year students felt they improved much more than second-year students. In terms of evolution, if we subtract the scores of second-year students from the scores of third-year students, *Reciting* comes first, followed by *Listening and questions*, *Dictation*, *Oral interview with professor*, *Video watching and questions*. As far as these tasks are concerned, second-year

students assessed themselves with the lowest lower rate. On the contrary, the tasks where no big gap in the scores is noticeable are *Summary*, *French into Japanese translation*, *Essay on new topic* etc.

The results show that the exams they least prepare for are always listening exams (Table 1.d). Considering that activities related to oral production or comprehension are often the most neglected in classrooms and textbooks, it is not surprising that students have more difficulty with speech acts and that many of them consider they are weak or very weak in this area.

Analyzing data from the various criteria separately is obviously not satisfactory enough. In order to better grasp the feelings of students and to understand what makes them appreciate an exam or not, we have searched for correlations between the various criteria studied.

3.2 Correlation between factors

We focused on the following 4 criteria: the amount of exams, the stress, the preparation time and the improvement reported by respondents after taking an exam, and correlated them against the results about student's appraisal of exams. Considering the answers of both second and third-year students, we first calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient corresponding to the degree of appraisal of exams according to each criterion.

When applying the Pearson correlation formula (figure 4), it appeared that the correlation was relatively large and negative (Pearson correlation coefficient: $r = -0.60$), meaning that the more stressful an exam was, the less students liked it. It is even more noticeable when looking at the scatter plot and the regression line. The regression line obtained, $y = 0.79x + 14.14$, and the coefficient of determination, $R^2 = 0.36$, indicate that 36% of the total variation in y can be explained by the linear relationship between x and y . In other words, the degree of stress felt during exams has a 36% influence on the appraisal of exams by students. Of course, 36% may seem small, but we must bear in mind that in social sciences, a phenomenon may be explained by multiple factors and therefore a single factor does not explain alone the values of a dependent variable. Stress is thus an important one, but others may have an influence on the level of exams appraisal by students.

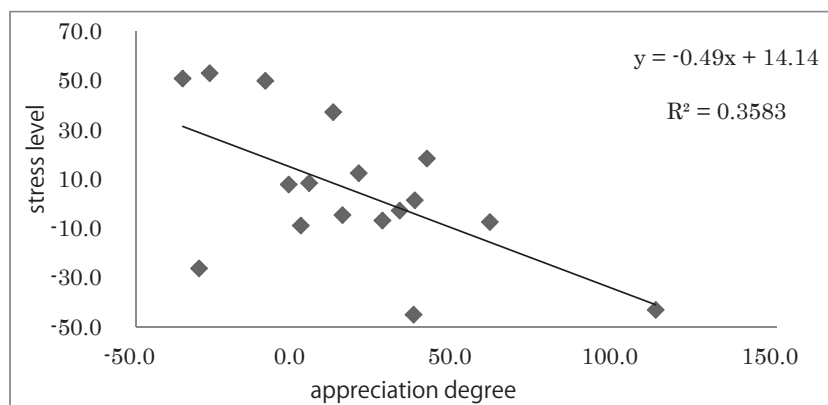


Figure 4 Scatter plot of stress level regression line according to the degree of exams appraisal, and Pearson correlation coefficient equation

We calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient of the level of exams appraisal according to 4 criteria both for second-year and third-year students, as well as for the total group (second-year and third-year students together) (Table 2).

Table 2 Correlation coefficient of the level of exams appraisal according to 4 criteria

	TOTAL	2nd year	3rd year
Frequency	0.34	-0.08	0.65
Stress	-0.60	-0.54	-0.65
Preparation time	0.41	0.26	0.55
Improvement	0.34	0.29	0.29

As shown in the above table, there are a number of correlations between the level of appraisal and the selected criteria. Regarding second-year students, the exams frequency, the preparation time, and the improvement felt after taking an exam do not seem to have a great importance. As far as third-year students are concerned, only the improvement criterion shows a very low correlation coefficient, which means only the other three criteria seem to have an influence on the level of exams appraisal by students. When looking at the answers from all students (total), stress and preparation time seem to have influence on the level of exams appraisal.

Taken independently, such correlations explain to a limited extent the variations in the level of exams appraisal. Actually, no value taken independently exceeds 42% of the explained variation.

To assess the various criteria that influence the level of exams appraisal more accurately, we performed multiple regression tests to identify multiple correlations between the different criteria.

For the group of second-year students, the first multiple regressions test, which checks all predictor variables at the same time, shows that only stress bears a significant influence on the level of exams appraisal. We therefore repeated a single regressions test with the stress criterion only. We obtained the following values: multiple correlation coefficients $R = 0.54$, coefficient of multiple determinations $R^2 = 0.29$. The stress criterion seems to account for a 29% influence on the level of exams appraisal. As the value of probability from the ANOVA table is less than 0.05, there is a statically significant relationship between the variables with a confidence level over 95%. The equation of the model is $y = 26.32 - 0.61$ (stress).

We checked whether there were also four predictor variables influencing the level of exams appraisal within the group of third-year students by using multiple regression tests. The results of the analysis confirmed the hypothesis more extensively than for the group of second-year students. The variable for the frequency criterion was: $\beta 1 = 1.56$, $t = 2.64$, $p = 0.02$, the variable for the stress criterion was: $\beta 2 = -0.69$, $t = -3.2$, $p = 0.008$, the variable for the preparation time was: $\beta 3 = 0.53$, $t = 2.93$, $p = 0.01$, the variable for the improvement criterion was: $\beta 4 = 0.53$, $t = -0.28$, $p = 0.78$, n.s. Three predictors seem to be significant, while only the improvement factor seems not to. New tests for multiple regressions led the following equation: $y = -91.2 + 1.52$ (frequency) $- 0.68$ (stress) $+ 0.51$

(preparation time) with $R = 0.88$ and $R^2 = 0.78$. This means that 3 criteria may account for a 78% influence on the level of exams appraisal. This value has a quite significant relationship since $F(3, 16) = 15.4$, $p = 0.0001$.

Thanks to multiple regressions, we were able to learn more about the relationship between several independent variables and a dependent variable. Taken together, using multiple regression tests, predictors allowed a better predicting model of the factors that had an influence on whether students liked or disliked an examination. Regarding the second-year students, only one factor (stress) seems to account for the fact that students liked or disliked an examination. However, with third-year students, many more factors come into consideration. Preparation time, the frequency of examinations, are also factors that, on top of stress, influence students' appraisal of examinations.

4 Conclusions

The survey allowed us to better understand the feelings of student towards examinations. It appears that teachers have a misunderstanding of students' expectations towards examinations. Teachers tend to think that students resent being assessed in some language skills – most notably oral skills – whereas, learners are actually open to all kinds of tests, particularly those related to oral skills. Evaluation therefore should not be limited to traditional types of examination such as grammar or translation tests.

This type of survey has also provided a good feedback for teachers. There are many ways to obtain feedback on the progress or on the content of a course, but it is always more difficult to get feedback on examinations. Thanks to the survey, we were able to obtain a better understanding of students expectations and the different factors influencing their vision on assessments. The Learner-centered teaching method aims at actively engaging the student in the evaluation process. Such a focus on the student is fundamental to maintain a good level of motivation. Many researchers have shown that motivation tends to decrease over time (Ohki 2009), but teachers should be able to maintain it to some extent if they increased the intrinsic value of the course and of the evaluation process by implementing exams that students enjoy more. Teachers should also reduce cost by doing less stressful tests or by reducing the time needed to prepare examinations.

Doing so, a better task achievement can be expected, thus creating a virtuous circle: better self-esteem from better performance during examinations increases the attainment value. However, increasing the utility value through the use of evaluations only seems to be difficult. It cannot be denied, however, that some official tests like Delf-Dalf or DAPF can be attractive from a professional point of view.

Maximizing the equation “values/expectations”, with the purpose to increase student motivation, does not mean that we should let the students choose the exams they are going to take, but this survey provides a clearer picture of the various factors that influence the appraisal of exams by students. Students' feelings evolve with their academic level. That is why second-year and third-year students

do not share the same expectations toward exams. More factors have to be considered for advanced students. To take a concrete example, it is possible to evaluate a skill in many ways. Thus, if face to face examination with the teacher appears to be inappropriate during the second year, because of the stress it involves, it is possible to do role-playing with other students. The objectives of the course will be preserved and a higher degree of motivation can be maintained. Interviews can be done when students have more self-confidence, during the third year for instance.

Even though studies on students motivation are complex because many factors are involved, it would be interesting to see in future research whether changes of examination types, as hinted in the present study, could have repercussions on learners motivation.

References

- Carette, V. "Et si on évaluait des compétences en classe ? A la recherche du « cadrage instruit", In Mottier Lopez Lucie & Crahay Marcel (eds.). *Évaluations en tension*. Bruxelles: De Boeck, 2009, pp.147-163.
- Cyr, P. *Les stratégies d'apprentissage*. Paris: CLE International, 1998.
- Eccles, J.S. "Subjective Task Value and the Eccles et al. Model of Achievement – Related Choices", in Elliot, A. & Dweck, C. (éd.), *Handbook of Competence and Motivation*, New-York: The Guilford Press, 2005, pp. 105-121.
- Goupil, G. & Lusignan, G. *Apprentissage et enseignement en milieu scolaire*. Boucherville: Éditions Gaëtan Morin, 1993.
- Isoda, T. "Jugyô no naka de toraeru gakushûsha no dôki dzuke: ninchiteki hyôka no puroseshu no kenshô", *Daigaku eigo kyôiku gakkai kiyo*, vol. 43, 2006, pp. 15-28.
- Rey, O. "Le défi de l'évaluation des compétences." *Dossier d'actualité veille et analyse*, No.76, 2012, pp.1-18.
- Meuret, D. "Ne diabolisons pas les « compétences", *Après-demain*, No.21, 2012, pp.8-10.
- Moirand, S. *Enseigner à communiquer en langue étrangère*. Paris: Hachette, Coll. F, 1982.
- Nunan, D. *The learner-centered curriculum: A study in second language teaching*. New-York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Ohki, M. et al. "Les causes principales de la baisse de la motivation chez les apprenants japonais de français", *Revue japonaise de didactique du français*, vol. 4, 2009, pp. 71-82.
- Thomson Kinoshita, C. Kaigai no nihongo kyôiku no genba niokeru hyôka – jiko hyôka no katsudô to gakushûsha shudôgata hyôka no teian – (tokushû kyôiku genba kara toinaosu "hyôka"). *nihongo kyôiku*, vol 136, 2008, pp.27-37.
- Veltcheff, C. & Hilton, S. *L'évaluation en FLE*. Paris: Hachette FLE, 2003.

大学における試験と学生の期待の最適化の可能性

SAUZEDDE Bertrand (Foreign Language Lecturer, Language Education Center, Ritsumeikan University)

KISHIMOTO Seiko (Foreign Language Lecturer, Language Education Center, Ritsumeikan University)

要 旨

教員は学生の学習内容の到達度を評価するにあたり、特定の方法の有効性を信賴していることから、試験方式についてはかなり限定されたアイデアに留まっていることがよくある。しかしながら、純粋に教授的な観点に立って、学生と教員の役割を反転し、試験の当事者が実感していることを窺い知ることはときに有意であると思われる。つまり、学生たちの試験に対する考え、そして期待は何であろうか。これらを詳細に考察することで、試験の役割に対する我々の概念形成がより深化するかもしれない。本稿では、まず、大学の2年生及び3年生が対象の複数のフランス語授業で実施したアンケート調査の結果を提示する。次に、これまでに受験を経験したさまざまな種類の試験について、学生側はどのような意見をもっているのか分析し、大学固有の評価にかかわる制約と学び手の期待との間に調和をはかることは可能であるかを考察したい。

キーワード

評価、試験、モチベーション、学習者中心教育、期待