

**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT**



UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH:

PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS OF MODERN
LANGUAGES MAJOR: SPECIALTY FRENCH AND ENGLISH TO CHANGE
THEIR MAJOR TO THE B.A. IN ENGLISH ORIENTED TO TEACHING AT THE
FLD AT UES

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF:

LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLES OPCION ENSEÑANZA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	vi
-------------------	----

CHAPTER I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Delimitation of the problem.....	1
Research questions.....	2
Objectives.....	3
Justification.....	5
Limitations.....	7

CHAPTER II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Background.....	8
Aptitude for the subject.....	9
Previous knowledge	12
Personality types and academic environments.....	21

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Methodology.....	30
Setting.....	31
Measurement instruments.....	32
Sample.....	33
Data collection.....	33
Data analysis process.....	34

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Students' positive self-perceptions with regard to MLM.....	35
Students' negative self-perceptions with regard to MLM.....	37
Students' parental influence on changing major.....	39

Students' prior knowledge of French.....	41
Academic Environment and students' decision of changing major.....	43
Class schedules influence on changing from MLM to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching.....	45
Subjects in MLM students found the most difficult to study.....	46
Subjects in MLM students found the easiest to study.....	47
Areas of French students found the most difficult to manage in MLM....	48
Areas of French students found the easiest to manage in MLM.....	49
Macro skills students found the most difficult to master when studying French in MLM.....	50
Macro skills students found the easiest to master when studying French in MLM.....	51

V. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions.....	53
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VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Teachers.....	58
For students.....	59
For the FLD administration.....	59
REFERENCES.....	61
APPENDICES.....	63

INTRODUCTION

This quantitative research project is oriented to determine to what extent psychosocial factors influence students of Modern Languages Major (MLM): Specialty French and English to change to the B. A. in English Oriented to Teaching. The participants of this study were students who had changed from MLM to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador. To identify students who could fit in this study, a first questionnaire was designed. In order to obtain the appropriate data, a second questionnaire was addressed to the students who constituted the sample population.

Throughout the investigation, some possible factors influencing major changings were found. These ones included aptitude for the subject, prior knowledge, and academic environment, among others. The results suggest that students' self-perceptions affect negatively their academic performance. Therefore, it strongly influences their aptitude for the subject. Also, the findings show that the lack of prior or previous knowledge of French influences strongly on this matter. Furthermore, the generated academic environment is considered as another factor for students to make a change in their majors. Finally, the results present an association between students' weaknesses that influence their decision of changing major. Of course, there is a very close relationship among those factors. This work also contains important recommendations with the purpose of avoiding the tendency of changing from MLM.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most students enter the university committed to a particular major, but they change their choice during the first years of studies. This phenomenon has been taking place in different universities in a wide variety of majors. Indeed, there are many changes from the selected majors to others when students begin feeling frustrated because of the difficulties faced in the first semesters of studies. This lack of persistence in higher education brings a great number of negative aspects on students' academic goals. On the one hand, to some researchers, changing major is not necessarily a negative phenomenon but represents students' discovery of other academic fields that stimulate greater personal interest or that are more compatible to their personal aptitudes and abilities (Astin, 1993; Lewallen, 1995; Tinto, 1993). On the other hand, some other studies suggest that there are some factors that influence students to take the decision of changing their first selected major. Besides, the impact of those factors determines the level of efficacy of students on their academic achievements.

Most studies made before regarding students who decide changing their first selected major take the line of inquiry of finding the factors that influence them to move from a major to another. There are some others that try to determine the level of persistence of students based on their abilities and vocational interests. However, this study focuses not only on finding out the factors that led students to change, but also to provide some advice to avoid this problem. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the psychosocial factors that influence students of Modern Languages: Specialty French and English to change their major to the Bachelor of Arts in English Oriented to Teaching at the Foreign Language Department (FLD) at the University of El Salvador (UES). In this way some help will be given to the people involved in this problematic situation.

1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

General question:

- How do psychosocial factors influence students of Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English to change to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching at the FLD at UES?

Subsidiary questions:

- To what extent does aptitude for the subject make students of Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English decide changing to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching?
- Does academic environment cause students of Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English make a change to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching?
- Is prior knowledge a factor that influences students of Modern Languages to change their major to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching?

2. OBJECTIVES

General objective:

- To identify the psychosocial factors that influence students of Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English to change to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching in order to avoid this tendency at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador.

Specific objectives:

- To establish a rank among the psychosocial factors that make students change their career so as to give them some guidance to prevent these changes.
- To prove that aptitude for the subject is a factor that influences students of Modern Languages on their changing to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching at the Foreign Language Department at the UES.
- To determine the incidence of prior knowledge in the decision of changing major with the purpose of helping students to choose their most appropriate major.
- To demonstrate that academic environment is a factor affecting the decision of making a change of major in order to help the FLD professors to advise students regarding this issue.

- To determine the influence of class schedules over the decision of changing major so as to give some recommendation to the FLD in order to avoid or reduce the major changing tendency.

- To provide FLD with recommendations aimed at preventing changes from Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching so that students receive some advisory on the matter.

3. JUSTIFICATION

Changing from an academic major to another is a well-known phenomenon in higher education. Students who do not perform well in a major tend to move to a better option according to their expectations and other influences. This instability is considered of great importance and it will be studied at the Foreign Language Department (FDL) at the University of El Salvador (UES) because of the following facts:

- ✓ The tendency of students who decide to change from Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching represents a five percent of the students who entered the former major in the previous years.
- ✓ The population who has decided changing from Modern Languages Major to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching represents a ten percent in relation to the average of students who normally registered in each semester in the last four years.
- ✓ The lack of success in this major makes students feel frustrated.
- ✓ Students who change from Modern Languages Major (major changers) to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching do not usually achieve their academic goals.
- ✓ Major changers tend to lower their level of confidence. As a result, their academic performance is limited.

- ✓ Students' personality, academic aspects and social expectations could be affected when students decide to change their major.

Making emphasis on the facts mentioned before, the study of this issue is a need at the FLD. Not only is it important to discover the factors that make students of Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English to change to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching, but also to provide some advice to avoid this phenomenon. In this sense, new students can be better oriented when selecting their initial major.

4. LIMITATIONS

Along the research, the researchers faced some problems regarding the investigation process.

- ✚ Not many researchers have made a research studying these areas which means that it is difficult to find opinions of researchers interested in this phenomenon.
- ✚ It was difficult to get access to statistic information about students who had changed from Modern Languages major to that of English Oriented to Teaching.
- ✚ Not all the teachers and students were able to give information in the process of collecting data.
- ✚ It was difficult to locate students in the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching who had changed from Modern Languages major.
- ✚ Natural disasters, which interfere with classes at the University, prevented the researchers from doing the research for three weeks.
- ✚ Another limitation was the interference of the University elections in the course of the classes on campus.
- ✚ Finally, the different schedules of the researchers created some conflicts to their meetings.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Background

In the educational field, deciding on an academic major is of great importance in order to achieve personal and professional goals. For instance, to persist in a major is determinant in an academic process in higher education. However, not all of the students persist and finish their initial majors. This problematic situation has been studied from different perspectives. There is a concern in the factors that may influence students to make the big decision of changing major. In this line of inquiry, there are some researchers that have studied this inconsistency with university students and these reasons are related to the psychosocial factors that determine their tendency to move from a major to another.

To have a better picture, it is important to clarify the following terms:

Major-changer: An undergraduate student who enters college decided about a major but changes to another. (Cunningham Karen May 2009).

A student who is "relatively stable": is defined as an undergraduate student who never changes his/her initial major or changes only once or twice. (Cunningham Karen May 2009).

Language learning aptitude: refers to the “prediction of how well, relative to other individuals, an individual can learn a foreign language in a given amount of time and under given conditions.” (Rumelhart & Ortony 1977).

Aptitude for the subject

Students' tendency of prolonging their first major to change it later is related to aptitude for the subject. As some authors suggest, aptitude for the subject plays an important role on students' persistence or inconsistency in their academic major. Through the study of some bibliography, some important factors have appeared. One of these is the aptitude students have to study a foreign language or more. Aptitude for the subject is based on the Theory of Self Efficacy which suggests an association between self-referents/perceptions and the actions people carry out to accomplish a task.

Theory of self-efficacy (Albert Bandura, 1982)

It is related to the aptitudes students have for the subject of study. To explain the relationship of these concepts, it is important to define the terms. Self-efficacy is defined as the perceived level of confidence in one's ability to perform various activities related to career planning and development. This theory explains that the self-referent thought mediates the relationship between knowledge and action (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Brown & Inoye, 1978; Weinberg, Gould, & Jackson, 1979). The issues addressed in this line of inquiry are to how people judge their capabilities and how through their self-percepts of efficacy, they affect their motivation and behavior. Something important to be mentioned is that aptitude for the subject is determined to self-perceptions of the capability to carry courses of actions required to deal with particular situations. Also, the choice of activities and environmental settings are influenced by own perceptions of self-efficacy and the effort and time people is going to persist on it as well. Moreover, there is some emotional reaction associated with self-perceptions. In this sense, the emotional

arousal influences the person's self-referent because they judge themselves as able or unable to deal with a determined environment or with specific tasks. (Bandura, 1982).

Some findings in previous researches concerning to aptitude for the subject

According to Astin (1993), Lewallen (1995), and Tinto (1993), changing major is not a negative situation. On the other hand, it is an opportunity to explore new academic areas according to students' aptitudes so that the new major fulfills students' expectations. As a result, they can feel more comfortable in the new academic option. In contrast to, there is another study made in Finland which suggests that students who change their major subject or stop their studies are the non-committed students. In any of these cases, they prolong their studies. (Jarkko Makinen, et al., 2004).

There are some other theorists supporting Bandura's findings about students' self-beliefs. They also based on self-efficacy theory (?) which constitutes a predictor of motivation and engagement in academic tasks according to their own judgments of their capabilities to deal with certain academic work in different situations. (Linnenbrick & Pintrich, 2003). According to Pajares & Miller (1994) there is a distinction among the terms self-efficacy, self-concept, and self-esteem. Self-efficacy is associated to goals and capabilities needed to develop specific tasks, whereas self-concept and self-esteem are associated to emotional responses and personal qualities.

Another study associates students' decision about changing their initial major with some variables. According to Karen Cunningham (2009), these variables have to do with (a) level of psychosocial development, (b) level of self-efficacy and (c) level of parental education. All these variables may influence students who vacillate in keeping their first choice at universities. Students' psychosocial development may determine their continuity in the same major or move. As Erik Erickson proposed in

his Theory of Psychosocial Development (1963-1968), if they feel competent in any academic area they will be motivated to continue and this motivation will be transformed into actions (successful academic life). These students feel a sense of mastery which is called ego strength or ego quality. However, if they do not believe in their self skills, they will feel a sense of inadequacy and will doubt about their ability to be successful. Cunningham also suggests that parental education will be a factor influencing major changers. This is due to the fact that students who have not had a model (their parents) in the academic field, they will be less successful because they have little or no experience about college-related activities and they have poor knowledge about college campuses.

The findings of a research which was made with undergraduate students at the Business College in Massachusetts suggest that there are positive and negative factors that influence freshmen students to change to another major. The positive factors the researchers found include interest in the subject, career and job opportunities, high level of compensation, discussion with other students, and introductory Courses, among others with less level of significance. These factors are associated with dissatisfaction with the previous major or the positive expectations about the new major. "It is also possible that students' decision to change majors might arise from negative factors related to the old major." (Malgwi Carles, et al., 2005). (?) The investigation asserts that female students are influenced to change major because of the difficulty of the major showing a difference of .05 level with men. Some other negative factors making this kind of influence on this decision were instructors, level of career/job opportunities, low level of compensation and discussion with other students.

Previous knowledge

Previous or prior knowledge is a factor associated to students' academic success. The fact that the students who already have some kind of knowledge of a subject are more advantaged over the rest, tell us of its strong impact. In this sense, it is important to determine if the lack of prior knowledge is a factor that makes students to change their initial majors. It is observable in classroom environments that most students have different skills and prior knowledge of certain kind of areas of study. This background knowledge makes the learning process easier.

Some terms definitions

Knowledge: It may be defined as “an individual's personal stock of information, skills, experiences, beliefs and memories” (Alexander, Schallert & Hare, 1991).

Prior knowledge: It is defined as a combination of knowledge and skills. It may be characterized as knowledge that:

- ✚ comprises both declarative and procedural knowledge;
- ✚ is present before the implementation of a particular learning task;
- ✚ is available or able to be recalled or reconstructed;
- ✚ is relevant for the achievement of the objectives of the learning task;
- ✚ is organized in structured schemata;
- ✚ is to a certain degree transferable or applicable to other learning tasks;
- ✚ is dynamic in nature (Dochy, Moerkerke & Segers, 1999).

Some previous investigations regarding prior knowledge

According to what Biggs (1993) suggested in his model of 3P (presage, process and product) in which he conceptualized the learning process as an interacting system of variables, they constitute factors of great significance on students outcomes. Within this model there was a concern on presage (students based) which includes prior knowledge, students' ability and motivation that exist prior the time of learning. Under this view there is a study, "Assessing University Students' Prior Knowledge" developed by Telle Hailikari (2009) in the University of Helsinki, Finland, which states that prior knowledge influences students' academic performance and results. "A key to developing an integrated and generative knowledge base is to build upon the learner's prior knowledge". (Glaser & De Corte, 1992) This asseveration led the researchers to understand that students acquire the new knowledge in an easier way if they can connect it with the previous information because it would be built in stronger bases. When there is a lack of this source of information in some students, it makes a visible difference in their performance and results in classes. As Dochy (1996) states: "individual differences in the prior knowledge base are a primary source of differences in students' achievement."

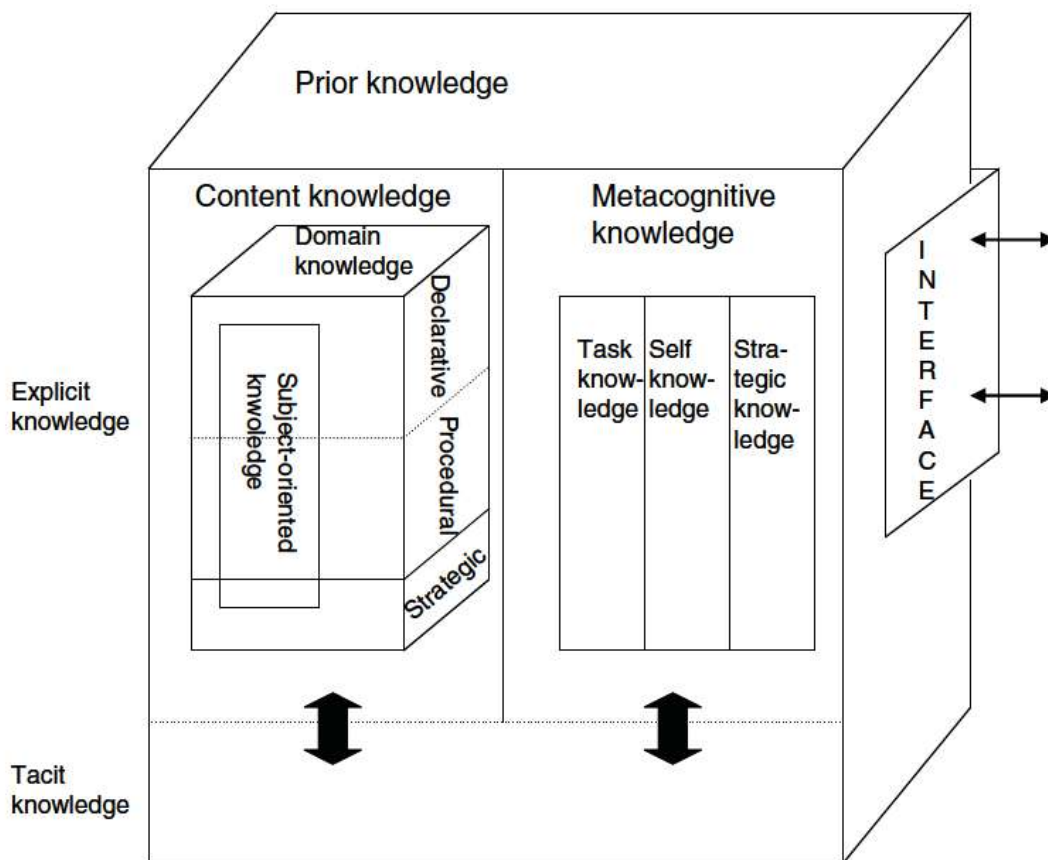
Prior knowledge organization

Referring to knowledge, there are some distinctions that need to be made:

Conceptual knowledge: It is further divided into content, subject-matter, domain and discipline knowledge.

Metacognitive knowledge: It includes self or person knowledge, task knowledge and strategy knowledge.

The following figure describes in detail the key dimensions of prior knowledge.



Conceptual map of prior knowledge taken from Dochy's research (1996)

According to the previous figure, *Prior knowledge* is divided into two components which are *content knowledge and metacognitive knowledge*. The first one includes a sub category: *Domain knowledge*. This kind of knowledge is subdivided into *declarative and procedural knowledge*. It also shows a base of *strategies* that may be related to how to recall the information. Declarative and procedural knowledge are fed by *subject-oriented knowledge* (information of subject matter).

The second main component of prior knowledge is *metacognitive knowledge*, which is related to higher cognitive skills such as *task knowledge, self knowledge*

and *strategic knowledge*. All of these components interact under a surface to produce tacit knowledge.

Declarative knowledge: It includes knowledge of facts and knowledge of meaning. It is assessed by recognizing, enumerating, recalling, remembering, defining, reproducing and understanding the meaning of a concept.

Procedural knowledge: It includes integration of knowledge and application of knowledge (what students can do with their knowledge). Its assessment is determined by understanding concepts and their interrelations, classifying, comparing, problem solving, application of knowledge, producing, and implementing.

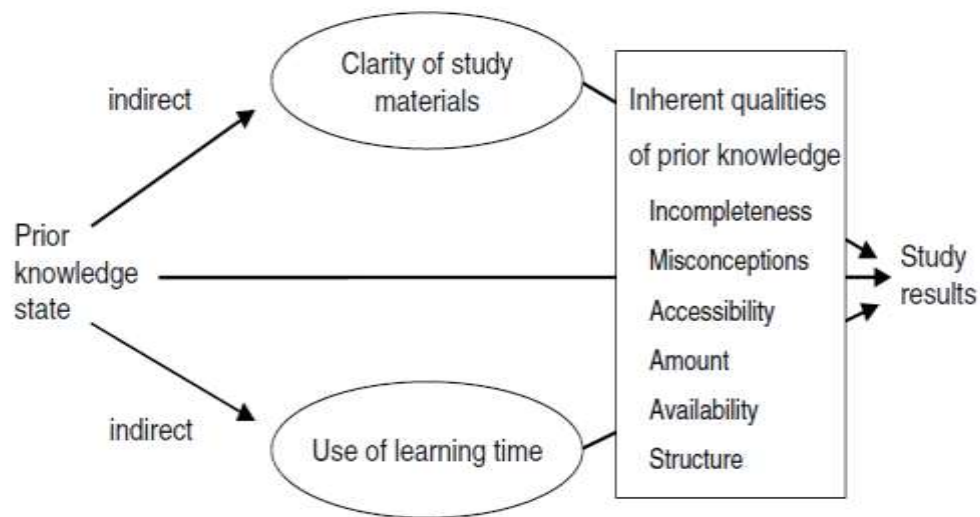
The relevance of background knowledge has been supported by some other researchers such as Bloom (1956), who affirmed that the learning process taking place in students is very influenced by their cognitive entry behaviors. Also, he stayed that “prior knowledge may account for one-half of the variance of student learning outcomes”. It means that the bases students have concerning to knowledge are important in a fifty percent of the students overall performance. Another author who supports the importance of prior knowledge in students’ achievements is Ausubel (1968), who states: “If I had to reduce all of educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this: The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner knows already. Ascertain this and teach...accordingly”. This asseveration not only led us to know the importance of pupils background knowledge but also the importance for teachers to take it into consideration for a better and more appropriate teaching methodology based on the differences among students prior knowledge. Another contribution on this concern was made by Weinert (1989), whose findings lie on the conception that the effects of prior knowledge are stronger than intelligence in the learning process. Similarly, Minnaert and Jassen (1996) found

that the domain of specific prior knowledge has a higher influence than general thinking skills. This assertion focused on students' previous learning experiences which constitute prior knowledge that helps them to acquire the new knowledge in an easier way.

In the study of prior knowledge literature, it is important to mention some relevant effects of the direct and indirect influences of it on the learning process. The effects of prior knowledge are organized in three different categories according to Dochy & Alexander (1995):

1. "A direct influence of prior knowledge in facilitating learning".
2. "The influence of the inherent qualities of prior knowledge (for example, the incompleteness, misconceptions, accessibility, amount, availability and structure of prior knowledge)".
3. "Interaction effects between the inherent qualities and the facilitating effect".

These three categories can cause different impact on learning according to the inherent qualities of prior knowledge. In this sense, the quality of prior knowledge will determine new knowledge acquisition accordingly. Furthermore, there will be a similar effect on students study behaviors such as study skills; speed; accuracy; time and effort students put on academic tasks; and learning strategies. This also will determine academic success according to Dochy et al. (1996). On the next page, there is a figure which describes better this process.



Interaction effects involving inherent qualities and the facilitating effect (Adapted and modified from Dochy 1992, p. 28).

Prior knowledge and academic achievement are also associated to students' previous study success (Harackiewicz et al., 2002). This is due to the fact that past experience in the academic life can determine in some degree the quality of prior knowledge. Besides, it is related to students' expectations about what they are able to do in the academic field. However, there are some authors such as Telle Hailikari, (2009); Yenilmez, Sungur & Tekkaya (2006) who argue that previous study success is not a good predictor of students' previous knowledge because Grade Point Average (GPA) is not able to predict students' prior knowledge at an specific time.

Supporting this research, there is a study entitled "Assessing University Students' Prior Knowledge" developed in the University of Helsinki Department of Education, by Telle Hailikari, which states that prior knowledge influence students' academic performance and results. It was developed with students majoring mathematics, pharmacy and chemistry. The study grouped students in four different studies. All of these students were assessed on the influence of their previous knowledge, its depth and its impact on their academic achievements. The researchers

developed an assessment model that correlates with each prior knowledge category (declarative and procedural knowledge). As a result they assessed knowledge of facts by recognizing, enumerating, recalling, and remembering. Knowledge of meaning was assessed by defining, reproducing, and understanding the meaning of the concept. The Interaction of knowledge was assessed by understanding concepts and their interrelations; classifying information and making comparisons. Also, the application of knowledge was assessed by problem solving, the application of knowledge, producing, and implementing it. The study found that prior knowledge, academic self-beliefs and prior academic success influence the final achievements of students. The findings show that procedural knowledge components are best predictors of students' academic achievements in a course. Also, the results indicate that prior knowledge is very associated to students' study pace. Furthermore, the implementation of the components of knowledge determines better the successful completion of a course in the established time and with best grades at the end of the course. On the contrary, deficient application of knowledge task is associated to leaving the course. Taking into account all the variables in this study (prior knowledge, academic self-beliefs, and previous study successes) it was found that prior knowledge and procedural components, especially the capability to apply knowledge, influenced the majority of students' achievements. This influence was seen in their final grades, academic self-beliefs and study pace. Finally, it was found that prior knowledge tends to vary in relation to previous study success and the major being studied in relation to the subject. Students who do not belong to a major in mathematics were not very successful in that subject because of their lack of prior knowledge.

Approaches and theory involved in prior knowledge influence over learning

According to Dochy et al. (2002) eight theories are useful to explain how prior knowledge influences new knowledge acquisition in the learning process. Even though there are some differences in their approaches, they strongly support each other in some degree. These theories explain the process by which prior knowledge influences learning:

- 1) In the process of learning, prior knowledge serves as a “category label” which influences the way the new information is organized and added to the existing knowledge structures (*the restructuring approach*);
- 2) Prior knowledge serves as an assimilative context in which the new material is related to, and, consequently, knowledge is enhanced and more easily retrieved by the process of elaboration (*the elaboration approach*);
- 3) The activation of prior knowledge increases access to that knowledge during the learning process (*the accessibility approach*);
- 4) Prior knowledge influences learning through selective attention so that relevant information receives more attention (*the selective attention approach*);
- 5) Prior knowledge influences learning through cueing: the more prior knowledge there is, the more knowledge there is available in one’s memory (*the availability approach*);
- 6) The activation of prior knowledge when learning new materials promotes the recall and retrieval of information from the memory (*the retrieval approach*);

7) Prior knowledge is structured in modifiable schemata, which influences the interpretation and understanding of a new situation (*the schema-transfer approach*) and finally;

8) More prior knowledge leads to a more rapid processing of information (*representation-saving approach*).

Schemata theory

Schemata may be thought of as “interacting knowledge structures” stored in hierarchies in long term memory (Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977). It is also called the “building blocks of cognition” (Rumelhart, 1980).

Types of schemata

Content schemata: Background knowledge of the content area of a text.

Formal schemata: Background knowledge of the rhetorical structures of different types of texts.

In academic terms, prior knowledge is related to schemata theory. This connection involves the interaction between background information and new information. This mental process is made automatically when recalling information at a specific time. According to Rumelhart, (1980), students can acquire successfully new knowledge if they can relate it to pre-existing information. This process in which the individuals interpret the information is driven by the input mapped towards existing schema. Every aspect of that schema must be compatible with the information contained in the input. Inside the modes of processing information, there are “bottom-up” and “top- down” processing. “Bottom-up processing is evoked by

the incoming data, it is called data driven. Top-down processing occurred as the system searches the input for confirmation of predictions made on the basis of higher order, general schemata. Top down processing is called: conceptually driven” (Rumelhart, 1980).

Patricia L. Carrell (1983) in her study of “Some Issues in Studying the Role of Schemata, or Background Knowledge, in Second Language Comprehension”, states that students relate the background knowledge when reading. The first association has to do with the content area of the readers and their cultural background knowledge. The second association is related to the familiarity language learners have with the structure of the texts. Her findings show that second and first language learners’ comprehension was affected negatively when reading a text that intentionally violates the schema of a traditional story. In this sense, the content area of the input has to be congruent in content as well as format (structure). Another study by Joag-dev and Anderson (1979) found that cultural issues influence readers’ comprehension. This research was done with two groups (Asian Indians and Americans). The interpretation of the readings varied according to the different elaborations that were made to figure out the information not found or logically inferable in the text. The cultural differences provided a better understanding of the text or, on the contrary, caused distortions which modified the content of the text.

Personality types and academic environments

As a psychosocial factor influencing major changers, it is of great importance because of its implications in the psychology field. There are some investigations that suggest that personality has to be congruent to the environment. Also, as Bandura (1982) asserts in his seminal work, “self efficacy judgments, whether accurate or

faulty, influence choice of activities and environmental settings.” This idea led the authors of this paper to pay attention to the implication of this factor in their research.

In order to have clear ideas, it is necessary to define the terms “personality” and “environment” in the follow text.

Personality type: Refers to the psychological classification of different types of individuals. Personality types are sometimes distinguished from personality traits, the latter embodying a smaller grouping of behavioral tendencies. Types are sometimes said to involve *qualitative* differences among people, whereas traits might be construed as *quantitative* differences. www.thefreedictionary.com

Academic environment: The sum of the internal and external circumstances and influences surrounding and affecting a persons’ learning situation. (www.thefreedictionary.com).

Personality types according to Carl Jung

The Extraverted Thinking Type

These people tend to live according to rules. They repress their feelings and try to be objective but sometimes their thinking is dogmatic.

The Extraverted Feeling-Type

These individuals are social people who look for the world’s harmony respecting authority and traditions. They tend to be emotional because thinking is repressed.

The Extraverted Sensation Type

This kind of people enjoys pleasure and look for new sensorial experiences. They are oriented to reality and avoid intuition.

The Extraverted Intuitive Type

Intuitive people are creative and like innovative ideas. They are likely to take decisions based on intuition rather than facts. They are in contact with their unconscious wisdom. Sensation is repressed.

The Introverted Thinking Type

These people tend to have an intense necessity of privacy. They are theoretical, intellectual and unpractical individuals.

The Introverted Feeling Type

These individuals are quiet, thoughtful and hypersensitive. Thinking is repressed and the person can be seen mysterious and far from the rest of the people.

The Introverted Sensation Type

This kind of people is likely to be passive, calm and artistic. They focus on sensory events and avoid intuition.

The Introverted Intuitive Type

They tend to be mystical dreamers. These people propose unusual new ideas and they are rarely understood by others. Sensation is repressed.

Personality types according to Holland's theory (1997)

Realistic types prefer activities that involve manipulating machines and tools. They tend to dislike educational and social activities. Realistic types value material rewards and perceive themselves to be practical, conservative, and persistent.

Investigative types prefer activities that involve exploration, understanding and prediction. They avoid activities that involve persuasion and sales. Investigative individuals value the acquisition of knowledge and scholarly achievements in science and technology. They see themselves as critical, intelligent, and skeptical, but lacking interpersonal skills.

Artistic types prefer artistic, literary, and musical activities. They tend to avoid activities that require them to conform to established rules. Artistic type individuals value aesthetic qualities and creativity. They see themselves as innovative, open, sensitive, and emotional. They also see themselves as lacking clerical and office skills.

Social types prefer to teach and help others through personal interaction, and they tend to avoid mechanical and technical tasks. They value education and social service. Social types see themselves as empathetic, helpful, and understanding, but not mechanically inclined.

Enterprising types prefer to persuade and direct others to attain organizational and personal goals. They avoid scientific and intellectual topics. Enterprising individuals value political and economic achievements, and they see themselves as self confident, sociable, and possessing leadership ability.

Conventional types prefer to attain organizational and personal goals by establishing and maintaining orderly routines. They avoid ambiguous or unstructured activities. They value material or financial accomplishments and they see themselves as conforming, orderly, and methodical.

According to Holland's theory of personality types, individuals can be classified using one or more of six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Convectional (RIASEC). The personality types are congruent to six types of environments which are named the same. In higher education students select environments that are compatible with their expectations, skills and interests.

Environments according to Holland's theory (1997)

Realistic environments are characterized by concrete, practical activities involving machines and tools. Realistic environments reward members who accumulate money, power, and tangible possessions.

Investigative environments are characterized by analytical and intellectual activities, and members are rewarded for displaying skepticism, persistence, and problem solving.

Artistic environments are characterized by creativity and a lack of structure. Members are rewarded for artistic, literary, and musical accomplishments.

Social environments are characterized by working with others and reward individuals for sociability and humanitarianism.

Enterprising environments emphasize leadership that is oriented toward attaining personal and organizational goals. Members are rewarded for displaying leadership and self confidence.

Conventional environments emphasize attaining personal and organizational goals through predictable and specific standards. These environments reward members for conformity and dependability.

Holland asserts that the general empirical framework between person-environment is based on three concepts: persons, their environments, and the interaction between persons and their environments. In the academic context, Holland's framework consists of students, their academic majors and the fit or interaction between students and their majors.

The three components of Holland's theory give rise to three propositions about college students and their academic majors: (1) students actively seek out and select majors that are compatible with their personality types (self selection); (2) academic majors differentially reinforce and reward student abilities and interests (socialization); and (3) students are more likely to flourish in environments that are congruent with their personality types (congruence).

Academic disciplines included within Holland types

Adapted from Smart, J. C., Feldman, K. A., and Ethington, C. A. (2000). Academic disciplines: Holland's Theory and the Study of College Students and Faculty. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Realistic

Electrical Engineering
Mechanical Engineering
Marine Science
Drafting/Design
Military Science

Investigative

General Biology
Biochemistry/Biophysics
Botany
Marine (Life) Science
Microbiology/Bacteriology
Zoology
Finance
Aeronautical/Astronautical Engineering
Civil Engineering
Chemical Engineering
Astronomy
Atmospheric Science
Chemistry
Earth Science

Social

History
Philosophy
Theology/Religion
Elementary Education
Physical
Education/Recreation
Special Education
Home Economics
Library Science
Nursing
Political Science
Psychology
Social Work
Women's Studies
Law Enforcement

Enterprising

Journalism
Business Administration
Marketing
Management
Business Education

Mathematics	Industrial Engineering
Physics	Communications
Statistics	Computer Science
Pharmacy	Conventional
Premedical/Pre dental/Preveterinary	Accounting
Anthropology	Secretarial Studies
Economics	Data Processing
Ethnic Studies	Not in Holland
Geography	Other Humanities
Sociology	Other Business
Artistic	Secondary Education
Arts	Other Engineering
English	Health Technology
Language/Literature	Therapy
Music	Other Professional
Speech	Other Social Science
Theatre/Drama	Other Technical
Music/Art Education	Agriculture
Architecture	

Previous studies related to academic environments and personality types

As John Holland (1997) asserts in his theory of personality types and work environment, personality types are associated to academic environments. The environment students select depends on their academic expectations. These expectations are related to students' interests and abilities. If the environment is not congruent with the personality type of the student, this one is going to delay, drop out

or change the major. In the case the student change major he/she will look for a major in consonance with his/her personality.

There are several studies based on Holland's theory of personality. One of these is focused on "the prediction of college major persistence based on vocational interests, academic preparation, and first year academic performance". According to Allen et al, students in higher education are more likely to persist in an academic major if their personality fit the academic environment. Students are characterized by personality types as environments are characterized by activities types. These characteristics have to be congruent to each other in order to persist in an environment and be successful. This theory gives space to Smart et al. (2000) proposal that "academic environments reward different patterns of students' abilities and interests." Also the findings of these authors suggest that "(1)interest major fit and first year academic performance work to independently predict whether a student will stay in their entering major and (2) the relative importance of two work task scores in predicting major persistence depends on the entering major (Allen and Robins 2007).

Another study based on personality types indicates that personality and intended academic major are related to students' college expectations. However, the associations between personality types and college expectations are not as strong as the associations between students' intended majors (Pike, 2006). These findings show us that most students who choose an academic major know beforehand about the types of activities they will find in the intended major even though the personality types are not necessary congruent with their college expectations. Major persistence depends on individuals' satisfaction about their intended major and academic environment.

III.METHODOLOGY

This study follows an explanatory mode, using a sample of students who have changed from Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching. The purpose of this graduation project is to find out the psychosocial factors that influence those students to make such change in order to avoid this tendency at the FLD at the UES. In this research, the aptitude to the subject, prior knowledge or schemata, personality type and academic environment are the most important aspects to be considered in the data collection model. The questions to be considered in this study are the following:

- ✚ How do psychosocial factors influence students of Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English to change to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching at the FLD at UES?
- ✚ To what extend do aptitudes for the subjects make students from Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English decide changing to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching?
- ✚ Does academic environment cause students of Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English make a change to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching?
- ✚ Is prior knowledge a factor that influences students of Modern Languages to change their major to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching?

This research followed a quantitative model. In order to successfully get data, two sampling procedures were used: sampling frame and purposive sample. Sampling frame was used to gather general information from two hundred fifty students

studying the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching at the Foreign Language Department. The purposive sample was implemented by the researchers in order to find out the students who have changed their major from Modern Languages Specialty: English and French to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching. In this sense, two questionnaires were used to get the necessary data to answer the research questions of this graduation project.

1. Setting

This study took place at Central Faculty of the University of El Salvador, specifically at the Foreign Languages Department which has a population of one thousand five hundred twenty two students. Those students are divided into three majors. The B.A in English Oriented to Teaching which has seven hundred sixteen students. Also, Modern Languages Major: specialty French and English counts with a population of seven hundred forty five students. Finally, Profesorado en Idioma Inglés para Tercer Ciclo de Educación Básica y Media has a population of sixty one students. According to gender there are nine hundred sixty nine female students and five hundred fifty three male students. The major in which our attention was centered in this research was the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching, particularly the students who changed from Modern Languages Major.

2. Measurement instruments

In this research, it was decided to use two questionnaires in order to collect the information. They were designed by the students working in this study according to the information needed to answer the general and the subsidiary research questions. The first questionnaire was conducted in August 2011 with different groups of students who were beginning the second semester at the FLD at UES. This questioner was addressed to students majoring in different years of the B.A in English Oriented

to Teaching. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify students who had made a change from Modern Languages Major: Specialty French and English to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching. It contained general information about their gender, name, e-mail, and telephone number. Also, this instrument included information about changes in their academic major: the year in which they made the change. Furthermore, the subjects they were taking with the purpose of contacting students who changed major, so the researchers could address the second questionnaire to them.

The second questionnaire was addressed only to students who had made a change from Modern Languages Major to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching (the ones identified in the previous questioner). The second questioner contained general information about the major students originally registered in; their gender, a list of statements related to students' aptitude and attitude towards the study of French; parental influence; students' previous knowledge about French; students' personality and academic environment. Also, it included a pair of open questions concerning the most difficult and the easiest subjects in the major. Finally, there were some selection questions which have to do with the mastering of abilities and areas of French.

The validity and reliability of the instruments (two questionnaires) have been established because of the fact that the instrument collected the information required to answer the research questions of this study. It generated the appropriate data related to the areas taken into account in this research (aptitude for the subject, previous knowledge, personality type and academic environment). The questionnaire was verified by the instructor who made some corrections on it. Also, it was piloted with some students. After passing the final questioner, the answers showed a great number of similarities. So, it can be said that the results are consistent.

3. Sample

To obtain the sample population the researchers decided a strategy. First of all, ask for some statistics to the Academic Administration of the Arts and Sciences School at University. This information concerned the population of the Foreign Languages Department and the number of students who changed from Modern Languages Major to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching. Secondly, look for those students who changed their initial major (31 major changers in the last four years). It was possible by the use of a questionnaire which had the purpose of identifying those students. This questioner was taken by two hundred fifty students. As result, the researchers found twenty students who fit in this study. It made a percentage of 64.5% of the students who changed their major. This sample was constituted by twelve females and eight males who originally registered in Modern Languages Major and made a change.

The twenty participants in this study were students from the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador. They were between the ages of nineteen to sixty one. They are students from different courses at the Foreign Language Department. All of them were Salvadorian people who speak Spanish and are learning English as a Foreign Language.

4. Data collection

To collect the data an instrument was prepared including 30 items containing a check list, open questions and selection questions. The questionnaire was given to 20 students who have changed from MLM to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching in order to fill it out. Those students were previously identified with the purpose of gather the information required for the research. In the case of students who were not located, the questionnaires were sent to their e-mail addresses. Then, the questionnaires were printed and processed.

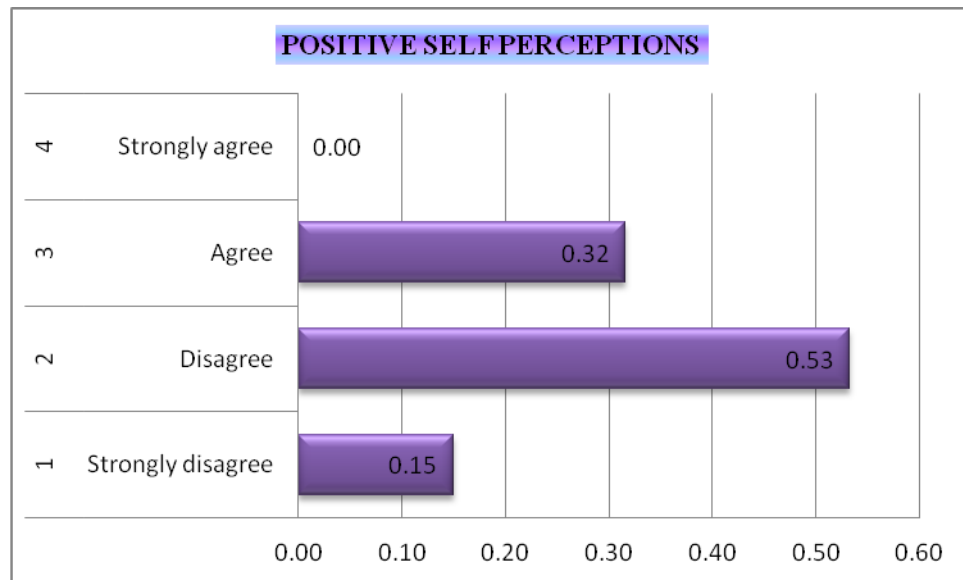
5. Data analysis process

The analysis of the data gathered from twenty questionnaires from students who have changed from Modern Languages major to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching consisted in processing the information for each area of study and the open and selection questions.

There were statements that represented four important areas in which the research project is focus on. Those areas are Aptitude for the subject, Parental Influence, Prior Knowledge and Academic Environment. These areas were measured by a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 means strongly disagree; 2 disagree; 3 agree and 4 strongly agree. The tendency for each area was calculated by summing all the answers in each question and option (the scale) and dividing them by the total number of the participants. Then, this total was multiplied by one in order to obtain a percentage. After that, the percentages for each option in the scale were added and divided by the total number of data. Finally, all the percentages in the scale were added to constitute the total percentage of the population. These data were graphed to show the results of the study.

There were others question which were focused in different aspects such as; the most difficult/easiest subjects in MLM; class schedule; the most difficult/easiest areas to manage in MLM and the most difficult/easiest macro skills to master in MLM. The tendency for each answer was calculated by counting all the answers. Then, the number of answers was divided by the total of the participants and the resulting data were multiplying by one. Finally, the information was graphed.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION



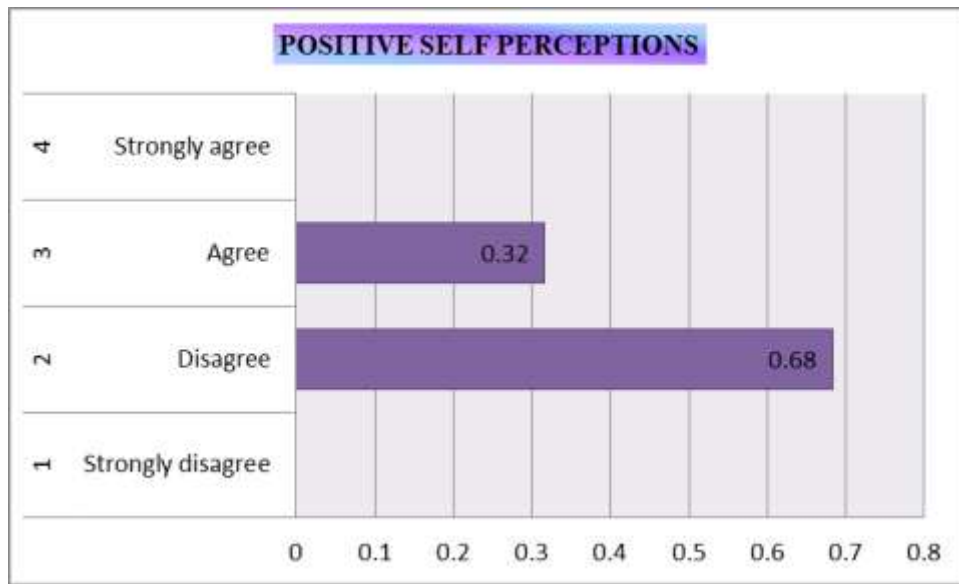
Students' positive self-perceptions with regard to MLM (graphic I)

The graphic shows that the 53% of the participants disagree on having positive self-perceptions with regard to MLM and the 15% of them strongly disagree the on the same fact. On the other hand, the 32% of the students who participated in this research agree on having positive self-percepts regarding MLM and nobody strongly agrees on the same issue.

The collected data indicate that there is a tendency of disagreement and strong disagreement on having positive self-perceptions as to the period when students began MLM. This information let the researchers to realize that most of the students who changed major did not have positive self-referent about their abilities in that major. On the other hand, the minority of the sample agrees on having positive self-perceptions. It means that these students considered themselves as able to deal with the tasks in MLM. Taking into account this information, it can be seen that the lack of confidence affected students' academic performance and it caused them to change

major. The following graph summarizes this agreement and disagreement controversial issue.

Students' positive self-perceptions with regard to MLM (graphic II)

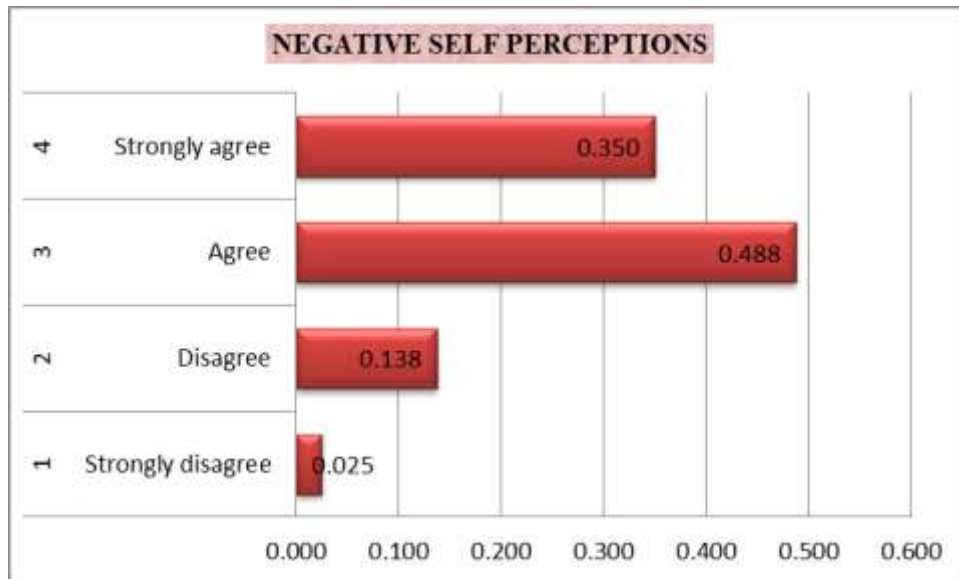


The previous figure shows an evident difference on the self-perceptions of students with regard to MLM. The 68% of the participants disagree on having positive self-perceptions about them when starting the major. On the contrary, the 32% of the population agrees on having positive self-perceptions about themselves.

In terms of agreement, this graphic shows a significant difference of 36% among the students who agree and those who disagree on having positive self-perceptions when they began MLM. The majority of the students tend to think that they did not have positive self-perceptions and it means that this lack of positivism influenced their learning process and consequently they changed from MLM. On the contrary, just a few students said that their self-perceptions with regard to the major were positive and that they did not affect their decision of changing major. Based on these data, it is evident that students' self-perceptions play an important role on their

academic development. In this case, most students did not have positive self-perceptions and it affected the achievements of their academic goals.

Students' negative self-perceptions with regard to MLM (graphic I)



*There is a variation on the percentages because of the approximation of decimals.

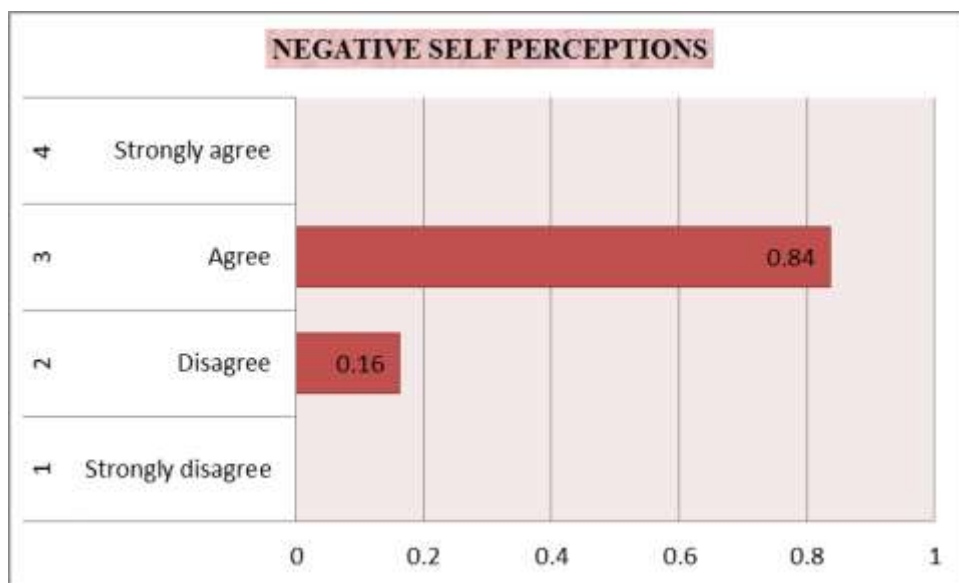
According to the graphic, the 49% of the surveyed students agree on having negative self-perceptions when starting MLM and the 35% of students strongly agree on the same issue. However, the 14% of the sample population disagrees on having negative self-perceptions when entering MLM and the 3% of them strongly disagree on the same fact.

As the graphic above shows, it can be inferred that for students who initially registered in modern Language Major, a lot more than the half (49% and 35%) had negative self-perceptions regarding the major. This means that for those students having negative self-perceptions it was an important reason for their decision of changing. On the other hand, the minority of the sample (14% and 3%) disagrees on

having negative self-perceptions when entering Modern Languages Major; it means that they had positive self-perceptions regarding the major.

The partial data of this graph can be summarized in terms of agreement versus disagreement about the students' self-perceptions in the next graph.

Students' negative self-perceptions with regard to MLM (graphic II)

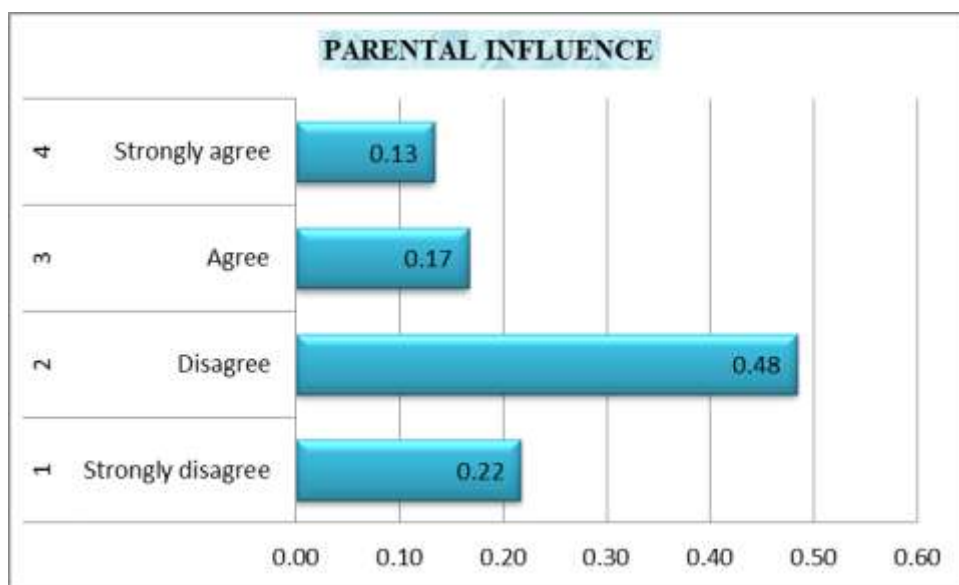


This table shows that the 84% of the participants agree on having negative self-perceptions when entering MLM. On the contrary, the 16% of the sample population disagree on having negative perceptions of their own when starting MLM.

In terms of agreement there is a difference of 68% between people who had negative self-perceptions when entering to MLM and students who disagree on the same issue. These negative self-perceptions affected students' academic performance. As a result of this graphics, it can be stated that negative self-perceptions was a strong reason for students to change major.

There is a strong tendency on the students' part to perceive their own academic development in negative terms as revealed by the graph.

Students' parental influence on changing major (graphic I)

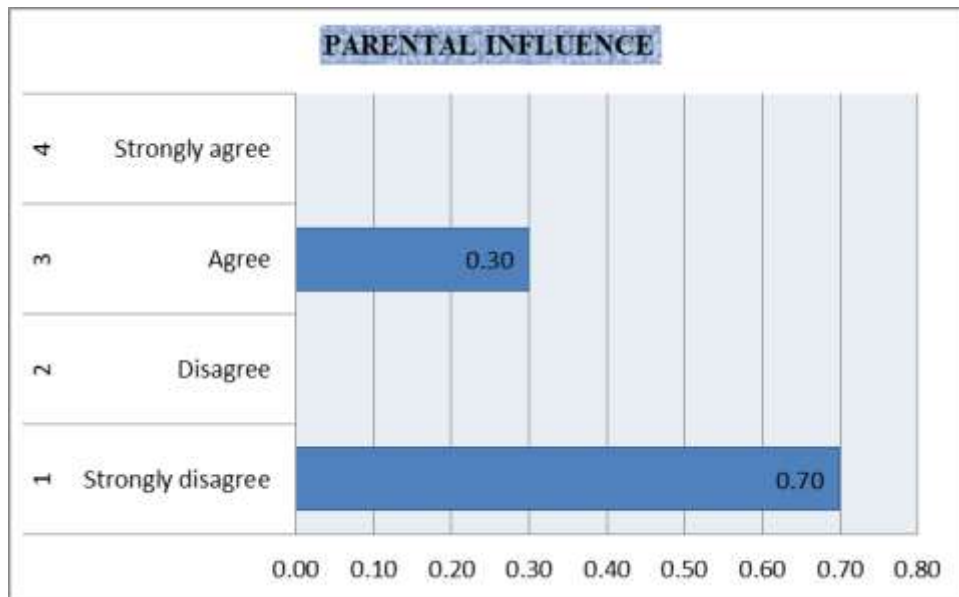


This graphic shows that the 48% of the sample disagree on having parental influence when studying MLM. At the same time, a 22% of the population thinks that parental influence did not affect their decisions on MLM. This graphic also shows a 17% of the population who agree that they had parental influence and a 13% of them strongly agree on the same fact.

The figure shows that almost half of students are in disagreement of having parental influence when they were studying MLM. Also, there is another group which is strongly in disagreement with the same issue. But it is important to say that there are students who think that their parents influenced on their decision of changing major. It means that most of the surveyed population thinks that parental influence did not affect them in changing major when they took the decision.

The following graphic summarizes students' agreements and disagreements concerning their parents' influence with regard to the decision of changing major.

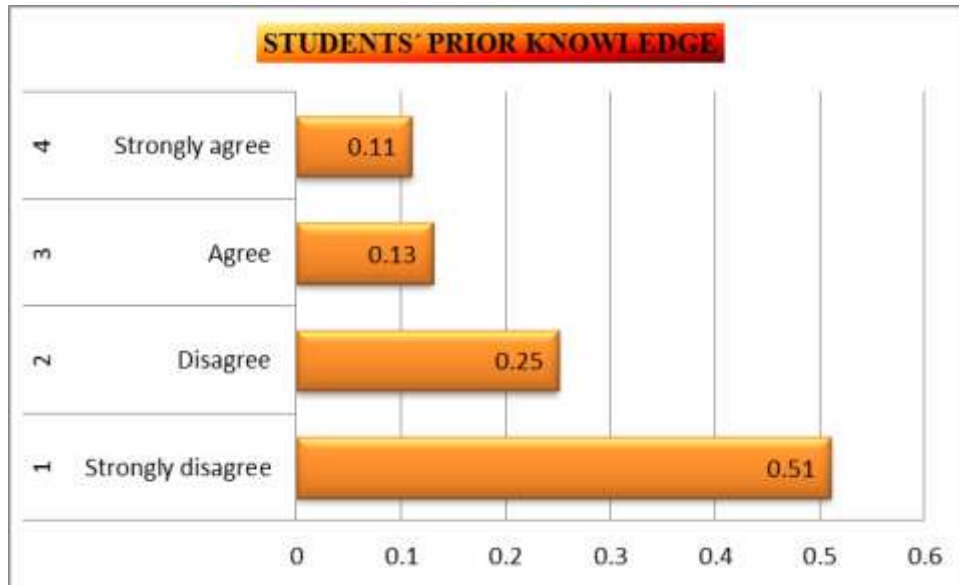
Students' parental influence on changing major (graphic II)



The graphic shows that a 70% of the population disagrees on having parental influence at the time of studying MLM. On the other hand, a 30% of the samples agree that they had parental influence when studying the major.

According to the graphic, there is a big and significant difference among students' parental influence because most of them think that they were not influenced by their parents at the time of studying MLM. But also, there is a small tendency of students who are in agreement on having parental influence when studying the major. It is important to say that for most students parental influence is not a factor that caused them to change major. Therefore, this evidence reveals that the students' parents did not have a considerable influence on their decision of changing their major. The students seem to have made their decision on their own.

Students' prior knowledge of French (graphic I)



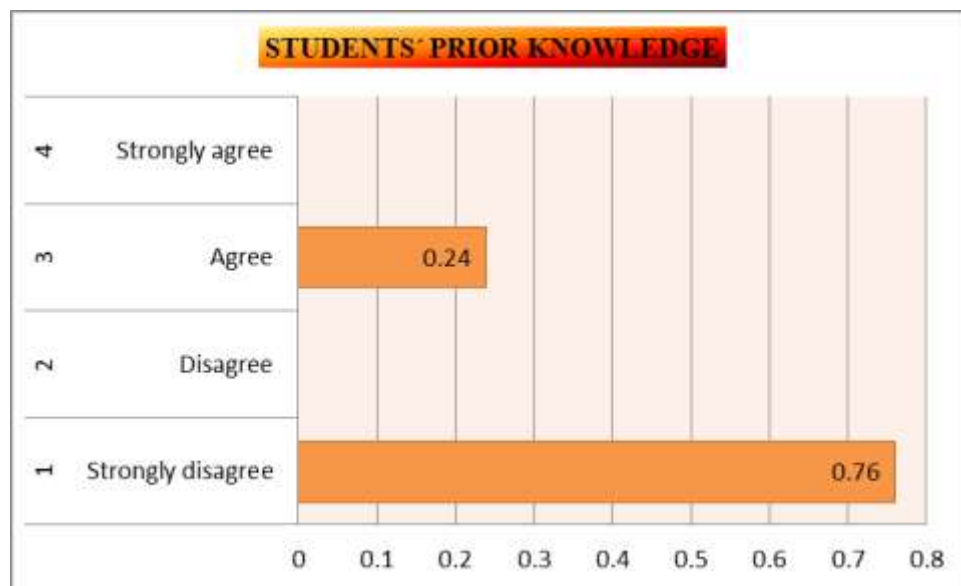
The graphic above represents that 51% of students strongly disagree on having had prior knowledge of French when they began studying MLM. The 25% of the participants disagrees with the same issue. 13% of them agree concerning the prior knowledge of French they had at the beginning of their learning process in MLM and the 11% of the students strongly agrees on the same fact.

The data reveal that more than a half of the surveyed students strongly disagree on having had prior knowledge of French. A smaller percentage disagrees on the same issue. It means that these students (76%) did not have any knowledge of French when starting MLM and it was a strong factor that caused them to change major. However, there is minor percentage of students (13% and 11%) who said that they had had some knowledge of French at the time they entered the major. It means that for the minority of the population prior knowledge was not a reason for changing from MLM to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching major. It let the researchers know that only less than a quarter of the sample population had prior knowledge of

French when they began studying the major and the greatest percentage of the participants did not have any knowledge of French. Therefore, the lack of prior knowledge of French is a strong reason that makes students change from MLM.

The following graphic summarizes students' agreements and disagreements regarding having prior knowledge of French when entering MLM.

Students' prior knowledge of French (graphic II)

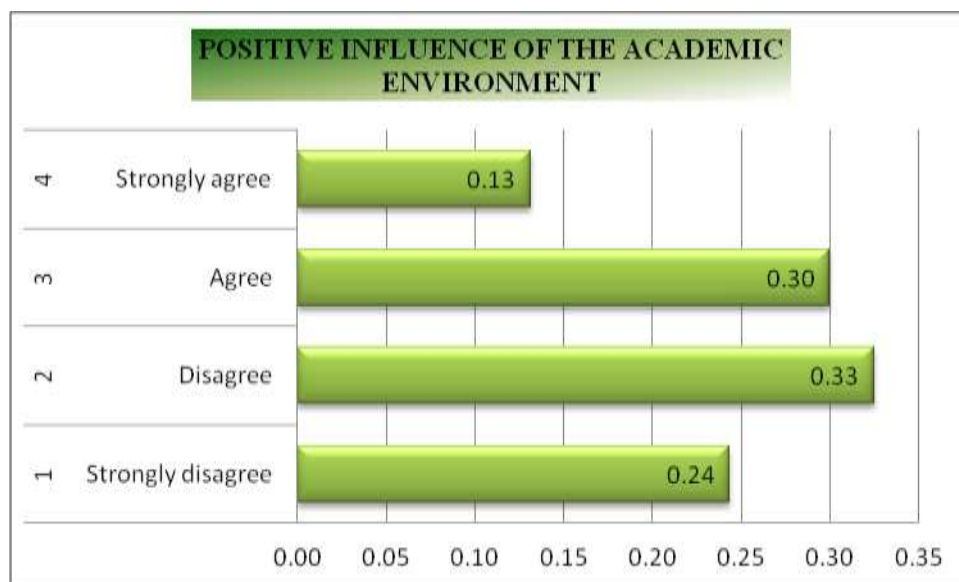


The graphic shows a very evident difference between the strongly disagree scale with the 76% and the agree one with the 24%. It means that 76% of students did not have any prior knowledge when starting MLM. However, 24% of students did have prior knowledge of French.

The analyzed data let the researchers to establish a great difference among students who were surveyed concerning the fact of having prior knowledge when starting MLM. The majority of the students (76%) strongly disagree on having prior

knowledge of French and the minority (24%) agrees on having this knowledge. The difference between the ones who knew about French and the ones who did not is of 52%. It indicates that most of them consider that the lack of prior knowledge of French influenced them to change from MLM to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching. As the data reveals there is an important association between previous and new knowledge and the lack of prior knowledge affected students' decision of making a change in their major.

Academic Environment and students' decision of changing major (graphic I)

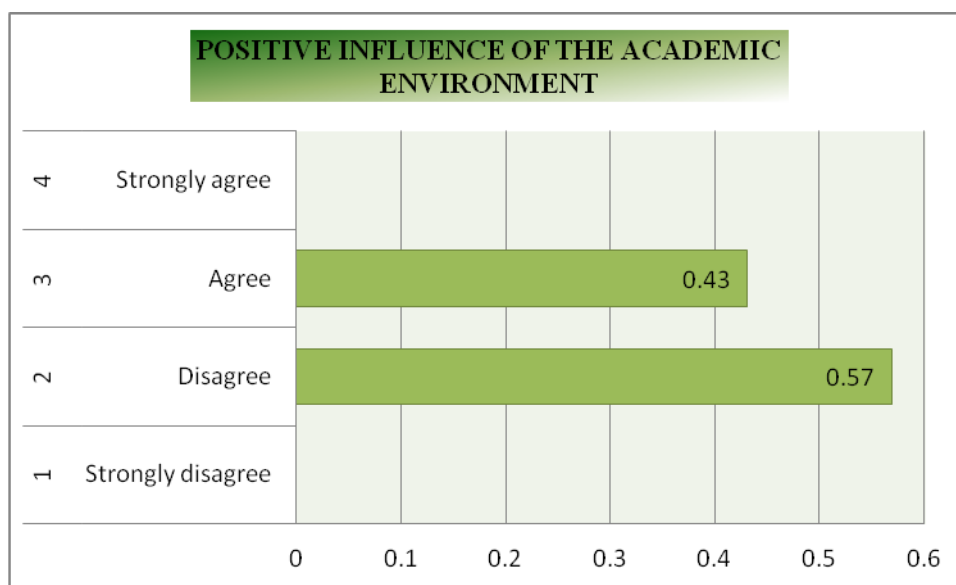


The graphic above shows that the 33% of the sample population disagree on the fact that the academic environment contributed positively to have a good performance in MLM and the 24% of them strongly disagree on the same issue. On the contrary, the 30% of the participants agree on the fact that the academic environment contributed in a positive way to perform successfully in MLM and the 13% of the students strongly agree on the same fact.

According to the figure, it is demonstrated that for most students, academic environment plays an important role in the decision of changing major. This graphic indicates that the majority of students disagree that the academic environment influences them positively to have a good performance. On the other hand, the minority agree that this factor contributed positively to have a good performance in MLM. This let the researchers know that for students it is important to have an adequate connection with their academic environment in order to succeed in MLM.

The following graph summarizes this agreement/disagreement controversial issue.

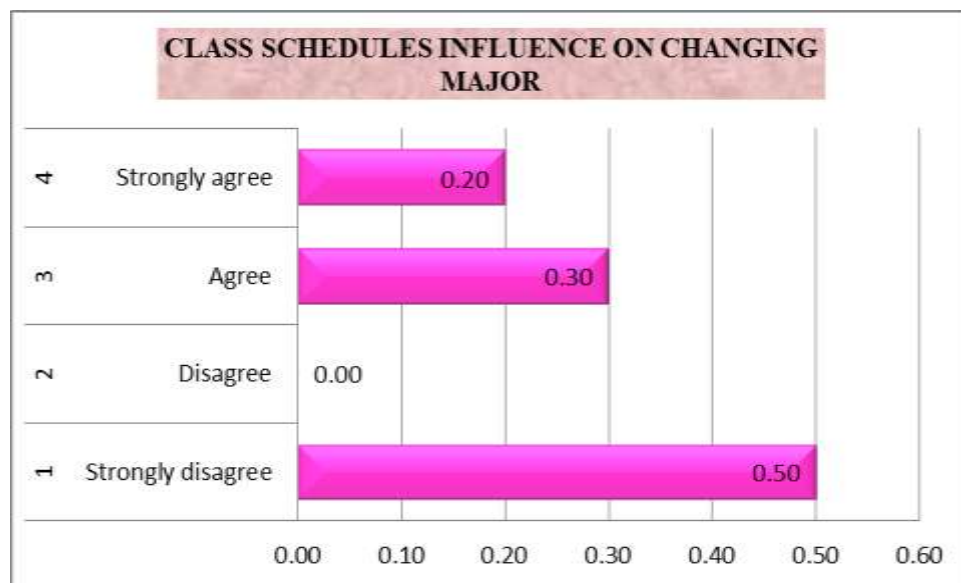
Academic Environment and students' decision of changing major (graphic II)



The previous figure indicates that the 57% the students disagree on the fact that the academic environment contributed positively to have a successfully performance in MLM. On the other hand, the 43% of the participants agree on the fact of that the academic environment contributed positively on their successful performance in MLM.

In terms of agreement most of the population was in disagreement on the fact that the academic environment influenced positively their academic performance because they did not feel comfortable in the classes. It means that a little more than half of students (57%) of the sample considered that the Academic environment had strongly influenced them on changing major. However, almost the half of the population said that it was not a factor for changing major. Although the difference among students' considerations about the academic environment is not so big (57% versus 43%), it is evident that the students who changed their major did not have a positive influence from their teachers and the generated academic environment.

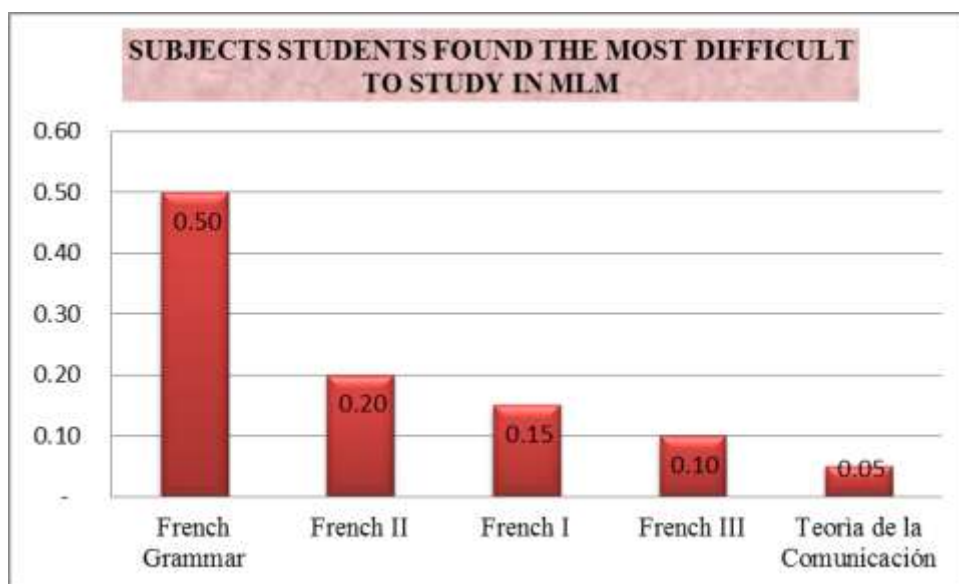
Class schedules influence on changing from MLM to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching



The previous graphic shows that the 50% of students strongly disagree on having been influenced by class schedules with regard to change from MLM to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching. On the other hand, the 30% of them agree on having had that influence and a 20% of the participants strongly agree on the same issue.

As the data reveal, half of the students tend to think that class schedules and their time availability to attend classes was not a factor that strongly influence them to change major. On the contrary, the other half of the population agree and strongly agree on the influence of class schedules and their time availability over their decision of changing from MLM to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching. It is curious that students' opinions on this matter are divided exactly by the half of the population. Even though, there is any difference between students opinions on this matter; it is important to mention that class schedules and time availability represent a cause of changing major. It may be because of some students need to work and study at the same time.

Subjects in MLM students found the most difficult to study

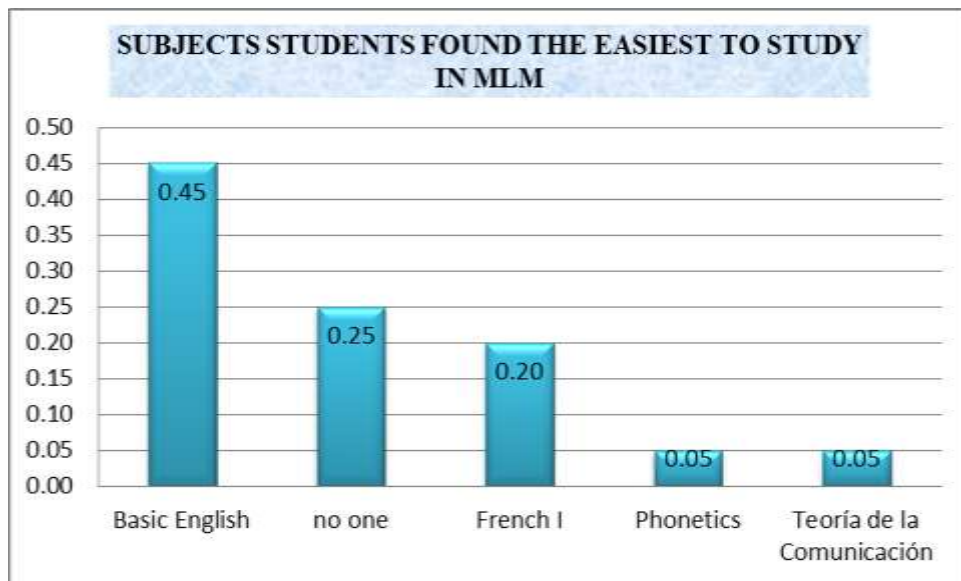


This graphic shows that the most difficult subject to study in MLM was French Grammar with the 50% of the sample of this research. Another subject that was considered the most difficult one was French II with a 20%. This is followed by

French I with a 15%, French III with a 10% and finally, “Teoría de la Comunicación” considered as a difficult subject by the 5% of the population.

According to the previous figure it can be inferred that there were five subjects that students said were the most difficult to study in Modern Languages Major. In terms of difficulty, the ranking is the following: half of the population thinks that French Grammar was the most difficult to study. The rest of the population was divided by French II, French I, French III and they conformed the other fifty percent of the surveyed students.

Subjects in MLM students found the easiest to study

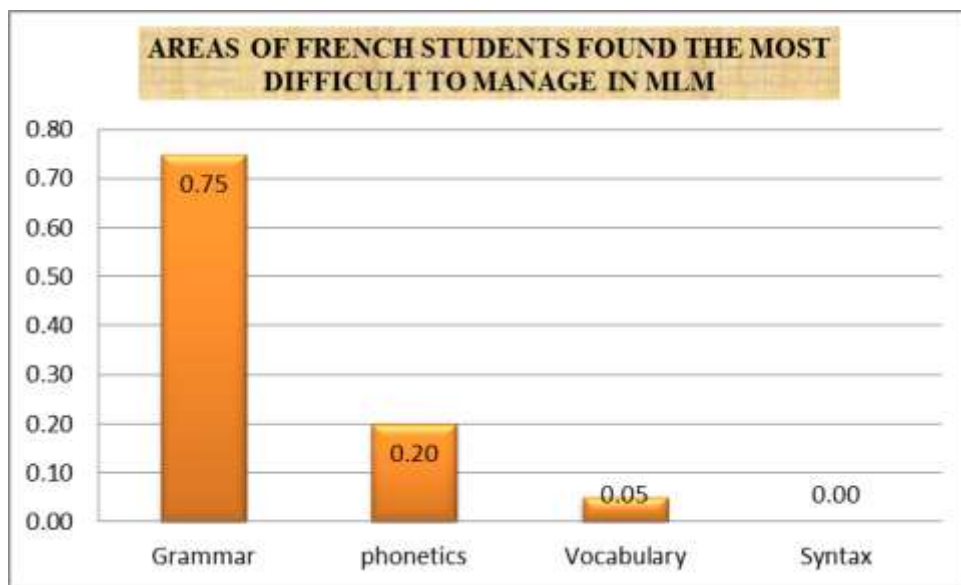


According to the graphic above, one of the easiest subjects to study in MLM was Basic English with a 45% of the population interviewed. At the same time it shows a 25% of the students who think that none of the subject in MLM was easy to study. Another subject which was one of the easiest to study was French I with a 20% of the sample. Finally, the graphic shows that phonetics was the easiest subjects for a

5% of the participants and another equal percentage was for Teoría de la Comunicación.

According to the data collected it can be stated that the majority of the students considered Basic English as the easiest subject in MLM. It can be inferred that they had some prior knowledge on English and it was the easiest to study for them. Also, a smaller but a significant percentage of students did not consider any subject as the easiest. It means that for them any subject was easy. A minor percentage of the sample agrees that French I was one of the easiest subjects in MLM. The smallest percentage of the students said that phonetics and “Teoría de la comunicación” were the easiest subjects when studying MLM.

Areas of French students found the most difficult to manage in MLM

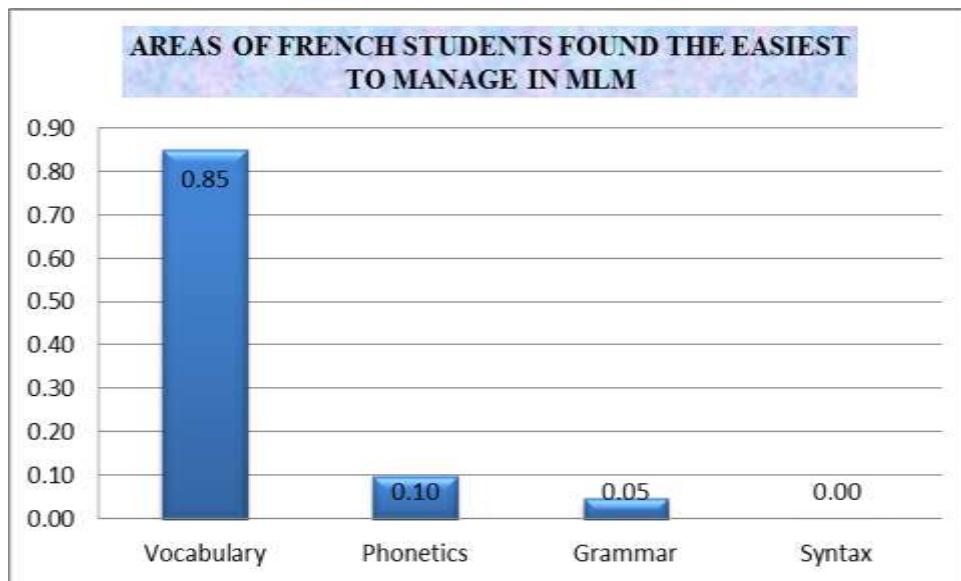


The graphic shows that the area of French that students found the most difficult to manage was Grammar with a 75% of students who were interviewed. At the same time, it shows that a 20% of the population think that phonetics is another

difficult area for students to manage in MLM and 5% of the population suggests that Vocabulary was the most difficult area to master.

Taking into account the data analysis, it can be stated that there were three areas of French which students found as the most difficult in MLM. In terms of difficulty the area with the highest percentage was Grammar as the most difficult area to manage. Moreover, there was a significant percentage who said that phonetics was difficult to study. Finally the lowest percentage was for vocabulary because a few students considered this area of French the most difficult to manage in MLM.

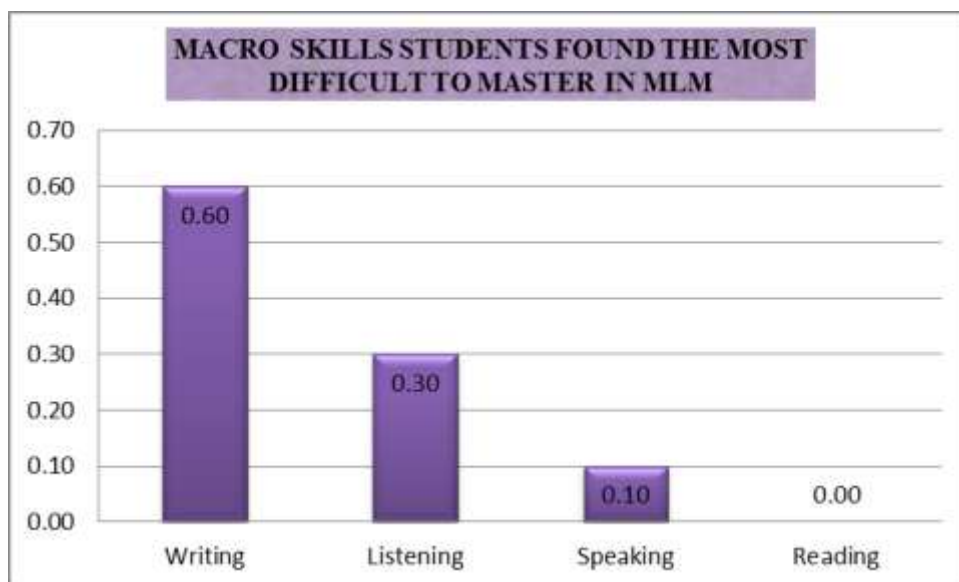
Areas of French students found the easiest to manage in MLM



This table shows an 85% of students who agree that vocabulary was the easiest area that they found during their studies in MLM, but there is a 10% of students who say that phonetics was one of the easiest and the 5% think that grammar was the easiest. The last option, which is syntax, does not indicate any percentage (0%).

The collected data show that most of the students (85%) considered French vocabulary as the easiest area to manage in MLM. These opinions can be associated to some similarities between words in French and Spanish. The smallest percentage of the participants considered phonetics (10%) and grammar (5%) as the easiest areas. The information reveals a great difference between the areas of French that were considered as the easiest to manage by students at the time of studying MLM.

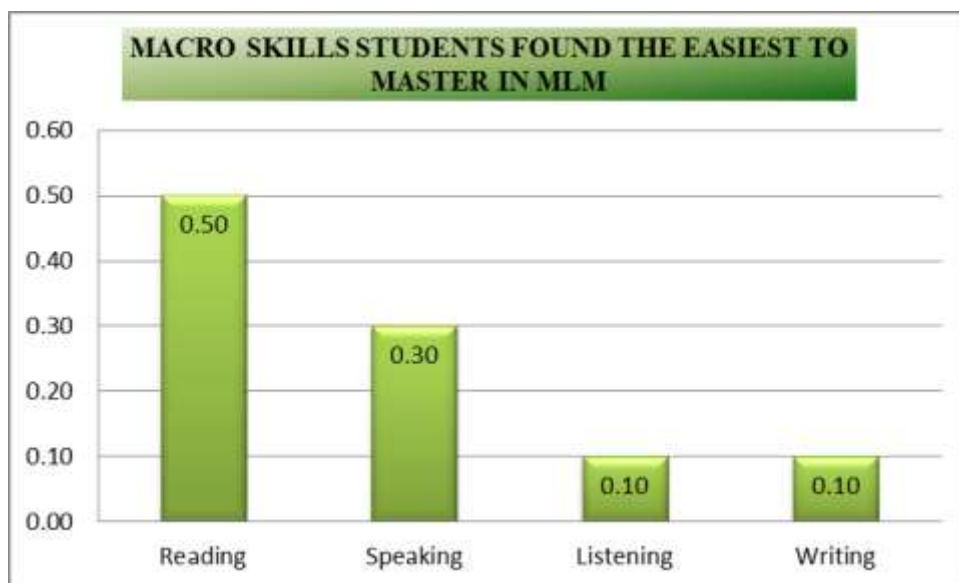
Macro skills students found the most difficult to master when studying French in MLM



With regard to the macro skills, students found writing as the most difficult skill in their learning process in MLM with the majority of the population (60%). The (30%) of them think that listening skill was the most difficult while the rest states that speaking was the most difficult. Reading skill did not represent any difficulty to the students under study, as revealed by the graph.

As indicated by the data, students had a lot of difficulty when dealing with writing. Listening skill also represented a problem to them and so did speaking in a lesser degree. It is curious to see that reading skill was not troublesome at all. This data exposes a problematic phenomenon based on the relation between Writing and Grammar.

Macro skills students found the easiest to master when studying French in MLM



The graphic represents the 50% of the students interviewed who stated that the reading skill was one of the easiest. It is followed by speaking with the 30%; the listening skill was the easiest for the 10% of the students similarly to writing skill with the 10% of the population.

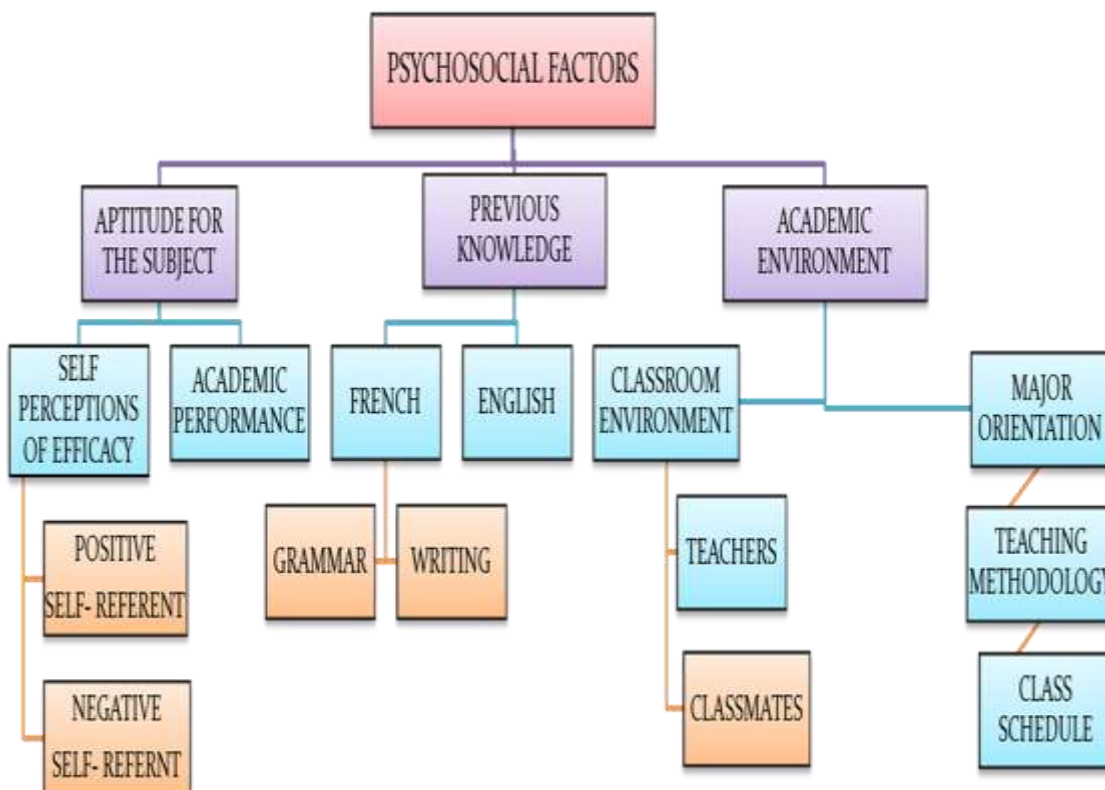
As to the macro skills students found the easiest to master, the graphic shows that half of students found reading skill as the easiest one. This is followed by speaking (30%), whereas listening and writing show a 10% each one. Taking into

account the data, reading and speaking were the easiest macro skills to master in MLM by the participants of this study.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influence students of Modern Languages Major to change to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching and also to provide some advice in order to avoid this tendency. Some factors were analyzed in this research project. These factors have been classified as psychosocial and they are the following: aptitude for the subject, parental influence, prior knowledge and academic environment. According to the data analysis there are some important conclusions related to each area.

The following scheme shows a summary of all the factors that were found throughout the investigation:



As a first conclusion, it is important to mention that Aptitude for the subject is based on self-perceptions. This is due to the fact that the self-referent mediates the relation between knowledge and action (Bandura et al., 1981). According to the results of this study, it can be concluded that most of students had negative self-perceptions about their abilities to deal with all the tasks that were required in Modern Languages major. According to this, the majority of students did not feel confident in their academic performance. It is because their own perceptions of self-efficacy were influenced by levels of anxiety affecting their performance in the classroom. Therefore, aptitude for the subject is one of the main factors that influenced on students decision of changing from Modern Languages major to that of B.A in English Oriented to Teaching.

The second conclusion is focused on Parental Influence which is considered as another psychosocial factor in the study of this issue. According to the findings, it can be said that parents influence is not a factor for changing from Modern Languages major to another career like the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching. This asseveration is based on the data results which show that the majority of students who changed major took that decision by their own and their parents' advice did not represent a considerable influence on their decision.

The third conclusion is associated to the positive influence of prior knowledge on facilitating learning because it is based on the conception of connecting previous knowledge to incoming information. It is due to the fact that knowledge can be built on strong bases to result in meaningful learning (Glaser & De Corte, 1992). However, in the course of this study it has been demonstrated that most students did not have any prior knowledge of French when they began studying MLM and it gave origin to gaps in their learning process affecting their academic achievements. Therefore, the lack of prior knowledge is a factor that strongly determined the tendency of changing from MLM to the BA in English Oriented to Teaching.

Fourthly, it can be concluded that the Academic Environment related to personality types plays an important role to persist or change from a major to another. Many studies have shown that the teacher influence on students behavior and the environment created by the professor in the classroom can rise or low students' affective filter (Bandura, 1982). In many cases subjects are not so difficult to the students but the way in which teachers prepares classes and tasks can strongly affect students' performance and academic goals. Other studies have shown that the environment rewards students' personality because there are a set of activities to each environment and students have certain characteristics that should fit with the environments (John Holland 1997). As the findings have shown the academic environment is one of the factors that most students considered as a cause of changing major. This is due to the fact that the generated academic environment did not influence students' performance in classes in a positive way. However, these results do not show a great ranking on this issue.

The fifth conclusion is focused on the most difficult and the easiest subjects in MLM that could have influenced on the tendency of changing major. The finding of this study indicates that students tend to think that French which is one of the specialties in MLM considered as a main influence on changing major. In terms of difficulty French Grammar seem to be the most difficult subject to study in this major. It is followed by all the intensive French courses. With regard to the easiest subjects considered by students who changed from MLM, English specialty subjects can be identified. Students tend to think that Basic English was the easiest subject when they studied MLM. This tendency can be associated with the fact that most students had prior Knowledge on English when they started to study MLM. Also, it is important to mention that 25% of the participants did not consider any subject as the easiest.

The sixth conclusion is based on the influence of class schedule and time availability over the decision of changing from MLM to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching. According to the findings, half of the population consider of great importance to have time facilities to study. Also, it can be concluded that half of the population require having schedules that adjust to their time availability and necessities.

The seventh conclusion can be made on the most difficult and the easiest areas of French. According to the data analysis, it was stated that for students there were two specific areas of French which influence on their decision of changing major. The areas are Grammar with a very high percentage in the rank. It is followed by Phonetics with a smaller percentage. For students it is important to know and to manage all the areas that are required for learning a new language. Otherwise they will face troubles in the major. Considering the easiest areas of French to manage in MLM it has been demonstrated that for students there are three areas of French considered as the easiest. One of them is vocabulary with the highest percentage of the participants. It can be due to the fact of similarities between Spanish and French.

Eighthly, considering the macro-skills students found the most difficult to manage in MLM, it can be concluded that there is a tendency of a significant percentage of them that focus on Writing. Also, the finding indicates that listening is another macro skill which shows a level of difficulty to students. It is important to mention that no one of the students who changed from MLM, considered reading as a difficult skill to manage. Taking into consideration the macro skills students found the easiest to master in MLM, it is evident that reading has the first place in the rank. It can be associated with the similitude between French and Spanish at the time of reading. This macro skill is followed by speaking and finally listening and writing, which show difficulty to a low percentage of the population.

As the ninth conclusion, the researchers can establish a rank among the psychosocial factors that influence students of MLM to change to the B. A. in English Oriented to Teaching. First of all, considering the areas influencing the tendency of changing major; aptitude for the subject associated to students' self-perceptions is considered as the main factor that makes students to change. It is followed by the lack of prior knowledge of French when starting MLM. On the third place, the academic environment is considered as a factor that influence on students' decision of changing their major. Lastly, it has been shown that parental influence does not affect students' tendency of changing from MLM.

With regard to the rest of the factors influencing changing major, it was found that grammar was considered the most difficult area to manage in MLM. As a result, it may be a strong factor that cause students change major. It is followed by the most difficult macro skill to master which was writing. The following factor influencing students' decision of changing major was the most difficult subject which was French Grammar. It is important to emphasize these data, because there is a connection among grammar, writing and French Grammar which were identified as main weaknesses of students who have changed from MLM. At the same time, students' problems associated to grammar and writing area may be connected to the lack of prior knowledge of French and their negative self-perceptions with regard to the major which affect their aptitude for the subject. The last factor influencing this matter was class schedules associated to students' time availability.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the teachers

- ✓ To provide students with specific information about MLM before starting their major. So that, students have a better picture of the general requirements of the career. In this sense, they will be aware about the necessary abilities to possess to study in the major and their self-perceptions regarding MLM.
- ✓ To elaborate a diagnostic French test in order to have a referent of students' prior knowledge of that the language. With the purpose of providing some reinforcement to those students without any prior knowledge of French. In this way, students will have better performance and results in their classes and have better self-perceptions of their own.
- ✓ To create a comfortable class environment through different activities in which students get motivated in classes and have a successful academic performance.
- ✓ To constantly evaluate their teaching methodology in order to identify the positive and negative aspects to improve their teaching practice, because methodology influences students' achievement and academics decisions.
- ✓ To generate a friendly environment in the classroom so that students feel comfortable to participate and ask for help any time they need it.
- ✓ To look for strategies that facilitates students to learn French grammar and French intensive courses in order to obtain better results.

- ✓ To put more emphasis on writing and listening skills so as to help students to have more practice and successful achievement in those skills.

For students

- ✓ To investigate all the general information about MLM, including the academic requirements (some knowledge of French) in order to be aware of the tasks they will face in MLM.
- ✓ To have an idea of the requirements and knowledge standards necessary to study MLM in order to avoid changing major.
- ✓ To take into account class schedules and students' time availability to study MLM because it requires an average of hours that can be different from their available time to study the major.
- ✓ To get involved in class activities so that they can practice the language with their mates in and outside the classroom.
- ✓ To look for help in order to improve the areas and skill in which they are facing troubles.

For the FLD administration

- ✓ To assign students in social hours group classes to reinforce freshman students in MLM. It will be with the purpose of helping students practice French in the areas they which are troubles for them (grammar, phonetics, and writing).

- ✓ To provide constant methodological trainings for the teachers with the purpose of updating their teaching abilities. In this sense, students will, get involved in all the class activities showing better results.
- ✓ To promote the use of the lab as a tool to improve students listening as a macro skills.
- ✓ To provide maintenance of the lab with the purpose of promoting its use.
- ✓ To create groups of classes which help students to improve the macro skill in which they have a deficient performance.
- ✓ To offer class schedules which adjust to students' time availability to attend successfully their studies in MLM.

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APPENDICES

❖ 1st questionnaire

**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
ARTS AND SCIENCE SCHOOL
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**

Graduation Project: Psychosocial Factors that Influence Students of Modern Languages: Specialty French and English to Change their major to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching at the FLD at UES.

Objective: To identify students who have changed from Modern Languages Major to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching so that they integrate the sample of the project.

Directions: Fill in the blank and check the option that best describes your information.

Name: _____ **Email:** _____

Sex: 1 Male 2 Female **Age:** _____ **Cell phone number:** _____

Year you entered the University: _____

1. Have you changed from Modern Languages Major to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching?

1 YES 2 NO

IF YOUR RESPONSE WAS YES, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

2. How many semesters of Modern Languages Major did you study before making the change to the B.A in English Oriented to Teaching?

1 2 3 4

3. What year did you change your major? _____

4. Which subjects are you taking in this semester? (II -2011):

	SUBJECT	GROUP	SCHEDULE	CLASSROOM
1	_____	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____	_____

❖ 2nd questionnaire

**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
ARTS AND SCIENCE SCHOOL
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**

**THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS ADDRESSED TO STUDENTS WHO HAVE CHANGED
FROM MODERN LANGUAGES SPECIALTY FRENCH AND ENGLISH MAJOR
TO THE B.A. IN ENGLISH ORIENTED TO TEACHING**

Research Project: Psychosocial Factors That Influence Students of Modern Languages to change their Major to the B.A. in English Oriented to Teaching at the FLD at the UES

Objective: To gather information related to the factors influencing Modern Languages Students to change their major to the B. A. in English Oriented to Teaching at the Foreign Language Department at UES.

Major you initially registered in: 1 B.A in Modern Languages 2 B.A in English Oriented

Specialty: French and English to Teaching (MLM)

Sex: 1 Male 2 Female **Age:** _____

What year did you initially register in? _____

What year did you change from Modern Languages major? _____

Directions: Check the number that better describes your opinion about each statement taking into account the scale.

N°	STAMENTS	1	2	3	4
	self perceptions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I felt confident when I chose to study Modern Languages Major (MLM).				
2	I felt able to deal with all the tasks that were required in French classes.				
3	I felt confident to master the components of linguistics (grammar, syntax, morphology, etc.) when studying MLM.				
4	I found it difficult to study French and English at the same time.				
5	I worked hard in MLM but it was confusing and difficult for me.				
6	My level of anxiety (nervousness) affected me to get involved with class activities in MLM.				
7	My grades caused me to quit MLM.				

	parental influence	1	2	3	4
8	My parents oriented me on the decision of selecting (MLM).				
9	My parents influenced on the achievement of my academic goals.				
10	My parents advised me on the decision of changing major.				
prior knowledge					
11	I had taken a French course before starting MLM.				
12	I knew something about French grammar before entering MLM.				
13	I learned French words and I could remember them easily when I was in MLM.				
14	I understood some French before starting MLM.				
15	I was good at speaking French before starting MLM.				
personality type & academic environment					
16	I knew about the tasks I had to perform in MLM.				
17	I had a good orientation before studying MLM.				
18	I had a good relationship with teachers and students in French classes.				
19	I liked the activity types developed in French classes when studying MLM.				
20	I felt comfortable in the classroom environment when studying MLM.				
21	When I was in MLM I helped my classmates whenever I could.				
22	Teacher's methodology helped me to get involved in French classes.				
23	Teacher's attitude encouraged me to get involved in French classes.				

Directions: Answer the following questions with the required information.

24. What subjects did you find the most difficult to study in Modern Languages major?

25. What subjects did you find the easiest to study in Modern Languages major?

Directions: Choose the option that best describes your opinion.

26. Do you consider that class schedules in MLM influence you to change to the B. A. in English Oriented to Teaching?

1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 strongly agree 4 agree

27. What are the areas of *French* that you found *the most difficult* to manage?

1 Grammar 2 Vocabulary 3 Phonetics 4 Syntax

28. What are the areas of *French* that you found *the easiest* to manage?

1 Grammar 2 Vocabulary 3 Phonetics 4 Syntax

29. Which of the following macro skills were *the most difficult* to master when studying *French*?

1 Listening 2 Speaking 3 Reading 4 Writing

30. Which of the following macro skills were *the easiest* to master when studying *French*?

1 Listening 2 Speaking 3 Reading 4 Writing