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The effect of cultural competence on the acquisition of French T/V pronouns

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For the degree of Master of Arts

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Date

THE EFFECT OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE ON THE ACQUISITION OF
FRENCH T/V PRONOUNS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

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by

Stacey C. Latimer

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of

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For my parents Samuel and Mary Latimer

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ABSTRACT

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The appropriate use of Tu/Vous French pronouns in everyday situations proves to be an ongoing challenge not only for native speakers but also for learners of the language. The complexity of the use of these pronouns goes beyond grammatical conjugation as it necessitates a consideration of the sociolinguistic and pragmatic situation with which one is presented. As a result, students with less exposure to T/V pronoun usage in the French culture will consequently have more difficulty in understanding the proper use of these pronouns.

Although some studies have looked at students' use of T/V pronouns in online interactions (Belz & Kinginger 2002; van Compernelle, Williams & McCourt, 2011) and in conversations with native speakers (Dewaele, 2004; Kinginger, 2000), few have also taken into account the effect of cultural competence on students' choice of pronoun. As T/V pronoun usage is intricately connected to the culture, it is an aspect that merits further investigation to assess students' understanding of pronoun use in everyday situations. The present study aims to examine in which situations students feel confident using pronoun and how their cultural competence and level of French has an effect on their choice of pronoun in the situations presented within the online survey. This study

will include a comparison of student responses across the levels of French taught within a university with the responses of native speakers. Cultural competence will refer to students' existing cultural understanding as a result of contact with the culture and in studies focused on French culture within the classroom that has aided in their effective and appropriate communication with persons within the French culture.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Goals of this Study

The pronouns of direct address in French *tu* and *vous* or T/V pronouns as they are frequently called, present a dynamic and complicated pragmatic situation affecting the sociolinguistic variation in modern French society and causes ongoing challenges for the second language (L2) learner of French. Second and foreign language learners from an English speaking background face an especially difficult task since although English has different registers to indicate the degree of formality within a conversation, it does not have two pronouns to distinctly specify this degree. As a result, L2 learners whose L1 is English will often confuse when to use which pronoun or be inconsistent in their use, which can lead to misunderstanding, insult, and confusion on the part of native speakers. As the appropriate use of T/V pronouns by L2 learners requires a certain amount of cultural competence, for the goals of this study, cultural competence will refer students' existing cultural understanding as a result of contact with the culture and in studies focused on French culture within the classroom that has aided in their effective and appropriate communication with those within the French culture. Cultural exposure will refer to a student's overall exposure to the French culture through study abroad or classroom studies.

The problematic situation of pronoun choice inspired several studies and analyses over the last 50 years, focusing specifically on pronoun choice among both native and non-native speakers alike in order to better understand the pragmatic complexity and ongoing evolution of the situation. Researchers have used various methods in order to assess T/V pronoun usage including the analyses of online communication among native speakers (Williams & van Compernelle, 2007; Williams & van Compernelle, 2009) and among L2 learners (Belz & Kinginger, 2002; Kinginger, 2000; Thorne, 2003; van Compernelle, Williams & McCourt, 2011). Other methods used by research include surveys and interviews for self-reporting of pronoun use by native speakers (Brown & Gilman, 1960; Gordon-Chloros, 1991) and by L2 learners (Dewaele, 2004; Ismail, 2014; Kinginger & Farrell, 2004). Although this is not a comprehensive list of studies, in actuality, very few studies consider the effect of students' cultural competence and their pronoun choice. Of those studies which have considered the cultural competence as a factor, Kinginger & Farrell (2004) examined the use of pronouns by students during study abroad and Liddicoat (2006) considered the development of students' intercultural awareness of T/V pronoun use through teaching the pronouns by the medium of culture. Both of these studies indicated an improvement in students' T/V pronoun use but only considered a small number of students and thus did not include a quantitative analysis tracing their improvement. Two additional aspects that have not yet been addressed are the use of pronouns across multiple levels of French and a comparison of students' responses with that of native speakers.

This study will address the need for more consideration for the effect of cultural competence of students by outlining how students' cultural competence affects their

understanding of French T/V pronoun usage. This study will include a comparison of student responses across the levels of French taught within a university and a comparison of native speakers' responses with that of students. Students' responses will be compared to their cultural competence in the language. The goals of this study are to examine in which situations students feel confident in appropriate pronoun use and how their cultural competence has an effect on their choice of pronoun in the situations presented within the survey.

The studies of both Brown & Gilman (1960) and Dewaele (2004) provided a framework for the development of the survey used in this present study. Both studies gave speakers Likert scales to choose how likely they would be to use each pronoun. The Brown & Gilman (1960) study only involved a few native speakers of French while the Dewaele(2004) study included native speakers of other languages, mainly English. Both studies used five-point Likert scales although the actual choices differed. Brown & Gilman's (1960) survey asked if speakers would definitely or possibly use one or the other pronouns. On the other hand, Dewaele's (2004) survey questionnaire asked students how frequently they spoke French and included 12 items inquiring if students always, often, or sometimes used each pronoun. Brown & Gilman's (1960) asked how likely the participant would be to use each pronoun depending on the 28 situations given. The survey for this present study used a series of questions asking students to rate the likelihood of T/V pronoun choice along a Likert scale similar to Brown & Gilman (1960) but considered a population more like that of Dewaele (2004). This present survey included 23 items involving a variety of people and situations in order to assess students' pronoun choice in multiple scenarios. Some of these scenarios were taken from rules and

situations presented in textbooks while other questions originated from experiences one is likely to encounter within French culture and in the classroom.

Coveney (2010) observed that questionnaires and surveys are not an adequate measure of native speaker and student use of pronouns due to concern of how reliable self-reporting of pronoun use actually is. However, Coveney (2010) also conceded that although researchers can analyze online chat conversations and written texts, it is very difficult to study pronoun use in spontaneous speech. Taking into account the question of self-reporting reliability, the use of a survey for the objectives of this study was seen as the most efficient way to gather a large number of responses from a diverse group of participants.

1.2 Outline of the Study

French is spoken all over the world and thus T/V pronoun use will naturally differ depending on the country, region, and culture. This study will consider the T/V pronoun paradigm commonly found in Parisian France as this is the “standard” French that students are primarily taught in the classroom. Vassallo-Villaneau (1991) outlines some examples of this paradigm of *tu* and *vous* in the situations native speakers often find themselves. Vassallo-Villaneau instructs that learners use *vous* with those above the age of 12 or 13 until the other speaker begins using *tu*. Within this paradigm the pronoun *vous* is the pronoun used to demonstrate politeness, respect, social distance, and for use in the plural. Conversely, the pronoun *tu* is used in the singular and in more informal situations, within the context of family, and in situations of solidarity such as among peers the same age or rank or among those of the same team (Vassallo-Villaneau, 1991).

This paradigm is also important for the purposes of this study due to the aspect of possibly causing insult by the wrong use of pronoun. If one uses *tu* to address a person in a situation in which a service is being rendered, one will make the other person feel inferior and such a circumstance would be seen as insulting. Conversely, using *vous* in a circumstance that merits informality and solidarity can be seen as rude. These examples of the T/V pronoun paradigm are given with the understanding that T/V pronoun use follows a series of unwritten rules that are controlled by the people within a culture and are based on what is commonly taught to students in the classroom. The rules commonly taught to students will be presented in more detail in Chapter 2.

In the Previous Research section the historical and theoretical background of this present study will be discussed. First, the history of the changes and development of T/V pronoun use in French history and society over the last few centuries will be examined. It is difficult to fully grasp the situation faced by L2 learners without also understanding the effect history and movements within society have played in the current use of T/V pronouns. The historical background of T/V pronoun evolution will serve as an outline for an examination of the resulting pragmatic dilemmas facing native speakers in pronoun choice particularly in certain situations. Interviews and studies that have been conducted focusing on native speakers' use of pronoun will be considered with the focus of how the current pragmatic situation also affects L2 learners. Studies and analyses exploring L2 learner pragmatic difficulties will be examined to ascertain what reported struggles students are having and what other factors need to be considered. This will be followed by a theoretical overview of the need for more cultural studies in foreign language classes and what cultural aspects affect pronoun choice among the French. Studies will be

discussed that consider the development of students' cultural understanding, and its effect on their developing linguistic system in regards to pronoun use. Finally, an explanation of the research questions, hypothesis, and structure of this present study will be outlined on the basis of this theoretical background.

The Methodology section will first describe the study participants, how they were recruited, and information on their linguistic and educational background. Secondly, the motivation for the structure and format of the survey will be explained including the justification for the inclusion of each survey item. The questions were grouped according to people, everyday situations, and classroom situations, thus, each question will be discussed in this order.

The Results section will report participants' responses to the survey and include an in-depth analysis of how different groups of responses compare to others. Responses were grouped based on level and cultural exposure and will be analyzed based on the design and motivation of the present study.

The Conclusion section will discuss how the results answered the research questions and if the initial hypothesis was affirmed based on the results. This section will also consider the implications of these results on learner development and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) pedagogy. This section will conclude with an outline of suggestions for future research in this area.

CHAPTER 2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This chapter discusses perspectives and research of French T/V (*tu/vous*) pronouns, and the effect of cultural exposure on learners' understanding of the use of each pronoun. The difficult pragmatic situation of T/V pronoun use is a constant source of confusion for learners. This chapter will consider analyses and studies of T/V pronoun use which have aided in the understanding of their use in French society, have investigated students' struggles with their appropriate use, and will outline a need for further research in the effect of cultural exposure on learners' use of them.

The review of the previous research in this area will examine the history and evolution of T/V pronouns in French literature and society in Section 2.1. In order to give a context for the current pragmatic situation, this section will focus in particular on the political and historical changes that have caused a shift in pronoun use. As native speaker data will be included in the study, the pragmatic dilemma of native speakers in T/V pronoun use will be examined in Section 2.2. This will aid in providing a context for the challenges learners face in pronoun use. Subsequently, an analysis of the pragmatic difficulties for the L2 learner will follow in Section 2.3. This section will supply the framework for the development of the study and justify the use of the situations in the survey. After an analysis of the pragmatic challenges of learners in pronoun use, a discussion of the effect of cultural exposure and study abroad on learners' T/V pronoun

use in Section 2.4 will expound upon the need for more cultural exposure and sociolinguistic awareness for students to begin to develop an understanding of appropriate pronoun use. Finally, an outline of the research questions and motivations of the present study will be presented in Section 2.5.

2.1 The History and Evolution of T/V Pronouns in French

The role and use of T/V pronouns in French has been constantly evolving over the last several centuries. In fact, the only published commentary on the proper grammatical usage of *tu* was not written until the 16th century since *tu* up to that point was rarely used. In the society of the time those of the upper social class used *tu* in addressing inferiors or someone with whom they shared an intimate relationship, and by those in the lower social classes in addressing each other (Maley, 1975). The pronoun *vous* was primarily used as a pronoun to show respect, to acknowledge the higher rank of another, to speak formally, and was used reciprocally among those in the upper social classes. For these reasons, the pronoun *tu* was for the most part absent in 17th and 18th century literature as it was considered too colloquial for written language (Coveney, 2003). However, there were those who did not entirely follow the conventions of society and still used both pronouns.

Despite the rarity of *tu* in written literature, Molière's plays written in the 17th century were one example which demonstrated a dynamic use of both pronouns. Using the pronoun *tu* would have made sense in the context of Molière's plays mainly because his characters were often lower class peasants representing everyday life.

Playwrights in particular are also known for using aspects of a language such as forms of address to make a scene more salient, humorous, or to illustrate a change in the relationships or emotions between characters. Fay (1920) confirmed this in his very detailed analysis of T/V pronoun use between characters in twenty-nine of Molière's plays. In his analysis, it was observed that a change from one direct address pronoun to the other could dramatically alter the tone of a conversation and scene to emphasize emotion and tenderness, to show superiority, or to be rude. The intended meaning of using one pronoun over the other depended heavily on the plot of the play and the personality of the characters although it was not always clear why a character would switch from using *tu* in favor of *vous* or vice versa. He came to the conclusion that Molière's usage of T/V pronouns is for the most part consistent throughout his plays and does seem to reflect oral pronoun usage that would have been common in his time. Written texts such as these plays which display examples of what would have been commonly spoken at the time gives us some clues as to how the pronouns were used historically.

The roles of these two pronouns were not only limited to movements in literature as two major historical events within the French government and society caused a dramatic shift in pronoun use. The first shift came in an increase in the usage of *tu* during the Revolution of 1789, when the use of the pronoun *vous* was condemned as a pronoun of feudalism resulting in an increase in the use of *tu* until the death of Robespierre (Brown & Gilman, 1960; Ford, 1974; Maley, 1972; Peeters, 2004). Despite this shift, the pronoun *vous* still continued to play an important role and did not disappear as had been hoped by the revolutionaries. The second major shift in pronoun came as a result of the

student demonstrations of May 1968, which mainly affected Paris. As Ford (1974) noted, professors and those who had previously maintained the use of *vous* in addressing them were essentially left “holding the bag” (p.1151) so to speak because *vous* was suddenly no longer seen as a pronoun of respect. This only lasted briefly but resulted in an increase in the use of *tu* in the subsequent generations. As both Maley (1972) and Ford (1974) observe, movements and major changes in government have resulted in a change in authority which naturally affects T/V pronoun use. Although Maley (1972) conducted a thorough analysis and overview of the history and development of these pronouns, she did not directly question or interview native speakers. However, Ford (1974) in corresponding with French students and professors involved in the May 1968 conflict was able to observe firsthand what changes were happening within the French society in regards to pronoun use. He found in the years that followed that *vous* was more likely to be avoided in favor of *tu* than before May 1968 and that first meetings no longer necessarily required the use of *vous*. Although both of the analyses by Ford (1974) and Maley (1972) are helpful for a synchronic analysis of the T/V situation in Paris as well as France, more current research is needed in the use of T/V pronouns among native and non-native speakers alike.

These historical changes in T/V pronouns aid in our understanding of how the meaning these pronouns has changed and developed over the last few centuries. The political movements within the society have caused shifts resulting in a pragmatic change each pronoun is used. Most importantly, these changes and movements demonstrate the important role pronouns have played and continue to play in society and relationships.

Accordingly, this historical background provides an overview for the struggles faced by learners and native speakers in pronoun use.

2.2 The Pragmatic Dilemma of T/V Pronouns

“Tu ou vous? *That is the question*” observed Vassallo-Villaneau (1991, p. 831) to emphasize the often difficult sociolinguistic and pragmatic situation facing native and non-native speakers in pronoun choice. As she remarks, typically when in doubt, one chooses to *vouvoyer* (use *vous*) those who are older than 13, but the tricky question remains as to the appropriate moment to begin to *tutoyer* (use *tu* with) someone else. This can be the cause of uncertainty due to not wanting to cause offense or give the impression of either a lack of respect or a lack of camaraderie. Blume (2000) described this pragmatic situation in her overview of the T/V pronoun situation as faced by both native speaker and learners:

With some effort and application, foreigners can learn to tie a scarf like a French woman or to chew wine like a French man. But they cannot hope to master the intricacies of the *tu* and *vous* forms of address, because the French can't either (p.1).

Obviously, even the French often struggle with choosing the right pronoun making it not as surprising that students would also have problems with choosing the correct pronoun according to the situation. For, as Dewaele (2004) described, the learners' predicament in choosing the right pronoun in French is much like walking a “sociolinguistic tightrope” (p.383) with one wrong move in pronoun choice causing one to fall off the tightrope

potentially causing a serious offense. However, it would be unrealistic to imagine that learners would begin to “master” the complex pragmatic system of T/V pronouns without at least a few stumbles along the way. Since even native speakers struggle with making mistakes in pronoun use, I will first look at what studies have been done to define the factors which determine pronoun use and the input of native speakers on their motivations for the circumstances in which they use each pronoun.

One of the first and foundational studies in T/V pronoun use was conducted by Brown & Gilman (1960). In analyzing the changes in the semantics of the use of one pronoun over the other in the last few centuries, they based their study on the view that the use of pronoun pragmatically dictated the existence of power or solidarity between two speakers. They defined the T pronoun (*tu*) as a sign of solidarity among those of the same social class, work setting, political group, or family, whereas the V pronoun (*vous*) signified distance within a relationship or in difference of social class. They came to these conclusions based on both historical examples as well as the results from a questionnaire given to male native speakers of German, French, and Italian. A total of 50 Germans, 20 Frenchmen, and 11 Italians responded to the questionnaire with some participants also sending letters afterwards to explain their choices in more detail. All of the participants came from upper-middle class professional families and were students studying in Boston who had been in the U.S. for less than a year. The questionnaire listed 28 situations to which participants checked off how likely they would be to choose a T or a V pronoun in each situation. Some of the situations included family members, colleagues at work, fellow students, a waiter in a restaurant, and those of higher and lower rank as well as the same rank within the army. Although the three languages did

differ in which cases and in which relationships one pronoun was preferred, they found that some principles of pronoun use were applicable across languages. From these principles, three different possibilities of distance and power relationships became apparent in reciprocal and nonreciprocal use of pronouns. The first was that an increase in the use of the reciprocal use of the T pronoun indicated an increase in solidarity in a relationship between two speakers. The second, that the nonreciprocal use of pronouns in which a V and T pronoun were used between two speakers was an indicator of a power semantic such as the historical example listed of a feudal lord addressing his subjects with *tu* while his subjects addressed him with *vous*. In modern times, an example of this nonreciprocal use of pronoun would be the choice of pronoun by a teacher in addressing students. They did note that the T and V nonreciprocal use was beginning to disappear from the French language although the French are very aware of its existence due to its frequent use in literature. The third type of relationship is the reciprocal use of *vous* indicating non-solidarity and possibly superiority. Overall, they found that the T pronoun was favored over the V pronoun across the three languages and that as solidarity increased so naturally did the use of the T pronoun.

Although some of the information and examples used in this often critiqued study by Brown & Gilman (1960) are now outdated, the importance of this initial study in T/V pronoun use has aided in the studies and analyses to follow. This study in being one of the first to conduct a survey to examine T/V pronoun use has had a profound effect on our understanding of T/V pronouns and on the need for continued research in this field. An analysis of T/V pronouns must begin with a consideration of this study. Despite the usefulness of this study as a starting point, one of the biggest critiques of this study as

Peeters (2004) asserts is an oversimplification of a very complex situation as there are many factors beyond only power and distance that determine the use of which pronoun in a given situation. As a result, students and native speakers often find themselves in a paradoxical situation in pronoun choice. For this reason, continued studies involving pronoun choice of both native speakers and learners will aid in better understanding the evolving pragmatic situation and how to improve students' understanding of the use of each pronoun. First, I will discuss the social effects influencing T/V pronoun use among native speakers, and then the difficulties that are currently facing learners.

2.2.1 Social Effects influencing T/V Pronoun Use

To further analyze T/V pronouns, one must consider the other elements and social effects that influence pronoun choice. Peeters (2004) in critiquing the conclusions of Brown & Gilman (1960) cites multiple instances when there has been a previous power relationship that no longer exists such as between a former student and teacher or between a former army captain and soldier that cause confusion for native speakers in choosing the appropriate pronoun. In agreement with Brown & Gilman (1960), Peeters (2004) also notes that the nonreciprocal use of the T/V pronouns has become rather rare in modern French, but Peeters (2004) elaborates further that those instances when the nonreciprocal use of pronoun occurs, especially marks and emphasizes a hierarchical and/or power inequality. Consequently, one has to be especially careful in T/V pronoun choice as pronouns used in the wrong way can be seen as trying to elevate one's status and make another feel inferior.

In fact, as French society has continued to shift in favor of the use of *tu* in more situations, Coveney (2010), in presenting a more recent analysis of the T/V pronoun sociolinguistic dynamic, argues that contrary to popular belief, *vous* is now the marked variant. His argument is based on the steady decline of the use of *vous* in modern spoken French in both France and Canada. He asserts that further research needs to be done in children's use of the pronouns to determine if this could be an indicator of a steady decline and eventual disappearance of *vous* much as has happened in English. If Coveney's (2010) predictions are correct, the use of T/V pronouns in French will seem to have come full circle since the 17th century when *tu* was rarely used in favor of *vous*. Although Peeters' (2004) analysis does align with Coveney's (2010) assertion that *vous* has in modern times become the marked pronoun of the two, he does not necessarily agree that *vous* is going to disappear from use in the French language any time soon especially when one takes into consideration the use of plural *vous*. As a matter of fact, the French even doubt that *vous* will completely disappear due to its importance in the language (Gardner-Chloros, 1991; Vassallo-Villano, 1991). Morford (1997) remarked that the French already tried to make *tu* the only pronoun in their language during the Revolution and that failed. The increase in the use of *tu* in the last 40 years has caused some in the older generation to lament that *tu* no longer has the same meaning or intimacy due to overuse as Morford (1997) noted. Due to this increase in the use of *tu* and the resulting shift in marked pronoun, students who are accustomed to using *vous* may find themselves being viewed by native speakers as overly formal with peers their own age or trying to appear as superior especially if the native speaker has begun the conversation using *tu*. Another problem that arises as Morford (1997) cites in

demonstrating the detrimental effect on relationships due to switching between the two pronouns as learners are apt to do:

One woman explained, for example, that when her attempts to switch to *tu* with someone fail, she reverts to *vous* but tends to expect less from her interactions with that person. As she put it, "If that person is so uptight that she can't say *tu*, then there are probably many things we couldn't discuss" (p. 14).

As one can see, consistency in pronoun use within conversations is essential both for the native and nonnative speaker to maintain good relations with those around them. Morford (1997) demonstrates that the situation has changed dramatically from the recommendations of an etiquette book from the 1930s which cautioned the use of *tu* only with those "lucky few" (p.10) with whom one has an intimate connection. In fact, the modern status of the use of *tu* is just the opposite causing the situation to consequently become more complicated with the increase of the use of *tu* as will be shown in an analysis of more modern native speaker use of pronouns in varying situations. This shift towards the use of *tu* is especially important in relation to how we teach pronouns and will also affect which pronoun a native speaker would choose in the situations presented in the survey.

2.2.2 Native Speaker Use of T/V Pronouns

In a study that focused on T/V pronoun use among native speakers, Gardner-Chloros (1991) found the notion of rules for L2 learners in the use of T/V pronouns intriguing as the use of these pronouns, as she stated, depends on many sociolinguistic factors that are hard to summarize in rules. In particular, she noted that the rule to not use

tu until the other speaker begins using *tu* was definitely intended for nonnative speakers because otherwise one would never hear *tu* used. She based her questionnaire, which was given to 78 people who were interviewed in three towns in Alsace, on the rules found in textbooks and manuals for teaching L2 students. The questionnaire focused on which pronouns were used based on the age and familiarity of another person and how much they hesitated between which pronoun to use. This questionnaire was followed by 34 more detailed interviews on pronoun choice. Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated using *tu* with children under the age of 15, but there was a large difference in hesitation between older and younger speakers in the use of *tu* with peers around the same age. Older speakers indicated a preference for the use of *vous* except for when talking to children while younger speakers tended to use *tu* with less hesitation unless the other speaker was quite a bit older. The biggest factor in choosing to use *tu* was based on how well the person knew the speaker. Some speakers though very few mentioned using *vous* with an unknown child. The elderly preferred the use of *vous* in more circumstance. Overall, the younger generations tended to use *tu* with their peers while those around thirty years of age reported a more frequent use of *vous*. Gardner-Chloros (1991) believed that this increase in the use of *vous* was most likely due to the somewhat older participants having jobs and encountering more situations and circumstances which would cause hesitation even with using *vous* among peers. This study was particularly interesting because it included both a questionnaire and a follow-up oral interview with some of the participants. Being able to hear the thoughts of native speakers as they are trying to decide which pronoun to use gave not only a more in-depth look into the dilemma that native speakers face but also evidence of how pronoun use has changed

across two or three generations. Unfortunately, Gordon-Chloros (1991) did not follow-up with a similar study among L2 learners to compare with the responses of the native speakers to measure how effective textbook rules are in teaching the use of pronouns.

In considering the pronoun use of young native speakers, one likely reason for the decrease of the use of *vous* is most likely because it creates a barrier, thus a group of friends would feel uncomfortable with one friend continuing to use *vous* (Ford, 1974). In an online conversation with Royer, a native French speaker in his mid twenties, he affirmed the same notion in remarking the use of *tu* among his peers:

One thing is sure, "vous" is not something "cool kids" want to do. If, for example, you are going to ski or play music with someone, anything that is somehow trendy and fun, we tend to use "tu". If it's, for example, a summer camp, people want to establish some kind of fraternity using "tu". A social butterfly would use "tu" a lot. By using "tu", you actually create a bond between you and the person you're speaking to. It's not just a pronoun, in that case. It's an invitation to join a circle of friends (J. Royer, personal communication, January 28, 2015).

According to Royer, *tu* is important for identifying oneself with and affirming one's membership within a group or team. Basically, it's more "trendy" to use *tu* among the youth. Royer continued that in his opinion, "if you're interacting with someone on a professional level, or for a service, it will automatically be *vous*. [In remarking on the use of *tu* with an older relative], for me, age doesn't matter when you talk to a relative" (J. Royer, personal communication, January 28, 2015). This point was especially interesting as Ford (1974) had mentioned in his analysis that children might resort to using *vous* depending on how well they knew their older relatives. Thus, either the trend has

continued to evolve in favor of the more consistent use of *tu* or it is a specific characteristic of the region or family from which Royer is from.

Royer mentioned that a native speaker will often use pronouns as a way to check the proficiency of a non-native speaker. Morford (1997) affirmed this reality in citing an example of supervisors who consistently used *vous* with immigrant workers due to the assessment that non-native speakers would not understand the distinction between the two pronouns in addition to maintaining their positions as overseers. By contrast, T/V pronoun use by native speakers may depend on more than solely relationships. Morford (1997) described situations in which the setting had an effect on pronoun use such as two lawyers who might use *tu* in regular conversation but use *vous* within a courtroom. Additionally, hierarchy within a work situation could play a significant role in whether one would use *vous* to maintain a certain professional distance. On the one hand, those at the same level such as factory workers might use *tu*, while those in a supervisory or director's position might be likely to prefer *vous* to maintain authority and respect (Morford, 1997). On the other hand, the use of *vous* can also designate a desire to maintain a distance with those one does not agree with politically or socially (Morford, 1997). As is apparent, T/V pronoun use is a pragmatic situation that sets the tone of personal and professional relationships, that emphasizes one's hierarchical status within a company and society, and that dictates one's social distance from another. This commentary on native speaker use of T/V pronouns in the aforementioned situations helps one better understand the native speakers' point of view in this study especially as some of these situations are presented within the survey for this study.

2.3 Pragmatic Difficulties for the L2 Learner

How a language is used and what is considered appropriate within a culture has a bearing on how a nonnative using the language will be perceived. As Riley (1984) affirms: “This is precisely why pragmatic error is so important in language learning: if a foreigner makes a grammatical error he is usually judged linguistically (He doesn't speak the language correctly). But if he makes a pragmatic error, he is judged socially ("He doesn't behave correctly")” (Riley,1984, p.130). There are certain things a native speaker will forgive a nonnative speaker for such as a pronunciation or a conjugation error as these errors do not affect comprehension and are often overlooked. Nonetheless, saying something deemed inappropriate, or in the case of this study, using the wrong pronoun with the wrong person at the wrong time, could be seen as incredibly impolite, insulting, and unacceptable.

As Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei (1998) found, having a high grammar competence did not necessarily correlate with also having a high pragmatic competence. Their case study focused on the effect the instructional environment, a learner's proficiency, and the awareness of the pragmatic clues given by the instructor in the classroom has on the grammatical and pragmatic development of ESL and EFL students. As Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei (1998) maintain: “The disparity between learners' and NSs' pragmatic competence may be attributed to two key factors related to input: the availability of input and the salience of relevant linguistic features in the input from the point of view of the learner” (p.234). In this study 543 students enrolled in English classes in two countries were recruited and given a questionnaire to ascertain their proficiency in English and their educational background. Students were presented with a series of short video

scenarios and rated if the scenarios were first grammatically correct and secondly, if they were pragmatically correct. If the scenarios were deemed incorrect, the students rated how serious the errors were. They found that ESL students rated pragmatic errors as more serious while EFL students rated grammatical errors as more serious. Students also could often tell that a sentence was grammatically incorrect but had more difficulty determining if it was pragmatically incorrect. Although ESL students were more aware of pragmatic errors, this did not always correlate with correct pragmatic production. Thus, one may even be able to tell that a sentence is pragmatically inappropriate but still struggle to produce the correct forms. Input does indeed play a role in this development, but as Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei (1998) mention, pragmatics are difficult to teach as students need interaction to practice and learn from mistakes. This study is relevant for the purposes of this study because L2 learners of French are faced with a similar quandary in pronoun usage. Students who have taken introductory courses in French may be able to recognize that a sentence using *tu* is grammatically correct according to the conjugation, but their understanding of when to appropriately use *tu* pragmatically takes much more practice and interaction to develop. This justifies the question of students' level of French in the present survey questionnaire and the coinciding assessment of how well they are able to indicate pronoun use based on level and experience with French.

2.3.1 Student Interactions with T/V Pronouns

This pragmatic dilemma of learners in the use of T/V pronouns and need for interaction became especially evident in two studies conducted by Kinginger (2000) and Belz & Kinginger (2002). Kinginger (2000) emphasized the need for interaction among

native speakers to assist students in learning to use pronouns properly. In this study, 14 students in university French classes in the U.S. were assigned an email pal among 10 French students in France who were enrolled in an English class in order to promote cross-cultural awareness and development. The email conversations between the students were recorded. The goal of the study was to assess how online peer interaction with native speakers affected the English speaking students' use of *tu* and *vous*. They found that the French students preferred the use of *tu* in their emails with the American students after the first contact and especially as they got to know one another. Often not noticing the difference in pronoun use or forgetting to consistently use *tu*, the American students would continue to use *vous* in their emails. The American students were consistently corrected and prompted by the French students to not be so formal and distant with them since they were all considered peers. It usually took more than one comment from the French students before the American students would begin to realize that using *vous* in these conversations was, in fact, using a marked pronoun which emphasized distance and formality and was not welcomed by those who felt themselves to be peers. This realization on the part of the American students echoes the views of Coveney (2010) and Peeters (2004) in marked pronoun use. Fortunately, through this interaction with native speakers, students improved in their use of T/V pronouns during the duration of their correspondence. Similarly, in the two case studies conducted by Belz & Kinginger (2002) through telecollaboration among L2 learners of French and German, the more students conversed with and became friends with students in Germany and France, the more the American students started learning how and when to use T/V pronouns, due mainly to corrections by the native speakers. Based on these studies, it is imperative for students to

have the opportunity to converse with native speakers in order to develop pragmatically in the use of the pronouns. Some of the limitations in these studies were the lack of assessments before and after the interactions with native speakers to determine how much students had acquired and were retaining in pronoun use. Additionally, there was no mention of how much explicit instruction students had received in pronoun use and both studies only included a small number of students. These studies provide a framework for some of the situations that will be examined in this present study. Although the goals of this present study do not include a measure of consistency of pronoun use, participants were given two situations involving which pronoun to use with a peer around the same age in order to assess if the situation is still a cause of difficulty for students and to ascertain which pronoun they would likely choose.

2.3.2 Online Interactions and the Use of Pronouns

As seen in the above studies, online communication presents a relatively recent and unique opportunity for development in the pragmatic rules governing pronoun use due to the inherent informality of chat rooms and social media. Williams & van Compernelle (2007) contend that there has not been a complete loss of formality and politeness online but instead a different set of rules exist as they discuss in their analysis of the use of T/V pronouns in French-language chat channels. In the examination of two corpora of recorded chat sessions, they found that the pronoun *tu* was overwhelmingly preferred but that *vous* was still present generally though not always only used with first introductions into a chat session and when addressing the other participants as the group. The advantage of these online communities as maintained by Williams & van

Compernelle (2007) is that “in an electronic communication space users have some flexibility to shape their social interactions and exchanges. One essential difference created by this relatively new medium of communication is the noticeable absence of a complex hierarchical social structure” (p.816). They remarked a widespread reciprocal use of *tu* due to this lack of formality and social expectation. In a second study, Williams & van Compernelle (2009) considered discussion forums as the structure is somewhat different from chat rooms with the hypothesis that *vous* would be more common due to an increased likelihood of unfamiliarity among participants. They examined two different threads of approximately 20 posts and specifically considered the first five posts in a thread for the use of pronouns. Even though they found a slight increase in the use of *vous* as compared to the study on chat rooms, the pronoun *tu* was still preferred among users. Some of the limitations of both of the above studies were a lack of background knowledge of the speakers and a lack of opportunity to ask speakers the reasons for their choice of pronoun. Consequently, one does not know where the speakers were from or their linguistic background. One can only assume that the reason for their increased use of *tu* was due to the informality of the community formed online. However, the fact that *tu* is preferred online in these instances would beg the question of how likely one would be to use *tu* with a Francophone friend on social media as in one of the questions in the situations of the present study.

A third study involving online communication conducted by van Compernelle, Williams & McCourt (2011) examined learner-learner interaction via synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) in order to assess what effect students might have on one another in T/V pronoun use in French. The participants included 81

university students enrolled in their first, second, and third semester of French and followed their chats over a 12 week period. Students were assigned to a group of three students each from a different level of French. Students were given the choice of discussing a particular theme from their textbook or to work on translation of vocabulary or grammar exercises during their recorded SCMC sessions. Upon examining students' use of pronouns, the authors found that students consistently switched between the two pronouns within the same conversation and even within the same sentence. In only one instance did a student question another student for her use of *vous* within a question. The researchers did not feel that students were completely unaware of T/V pronoun distinctions in French, but since there were no social consequences for using the wrong pronoun, the students did not realize their mistakes and thus did not develop sociopragmatically. Overall, they found that second semester students performed better than the third semester students which affirms Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei's (1998) conclusions that grammatical competence does not always equal pragmatic competence in students. Although van Compernelle et al. (2011) examined the use of pronouns based on the type of sentence used, e.g., declarative or interrogative, there was a lack of pinpointing exactly with which situations students were struggling the most in appropriate pronoun choice and use. This could have been due to students mostly using the pronouns incorrectly no matter what the situation was. A consideration of pronoun use in online interactions on Facebook will be considered as part of the situations in this present study due in part to the findings of the aforementioned three studies.

2.3.2 Surveys and Interactions between Native Speakers and Learners

In a study which looked specifically at students' interactions with native speakers, students also struggled to consistently use the *tu* form with native speakers. This could have been due to a lack of development in the language or not being accustomed to using *tu* with an older native speaker (Dewaele, 2004). Dewaele (2004) looked at the data of self-reported pronoun use among both native and non-native speakers of French through the use of a questionnaire, recorded dialogues between teachers and students, and recorded conversations between native speakers and nonnative students. His series of three studies looked at multiple variables including gender, native versus nonnative speaker status, if the nonnative speaker's L1 included multiple pronouns, and students' frequency of speaking French. Through the questionnaire given to 125 respondents, he found that knowing the status of the interlocutor, whether native or nonnative, was imperative to truly understand their use of one pronoun versus the other. Additionally, among the self-reported data gathered through the use of survey that included degrees of likelihood of using one pronoun versus the other, it was found that *vous* was preferred with strangers while *tu* was preferred with children and with those well-known to the interlocutor. Dewaele's (2004) study showed the benefits of having participants respond to a questionnaire and having recordings of the students' pronoun use in conversations with native speakers. His study looked at a very similar population of university students and native speakers as my study is also aimed to analyze. The main difference is in perspective. Dewaele's (2004) analysis focuses on how different aspects such as age, gender, and speaker status can have an effect on the T/V pronoun use of students. Although all of these aspects do affect learner use of pronouns, the aspect missing in this

study was an assessment of cultural competence and previous study abroad experiences which could also have an effect on learners' use of pronouns and their confidence in pronoun use in conversations with native speakers.

These examples of online and in-person interactions between native and nonnative speakers tend to agree with the claims of Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis. According to this hypothesis learners need the opportunity to notice interlanguage pragmatic differences in order for acquisition of these concepts in the language to take place. The more difficult question as Schmidt (1993) explains is what role noticing these pragmatic and grammatical differences plays in the acquisition of the language. As has been seen in the above examples of the studies of Belz & Kinginger (2002), Kinginger (2000), and van Compernelle et al. (2011), learners often required the correction of native speakers more than once before the learners became aware that they were not using the pronouns correctly. Schmidt (1993) argues against the existence of subliminal learning and claims that learners' acquisition of a second language is defined by what they notice. In this manner, learners will not learn the pragmatic difference between the use of *tu* and *vous* without explicit instruction and practice. However, although Warga (2007) agrees that noticing pragmatic differences between languages is important, she asserts that pragmatic awareness alone will not necessarily lead to the correct pragmatic use of these concepts in a second language. Warga (2007) advocates explicit instruction of the pragmatics of French to help students improve their pragmatic awareness and give them the opportunity to practice using different registers of speech.

This need for practice is especially true with the use of the plural *vous* which often causes confusion for L2 students. When addressing more than one person even if

one is addressing friends, one is to use the plural *vous*. The confusion originates from understanding the difference between the *vous* for politeness and the *vous* addressed to multiple people within the same conversation. Lyster & Rebouffet (2002) found that immersion students in Canada struggled to use the plural *vous* despite being given several examples both explicit and implicit by the teacher. Lyster & Rebouffet (2002) came to the conclusion that students were most likely struggling because of few opportunities to actually use the plural *vous* themselves in daily interactions. This assertion was based on Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985) which maintains a need for students to have opportunities to experiment with the language they are learning through output and, in effect, test the hypotheses they have formed about language use.

2.4 Cultural Competence and T/V Pronouns

As we have seen so far in the consideration of T/V pronouns in French, native speakers and students alike face a difficult pragmatic situation in the choice of pronoun. The culture of a language is often seen in the rather broad terms of "big C" (big Culture) which includes such things as literature and history and "little C" (small culture) which includes daily life and everyday language. Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory even goes so far as to link children's acquisition of their native language to their social interaction with and participation in the culture and environment surrounding them. French children grow up hearing and learning to use the T/V pronouns although there are more factors in play in language development and acquisition than solely the environment in which one grows up. As we have seen previously, movements in society as well as one's own personality has an effect on language development and usage.

According to Kramsch (1998), language expresses, represents, and symbolizes cultural reality. She explains that the manner in which one uses a language is as a result of being a part of a cultural group. As a result, culture influences the choice of words, of subject, the manner of negotiating meaning, and in the interest of this study, the appropriate choice of pronoun. The history, the traditions, the rules governing how to be polite, and the use of slang are just a few examples of the aspects within a language which are determined by the culture associated with the language. Coupland (2007) states that “Members of cultural groups are aware of, and engage in, distinctive ways of speaking and interacting, and some of these are ritualized into familiar speech” (p. 107). Although neither Kramsch (1998) nor Coupland (2007) specifically referred to pronoun use in French, the general principles and realities of the cultural link with language also apply to the use of *tu* and *vous*. As Moran (2001) explains in examining the “Language-and-Culture” phenomenon:

The fact that *tu* and *vous* exist in French, for example, tells us that French speakers need this distinction in their culture. They need it in order to establish roles and maintain relationships with other French speakers, which is crucial to enacting their cultural practices (p. 35).

Although it is not always readily recognized as part of culture since it is primarily taught as grammar, the T/V pronoun distinction in French is an important part of interaction as has already been seen in previously mentioned studies (Belz & Kinginger, 2002; Kinginger, 2000). Moran (2001) recalled an experience in going to a dinner in France where he knew very few people, thus he began the evening addressing everyone with *vous* and as the evening progressed everyone began addressing each other using *tu*. What

was remarkable to him was that the next morning he met someone in town whom he had addressed using *tu* the night before but in this instance received a cool *vous* in response to his greeting using *tu*. There are multiple reasons why this could have happened including the place and setting, but it could have had a lot to do with the view of friendship and distance. Although *tu* has become more widespread in French society as indicated by Morford (1997), the need and use for *vous* is still prevalent and likely to remain so.

Wylie & Brière (2001) note that passing from *vous* to *tu* within a relationship causes confusion and problems even for native speakers especially depending on how long one has been using *vous* with the other as well as what the hierarchal status is within the relationship. Culturally, the French differ from Americans in their friendships and how they communicate on a professional level which also affects their use of pronoun within a relationship. One difference that is puzzling to Americans is that “Une chef d’entreprise peut appeler sa secrétaire par son prénom, mais ne la tutoie pas” (*The director of a company can call his secretary by his/her first name but not use tu with him/her*) (p.107). In American culture, calling someone by his/her first name often indicates a certain degree of informality depending on the situation, but this is not necessarily the case in the French culture. On the other hand, as Wylie & Brière (2001) further explain, using *tu* in a conversation typically gives the impression of a certain amount of equality and familiarity with another person, but it does not necessarily mean that someone is considered a friend. For the French, as Carroll (1987) remarks, a friendship once established is considered permanent and the friend is like a family member. As a result, friendships among the French can potentially take longer to form and may not immediately necessitate the use of *tu*. Thus, in Moran’s (2001) rather

puzzling experience, the use of *tu* was most likely due to the friendly atmosphere of the gathering and not so much in the establishment of a friendship, hence the reason for the switch back to the formal pronoun *vous* when they were no longer in that setting.

Due to the social and cultural significance of pronoun use in French as we have seen so far, it is not surprising that these two pronouns would have also become a part of a comedy routine. The stand-up comedian Raymond Devos used a play on words between the sounds in the phrase “Qui tu es?” (*Who are you?*) and “Qui tuer?” (*Who kills?*) to narrate a famous comedic routine. After a call from his doctor, he thought that he had contracted a “killer virus” and believed that he was supposed to kill the first person he met upon leaving his house. Upon exiting his house he came across someone else carrying a gun, and he feared he had run into someone with the same virus resulting in the following exchange: “Il me dit (*He said to me*) : - ‘Tu permets que je te tutoie ? Je te tutoie et toi, tu me dis tu !’ (*Will you permit me to use tu with you? I’m using tu with you, and you will say tu to me !*) Je me dis (*I said to myself*): - ‘Si je dis tu à ce tueur, il va me tuer !’” (*If I say tu to this killer, he’ll kill me*) (Devos, 1988). In an earlier statement within the narration, he addresses the other person with *vous* and makes it clear that he doesn’t use *tu* with someone he just met. Though in this instance he was more concerned that saying *tu* could result in a misunderstanding of *tue* which is the imperative form of the verb *tuer* meaning “to kill”. In this rather comic example, Devos maintained the formal *vous* especially after meeting his doctor who described his mistake that Devos did not actually have the “killer virus,” but instead the doctor had it.

2.4.1 The Role of Pronouns in Politeness

Even though students are not likely to be faced with a life or death situation involving the use of *tu* and *vous* as in the previously mentioned comedy routine, they may be likely to cause offense by appearing impolite to native speakers through their choice of pronoun. What is considered polite and rude is intricately linked to the culture of a language. One can expect that a student who has not grown up using the two pronouns will require time and practice to learn the use of each pronoun. Learners will also face the challenge of the influence of their native culture's rules of politeness on their use of a second language. The rules of politeness will often dictate which registers and even pronouns are used within a conversation. Ismail, Aladdin & Ramli (2014) did a recent study in French classes taught in a university in Malaysia which focused primarily on how politeness is taught and how much students understand in the use of pronouns in order to be polite. They gave 48 students a questionnaire in which there was a list of various people one might meet in everyday conversations and students were to select if they would use *vous* or *tu* in those situations. They noted that although the students had been instructed that in French, one primarily uses *tu* with one's parents, a large majority of the students selected *vous* because in the Malaysian culture in order to show respect, one's parents are typically addressed using a more formal register. Malaysians have different registers of formality and their own forms of politeness which influenced their choice of pronoun in French. As Ismail et al. (2014) indicate based on these results, students need to learn how to appropriately use words and concepts in a language based on the culture of the language. This questionnaire was essentially used to diagnose where problems occur in student comprehension of the use of pronouns. Their next project is to

create teaching approaches to answer the problems that students are facing in this issue. One of the limitations of their study was that students were only given a choice of either *vous* or *tu* instead of being able to rate on a Likert scale how likely they would be to choose one or the other. In some situations, it is difficult to indicate either one or the other. A Likert scale may have been more accurate in assessing how likely students would be to choose one or the other pronoun.

Students who have not spent as much time studying a culture different from their own will have increased difficulty understanding how others in another culture communicate and view the world. In fact, in a study conducted by Thorne (2003) American students exchanging emails with French students in a lycée (French high school) mutually found each other rude. For example, French students gave direct answers to the Americans' questions without really asking questions to continue the conversation. Students in this situation were faced with a communication problem not so much due to grammar problems but with understanding what was perceived as polite and normal in discourse in another culture. Despite this cultural breakdown in communication, another case mentioned within this same study by Thorne (2003) showed the potential increased benefits of online communication through IM rather than solely email between French and American students. In this one particular case, an American student befriended one of the French student keypals and began having long open conversations on AOL in which they felt comfortable correcting each other's grammar. This was particularly helpful for the American student who was struggling with appropriately using *tu* and *vous* within the conversation. This student felt comfortable

being corrected because she was corrected in a safe environment in which she would not be judged socially for the mistakes she made with pronouns.

Much of the burden lies on the teacher to teach students how to be polite in a foreign language as Moreno Pichastor (1996) discussed in his explanation of various teaching strategies for helping students understand politeness in another culture. He mentioned in particular that instructors need to not only tell students about rules of politeness but also to give them a chance to practice through presentations of scenarios. Although he did not mention specifically the use of pronouns or even French, he did give several general examples of the fact that each language has varying ways of asking and requesting things that depends on how polite one needs to be. One normally sees similar such explanations in textbooks in regards to varying ways of asking for the same thing with small explanations of what would be seen as the most acceptable according to the context. Thus, it would be beneficial to give students more opportunities to practice scenarios of situations which require the use of a pronoun.

2.4.2 The Textbook and T/V Pronouns

In the current approaches to teaching pronouns, students are given rules about pronoun use in a textbook as a place to start as well as to help them avoid appearing as rude or inappropriate. Although this may be a good place to begin in learning the language, this does not help students in realizing the full meaning of the use of pronouns in a language. In the first chapter of *Horizons*, a textbook used during first year French at the university level, students are taught “Les formules de politesse” (*Salutations/Greeting others*) in which it is stated that the pronoun *vous* is used “to greet strangers and those to

whom you show respect” (p. 6), and *tu* is used “to greet classmates, friends, family members, or children...” (p. 8). Understandably, this is the first chapter taught to students who are beginners in the language, thus, this is a very simplified version. This does give students a good place to start, but not much emphasis is placed on the two pronouns other than the grammatical conjugations of the use of each pronoun. In the 200 level (second year), the textbook *Bravo!* gives a little more detailed explanation:

Tutoyer or Vouvoyer? This is not always an easy choice because strict rules do not exist and changes within French society continue to influence modern use of *tu/vous*. Age, socioeconomic background, status, familiarity can all have an influence on the choice of pronoun (p. 7).

This explanation continues by giving a somewhat detailed list of the people with whom one typically uses each pronoun. Additionally, this explanation was written in small text on the side of the page where it might not even be noticed by the average student unless pointed out by the professor. Although this is a more comprehensive explanation than the one given in *Horizons*, students still struggle with using the pronouns properly.

2.4.3 Teaching Pronoun Use through Culture

Part of the problem that students are facing through the only minimal explanation of T/V pronouns in textbooks is a lack of cultural and sociolinguistic explanation within the classroom. Van Compernelle (2010) in presenting a pedagogical model for the teaching of French T/V pronouns maintained that students should be taught pronouns beyond solely *vous* being a pronoun used to be polite and *tu* as a pronoun used among friends. He cites examples of when it could appear as rude to use either pronoun in the

wrong context. For this reason, he favors teaching pronoun usage from a sociolinguistic perspective which takes into account variation, social groups, and cultural values. This would give students the opportunity to interact with how the pronouns are used in society.

Liddicoat (2006) conducted a study to assess how teaching T/V pronouns through culture aided students in understanding when to use pronouns. Liddicoat (2006) began his study by analyzing the simplistic dichotomy that is often taught in French textbooks in regards to pronoun use. The study involved 10 Australian native English speakers enrolled in a beginning French course. After three weeks into the course when they would have been introduced to the existence of two pronouns in French through the textbook and through classroom use, they were taught the use of French T/V pronouns through the use of culturally authentic materials in three 30 minute sessions over the course of eight weeks. The focus of the study was to raise awareness of the use of the two pronouns of direct address in French by having students work through a series of culturally authentic texts and videos involving French forms of address both in pronoun use and in the use of titles and first names. Students were given discussion questions to help guide them through the activities and aid in intercultural reflection. Next, students were interviewed about their understanding of the uses of each pronoun and wrote a reflective journal immediately afterwards. Liddicoat (2006) found that students' initial understanding of the two pronouns before the treatment was very limited as students focused more on the forms of *tu* and *vous* rather than on the meaning. As students began working through the authentic materials, their understanding began to expand in the use and meaning of the two pronouns. In some students' reflections, they began noticing the

differences in meaning of pronoun use within conversations and even reflecting on their own ways of addressing others in the Australian culture. Since students were only at the beginning level, this study was only able to show students' developing intercultural awareness in pronoun use, but this awareness had not yet developed into practice. The importance of this study is the fact that students were able to begin to recognize the practices of the second culture although this had not yet become part of their developing linguistic system. Further research would be needed to assess how students taught T/V pronouns through the medium of culture would later perform on assessments of the appropriateness of students' use of pronouns. As one can see through both of these studies, students who have increased cultural and sociolinguistic understanding of the use of pronouns will ultimately be more aware of the correct use of these pronouns in given situations.

2.4.4 The Effect of Study Abroad on T/V Pronoun Use

One factor also affecting of learner development in a second language beyond cultural exposure in the classroom is exposure to the native culture. Many students elect to improve their language skills and cultural understanding by studying abroad. Although programs vary in length and in structure, overall, students tend to benefit in their language development from time abroad in the country where the language is spoken natively. Kinginger & Farrell (2004) examined the meta-pragmatic development in T/V pronoun use of eight American students who spent a spring semester in different urban areas of France. The students participating in the study kept a journal of their experiences within the culture and were given pre and post tests to evaluate their skills in French. As

part of this assessment, they were also given a Language Awareness Interview which presented six hypothetical situations and asked students to report which pronoun they would likely use in the given situations. The results showed some variable areas, but participants did indicate some amount of sociolinguistic development in the use of the pronouns during the course of their semester abroad. Based on the interviews at the end of the students' study abroad programs, the development of the use of T/V pronouns heavily depended on students' willingness to immerse themselves in the culture and build social networks among native speakers instead of only socializing with other Americans. Despite this fact, even those who were the most successful in this endeavor still faced some uncertainty in pronoun use. In particular, students struggled with whether to use *tu* or *vous* with peers the same age due to wanting to be polite despite some admitting that they were aware that culturally *tu* would probably be the most appropriate pronoun in this situation. Understandably, this study was limited to the very small number of participants and as the authors noted, they could not always be sure based on their questions why or how some students developed their sociolinguistic knowledge. On average, they did find that study abroad had a positive effect on students' understanding of the sociopragmatics of T/V pronoun use.

Another study which was conducted on the benefits of study abroad on T/V pronoun development analyzed Irish students' development of T/V pronouns in German. In the study conducted by Barron (2006) students were evaluated three times during the course of their study abroad program using a program that gave them synopses of situations and the students had to write dialogues to accept or refuse offers depending on the instructions. The researchers used the free discourse completion task (FDCT)

program to facilitate these role play responses from students. The goal was to help students notice when they were using each of the T/V pronouns and determine if the students realized when they were inappropriately using the pronouns. Barron came to the conclusion that students tended to overuse the T pronoun in German despite living in the culture. Additionally, Barron observed that students tended to switch between informal and formal pronouns within the same dialogue which has been found to also happen among French students (van Compernelle et al, 2011). Students also struggled in non-reciprocal instances of pronoun use as in a situation in which a professor addressed a student and some classmates using the informal pronoun and they were expected to respond with the formal pronoun. The results also showed that students often used strategies to avoid having to make the choice between pronouns such as electing to use the pronoun for “we” which seemed odd to native speakers. In this particular study, there was not a significant change in students’ use of the pronouns from the beginning of the program to the end despite residing within the culture. As Barron (2006) asserts, this is most likely due to students’ struggles with procedural and declarative knowledge of pronouns and the need for continued interaction with native speakers in order to continue to develop competence which agrees with the findings of Belz & Kinginger (2002). Although this study was conducted on German T/V pronoun use which does differ from French, this study was still useful for consideration as students in French face similarly difficult sociolinguistic situations.

As has become apparent in the previously mentioned studies and analyses, the consideration of culture in the teaching and acquisition of French T/V pronouns is of utmost importance. In particular, culture adds another dimension to pronoun use and

requires that the student think of language beyond grammatical terms and instead as a way of communicating within another culture and identifying one's status with another speaker within a social context. In the present study, cultural exposure of students will be examined in order to assess how this may have affected their understanding of pronoun usage in the contexts and situations provided.

2.5 The Present Study

The motivation for the design of this present study was based on a gap in the research involving T/V pronouns in a large group of university students in comparison with native speakers. As mentioned above, studies involving surveys of students often involved only small groups of L2 students or only native speakers. Although some studies have looked at students' use of direct address pronouns during and after a study abroad experience (Kinging & Farrell 2004; Barron 2006), few have also taken into account those who have only taken a culture class and compared their choice of pronoun based on hypothetical situations with those who have studied abroad. In effect, many studies look solely at which pronoun students are choosing in conversations online (Belz & Kinginger 2002) or in person (Dewaele 2004; Kinginger 2000) but few have asked students to rate based on different situations and with different people which pronoun they would be most likely to choose.

Understandably, choosing the appropriate pronoun is in some circumstances not even clear for native speakers as this choice often depends on several factors. However, there are some instances one finds in which it would seem strange to pick the informal when the formal should be used or vice versa. Taking into account the region and country

of origin, native speakers also differ among themselves and have different expectations of which pronoun would be appropriate both pragmatically and sociolinguistically.

Based on this, the research questions for this present study are: 1) How does the integration of cultural studies or the lack thereof in French language curriculum affect a student's understanding of the proper use of *tu* and *vous*? 2) In what situations do students have a clear understanding and confidence of the proper use of *tu* and *vous*? The general hypotheses regarding these research questions is that students with more exposure to French culture and a higher level of French will have a better understanding of the proper pragmatic use of *tu* and *vous*. Additionally, students with little cultural exposure will feel confident in situations that have been explicitly taught through the textbook but not as confident in situations that require some amount of cultural competence.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This study was designed specifically as an inquiry into the cultural competence of L2 students in their choice of T/V pronouns. As mentioned earlier, although research has been done analyzing study abroad students' and native speakers' understanding of pronoun use, very little research has been done that takes into account students' choice of pronoun across several levels in a university setting. In order to facilitate the responses of as many students as possible across several levels, a survey was set up in Qualtrics. I will first describe the participants who took the survey and how they are grouped. Secondly, I will discuss the design of the survey and the biographical questionnaire. Lastly, I will discuss the three groups of questions and the justification for their inclusion.

3.1 Participants

Two sets of participants were recruited to take an online survey involving the use of T/V pronouns. The first and largest set of respondents consisted of postsecondary students currently enrolled in all levels of French classes from absolute beginners to graduate students at Purdue University. The second set of participants was comprised of native speakers of French.

In order to divide participants into the appropriate group, the first obligatory question in the survey asked "Are you a native speaker?" and based on the answer yes or

no, participants were divided into the two categories. Each group answered a different questionnaire to assess the linguistic, educational, and cultural experience of the participants. The survey was completely voluntary, but partially completed surveys were discarded leaving a total of 134 participants. Of those 121 were students and 13 were native speakers. However, three students reported being under the age of 18, and thus were not allowed to complete the survey which brought the total number of student participants to 118.

The majority of the L2 students who participated in the survey indicated that they were between the ages of 18 and 24. However, ten also recorded being between the ages of 25 and 38, and one was age 39 or older. Thirty-seven of the participants were male and 81 female. In the biographical questionnaire students were asked to select the highest level of French classes they had completed in order to measure the amount of experience with French the students had. Fifty-two reported being at the 100 level, 27 at the 200 level, 22 at the 300 level, 11 at the 400 level, and six at the graduate level. Additionally, 89 reported having had previous experience with French before coming to Purdue. Of these who had reported previous experience, one reported having lived in France previously as a child, one mentioned studying French at an international school in Luxembourg, and three mentioned having studied French as part of the International Baccalaureate while the vast majority reported having had between two and six years of French in high school and middle school. Three participants also mentioned holding a Master's degree in French before coming to Purdue. Thus, the majority of L2 students participating in the survey began studying French at Purdue already having a high degree of previous experience in the French language. Students were also asked if they knew or

had studied any other languages in addition to French and English. Sixty of the participants indicated having experience with other languages. Approximately 23 different languages were listed with fluency ranging from having taken one course in the language to being a native speaker.

In order to assess students' exposure to French culture and native speakers within a French speaking country, students were also asked if they had previously vacationed or studied abroad in a country where French is the official language. Fifty-six mentioned having vacationed in a French speaking country with the majority mentioning France although Canada, Belgium, Luxembourg, Haiti, Switzerland, and Togo were also mentioned. Furthermore, students were asked if they had ever studied abroad and if so, where and for how long. Twenty students affirmed having studied abroad, and the majority studied in France although a few also studied in Benin, Gabon, Togo, Luxembourg, and Canada with their stays varying from one week to two years. The courses they reported taking during their time in these countries mainly focused on language, literature, and culture although one mentioned taking regular high school classes in English. Other courses reported focused on French immigration, wine, theater, and food. Of those who studied abroad twelve also stayed with a host family.

Furthermore, the last questions on the questionnaire asked students if they had ever taken a course focused primarily on French culture or an aspect of French culture, and if these courses had been primarily taught in French. Twenty-seven students listed French culture courses that they had taken which primarily focused on food and wine, cinema, and civilization. Some of the other courses mentioned were taken in high school and focused on French lifestyles and the regions of France. The courses were primarily

taught in French although a few courses were said to have been taught half in French and half in English.

The age range in the native speaker questionnaire in particular was of interest because generationally the use of *tu* and *vous* can vary widely (Ford, 1974). In the native speaker group seven reported being between the ages of 18 and 24, three between the ages of 25 and 38, and three were 39 or older. Eight of the participants were male and five female. All reported being from France except for one who reported being from the U.S. and two who reported being from Canada. All had had formal education in French at the college level and above although two just simply listed being a native speaker. All but two reported knowing another language besides French and English. The survey was written in English, thus anyone taking the survey would have to have basic reading skills in the language. Additionally, all but four had lived in another country besides their country of origin. Most of the countries they listed as having lived in were English speaking countries such as the U.S., Australia, and Scotland with the only exceptions to this being Spain and Senegal. These questions were asked in order to understand the linguistic and cultural background of the native speakers taking the survey. All of the participants indicated having studied and/or being able to speak another language besides French and English and these included Italian, Spanish, Russian, German, Polish, Portuguese, and Turkish. They did specify that in some of the languages listed they only had basic speaking or reading skills. The fact that the majority of the native speakers who took the survey had multiple proficiencies would give them more likelihood of having an understanding of several cultures and at least a basic understanding of some of the cultural forms of politeness that would exist across cultures in addition to their own. The

complete questionnaires for both native and nonnative speakers can be found in the appendices. All of the biographical information important for the purposes of this study have been compiled in the following table.

Table 3-1 Participant Biographical Data

	L2 Learners	Native Speakers
Number	118	13
Age		
18-24	107	7
25-38	10	3
39+	1	3
Sex		
Male	37	8
Female	81	5
Formal Education	N/A	13
University French		
Level		N/A
100	52	
200	27	
300	22	
400	11	
Graduate	6	
Study Abroad	20	9
Culture Courses	27	N/A
Experience with Other		
Languages	60	11

3.2 Materials and Procedure

Recruitment of students took place during the first few minutes of class when students were informed of the nature of the study being conducted and that the study was completely voluntary. Those interested in participating were asked to write their names

and email addresses on a sign-up sheet in order that the link to the survey could be emailed to them. Graduate students within the department were also asked to take the survey in order to also assess the responses of students at the highest level of non-native proficiency within the department.

Native speakers of French were recruited through email and private messages. They were told of the goals of the study and asked to participate in order to have a set of data to compare with the student data. It was also reiterated that the study was strictly voluntary. If the native speakers were interested in participating in the study, a link to the online survey was sent through email for them to complete at their convenience.

After completing the biographical questionnaire, the respondents were taken directly to the French T/V pronouns survey. The T/V pronoun survey was the same for each group and asked respondents to rate on a Likert scale how likely they would be to choose one pronoun over another in the examples given. The choices under each question were “Definitely *tu*, Most likely *tu*, Likely *tu*, Not sure, Likely *vous*, Most likely *vous*, and Definitely *vous*.” There were three groups of Likert scales involving the use of *tu* and *vous*: with people; in five different everyday situations; and in the classroom. The full survey can be found in the appendices.

The survey was modified from both the Brown & Gilman (1960) and the Dewaele (2004) studies. The Likert scale was expanded to a seven point scale versus a five point scale and the situations used were also modified. Brown & Gilman’s (1960) study focused in more detail on family relationships, fellow students, coworkers, and soldiers. Dewaele’s (2004) study did not offer many examples from the questionnaire used other than that the scale was based on frequency and that questions involved scenarios of

requests for specific information from people of varying ages, sex, and familiarity. The modifications in the survey in this study focused on more general situations and people that one is likely to meet in everyday life in order to have a more general idea of situations and people students are confident in which pronoun to use.

3.3 T/V Pronouns with People

The first item group presented multiple different people one would potentially meet and interact with on a daily basis. The following people were listed in this group: an elderly stranger, a stranger around the same age, a coworker or a colleague, a professor or an instructor, a cashier, a bus driver, a Frenchman you have conversed with on several occasions, a Francophone friend on Facebook, a former professor you have friended on Facebook, a small child who is not a family member, an elderly family member, a sibling, a parent, and with your host family in a study abroad situation. The first question “an elderly stranger” was selected due to the fact that students in the 101-202 levels are explicitly taught to use *vous* in this case in both *Horizons* and *Bravo* in order to show respect. The second question “A stranger around the same age” presented a dilemma since students are taught to use *tu* with peers around the same age though at the same time they are taught to use *vous* with strangers unless prompted to use *tu*. However, even native speakers have run into the problem of accidentally insulting someone they perceived to be their age by using *tu*, such as in the case of a sales clerk who addressed a customer of around the same age with the *tu* pronoun (Peeters, 2004). Furthermore, students in a study abroad situations have reported feeling that using *tu* with those of the same age was part of their outgoing personality or that they preferred *vous* as they desired

to be polite despite what they recognized as a cultural norm (Kinging & Farrell, 2004; Barron, 2006). This caused a problem as was seen in the studies conducted by Dewaele (2004) and Belz & Kinginger (2002) when students were so used to using *vous* that they struggled to use *tu* consistently even when prompted and urged by native speakers to use *tu*. The third question “A coworker or a colleague” was presented due to the previous studies and analyses done (Brown & Gilman, 1960; Ford, 1974) which established the existence of a certain amount of solidarity and camaraderie among workers which would constitute the use of *tu*. Students taking French in a university setting converse with professors and instructors on a daily basis which provided motivation for seeing which pronoun would be chosen in the fourth question “A professor or an instructor.” The next two questions in particular were added due to the fact that L2 students with only a small exposure to the French culture might not realize the appropriateness of using *vous* with both a cashier and a bus driver. As one daily encounters both cashiers and bus drivers in a French speaking culture, these questions were added as the wrong use of a pronoun in either situation could cause quite a bit of insult and misunderstanding. However, Ford (1974) noted that there are occasions when using *tu* with a bus driver has been used reciprocally, but this was only in instances when the bus driver in a local area knew the people very well and saw them on a daily basis. Ford (1974) also claimed that this was also part of a social class distinction since those in lower classes tended to use *tu* reciprocally more frequently. Likewise, the question “A Frenchman you have conversed with on several occasions” potentially presents some gray areas for both student and native speakers. Social distance and friendships can be seen quite differently across cultures. Although one might have talked to a French man or woman more than once, it

does not always follow that one will use *tu* with that person depending factors such as age and degree of social distance (Blume, 2000; Carroll, 1987; Wylie & Brière, 2001). Along the same lines as a differing perception of distance within friendships, Facebook presents yet another gray area in the use of pronouns. The next two questions focused primarily on Facebook and students' use of pronouns with a Francophone friend (referring to any French speaking person from any country) on Facebook as well as with a former professor that they have friended. Studies have been conducted focusing mainly on online communication and chat rooms between native and nonnative speakers of French (Belz & Kinginger, 2002; van Compernelle, 2011; Williams & van Compernelle, 2007; Williams & van Compernelle, 2011). Similar to chat rooms and emails, Facebook has introduced a new forum with a new set of rules when it comes to conversing particularly in a foreign language. Social media as a whole often creates a rather informal environment due to the information that is often posted and the interactions that take place. Facebook and "friend" were mentioned in this question causing one to predict the use of *tu*, but even Facebook presents its own rules of social distance. Beyond Facebook, no longer being under the instruction or mentorship of a professor could cause some confusion as to which pronoun to use (Brown & Gilman, 1960; Peeters, 2004). With the question "a small child who is not a family member," students are explicitly taught to use *tu* in this situation; despite that the child may be a stranger, there is a hierarchal age difference although surprisingly Gardner-Chloros (1991) did find some small percentage of hesitation among native speakers with using *tu* with children. In addition to the pronoun use with children, students are explicitly taught that the pronoun *tu* is used with family members such as parents, siblings, and elderly family members. All three of these people

were thus added to the survey although Ford (1974) noted that some higher nobility families still did practice the use of *vous* as a sign of respect even in the 70s. As he mentioned, the most famous example of this was Charles de Gaulle who reportedly addressed his wife and children with *vous*. The last question asked which pronoun would be most likely used with a host family on a study abroad situation as both the dynamics of family and of not knowing the family well could play a role in determining the appropriate pronoun.

3.4 T/V Pronouns in Everyday Situations

The second item group consisted of five everyday situations on and off campus and in France that both a native speaker and a student would be likely to experience which would obligate a choice of pronoun. Respondents were presented with the following situations: first meeting with a university student who is a native speaker of French; first meeting with a university student who is a non-native speaker of French; a stranger asks you for directions to the Eiffel Tower; a French native speaker greets you by saying “Bonjour, Madame/Monsieur;” and you are ordering a drink in a small café.

The first two questions present a situation in which one is speaking with a peer of around the same age in a university setting but when it would be difficult to determine whether *tu* or *vous* should be used, as revealed in Belz & Kinginger’s (2002) study. In these two questions a distinction was made between whether the peer was a native or non-native speaker to determine whether there would be any significant difference in pronoun use in either situation. These questions were added to ascertain if speakers might alter their use of pronoun based on the experience of the other speaker in the language.

The next question is a situation that is likely to happen when one is approached in France by a stranger asking for directions to a famous site or monument. Here, the pronoun that students are taught to use is *vous* because the person is a stranger. Similarly, students are also taught to use *vous* whenever someone addresses them using the formal phrase “Bonjour, Madame/Monsieur.” According to an online conversation with a Frenchman in his mid twenties: “One thing I've never heard: ‘Bonjour madame, tu vas bien ?’ It sounds awful and nobody with at least some education would say that” (J. Royer, personal communication, January 28, 2015). Although there has been an overall increase in the use of *tu* in French, at least in France, there are still situations such as this example in which *tu* would sound very strange and even disrespectful. This is most likely the reason why textbooks stress using *vous* when addressed in this manner. This question was included in order to surmise if students understood the use of *vous* in this context and if native speakers still prefer the use of this pronoun in this situation.

The last question in this group asked which pronoun respondents would use when ordering a drink in a small café due to the existence of social distance between a server and a customer. In a café setting, *vous* should always be used for this reason. In fact, using *tu* in this particular instance could potentially cause the server to feel inferior and insulted. Just as Compernelle (2010) maintained, T/V pronouns must be taught with the understanding that using *tu* can also be used to insult someone, that is it not solely a pronoun used among intimate friends or even among those of the same age. In this instance, it would not matter if the server is around the same age, one should always use *vous* due to the setting and the social distance in this situation. However, only students

with some amount of cultural exposure would be likely to realize this which is the justification for including this question in the survey.

3.5 T/V Pronouns in the Classroom

The third item group focused solely on situations within a classroom which naturally is what students in French classes would find the most familiar. Pronouns used within the classroom can differ based on the class and the professor. Moreover, it is in the classroom where students will be exposed to pronoun use and will be given the opportunity to practice using pronouns. This item group was included as a way of assessing how pronoun use within the classroom also affects students' understanding of how pronouns should be used and how they are using them. There were four situations presented: when you are talking to a fellow student in a partner activity; when you are interacting with students while doing a group activity; when the instructor is addressing the entire class; and when the instructor is addressing an individual student.

The first two questions returns to the issue of student solidarity since they are interacting with peers of the same age. In these cases, students would be expected to use *tu* in addressing their peers in either of the examples presented. However, as van Compernelle et al. (2011) found, learners who were conversing with each other in online recorded conversation alternated frequently between the pronouns within their conversations with their peers. This was most likely due to a lack of understanding of the proper use of pronouns.

The last two scenarios focused specifically on the use of pronouns by the teacher in a French class. The first scenario addressed the pronoun that a teacher would use to

address the class. This was due to the interactions that students observe in the classroom and which pronoun they hear their instructor use in the situations presented. Students are explicitly taught in textbooks to use *vous* when addressing a group since it is the second person plural pronoun. As a result, the most likely response would be *vous* in this particular scenario. Despite this, students do not always have the opportunity to actually practice using *vous* in a plural sense themselves. Lyster & Rebouffet (2002) found that students struggled with knowing when to use *vous* in a situation involving addressing more than one person. As a result, although they may hear their teacher address the class using *vous*, they may not realize that she does so in order to address the class as a whole.

Although it does heavily depend on the instructor, *tu* is often used when addressing individual students. Moran (2001), in asking high school teachers in France what pronoun they use in addressing students, found a wide range of differences from those who insisted on using *vous* and having the students also use *vous* to those who solely used *tu*. As Moran (2001) observed, this was quite different from the “teacher-student formality” (p.34) that is common in the U.S. since American students are taught to use *vous* with professors although professors may choose to use *tu* when addressing the student. Participants were asked to choose which were more likely to be used based on these situations.

The next chapter will present participants’ responses to the questionnaire and the survey. An analysis will be made based on students’ cultural competence and level of French as compared to the responses of native speakers based on the hypothesis that students with a higher level and more experience with studying in the French culture will be more confident of T/V pronoun usage.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Based on the motivation for the study and the design of the survey in assessing students' understanding of the use of the two pronouns of direct address in French, two predictions were made for the outcome of the results. First, it was predicted that students with a lower proficiency in the French language and culture as compared to that of an advanced learner or native speakers would have an increased difficulty and decreased accuracy in assessing the appropriate use of each pronoun. Second, those with more exposure to French in the more advanced levels and those who had had opportunities to study abroad or who had taken a French culture class were predicted to have a better understanding and increased accuracy in the appropriate choice of pronoun. In order to pinpoint in which situations students had a clear understanding of when to use each pronoun and whether cultural exposure may have had an effect on respondents' choice of pronoun, the questions within the Tu/Vous survey presented several different situations and people a student and a native speaker would likely encounter both within the classroom as well as in a France.

With this in mind, participants' responses were grouped based on cultural exposure and the highest level of French completed at the university. The data was compared with the responses of native speakers. The first group of results was divided on the following criteria based on responses to the biographical questionnaire: study abroad;

culture class only; neither culture class nor study abroad (No CC nor SA); and native speakers (NS). The second group of results set was divided based on highest level of French studied with the following labels: 100, 200, 300, 400, graduate (Grad), and native speaker (NS). Results to the survey will first be reported based on cultural exposure and then will be analyzed based on the level of responses.

4.1 Results for T/V Pronouns with People

There were some instances in this first group of questions when even those at the lowest level of French had a clear understanding of when to use *vous*. This was evident in two of the questions when all respondents indicated that the likely pronoun would be *vous* in the specific situations when addressing a professor or an elderly stranger. These responses were due to the explicit rules in the textbooks that teach the use of *vous* with both an elderly stranger and a professor. Despite this, pronoun use with a stranger around the same age and with a coworker or colleague had varied responses from all levels of students and from native speakers. Similarly, the responses for “A Frenchman you have conversed with on several occasions,” “a former professor you have friended on Facebook,” and “with your host family in a study abroad situation” varied from both the students and the native speakers. This array of differing responses was most likely due to the ambiguity and missing context of the situation and the inherent complexity in pronoun choice even among native speakers. The questions merit further study in a context that would allow for respondents to explain their pronoun choice.

In contrast, responses to the question “A Francophone friend on Facebook” were intriguing because 76.9% of native speakers indicated definitely using *tu* but 7.7% also

indicated most likely using *vous*. This was rather puzzling because one would have predicted that all would have said *tu*. In fact, with the exception of the no culture nor study abroad group with 1.2% indicating likely using *vous*, 2.4% indicating definitely using *vous*, and 2.4% indicating not being sure, all of the non-native speakers reported a degree of likelihood of using *tu* in this instance. With the exception of the native speakers, those in the no culture nor study abroad group who indicated using *vous* were in the 100 and 200 levels of French. As has become obvious with the native speakers' responses, this case is subjective depending on the relationship between the two people although one would expect some degree of informality already present when one becomes friends with someone on Facebook.

Conversely, the question asking for pronoun use with a cashier yielded interesting results on the part of non-native speakers. In this case, the 13 native speakers preferred the use of *vous* with 69.2% selecting "definitely *vous*," 23.1% favoring "most likely *vous*", and 7.7% choosing "likely *vous*." None of the native speakers chose any response on the *tu* end of the scale. In contrast, of the 83 students reporting no culture class nor study abroad experience 10.8% elected to use *tu*, 4.8% were not sure and the rest favored a degree of likelihood of using *vous*. Thus, of the 83 students approximately 16% indicated using *tu* or were not sure in this situation. Furthermore, 11% of the nine culture class only respondents indicated that one would most likely use *tu* in this situation and 15% of the 20 study abroad students indicated not being sure as one can see in the figure and table below.

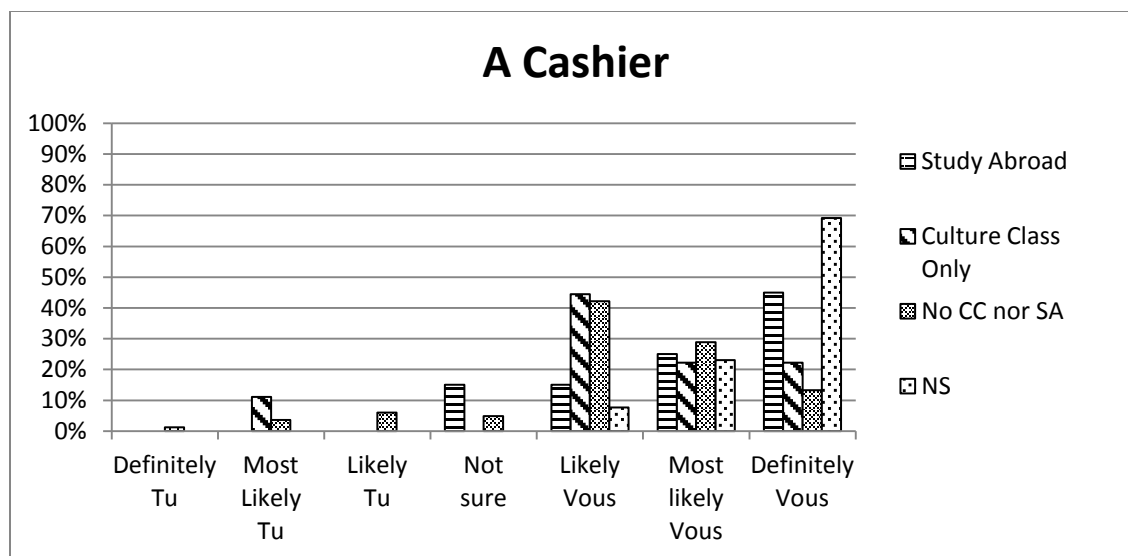


Figure 4-1 Cashier by Cultural Exposure

Table 4-1 Cashier by Cultural Exposure

	No CC nor SA <i>n</i> = 83	Culture Class <i>n</i> = 9	Study Abroad <i>n</i> = 20	NS <i>n</i> = 13
Definitely Tu	1.2%	0.0%	0%	0%
Most Likely Tu	3.6%	11.1%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	6%	0.0%	0%	0%
Not Sure	4.8%	0.0%	15%	0%
Likely Vous	42.2%	44.4%	15%	7.7%
Most Likely Vous	28.9%	22.2%	25%	23.1%
Definitely Vous	13.3%	22.2%	45%	69.2%

Upon regrouping the levels of French of the respondents, those who had indicated definitely using *tu* in this instance were from the 200 level, whereas the rest of the responses indicating *tu* were from the 100 level. Of the responses for this question 5.8% of the 52 in the 100 level, 7.4% of the 27 in the 200 level, 4.5% of the 22 in the 300 level, and 9% of the 11 in the 400 level indicated not being sure which pronoun to use as one can see in the figure and table below.

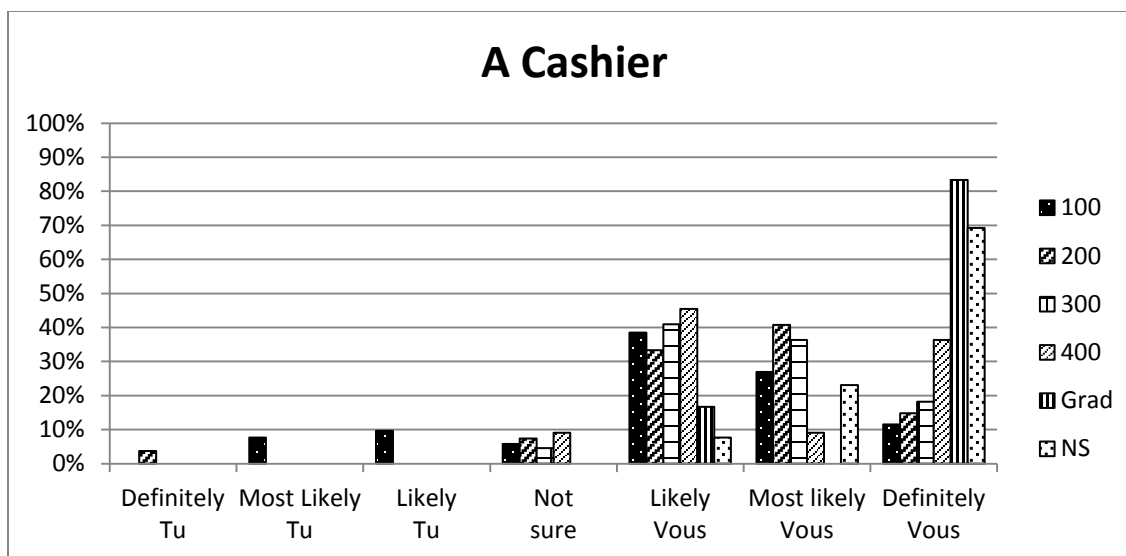


Figure 4-2 Cashier by Level

Table 4-2 Cashier by Level

	100 <i>n</i> = 52	200 <i>n</i> =27	300 <i>n</i> =22	400 <i>n</i> =11	Grad <i>n</i> =6	NS <i>n</i> =13
Definitely Tu	0%	3.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Most Likely Tu	7.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	9.6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Sure	5.8%	7.4%	4.6%	9.1%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	38.5%	33.3%	40.9%	45.5%	16.7%	7.7%
Most Likely Vous	26.9%	40.7%	36.4%	9.1%	0%	23.1%
Definitely Vous	11.5%	14.8%	18.2%	36.4%	83.3%	69.2%

Culturally and pragmatically, cashiers should be addressed using *vous* in order to show respect due to social distance. Obviously, there are exceptions to this, but in general this is the case. The responses to this question were particularly intriguing both because of those in the lower levels who indicated a likelihood of using *tu* and the percentage of those who were unsure of which pronoun to use in this instance. Additionally, although there were some in higher levels of French, it is worth noting that these students had

either no cultural exposure or had only taken a class. Overwhelmingly, those with more cultural exposure had a higher confidence for using *vous* in this situation.

The responses to the use of pronouns with a bus driver were rather similar to the cashier although there were some differences. Native speakers strongly favored the use of *vous* in this case as well. What was different was the fact that 10% of the 20 study abroad students reported likely *tu* and 5% were not sure while the majority of responses that indicated using *tu* were from those with no culture class nor study abroad experience. In contrast with the 69% of the 13 native speakers who responded with definitely *vous*, of the 83 no culture nor study abroad respondents a total of 14.4% were directly at odds with native speakers as one can see outlined in the figure below.

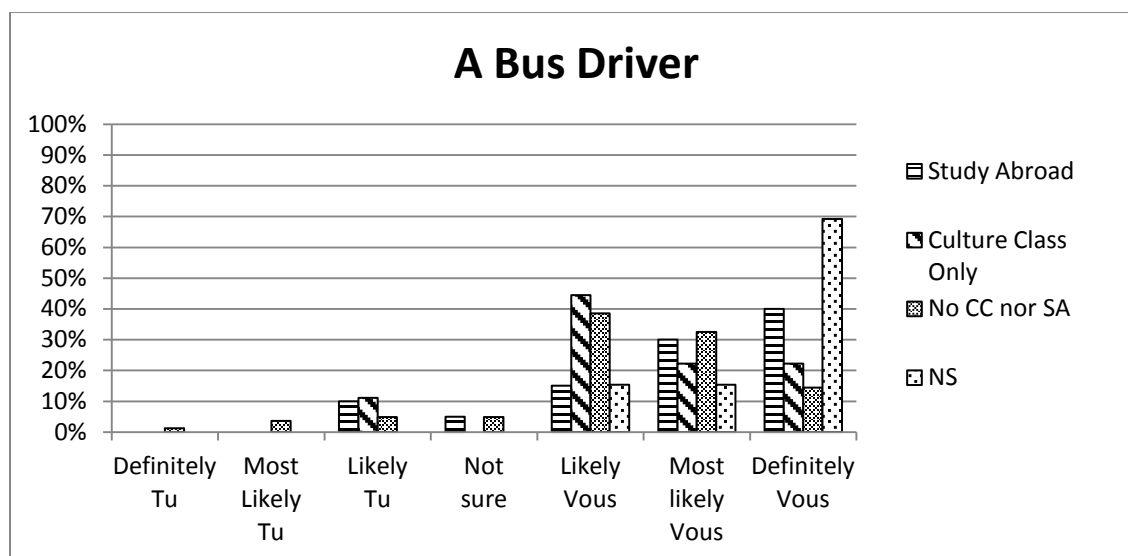


Figure 4-3 Bus Driver by Cultural Exposure

Table 4-3 Bus Driver by Cultural Exposure

	No CC nor SA <i>n</i> = 83	Culture Class <i>n</i> =9	Study Abroad <i>n</i> =20	NS <i>n</i> =13
Definitely Tu	1.2%	0%	0%	0%
Most Likely Tu	3.6%	11.1%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	6%	0%	10.0%	0%
Not Sure	4.8%	0%	5%	0%
Likely Vous	42.2%	44.4%	15.0%	7.7%
Most Likely Vous	28.9%	22.2%	30.0%	23.1%
Definitely Vous	13.3%	22.2%	40.0%	69.2%

In observing the levels of the responses, the possible reasons for the choice of *tu* became more apparent. In this case, 3.7% of the 200 level reported definitely using *tu*, 5.8% of the 100 level reported most likely using *tu*, 9.6% of 100 level and 7.4% of the 200 level reported likely using *tu*. Thus, the choice of *tu* in this situation that would normally have warranted the use of *vous* was most likely due to both a lower level of French and a lack of cultural exposure. Furthermore, 3.8% of the 100 level, 3.7% of the 200 level, 4.6% of the 300 level, and 16.7% of the graduate level reported not being sure. While it is understandable why those in a lower level with little cultural experience might not be sure, it is puzzling that graduate students would have not been sure which pronoun to use. This could possibly be due to previous experience using *tu* with a bus driver who was a friend or from not having taken the bus while studying abroad since all graduate students reported having studied abroad. However, it is worth noting that 85% of study abroad students and 88% of culture class only students favored *vous* although only about half of those students indicated a high confidence of definitely using *vous*.

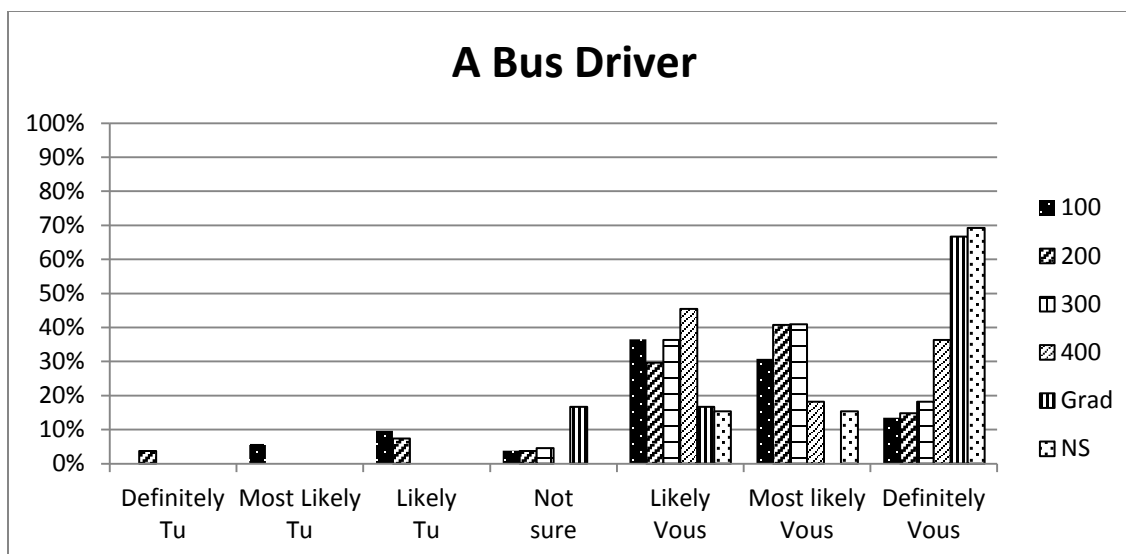


Figure 4-4 Bus Driver by Level

Table 4-4 Bus Driver by Level

	100 <i>n</i> = 52	200 <i>n</i> =27	300 <i>n</i> =22	400 <i>n</i> =11	Grad <i>n</i> =6	NS <i>n</i> =13
Definitely Tu	0%	3.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Most Likely Tu	5.8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	9.6%	7.4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Sure	3.9%	3.7%	4.6%	0%	16.7%	0%
Likely Vous	36.5%	29.6%	36.4%	45.5%	16.7%	15.4%
Most Likely Vous	30.8%	40.7%	40.9%	18.2%	0%	15.4%
Definitely Vous	13.5%	14.8%	18.2%	36.4%	66.7%	69.2%

Another instance that caused some confusion among non-native speakers were the responses for “a small child who is not a family member.” Native speakers showed a compelling preference for the use of *tu* with 92.3% reporting definitely using *tu* and 7.7% reporting most likely using *tu*. The majority of those who had studied abroad or had taken a culture class were aligned with the native speakers preferring to use *tu* in this instance. However, of those from the no culture nor study abroad group a total of 25.6% indicated

either not being sure or a having preference for using *vous* and 10% of study abroad students indicated likely using *vous*.

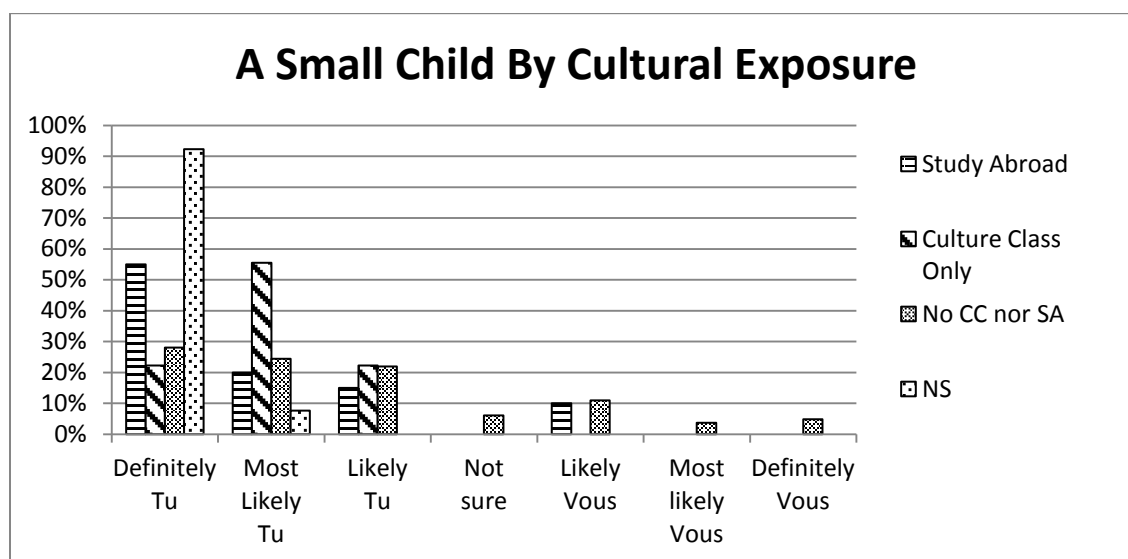


Figure 4-5 A Small Child by Cultural Exposure

Table 4-5 Small Child by Cultural Exposure

	No CC nor SA <i>n</i> = 83	Culture Class <i>n</i> = 9	Study Abroad <i>n</i> = 20	NS <i>n</i> = 13
Definitely Tu	28.1%	22.2%	55%	92.3%
Most Likely Tu	24.4%	55.6%	20%	7.7%
Likely Tu	22%	22.2%	15%	0%
Not Sure	6.1%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	11%	0%	10%	0%
Most Likely Vous	3.7%	0%	0%	0%
Definitely Vous	4.9%	0%	0%	0%

The levels reporting a likelihood of using *vous* or not being sure were quite varied. In fact, 10% of 400 level students, 9.1% of 300 level, 7.4% of 200 level, and 3.8% of 100 level students reported not being sure which pronoun to use. Additionally, 13.6% of 300 level students, 11.1% of 200 level students, and 9.6% of 100 level students reported likely using *vous* while 5.8% of 100 level students and 3.7% of 200 level

students reported most likely using *vous*. Of those reporting definitely using *vous*, 3.8% were from the 100 level, 3.7% from the 200 level, and 4.5% from the 300 level. The cause of the uncertainty was likely due to the child being a stranger and of not being aware that due to the difference in age, one usually uses *tu* in this circumstance.

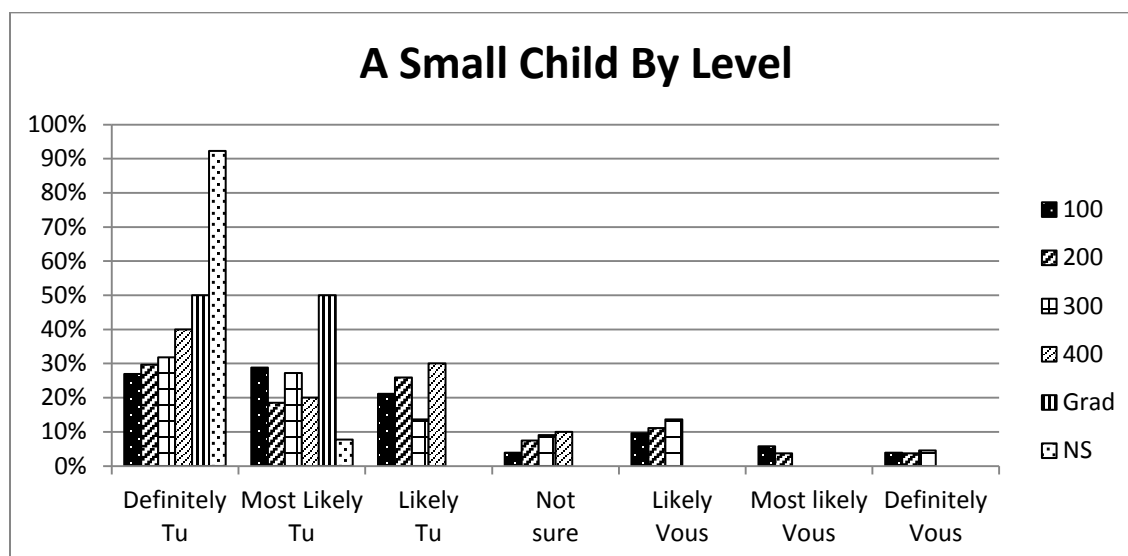


Figure 4-6 A Small Child by Level

Table 4-6 A Small Child by Level

	100 N = 52	200 N = 27	300 N = 22	400 N = 11	Grad N = 6	NS N = 13
Definitely Tu	26.9%	29.6%	31.8%	40.0%	50%	92.3%
Most Likely Tu	28.9%	18.5%	27.3%	20.0%	50%	7.7%
Likely Tu	21.2%	25.9%	13.6%	30%	0%	0%
Not Sure	3.9%	7.4%	9.1%	10%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	9.6%	11.1%	13.6%	0%	0%	0%
Most Likely Vous	5.8%	3.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Definitely Vous	3.9%	3.7%	4.6%	0%	0%	0%

The case of using *tu* or *vous* with an elderly family member showed a variety of responses with the most interesting being that of the native speakers as 76.9% reported definitely using *tu* and 15.4% reported likely using *tu*, but 7.7% reported likely using

vous. Those with study abroad experience and those in the no culture class nor study abroad had varied responses all across the board. What is worth noting here though is that 62.5% of culture class only students indicated most likely using *vous*. The diversity of responses was most likely due to the confusion between a person being both elderly and a family member.

The choice of pronouns with a sibling and a parent were the most intriguing with the non-native speakers as 100% of the native speakers indicated definitely using *tu* with each. Curiously, 5% of study abroad students indicated likely using *vous* with a sibling as compared to 1.2% of the no culture class nor study abroad group who indicated likely using *vous*. By level, 1.9% of the 100 level and 3.8% of the 200 level indicated likely *vous* as well.

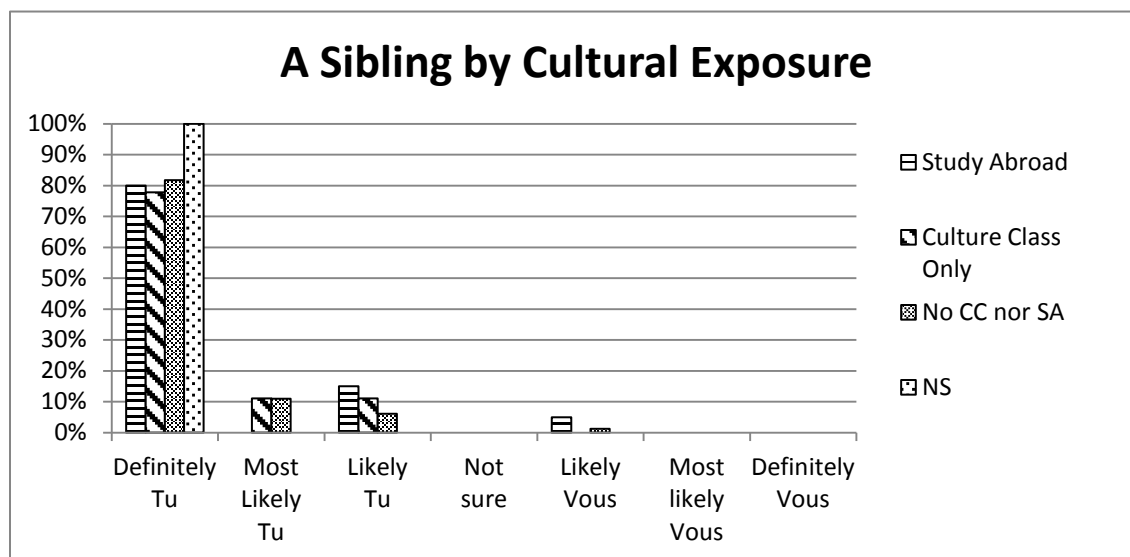


Figure 4-7 A Sibling by Cultural Exposure

Table 4-7 A Sibling by Cultural Exposure

	No CC nor SA <i>n</i> = 83	Culture Class <i>n</i> = 9	Study Abroad <i>n</i> = 20	NS <i>n</i> = 13
Definitely Tu	81.7%	77.8%	80%	100%
Most Likely Tu	11%	11.1%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	6.1%	11.1%	15%	0%
Not Sure	0%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	1.2%	0%	5%	0%
Most Likely Vous	0%	0%	0%	0%
Definitely Vous	0%	0%	0%	0%

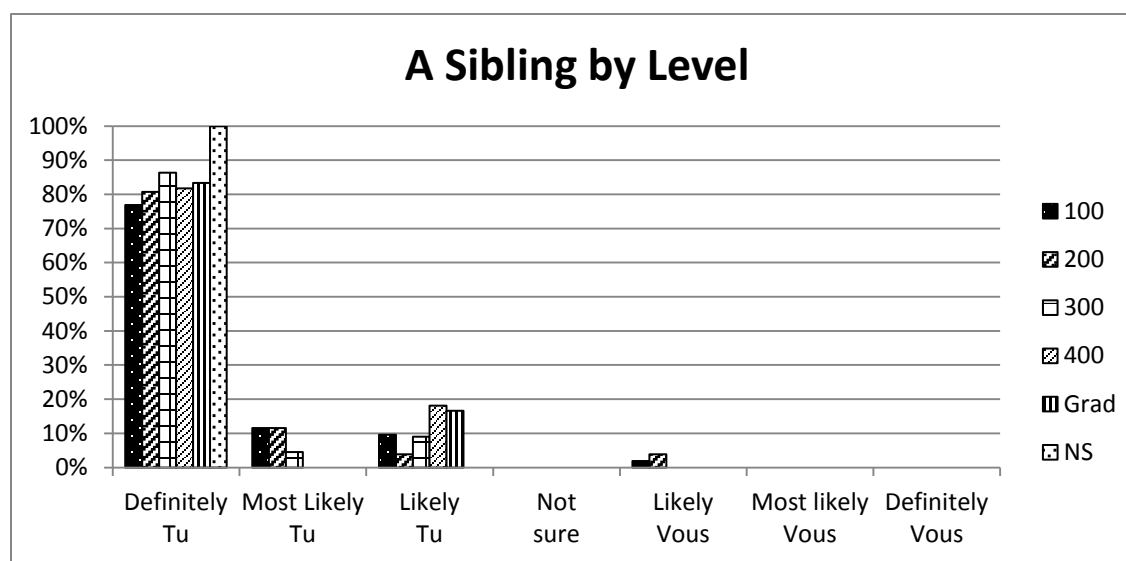


Figure 4-8 A Sibling by Level

Table 4-8 A Sibling by Level

	100 <i>n</i> = 52	200 <i>n</i> =27	300 <i>n</i> =22	400 <i>n</i> =11	Grad <i>n</i> =6	NS <i>n</i> =13
Definitely Tu	76.9%	80.8%	86.4%	81.8%	83.3%	100%
Most Likely Tu	11.5%	11.5%	4.6%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	9.6%	3.9%	9.1%	18.2%	16.7%	0%
Not Sure	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	1.9%	3.9%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Most Likely Vous	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Definitely Vous	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

With a parent, 10% of study abroad students indicated likely using *vous* and 5% indicated definitely using *vous*. As one can see in the figure below, the majority of participants responded that one would definitely use *tu* in this situation, but it is particularly striking that some students who had had exposure to the culture responded with a likelihood of using *vous* with a parent. Although this question does for the most part fit with the prediction that those with an increased cultural exposure would have a higher confidence in choosing *tu*, it is still puzzling that still some who had studied abroad and those who had taken a culture class would have either been not sure or have chosen *vous* in this instance. One possible reason for this could be obviously never having had to address one's parent using one of these pronouns.

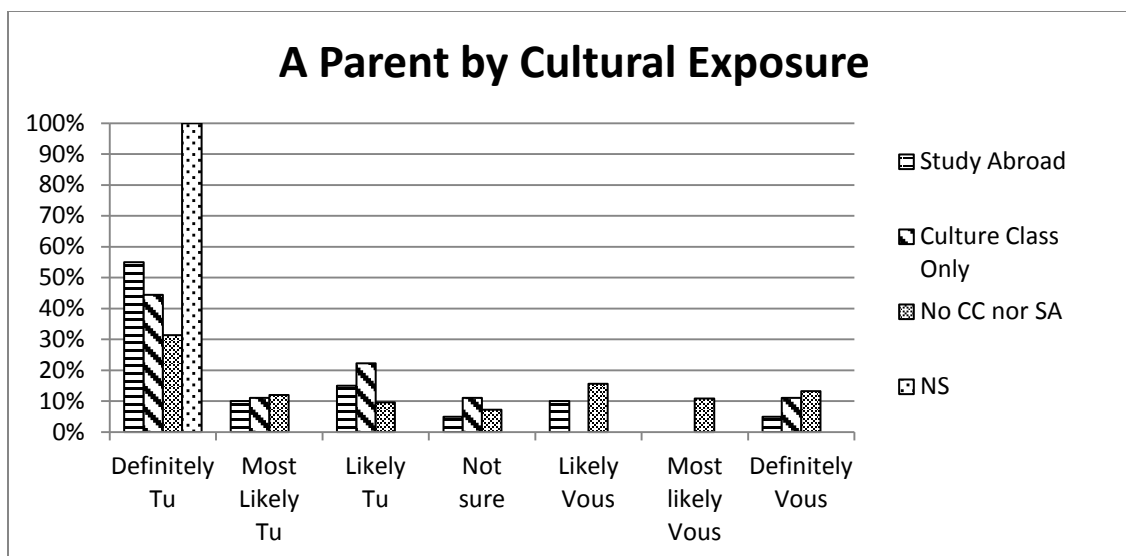


Figure 4-9 Parent by Cultural Exposure

Table 4-9 Parent by Cultural Exposure

	No CC nor SA <i>n</i> = 83	Culture Class <i>n</i> =9	Study Abroad <i>n</i> =20	NS <i>n</i> =13
Definitely Tu	31.3%	44.4%	55%	100%
Most Likely Tu	12.1%	11.1%	10%	0%
Likely Tu	9.6%	22.2%	15%	0%
Not Sure	7.2%	11.1%	5%	0%
Likely Vous	15.7%	0%	10%	0%
Most Likely Vous	10.8%	0%	0%	0%
Definitely Vous	13.3%	11.1%	5%	0%

In order to better understand perhaps why those who had mentioned taking a culture class and having studied abroad chose the pronoun *vous*, the figure below presents a breakdown of the levels of the respondents.

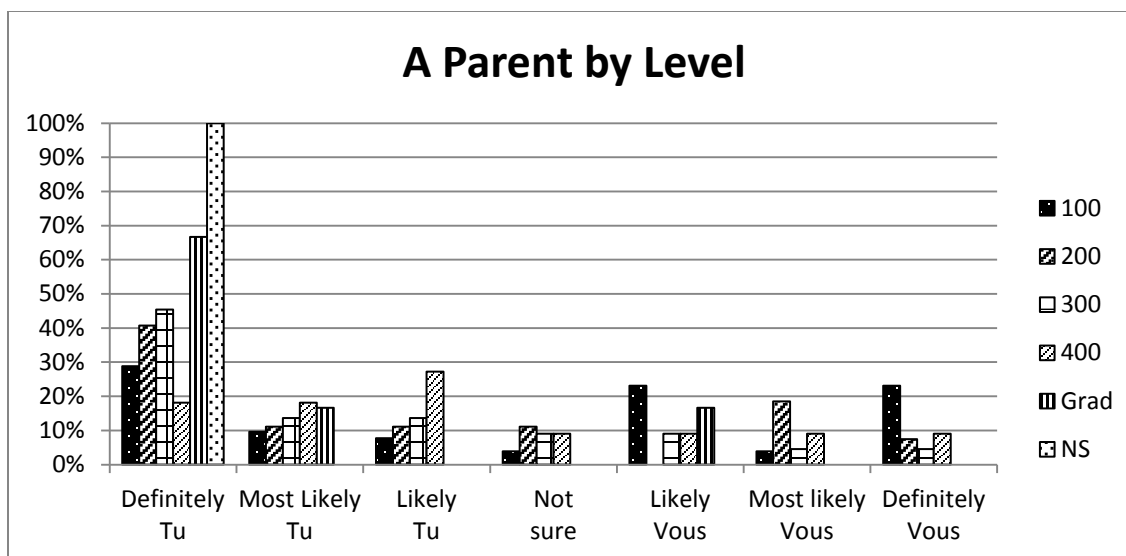


Figure 4-10 Parent by Level

Table 4-10 Parent by Level

	100 <i>n</i> = 52	200 <i>n</i> =27	300 <i>n</i> =22	400 <i>n</i> =11	Grad <i>n</i> =6	NS <i>n</i> =13
Definitely Tu	28.9%	40.7%	45.5%	18.2%	66.7%	100%
Most Likely Tu	9.6%	11.1%	13.6%	18.2%	16.7%	0%
Likely Tu	7.7%	11.1%	13.6%	27.3%	0%	0%
Not Sure	3.9%	11.1%	9.1%	9.1%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	23.1%	0%	9.1%	9.1%	16.7%	0%
Most Likely Vous	3.9%	18.5%	4.6%	9.1%	0%	0%
Definitely Vous	23.1%	7.4%	4.6%	9.1%	0%	0%

As displayed in the figure, the majority of those students who responded with the likelihood of using *vous* were from the 100 level with 23.1% designating likely *vous*, 3.8% designating most likely *vous*, and 23.1% favoring definitely *vous*. From the 200 level 18.5% preferred most likely *vous* and 7.4% preferred definitely *tu*. In the 300 level 9.1% preferred likely using *vous*, 4.6% preferred most likely using *vous*, and 4.6% preferred definitely using *vous*. In the 400 level 9.1% favored likely using *vous*, and the same percentage for both favored most likely using *vous* and definitely *vous*. Quite

surprisingly, 16.7% of graduate students indicated likely using *vous* with a parent. In this case, one cannot conclude that level and cultural exposure alone necessarily dictated the choice and level of confidence of some students.

4.2 Results for T/V Pronouns in Everyday Situations

In the second item group containing five everyday situations, the question “a native speaker greets you by saying ‘Bonjour, Madame/Monsieur,’” overwhelmingly elicited responses in favor of using *vous* although 11.1% of culture class only and 2.4% of no culture nor study abroad students responded with not being sure. Of those who responded “not sure” to this question were 1.9% of the 100 level, 3.7% of the 200 level, and 9.1% of the 400 level. In this category those with little cultural exposure beyond the classroom were primarily the ones who were not sure. As one is being greeted with a formal title, it would necessitate that one also respond with a formal pronoun; although some were unsure of the pronoun choice, the majority of respondents correctly chose *vous*.

The question “The First Meeting with a university student who is a non-native speaker of French” received varied responses similar to the questions in the first item group. The varied responses were most likely due to the ambiguity of the situation and the context and the prevailing complexity of pronoun choice especially in this situation which could greatly depend on the proficiency of the non-native speaker in question.

The situation of a first meeting with a university student who is a native speaker of French also had diverse results, but what was interesting in these responses was that those who had only taken a culture class were strongly in favor of using *vous* while all of

the other groups including the native speakers responses were all over of the spectrum although the majority of native speakers indicated confidence in definitely using *tu*. The unfamiliarity of the person despite the person being a university student could have been the cause of the varied responses. Due to not being able to tell whether level or culture had an effect on participants' responses, this question is an example of a need for further inquiry through interviews.

A stranger asking for direction to the Eiffel Tower yielded interesting results as it was a stranger asking for directions, the situation should have necessitated the use of *vous*. This fact was affirmed by the native speakers who preferred the use of *vous*. In fact, 76.9% of native speakers favored definitely using *vous* in this situation. However, of those in the no culture class nor study abroad group 2.4% reported most likely using *tu*, 7.2% reported likely using *tu*, and 1.2% reported not being sure. This was not too surprising as these students would not have had as much cultural exposure to know that it would be considered impolite to use *tu* in this situation. Curiously though, 11.1% of culture class only students and 10% of study abroad students indicated likely using *tu* in this situation. It is possible that this choice could be due to not having been exposed to this situation in a real-life experience. As one can see in the figure and table below, 55% of study abroad students and 44.4% of culture class only students were confident in the use of *vous* in this instance, whereas only 25.3% of no culture class nor study abroad students were confident in pronoun choice.

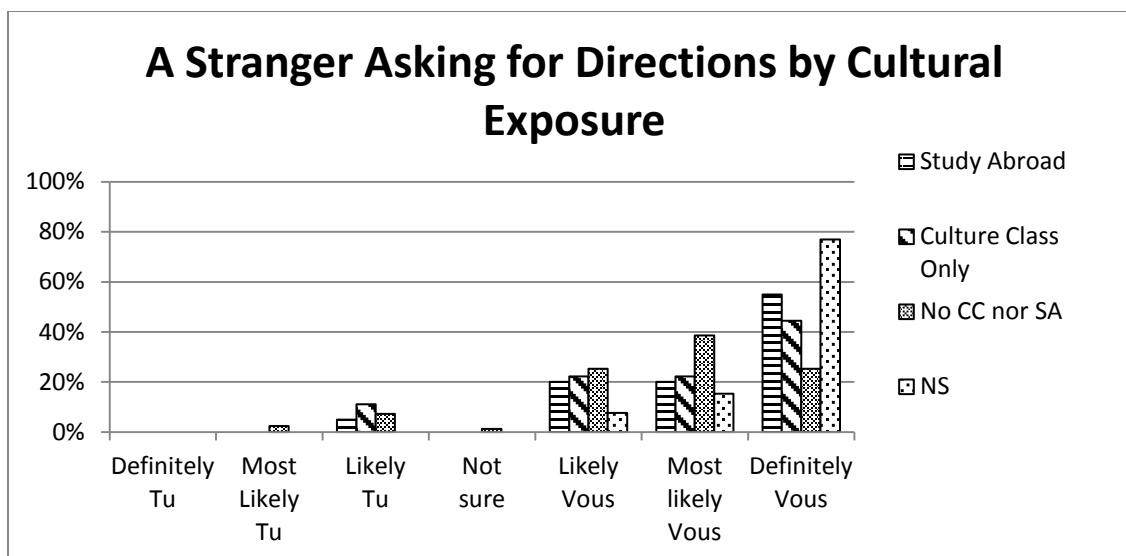


Figure 4-11 A Stranger Asking for Directions by Cultural Exposure

Table 4-11 A Stranger Asks for Directions by Cultural Exposure

	No CC nor SA <i>n</i> = 83	Culture Class <i>n</i> =9	Study Abroad <i>n</i> =20	NS <i>n</i> =13
Definitely Tu	0%	0%	0%	0%
Most Likely Tu	2.4%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	7.2%	11.1%	5%	0%
Not Sure	1.2%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	25.3%	22.2%	20%	7.7%
Most Likely Vous	38.6%	22.2%	20%	15.4%
Definitely Vous	25.3%	44.4%	55%	76.9%

Additionally, if one takes the levels of these students into consideration, one sees that it was the majority of those in a lower level who favored using *tu* in this situation. In the 100 level 3.8% elected to most likely use *tu*, 11.5% elected to likely use *tu*, and 1.9% reported not being sure, and in the 200 level 7.4% favored likely using *tu*. Thus, it could be argued that these students' choice of likely using *tu* is due to a lack of experience with the language despite having had some cultural exposure studying the culture or studying in a French speaking country.

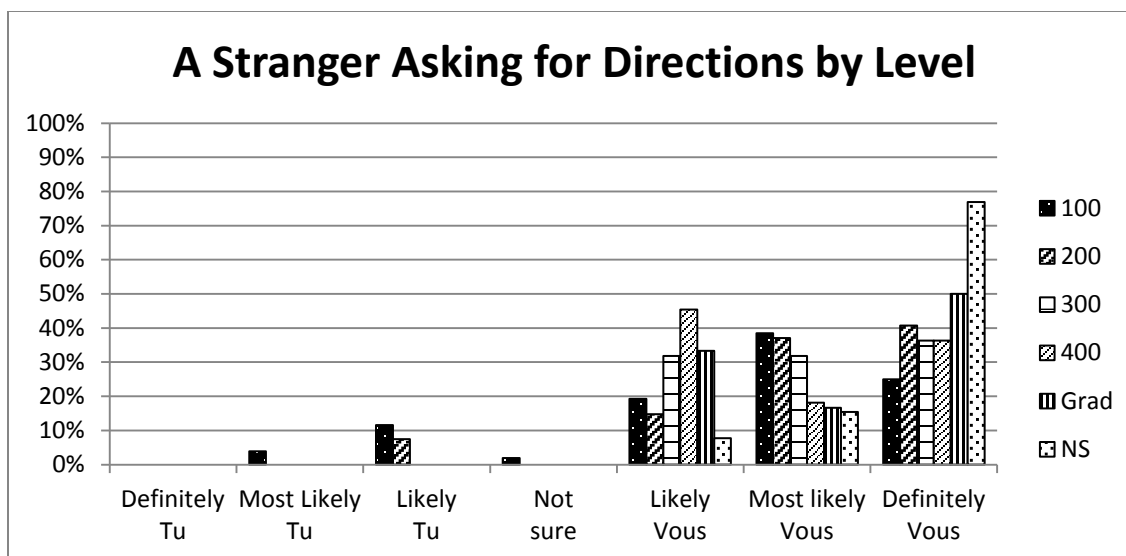


Figure 4-12 A Stranger Asking for Directions

Table 4-12 A Stranger Asks for Directions

	100 <i>n</i> = 52	200 <i>n</i> = 27	300 <i>n</i> = 22	400 <i>n</i> = 11	Grad <i>n</i> = 6	NS <i>n</i> = 13
Definitely Tu	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Most Likely Tu	3.9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	11.5%	7.4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Sure	1.9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	19.2%	14.8%	31.8%	45.5%	33.3%	7.7%
Most Likely Vous	38.5%	37%	31.8%	18.2%	16.7%	15.4%
Definitely Vous	25%	40.7%	36.4%	36.4%	50%	76.9%

Another similarly culturally linked question that would have necessitated the use of *vous* for both hierarchy and distance reasons is the instance of ordering a drink in a small café. The easiest way to insult a waiter or waitress in a restaurant is to use *tu* when ordering. Not surprisingly, native speakers gave a strong indication of using *vous* with 69.2% indicating definitely using *vous*, 23.1% indicating most likely using *vous*, and 7.7% indicating likely using *vous*. As can be seen in the figure below, most students chose likely using *vous* in this circumstance, but in the culture class only group, 11.1%

chose definitely *tu* and 11.1% chose likely *tu* which was somewhat surprising since students are generally explicitly taught how to order politely in a restaurant. It was not as surprising that in the no culture class nor study abroad group that 4.8% chose most likely *tu*, 9.6% chose likely *tu*, and 3.6% indicated not being sure.

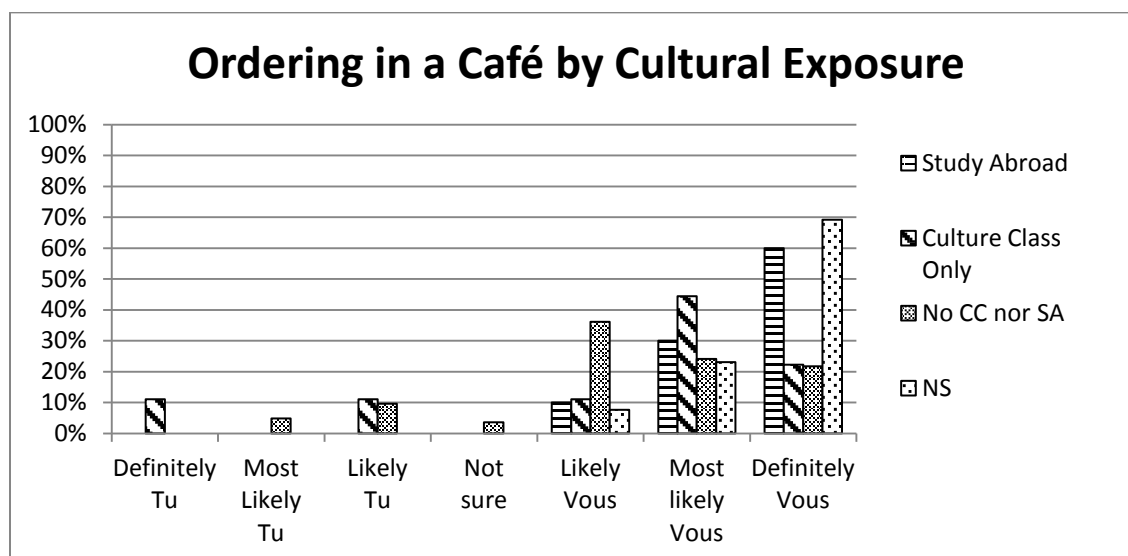


Figure 4-13 Ordering a Drink by Cultural Exposure

Table 4-13 Ordering a Drink in a Café by Cultural Exposure

	No CC nor SA <i>n</i> = 83	Culture Class <i>n</i> = 9	Study Abroad <i>n</i> = 20	NS <i>n</i> = 13
Definitely Tu	0%	11.1%	0%	0%
Most Likely Tu	4.8%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	9.6%	11.1%	0%	0%
Not Sure	3.6%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	36.1%	11.1%	10%	7.7%
Most Likely Vous	24.1%	44.4%	30%	23.1%
Definitely Vous	21.7%	22.2%	60%	69.2%

The choices of the culture class only group being rather puzzling, it was important to assess the highest level of French these students had taken. Even more surprising was the fact that these results were spread over the 100-400 levels. In analyzing the levels,

one finds that 3.7% of those in the 200 level reported definitely *tu*; 7.7% of the 100 level reported most likely *tu*; 11.5% of the 100 level, 3.7% of the 200 level, 9.1% of the 300 level, and 9.1% of the 400 level indicated likely using *tu*; and 3.8% of 100 level students and 3.7% of 200 level students indicated not being sure.

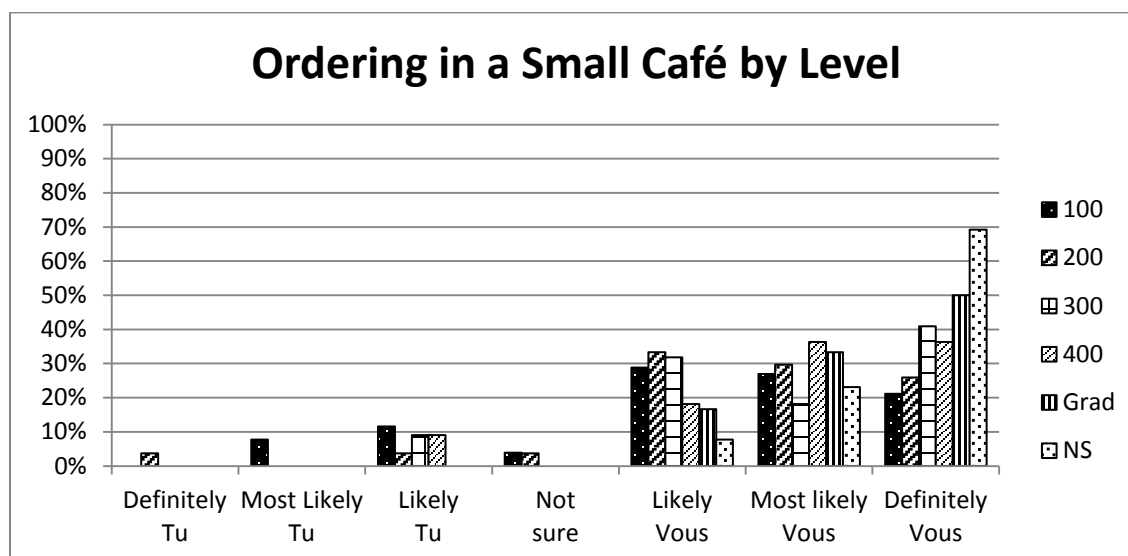


Figure 4-14 Ordering a Drink in a Small Café by Level

Table 4-14 Ordering a Drink in a Café by Level

	100 <i>n</i> = 52	200 <i>n</i> = 27	300 <i>n</i> = 22	400 <i>n</i> = 11	Grad <i>n</i> = 6	NS <i>n</i> = 13
Definitely Tu	0%	3.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Most Likely Tu	7.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Tu	11.5%	3.7%	9.1%	9.1%	0%	0%
Not Sure	3.9%	3.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Likely Vous	28.9%	33.3%	31.8%	18.2%	16.7%	7.7%
Most Likely Vous	26.9%	29.6%	18.2%	36.4%	33.3%	23.1%
Definitely Vous	21.2%	25.9%	40.9%	36.4%	50%	69.2%

Portions of the textbooks used in the 100-200 levels do discuss cafés in France and the proper way of ordering food and drink, but apparently, for some, the idea of using *vous* in this situation has not been made clear. Another reason for this choice could also simply

be due to not having had the experience of having to order in French which is most likely why those who had had experience ordering, advocated using *vous*.

4.3 Results for T/V Pronouns in the Classroom

Within the last item group which focused on interactions within the classroom responses to two of the questions were varied in both the native speaker and the student groups. These two questions involved interacting with students in a group activity and the instructor addressing an individual student. It is possible that the former question was not clear and thus may have caused confusion as to if one would be addressing the group collectively which would have required *vous* or if one would only be addressing individual students within the group which would have required *tu*. This possible confusion indicates a need for further inquiry. In the latter question one would have predicted using *tu* when a professor is addressing an individual student, but this could vary by professor and by class. Professors are always supposed to be addressed using the *vous* form, but the professor may elect to use *tu* with an individual student. As this question could be seen as subjective and there was no opportunity for respondents to explain their choice of pronoun, it made the results difficult to assess. This is yet another example of why these pronouns need to continue to be studied due to the complexity involved in pronoun choice.

Despite the confusion on which pronoun would be used for an instructor addressing an individual student, except for 6.1% of no culture class nor study abroad who indicated either not being sure or a likelihood of using *tu*, all other groups including native speakers indicated a rather strong inclination for using *vous*. Those favoring likely

using *tu* or not being sure were in the 100 and 300 levels. Hence, both level of French and lack of cultural exposure would have likely been the cause in this instance.

In talking to a fellow student in a partner activity, the majority of all groups strongly advocated using *tu*. Interestingly, 7.6% of native speakers indicated not being sure which could be as a result of not knowing details of the classroom structure in question or perhaps due to the potential unfamiliarity with the student in the partner activity. Additionally, 10% of study abroad students and 3.7% of no culture nor study abroad students indicated not being sure; 11.1% of culture class only indicated likely *vous* and 1.2% of no culture nor study abroad indicated definitely *vous* as one will note in the figure and table below.

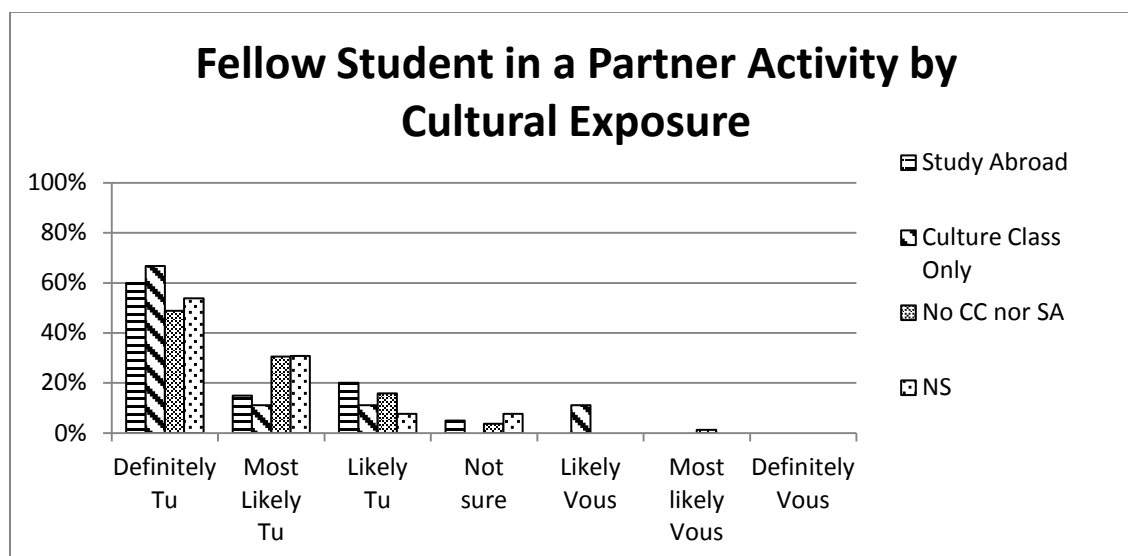


Figure 4-15 Fellow Student in a Partner Activity by Cultural Exposure

Table 4-15 Fellow Student in a Partner Activity by Cultural Exposure

	No CC nor SA <i>n</i> = 83	Culture Class <i>n</i> =9	Study Abroad <i>n</i> =20	NS <i>n</i> =13
Definitely Tu	48.8%	66.7%	60%	53.9%
Most Likely Tu	30.5%	11.1%	15%	30.8%
Likely Tu	15.9%	11.1%	20%	7.7%
Not Sure	3.7%	0%	5%	7.7%
Likely Vous	0%	11.1%	0%	0%
Most Likely Vous	1.2%	0%	0%	0%
Definitely Vous	0%	0%	0%	0%

One would expect that the level of those advocating using *vous* would have been in the lower levels of French, but 18.2% of 400 level students indicated likely using *vous* as compared to the 2% of 100 level who indicated the same choice as one can see in the figure below.

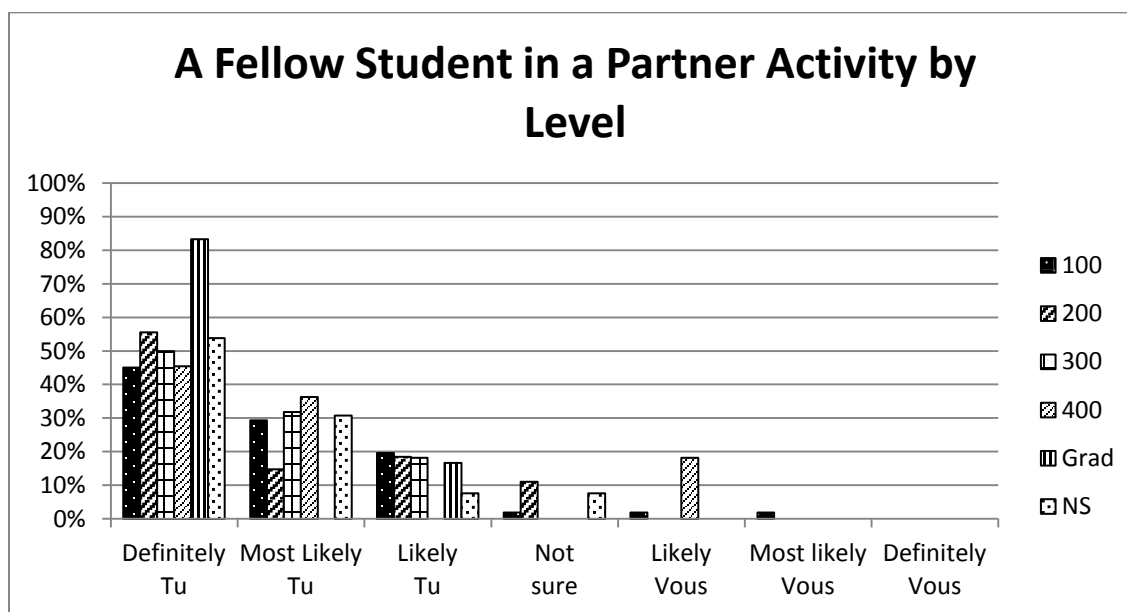


Figure 4-16 Fellow Student in a Partner Activity by Level

Table 4-16 Fellow Student in a Partner Activity by Level

	100 <i>n</i> = 52	200 <i>n</i> =27	300 <i>n</i> =22	400 <i>n</i> =11	Grad <i>n</i> =6	NS <i>n</i> =13
Definitely Tu	45.1%	55.6%	50.0%	45.5%	83.3%	53.9%
Most Likely Tu	29.4%	14.8%	31.8%	36.4%	0%	30.8%
Likely Tu	19.6%	18.5%	18.2%	0%	16.7%	7.7%
Not Sure	2%	11.1%	0%	0%	0%	7.7%
Likely Vous	2%	0%	0%	18.2%	0%	0%
Most Likely Vous	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Definitely Vous	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

As students interact with each other in class on a daily basis, it is surprising that those in the upper level of French indicated using *vous*, but this could also be due to a difference in personality as well as only having taken a culture class versus studying abroad.

4.4 Summary of Results

With some exceptions, overall the results of the survey support the predictions for the roles level of French studies and culture in pronoun choice in the situations presented. Specifically, the roles of these learner characteristics manifested in their responses to questions regarding pronoun choice with a bus driver, with a cashier, and when ordering a drink in a small café. Those in the lower levels and with the least amount of cultural exposure were among the ones who indicated using *tu* in all three situations which culturally and pragmatically would be seen both as inappropriate and rude. Although some of the situations and people presented could be seen as rather subjective and contextual such as which pronoun a professor would use in addressing a student, for the most part the responses of the questions affirmed the prediction that those with a more

cultural exposure were overall more accurate and confident in choosing the proper pronoun. However, it must be clarified based on the results that taking a culture class alone did not always necessarily indicate appropriate pronoun choice although those having taken a culture class were more likely to choose the appropriate pronoun than those who had neither taken a culture class nor studied abroad. Despite the reality that the content and focus of culture classes can widely vary, the data does indicate that students with at least some experience studying the culture did have a better understanding of when to use pronouns than those who had no experience at all. Although there was an increased likelihood of choosing the appropriate pronoun, having completed studies at a higher level of French did not always determine that one would choose the correct pronoun. Thus, it is apparent that more is needed than just grammatical competence when it comes to pronoun choice.

Overall, native speakers agreed on pronoun choices with a few exceptions in which the questions were too subjective and lacking a proper context. Conclusions based on these results will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusions and Implications of the Study

The theoretical framework for this study, the structure of the survey and the results from the survey have been discussed and analyzed in the preceding chapters. In Chapter 1, the goals and the justification for this study on the effect of cultural exposure on Tu/Vous pronoun use were introduced. In Chapter 2, through the analysis of previous research done in this topic aided in outlining the need for this study and the ongoing need for more research in the cultural connection in student acquisition of T/V pronouns. In Chapter 3, the motivation for and the explanation of the survey design were described according to the goals of the study. In Chapter 4, the results of the survey were reported and divided into different groups based on level and cultural exposure in order to ascertain what effect cultural competence had on students' use of pronouns.

As discussed in the previous chapter, students' exposure to the French culture played an important role in pronoun choice. Essentially, based on the results those who had not had the opportunity to study culture in the classroom or to experience the culture through study abroad had more difficulty and less confidence in selecting the correct pronoun which aided in answering the first research question. Additionally, learners sometimes picked a pronoun that would have been considered rude or inappropriate according to the context. Naturally, due to having grown up within the culture, this was

not an issue for native speakers as compared to learners. The second research question sought to pinpoint in which situations students have a clear understanding and confidence of the proper use of *tu* and *vous*. Based on the results, students were the most confident in situations using the formal singular *vous* which had been explicitly taught by their textbooks as seen in the situations involving an elderly stranger and a professor. Situations that required more cultural competence and exposure showed a decrease in confidence and understanding. According to these results, the appropriate pragmatic and cultural use of pronouns relies heavily on students' cultural competence.

The implications of this study for foreign language education are the need for more opportunities for students to interact with the culture both through cultural studies within the classroom and through opportunities to interact with native speakers for continued development in T/V pronoun use. Although some of the understanding of when to use and not to use each pronoun is gained through experience with trial and error, students need to be taught explicitly what situations are considered inappropriate for each pronoun. Despite the fact that any non-native speaker is going to struggle through trial and error with pronoun use, one can hope that with an increased awareness through cultural exposure, students will be able to practice using pronouns in an environment safe from possible misunderstanding on the part of native speaker.

5.2 Limitations

This study was effective in assessing some of the areas in which students are struggling with pronoun choice. This became apparent based on some of the responses such as to the questions involving pronoun use with a bus driver or with a waiter in a

café. Through the survey design and the questions asked in the biographical questionnaire, the results aided in giving an accurate picture of what situations may be causing students problems are and perhaps some of the reasons as to why beginning students in particular are struggling. The limitations of this study included the fact that this was only a small sample of responses from college students and native speakers. Along the same lines, there were also a few survey questions in which the context was not specific enough resulting in increased difficulty for respondents to choose what they felt was the correct pronoun. Although it is not as efficient or time effective, interviews with participants on their reasons for pronoun choice in varying situations would aid in assessing students' thought processes. Interviewing native speakers in a similar fashion would provide insight into what motivations and contexts result in choosing one pronoun over another.

Furthermore, the study abroad experience of students varied widely and a future study should include a minimum time of at least one semester abroad. This change would give a more accurate measure of study abroad experience. It would also be beneficial to compare study abroad students' use of T/V pronouns based on the duration of their program and the region in which they studied.

5.3 Future Research

As for future research, it would be useful to expand the survey to include more students and native speakers from additional universities. Perhaps a larger sample size with the more specific contexts may provide clearer results for the questions that had to be dropped from consideration in this study. Moreover, this study only asked participants

to choose on a Likert scale how likely they would be to use one pronoun or the other, but there was not a way provided for participants to explain their responses. As a result, it was not always clear why there were such varied responses from participants across levels.

Additionally, few studies have been done within the classroom to test different approaches for teaching T/V pronouns. Based on the results of this study, the integration of cultural studies or the lack thereof in French language curriculum seemed to affect students' understanding of the proper use of *tu* and *vous*. Further studies are needed to continue to study what aspects of culture would aid in students' acquisition of pronoun use. Although it would be difficult to conduct a longitudinal study following students for the first few semesters of their French studies, it would be helpful to be able to at least see if interventions using culture to teach T/V pronouns similar to Liddicoat's (2006) study would benefit students in the long term. This study showed some of the problems that students are having understanding when to use pronouns, but this data needs to be expanded upon to start trying to find solutions and better teaching approaches for the very important pragmatic and cultural concept of T/V pronouns.

5.4 Final Conclusions

In conclusion, based on the results, it is evident that students need more exposure to the French culture in order to better understand the often complex sociolinguistic and pragmatic situation involved in pronoun choice. One often tells beginning students to use *vous* until signaled to use *tu* by a native speaker, but as they continue to advance in their studies of French, students need to continue to expand their understanding of the use of

these two pronouns beyond this simple rule they learned as beginners. As became apparent in the results, even those with more experience in the language struggled in knowing which pronoun to use such as in the instances with a parent and in ordering a drink in a small café. Consequently, level alone does not necessarily guarantee competence in pronoun use. Students with more cultural exposure particularly those with study abroad experience indicated an overall better understanding than those without such experience. Students need both explicit instruction and a cultural background to begin to effectively use these pronouns. Based on these results, cultural competence does indeed play an important role in T/V pronoun acquisition and thus needs to continue to be considered in future research in T/V pronouns as well as in the field of SLA.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Native Speaker Biographical Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this survey. This survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete.

Are you a native speaker of French?

- Yes
- No

Please select your age range:

- under 18
- 18-24
- 25-31
- 32-38
- 39+

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your country of origin?

Have you had any formal education in French?

- Yes
- No

What is the highest level of courses that you have completed in French?

- Less than High School
- High school (or equivalent)
- Undergraduate (or equivalent) level
- Graduate School Level
- Other (Please Explain) _____

Do you speak any other languages?

- Yes
- No

What other languages do you speak and what is your proficiency in each language?
Please follow this format in listing languages: *Spanish near native;*
Portuguese advanced high

Have you ever lived in a country other than your country of origin?

- Yes
- No

What countries have you lived in and for how long?

Appendix B Non-Native Speaker Biographical Questionnaire

French T/V Pronouns

Thank you for participating in this survey. This survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete.

Please select your age range:

- under 18
- 18-24
- 25-31
- 31-38
- 39+

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Choose the highest level of French you have completed:

- 100 level
- 200 level
- 300 level
- 400 level
- 500-600 (Graduate level)

Did you study French before coming to Purdue?

- Yes
- No

Please explain. What courses in French did you take previously? *Example: Two years in high school*

Do you know any other languages besides English and French?

- Yes
- No

Please list, and describe your experience with those languages in as much detail as possible (number and level of courses taken, study abroad, proficiency, etc.).

Have you ever traveled as part of a vacation in a country where French is the official language?

- Yes
- No

Where did you go and how long did you stay? *Example: Brussels, Belgium: 1 week; Paris, France 3 days*

Have you ever studied abroad in a country where French is the official language?

- Yes
- No

Where did you study and how long was your program? *Example: Cannes, France 3 months*

What courses did you take while on your study abroad program?

Did you stay with a host family?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever taken a class primarily focused on French culture or an aspect of French culture?

- Yes
- No

Please list all courses and the focus of those courses in the space provided. *Example: FR 380 French Food Culture: French culture as seen through the traditions, preparation, etiquette, and importance of food in everyday life.*

Was this/Were these class(es) taught primarily in French? Please Explain:

