Problem
Many first-year foreign language students at the high school level have difficulty learning sentence construction. Students often want to create coherent sentences, but during the first year of foreign language instruction are not able to acquire the needed grammatical foundation to write such sentences.

Background
According to Sigsbee the experience in the foreign language classroom needs to be enhanced because American students fall short in both fluency and proficiency, and the situation needs to be remedied by changing the way foreign language is taught and by increasing the duration of foreign language education before college (46-8).

Is computer-based learning a way to enhance foreign language instruction? It is plausible that computer based learning can both apply generic teaching concepts as described by McDonough (294-95) as well as fun, creative lessons. Many studies have been conducted regarding the benefits of the use of cinematography in foreign language education. Chang has found that foreign language education has become more exciting since multimedia technology has entered education, a finding that correlates directly with computer based (visual) learning (12-4). Furthermore, classes that present students with pragmatic based activities offer students real-life skills according to Brickman and Manning (64-6). Computer experience has never been more crucial and offering students practice with computer experience may be viewed favorably by students and enhance their foreign language learning experience. The need for greater sophistication in textbooks applies also to foreign language textbooks according to Birchbickler (295-96). Walz believes that foreign language textbooks are still too steeped in written traditions of the past and do not provide enough oral language practice; therefore, computer based learning may offer an alternative to emphasizing textbook learning (161-63).

The Research Question
What are the student-perceived benefits and detriments associated with traditional classroom instruction and computer-based instruction in the foreign language classroom at the high school level?
Objectives and Hypotheses

Objective 1: To understand the initial perceptions of students towards the two types of learning.
Hypothesis 1: Students will initially be more attracted to the computer based setting.

Objective 2: To observe any potential change of students’ perceptions of both learning methods following the study.
Hypothesis 2: Students’ perception will remain highly positive relating to computer-based learning, but perceptions of traditional classroom learning will be viewed more favorably than initial responses.

Variables

Dependent Variable: Teaching setting and the materials used (ex. computer vs. textbook and blackboard). These are also considered treatment variables.

Independent Variables: The independent variables in this study primarily focus upon student academic and demographic characteristics. The variables include the following: IQ, gender, economic status, study habits, level of interest in foreign language, level of interest in computers, computer proficiency level, and maturity level

Criterion Variables: the students’ self-reported satisfaction scores with each educational method and the actual student grade in the class. Although improving student academic performance scores is not the primary purpose of this study, the scores should be considered when evaluating student perceptions and preference for the different classroom settings.

Outcomes

Initially, students will likely rank computer-based learning environments more positively (a minimum of 2 points greater than the ranking for a the traditional classroom setting on a 7-point scale) because it offers a change from their current everyday environment; however, after participating in comparable 6-week educational units in each setting, student reported survey scores will become more diverse with a portion of students retaining their initial perceptions, while a portion will show greater support (a higher score on a 7-point scale) for the traditional classroom setting.

Sample Design

There are approximately fourteen first-year foreign language classes (French and Spanish) in Martin County taught each academic year (fall and spring semesters). Due to the difficulty and challenge of
studying individual students in different classrooms, a cluster sample will be utilized. This sampling method will allow the researcher to select a specified number of units (entire classrooms) as the sample population. Though there are problems with the scale being representative and determining confidence limits, this sampling strategy is the most feasible option, because a typical first-year foreign language learner does not exist. That is, every individual student comes with different abilities and deficiencies in academic ability, IQ score, etc. (refer to independent variables for a listing of these variables). The survey does not try to determine each child’s computer skill level because by high school the majority of students have been exposed to many years of computer courses and practice. The cluster sample however is beneficial because it will not evaluate each student’s responses and experience, but the units’ responses and experience. The identified sampling method will minimize sample bias as a threat to validity. As a second data collection method, focus groups will be utilized to obtain qualitative data and to minimize gaps and deficiencies in the survey questionnaire items. These focus groups will be composed of a number of students within the foreign language curriculum who are willing to participate in this portion of the research. If enough people are interested in participating in the focus groups, a random sampling strategy will be incorporated in selecting participants.

Fifty percent of the total population (7 classes) will be selected. Though some are French and some Spanish students, they will all have the same course of study. All students will go through 6 weeks of one method followed by 6 weeks of the other method. Both methods will be administered simultaneously to determine if the order of the instruction method influences preference scores. To determine if these preferences remain constant over time an extended longitudinal study may prove beneficial. A quantitative approach will be used to collect data. A written pre-test will be administered to all students before instruction (Appendix A) and a post test (Appendix C) will be administered after the completion of both teaching methods. The proctor should read the directions for the pre-test (Appendix B) to the students and the directions to the post-test (Appendix D). Surveys will be quantitative, the majority of questions using a Likert scale/ranking criteria. The survey will consist of positive and negative statements relating to the computer-based learning environment and to the traditional classroom environment in which students will indicate a numeric response to the level in which they agree or disagree with the statement (e.g. 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = unsure, 7 = strongly agree).

The term computer-based learning has been changed to the computer lab classroom for this survey because the majority of students taking this survey will not know what computer based learning is but will be more familiar with computer lab classroom since some most will have been exposed to a computer
lab classroom in either keyboarding or Computer Applications I (both required by Martin County for graduation and often taken during students’ freshman year).

The concept of the traditional classroom should be explained to students before giving the pre-test as a classroom where paper, pencil, the textbook, overhead projector and the blackboard are the main medium used for conveying information.

**Description of Participants**
The participants will not be recruited for this study. Their class will selected at random.
All participants should meet all of the following to participate in this study:
Be currently enrolled in Spanish I or French I in a public secondary school in Martin County
Be a student in one of the 7 classes randomly selected for this study

**Analysis**
Both the pre-test and the post-test are made up of three primary components. The first of these is a section on student socio-demographic characteristics. These eight questions address aspects of age, gender, racial background, academic grade level, foreign language of interest, and previous level of foreign language experience. All of the variables within this section are quantitative. Though there are no numeric rankings present, all variables can be assigned a numeric code or value for the purpose of statistical testing.

The second part of the survey is composed of several pre-constructed statements concerning various aspects of the traditional classroom and the computer-based learning environments. Each question is followed by a 7-point Likert scale. Values on this scale for each item range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (not sure), to 7 (strongly agree).

The final component of each survey instrument is three open-ended questions in which the student will summarize his/her opinion in 1 or more sentences or phrases. The relationship between student classroom setting opinions and socio-demographic characteristics will be examined by using both chi-square analysis and analysis of variance (F test). Chi-square analysis will be used to examine the relationship between socio-demographic categories and researcher defined classroom settings (traditional and computer-based). Analysis of variance (F test) will be employed to analyze the difference in classroom setting attributes (likes and dislikes) between socio-demographic categories.
Finally, the open-ended qualitative responses will be observed for any patterns, themes, or categories that may be present. This synthesis of narrative responses will likely assist in, and further strengthen, the
researchers overall interpretation of student perceptions of traditional vs. computer-based classroom settings.
Administrative Guidelines for Proctors

Pre-Test

On the first day of the semester please administer the pre-test to your students.

Teacher Say:

Today you are going to take a survey regarding your perceptions of computer lab classrooms and traditional classrooms and how and where you feel you learn best.

Teacher Say:

The term computer lab classroom is used frequently in this survey. For the purpose of this survey, computer lab classroom is defined as: a classroom where the majority of time is in a class with many computers and lectures and notes are on the computer and written and audio exercises are on the computer. The computer is the primary source of information and interaction. Are there any questions about this definition? (You may repeat the definition if a student has a question.)

Teacher Say:

The term traditional classroom is used frequently in this survey. For the purpose of this survey, the traditional classroom is defined as: a classroom where the majority of time is in a classroom with chairs, tables, and a blackboard. The teacher and the textbook are the main references. The majority of written and audio practice comes from the teacher. Are there any questions about this definition? (You may repeat the definition if a student has a question.)

Teacher Say:

I will now hand out the survey. You should write directly on the survey. (Students should be given as much time as they need)

Teacher Say:

Thank you for participating in this survey.
Dear Student,

I would like to express my sincerest appreciation for your willingness to participate in this study of foreign language students. The information you provide will assist teachers in better meeting the educational needs of students.

Your classroom was selected at random to participate in this survey. All responses will be strictly confidential and will be used only for the research purposes of this study.

If there is any question or portion of the questionnaire that you do not understand, please leave it blank.

Thank you
Student Profile

Please complete each of the eight items below. These items address personal information and your previous experience with foreign language.

1. What is your age? _____ years

2. What is your sex?
   [ ] Female  [ ] Male

3. How would you best characterize your racial background?
   [ ] American Indian or Alaskan Native
   [ ] Asian
   [ ] Black or African-American
   [ ] Hispanic
   [ ] White or Anglo-American
   [ ] Other (please specify) ____________

4. What is your current grade level?
   [ ] 9th grade  [ ] 11th grade
   [ ] 10th grade  [ ] 12th grade

5. What foreign language are you currently taking?
   [ ] French
   [ ] Spanish

6. Have you had any previous exposure to the language you are taking now or any other language?
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No

If you answered no above, please go on to question # 8.
If you answered yes above, please continue.

7. What was the language? ______________

8. What type of previous exposure did you have? Check all that apply.
   [ ] Native speaking family member
   [ ] Classroom instruction
   [ ] Language camp
   [ ] Time in a foreign country
   [ ] Other (please specify) __________________
**Pre-Test**

Most students, if asked, have certain likes and dislikes when dealing with classrooms and computer labs as a place for learning. The following statements you may or may not agree with. Please circle the number which best reflects your opinions and feelings.

A score of “1” means that you strongly disagree, “2” – “3” means you somewhat disagree, “4” means that you are not sure or have no opinion, “5” – “6” means that you somewhat agree, and “7” means that you strongly agree with the statement. **CIRCLE ONLY ONE NUMBER PER STATEMENT.**

1. Traditional classrooms offer greater abilities to ask questions when I am confused.

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2. The teacher often goes too fast in the traditional classroom with course material, which makes it hard for me to keep up if I get confused.

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3. The traditional classroom moves too slowly, and I feel we go over the same items again and again.

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4. Traditional classroom learning is boring.

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5. Teachers use a variety of activities in the traditional classroom to make the learning interesting.

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6. Other students in the classroom disrupt my learning.

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7. I learn from my peers through their questions to the teacher, class discussions, and group work.

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8. I learn best by myself.

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9. The traditional classroom environment at my school is generally fun.

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10. I learn a lot in the traditional classroom environment at my school.

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11. I think class would be much more interesting if we were in the computer lab classroom the majority of the 90-minute foreign language class period.

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12. With a computer lab classroom I think it will be easier to go my own pace.

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13. I feel that I would have plenty of opportunity to ask questions in a computer lab classroom.

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14. I feel that I would be more interested in the foreign language I am taking if I was in a computer lab classroom.

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15. My teacher is not as important to my learning in the computer lab classroom.

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16. I think I learn more from my teacher than I would in the computer lab classroom.

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17. My attention span is greater when working on the computer.

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18. I love to use computers for schoolwork.

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20. Computers intimidate me.

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21. I would like to work in the computer lab classroom every day.

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22. Overall I think I will like the computer lab classroom better than the traditional classroom.

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Please explain what you think will be the positive and negative aspects of the traditional classroom over the next 6-weeks.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Please explain what you think will be the positive and negative aspects of the computer lab classroom over the next 6-weeks.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Briefly state which of these environments you feel will be better for you to learn the foreign language material and why.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Post-Test

Most students, if asked, have certain likes and dislikes when dealing with classrooms and computer labs as a place for learning. The following statements you may or may not agree with. Please circle the number which best reflects your opinions and feelings.

A score of “1” means that you strongly disagree, “2” – “3” means you somewhat disagree, “4” means that you are not sure or have no opinion, “5” – “6” means that you somewhat agree, and “7” means that you strongly agree with the statement.

CIRCLE ONLY ONE NUMBER PER STATEMENT.

1. Traditional classrooms offer greater abilities to ask questions when I am confused.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree     Not Sure     Somewhat Agree     Strongly Agree

2. Teachers often go too fast in the traditional classroom with course material, which makes it hard for me to keep up if I get confused.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree     Not Sure     Somewhat Agree     Strongly Agree

3. The traditional classroom moves too slowly, and I feel we go over the same items again and again.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree     Not Sure     Somewhat Agree     Strongly Agree

4. Traditional classroom learning is boring.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree     Not Sure     Somewhat Agree     Strongly Agree

5. Teachers use a variety of activities in the traditional classroom to make the leaning process more interesting than the computer lab.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
6. Other students disrupt my learning in the traditional classroom, but less so in the computer lab.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Somewhat Not Sure Somewhat Strongly
Disagree Disagree Agree Agree

7. I learn from my peers through their questions to the teacher, class discussions, and group work, and I miss out on this in the computer lab.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Somewhat Not Sure Somewhat Strongly
Disagree Disagree Agree Agree

8. I learn best by myself and working on the computer allows me to do this.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Somewhat Not Sure Somewhat Strongly
Disagree Disagree Agree Agree

9. The classroom environment at my school is generally fun.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Somewhat Not Sure Somewhat Strongly
Disagree Disagree Agree Agree

10. I learn a lot in the classroom environment at my school.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Somewhat Not Sure Somewhat Strongly
Disagree Disagree Agree Agree

11. I learn more in the traditional classroom environment than in the computer lab classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Somewhat Not Sure Somewhat Strongly
Disagree Disagree Agree Agree

12. I like to be in the traditional classroom environment but not every day.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Somewhat Not Sure Somewhat Strongly
Disagree Disagree Agree Agree
13. Class is much more interesting when we are in the computer lab classroom.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree Not Sure Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

14. I learn more in the computer lab classroom because I am able to go my own pace and not get behind.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree Not Sure Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

15. I feel that I have plenty of opportunity to ask questions in the computer lab classroom.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree Not Sure Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

16. I feel that I am more interested in the subject when I am in the computer lab classroom.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree Not Sure Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

17. My teacher is an important part of the computer lab classroom.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree Not Sure Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

18. I think I learn more from my teacher than I do in the computer lab classroom.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree Not Sure Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

19. My attention span is greater when working on the computer.

1                     2                     3                     4                     5                    6                    7
Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree Not Sure Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree
20. I love to use computers for schoolwork.

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22. Computers intimidate me.

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23. I learn more in the computer lab classroom than in the traditional classroom.

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24. The computer lab classroom is interesting, but I don’t want to be in the computer lab classroom everyday.

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25. I prefer to be in the computer lab classroom the majority of the 90-minutes of my foreign language class period.

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</table>
Please explain what you found to be the positive and negative aspects of the traditional classroom over the last 6- weeks.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Please explain what you found to be the positive and negative aspects of the computer lab classroom over the last 6- weeks.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Briefly state which of these environments was better for you to learn this foreign language material and why.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
Administrative Guidelines for Proctors

Post-Test
After students have participated in 6-weeks of the traditional classroom and 6-weeks in the computer lab classroom please administer the post-test.

Teacher Say:
Today you are going to take a survey regarding your perceptions of computer lab classrooms and traditional classrooms and how and where you feel you learn best.

Teacher Say:
The term computer lab classroom is used frequently in this survey. For the purpose of this survey computer lab classroom is defined as: a classroom where the majority of time is in a class with many computers and lectures and notes are on the computer and written and audio exercises are on the computer. The computer is the primary source of information and interaction. Are there any questions about this definition? (You may repeat the definition if a student has a question.)

Teacher Say:
The term traditional classroom is used frequently in this survey. For the purpose of this survey, the traditional classroom is defined as: a classroom where the majority of time is in a classroom with chairs, tables, and a blackboard. The teacher and the textbook are the main references. The majority of written and audio practice comes from the teacher. Are there any questions about this definition? (You may repeat the definition if a student has a question.)

Teacher Say:
I will now hand out the survey. You should write directly on the survey. (Students should be given as much time as they need)

Teacher Say:
Thank you for participating in this survey.
Works Cited


