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**Motivated Spanish Learning among Anglo-Texan High School
Students: An Exploration of Theories, Research, and Experience, with
Implications for Pedagogy**

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Report

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Abstract

Motivated Spanish Learning among Anglo-Texan High School Students: An Exploration of Theories, Research, and Experience, with Implications for Pedagogy

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

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Research into foreign language and second language learning motivation has progressed steadily over the past half century. Several theories and models have been developed to explain how learners are motivated to learn a foreign language. Context-specific research, however, is lacking for Anglo-Texan high school students learning Spanish. This report applies the theories of foreign language learning motivation to this context, using personal experience and anecdotes from the author as a Spanish teacher and student, in order to prescribe pedagogical applications of the research for high school Spanish teachers in Texas who seek to increase their students' motivation.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Application	3
Socio-Educational Theory of Foreign Language Motivation	3
Self-Determination Theory and Foreign Language Motivation	6
Dörnyei's Foreign Language Motivation Model.....	9
The Expectancy-Value Model and Goal Orientation	12
Possible Selves Theory in Foreign Language Motivation	14
Chapter Summary	16
Chapter 3: Pedagogical Applications of Motivational Factors	18
Humanizing the Target Culture	18
Activating Intrinsic Motivation: Finding the Fun in the Foreign	20
The "Cool Factor" of Spanish: Connections to What Teens Value	22
An Honest Conversation about Difficulty	24
A Future with Spanish: Possible Future L2 Selves.....	25
Chapter 4: Conclusion.....	28
Bibliography	33

Chapter 1: Introduction

Texas presents a unique cultural situation for high school students learning Spanish. Though the de facto national language of the United States is English, Spanish plays an important role in the public spaces of Texas, and with an ever-increasing Hispanic population in the state, it is unlikely that Spanish will stop being spoken. This reality provides incentives for students to apply themselves in Spanish classes and to remain motivated in their Spanish language learning (SLL).

More broadly, there are other motivational factors for Anglo-Texan students that pertain to the general situation of American high school foreign language learning (FLL). Some of these influences are negative, such as the lack of public role models who speak a foreign language. Some of these influences, however, are essentially neutral: the “exotic” nature of foreign languages and cultures can appear “strange” and “uncool” to some teenage Americans, while to others they can be “interesting” and “fun.”

Much research has been done in the fields of both foreign language learning and general education on students’ motivation to learn. These bodies of literature have produced various theories, many of which can help us to understand various facets of particular educational settings. The present report will demonstrate the relationship between these theories of motivation and the real-world situation of Anglo-Texan high school students learning Spanish.

Further, if the theories of FLL motivation and general educational motivation can clarify the motivational context of this learning subgroup, it can also help teachers to identify ways in which pedagogical intervention can help to augment the motivation of learners. Using a combination of the motivation literature and personal experiences from

living and teaching in Texas, the author will demonstrate pedagogical applications and courses of actions for teachers of high school Spanish in Texas who desire to increase their students' motivation.

The present report will consist of several sections. Chapter 2 will review the literature of foreign language motivation, from socio-educational theory down to the present possible future selves theories. Foreign language motivational theory will often be intersected with theories of motivation in mainstream education, and a combination of the two will be used to provide a unified theoretical outline of motivation in foreign language learning. The review of literature will be punctuated with personal anecdotes and experience as a Texan from the present author, explaining how the motivational literature allows a fuller understanding of the SLL situation for Anglo-Texan high schoolers. Comparisons will be made between different theories and aspects of this particular student culture.

Chapter 3 will be a discussion regarding the implications of the research for teachers. Pedagogical recommendations will be made to help teachers of high school Spanish shape the motivational orientations of their students, give guidance to their students in shaping their own orientations, and make the class accommodating to the specific orientations of the students in the class.

Chapter 4 will connect theory, experience, the target student population's motivation, and pedagogical implications, while calling for further research into motivation in this particular language learning situation. The present author hopes that this report will be useful to teachers in developing a curriculum and a class culture that promotes motivated SLL among Anglo-Texan students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Application

Socio-Educational Theory of Foreign Language Motivation

Motivation is a crucial component of any learning model. Students learn because, for one reason or another, they find the impetus to accomplish the tasks set before them. Motivation in foreign language learning is classified as an individual difference in second language acquisition (Cook, 2008). As such, it can widely vary based on factors particular to each student in a given classroom. The primary researchers to link motivation to second language proficiency were Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972). They conducted a series of empirical studies examining various potential motivating factors of students, along with levels of proficiency, in various locations around the world. They found that in many settings, motivation is the highest predictor of success in foreign language learning.

From the beginning of second language acquisition research into motivation, an effort was made to categorize various types of foreign language motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) posited that people in different settings are likely to be motivated to learn a foreign language through different orientations. They saw a divide between instrumental motivation, in which the learner desires to learn the language for utilitarian or strictly practical reasons, and integrative motivation, in which the learner is intrigued by the target culture and desires to know more about it, and perhaps even become somewhat like it. These two broad categories have formed the basis of much thought about foreign language motivation.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) determined that these two categories of motivation were predictive of language learning success in different environments. In studies

conducted in the United States, for example, regarding learners of French, the authors found that integrative motivation was broadly predictive of success. On the other hand, in a study conducted in the Philippines, Filipino learners of English are more easily motivated by instrumental motivation, due to the fact that the university system of the Philippines requires the use of English in classes (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The integrative-instrumental model (also known as the socio-educational model) emphasizes the cultural attitudes that learners bring to language learning. Texas provides a unique situation in this regard. Since Texas is located on the border with Mexico, Texas has a large Latino population. The proximity of Latinos causes some students to have positive feelings toward them. On the other hand, political developments in Mexico and on the Texas-Mexico border cause some to have somewhat negative attitudes toward Spanish-speakers. Both positive and negative attitudes correspond to the strength of students' SLL motivation. (For another exploration of Anglo-Texans' attitudes toward Texans and the effects on SLL motivation, see Martin, 2009).

Anglo-Texans who develop personal relationships with Spanish-speakers are likely to develop integrative motivation to learn the native language of their friends and acquaintances. As a personal example, Latinos have played an important role in my own development as a Spanish speaker. I had Latino acquaintances growing up, both peers and family friends, who were close to me. My earliest instances of speaking Spanish outside of the classroom were brought on by my interactions with these people. The desire to interact with them, to inhabit a small part of their world, was brought about by these interactions. Eventually, this integrative motivation would result in my taking Spanish throughout high school and earning a B.A. in Spanish. Similar stories for other

Anglo-Texans have caused similar interest in Spanish for the purpose of getting to know Spanish speakers in their lives.

The Hispanic presence in Texas also provides instrumental incentives for students to acquire Spanish. Many Anglo-Texans recognize the utility of learning Spanish in a state that has a rapidly growing Spanish-speaking population. Many of my students and their parents routinely express the view that learning Spanish is crucial for living in Texas in order to communicate with a large percentage of the state's population.

The pre-existing conditions that naturally produce integrative and instrumental SLL motivation in many Anglo-Texan students can be leveraged by teachers. Many Anglo-Texans who live in areas with a low Hispanic population do not experience these motivating factors in their everyday lives. For these students, Spanish teachers can highlight this reality in order to allow students to see the importance of Spanish in their lives as Texans. For those who already feel some amount of integrative or instrumental motivation, highlighting the local Hispanic community can further cause students to recognize the utility of learning Spanish for the sake of interaction with people who are essentially their neighbors.

The socio-educational model of language learning motivation has remained influential over the years, and other researchers have sought to expand it by including concepts derived from more recent research. Clément and Kruidenier (1983) found other factors besides the national-societal environment that contributed to motivation; these factors were more particular to individuals, and included ethnicity, social milieu, and target language. They also suggested new categories of motivational orientation (travel, friendship, and knowledge motivations) in place of a unified integrative motivation.

Doubt was cast on the legitimacy of the integrative motivation construct, as not all non-instrumental reasons for language learning relate strictly to a desire to draw closer to the target culture. For example, some students were found to want to simply acquire their second language as knowledge, for knowledge's sake.

Self-Determination Theory and Foreign Language Motivation

As second language acquisition researchers looked for other models to apply to language learning motivation, the work of Deci and Ryan (1985) played a crucial role. In this social psychological book on intrinsic motivation, the authors explored how people are motivated in various areas of life, including in education. The authors introduced self-determination as a construct. Self-determination is defined as the extent to which one perceives that they are choosing to engage in an activity rather than being forced to by an external force. Self-determination is seen to be a strengthening force for motivation. Self-determination connects to motivational orientation in that one's orientation toward a task reflects how much agency one feels in performing that task. In Deci and Ryan (1985), there are two primary categories of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. The fulfillment of intrinsic motivations is seen to produce feelings of self-determination, as a person does something because they feel that they want to do it. Extrinsic motivations can be either related to or antithetical to self-determination. Extrinsically motivated actions that are "based on one's own values and desires" (p. 35) would be accompanied by self-determination, while extrinsic motivations that go against the wants and needs of the person allow for less self-determination.

Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (1991) discussed more in depth the nuances of extrinsic motivation, positing four sub-categories that are distinguished by the extent of internalization that the motivation has undergone. External regulation occurs when the motivation to perform a task is provided by external people or factors, such as parents or teachers in the case of a student. Introjected regulation occurs when the consequences of the performance of a task have become internalized, such that the punishment for failure is guilt and the reward for success is feeling a boost of self-esteem. While internal to the person, these consequences do not reflect associations intrinsic to the task itself, but rather internalizations of largely external pressures. Identified regulation refers to a motivation for a task that the person accepts as valuable, albeit for practical, non-intrinsic reasons. Finally, at the most internalized end of the extrinsic motivation spectrum, integrated regulation is associated with tasks that fully cohere with a person's self-understanding and set of values. Integrated regulation differs from intrinsic motivation in that it still does not imply interest in the task itself, but rather in a valued outcome of the task (p. 330). As extrinsic motivation becomes more internalized, so the self-determination of the individual increases.

Since there are potentially positive environmental influences on students' SLL motivation in Texas, there is much potential for self-determined SLL to take place. If students are exposed to the Latino community in positive ways, there can be both intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation to learn Spanish. However, there are some high school students for whom a foreign language is intrinsically appealing, even without reference to the target culture. For these students, perhaps the intrinsic motivation construct fits better than the integrative motivation construct of socio-educational theory.

Vallerand et al. (1992) distinguished between three different kinds of intrinsic motivation (or IM for short): knowledge IM, accomplishment IM, and experience-stimulation IM (see also Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000). While some foreign language students have experience IM and knowledge IM, in that they want to *experience* and *know about* the target *culture*, others have accomplishment IM and knowledge IM in that they want to achieve *mastery* and *knowledge* of the target *language*, while perhaps experiencing some *stimulation* from conversing in the language.

The latter description has played a significant role in my own growth as a Spanish speaker; for me, interest in culture, which is now a strong personal motivator, grew out of an interest in language. Some of the students that I teach have also stated that they were interested in Spanish because it was exciting to try something as different and new as speaking in a foreign language.

As in other high school classes, however, Spanish students can remain disinterested in the class and the subject material. These passive learners' motivations for taking the class and working at it are on the least self-determined end of the self-determination spectrum. Passive students, who simply take a foreign language because it is required and try to pass the class in order to avoid repeating it, are externally regulated. They view the act of language learning as imposed on them by external forces against their will. Many of these students can perhaps become more self-determined and intrinsically motivated if they can see the pleasure that can come from language learning. Understanding why some students are intrinsically motivated could help language teachers design lessons that utilize the intrinsically pleasurable elements of language learning and attract more of the passive students to want to learn for themselves.

Dörnyei's Foreign Language Motivation Model

Dörnyei (1994) provided a useful conceptualization of foreign language learning motivation. His model involves three tiers: the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level. These three levels represent the three main groups of factors affecting language learning motivation. The language level involves factors specific to the target language and how the student relates to that language. Dörnyei (1994) divides this level into integrative and instrumental subsystems, according to Gardner and Lambert's (1972) socio-educational model. The learner level pertains to individual differences particular to the learner, and consists of the learner's need for achievement and issues of self-confidence, including anxiety, perceived L2 competence, self-efficacy, and how the learner reacts to past language learning experiences (Dörnyei, 1994).

The largest level in Dörnyei's (1994) model is the learning situation level, which encompasses course-specific, teacher-specific, and group-specific motivational components. Course-specific components pertain to how the student views the course content and required tasks, and whether the student finds them interesting, relevant, doable, and satisfying. Teacher-specific components are ways in which the teacher relates to the students and presents the material, including the teacher's type of authority, her modeling of the language, her task presentation, and her feedback. Finally, group-specific components relate to the group context within which a student is learning an L2. A group of language learners can have varying degrees of goal-orientedness, or alignment with the goal of learning the L2. The group will have a norm and reward system, in which students who adhere to the norms and alignments of the group will be rewarded, and those who do not will face social consequences. Group cohesion, the strength of the

bonds between the learners, will determine how influential the former two group-specific components will be upon the motivation of the individual. Altogether, this model of language learning motivation considers various perspectives of the language learning process and offers potential points at which teachers may intervene in the motivational system of the student.

Several studies have been conducted in the United Kingdom recently that examine group-specific motivation among primary and secondary school foreign language students. Taylor and Marsden (2014) found that personal relevance of a foreign language correlated positively with willingness to take foreign language courses, while perceived general societal relevance did not correlate. They also found a possible connection between interventions designed to interest students in foreign language study and improved willingness to enroll in foreign language courses. Bartram (2006a; 2006b) studied attitudes of foreign language pupils aged fifteen to sixteen in England, Germany, and the Netherlands, to determine the nature of peer and parent influences on language learning attitudes. Peer influences were determined to play a large role in the selection of one language over another; for example, students often chose a foreign language class in order to be in a class with their friends (Bartram 2006b). Gender differences in attitudes toward particular languages and toward language learning in general were shown to be present in all settings, but particularly in England. Boys appeared to view language learning in general as a feminine activity, and they particularly considered French to be a “feminine language.” In his other study on the same data set, Bartram (2006a) explored the attitudes of parents toward language learning, as perceived by the students, and found that English students reported much more negative attitudes than their Dutch and German

counterparts. While the sample size of the data set for these two studies was small, the difference between the results in Germany and the results in England was particularly striking. Taylor and Marsden (2014) posit that for English-speaking societies, cultivating motivation for foreign language learning is more difficult due to the perception of English as the ‘global language.’ It is possible that some in the United States share the attitude that for English speakers, foreign language learning is not necessary.

Dörnyei’s (1994) SLA motivation model, along with the recent work from the United Kingdom on peer and parent influences, address the “learning situation” of language learners. Group-specific motivational components can play a large role in students’ adoption of particular views about FLL and the target cultural community, and consequently, their FLL motivation can rise or fall. If it’s “not cool” to speak a foreign language well or to sound foreign, or if the student culture propogates negative views about the target cultural community, students and teachers will have to expend more effort to maintain FLL motivation. On the other hand, if the local student group views the target culture as interesting and attractive, FLL motivation is much easier to maintain, and students may even place pressure on each other to learn the language. While teachers cannot decide what is popular among their students, they can influence the group perception of the target culture by demonstrating the similarities and intriguing differences of the target culture from American culture, and help the students to see points where the things that they enjoy are reflected in the target culture as well.

As a teacher, I have often struggled with being able to encourage my students to do activities in class that are socially risky. For high school students, speaking a foreign language in front of peers entails the risk of sounding ridiculous and making a spectacle

of oneself. One student has confessed to me in private that he likes the more “hands-on” activities and games we do in class, but he quite often seems reticent to participate when we do these activities. Perhaps this is an instance in which group-related motivation to not appear silly overrides an intrinsic motivation to practice Spanish for pleasure.

The Expectancy-Value Model and Goal Orientation

Another conceptual framework that connects the previous models to the below model of goal orientation is the expectancy-value model. The three components of this model are value, expectancy, and affective factors (Pintrich, 1989, as cited in Jernigan, 1999). Values are the reasons why students would consider tasks worth performing or classes worth taking. Affective factors consist of the student’s emotions surrounding the task or class in question. Expectancy is the extent to which the student believes that success at a task, assessment, or class overall, is possible or probable. The concept of expectancy names an important aspect of motivation not previously addressed in other theories. Students’ predictions of their own success often result in motivation and effort to match their predictions.

Goal orientation pertains to both the reason a student is motivated to succeed in a task as well as the mindset with which the student approaches the task (Jernigan 1999). Theorists have proposed two primary goal orientations: performance orientation and mastery, or learning, orientation (Ames, 1992; Elliot & Dweck, 1988). A student who is performance-oriented focuses on opportunities to demonstrate his ability. This student often wonders if his ability is sufficient for the task. A student who is mastery-oriented seeks to improve his ability by seeking the necessary tactics and mustering the necessary

effort to improve in the task (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Common among performance-oriented students is the belief that high amounts of effort indicate a lack of ability. Therefore, performance-oriented students look for ways to expend less effort, and they tend to avoid difficult tasks for fear of failing or of expending too much effort and appearing inept (Ames 1992).

Apathetic students, it has been observed, exhibit neither of the primary goal orientations. Goal theorists have proposed a third orientation whose defining feature is work avoidance (Meece & Holt, 1993). These students do not necessarily feel motivated to perform, compare themselves to others, or master the task at hand, but rather to expend as little effort as possible while doing the tasks required of them.

It has also been proposed that performance orientation be separated into two new orientations: “Performance Alpha” and “Performance Beta” (Nam Jung, 1996). Performance Alpha, also known as ego-social orientation, applies to students who want to succeed in order to please, appease, or impress others in their life, such as teachers, parents, or peers. Performance Beta, also known as utilitarian orientation, applies to students who desire to succeed in order to gain some practical value, such as getting good grades in order to move on in school, or securing a desirable job once out of school (Nam Jung, 1996).

Unproductive goal orientations and expectancy seem to plague many people who are trying to learn a foreign language in Texas, and possibly in the rest of the United States as well. When FLL becomes the topic of conversation, many Texans I talk to seem to feel that they are incapable of learning a foreign language. They will often say something to the effect of, “Despite three high school years (or three college semesters)

of a foreign language class, I still can't speak the language." If so many adults repeat this line, it is no surprise that high school students often express the same sense of futility in foreign language class. This paradigm perhaps reveals a cultural bias, when it comes to FLL, toward a performance goal orientation.

Perhaps cultural expectations of FLL failure are in part due to unrealistic expectations of what language learning should look like. Jernigan (1999) cited the plethora of language learning materials that promote unrealistic expectations of success, claiming to teach buyers a language in a tiny fraction of the time that most language learners need to become fluent. These expectations become disappointment when most people who attempt language learning realize that for them the lofty goal of, for example, becoming fluent in a language in 10 minutes a day for 60 days is impossible.

Language learning is a long, complex process, regardless of ability. Many in Texas do not seem to understand this, and thus become discouraged when they expend so much effort to learn a language, thinking that their ability is being tried and found lacking. To combat this mentality, teachers could emphasize to students that learning a language is challenging regardless of one's natural ability, and that mistakes are a natural part of the FLL process.

Possible Selves Theory in Foreign Language Motivation

Second language acquisition researchers have more recently been utilizing a perspective on motivation and goals known as possible selves theory. Dörnyei (2009) explains and utilizes this concept extensively in reference to second and foreign language learning. Possible selves are future self-concepts that we imagine to be potential future

outcomes in our lives. There are four main types of possible selves: the ideal self (the person one would like to be), the feared self (the person one would like to avoid being), the expected/default self (the person one most expects to be unless action is taken to change), and the ought self (the person one feels pressured to be from others). Dörnyei (2009) states that in an educational setting, both an ideal self and a feared self are instrumental in bringing about strong motivation to perform academic tasks. In regards to an ‘ideal L2 self’, he posits that the ability of a student to have a healthy ideal L2 self is related with the student’s views and attitudes about the target culture, since often native speakers are the most accessible models for what being an L2 speaker looks like. Therefore, if the student has a negative view of the L2 community, he will find it difficult to form a positive ideal L2 self.

Interaction with foreigners is often not on the minds of American teenagers as a part of their ideal selves. Public figures in the United States are not generally known for their ability to speak foreign languages. Thus, I suspect that many American teens have trouble imagining themselves speaking a foreign language fluently in the future, let alone construing that as a particularly “ideal” trait. There is, however, one scenario in which I have seen the ideal self incorporate fluent Spanish. Since I work at a Christian school, I have several students who have done humanitarian work (sometimes called “mission trips”) either in Spanish-speaking countries or among the Hispanic population in Texas. Such students have the potential to envision their ideal future selves as people who do global service work, and thus are able to converse in Spanish or other languages in order to better aid people abroad. There are many other possible ways in which Anglo-Texan students could visualize themselves using Spanish. Teachers can encourage students to

try to create these visualizations for themselves so that when they find Spanish to be a challenge, they can return to these visualizations and remember their personal goal for SLL.

Chapter Summary

The research on motivation in foreign language learning, aided by applicable research on motivation in education more broadly, has produced a variety of theories, each of which has its own points of validity and explains a different facet of the complicated FLL motivational construct. Theories explain the experiences of teachers and students, and allow us to construct a useful understanding of the educational reality. Adopting a pedagogical mindset based on theory and research helps teachers specify barriers to students' motivation, realities that could aid students' motivation, goals for intervening in students' motivational systems, and practices that allow them to meet those goals.

Table 1: Motivational Theories in Education and Foreign Language Learning

Motivation Theory	Summary of Model
Socio-educational theory	Integrative motivation (desire for closeness with target culture) and instrumental motivation (desire to meet an external end through language learning)
Self-determination theory	Intrinsic motivation (pursuit of inherent pleasure of the activity) and extrinsic motivation (desire to satisfy external pressures), self-determined actions are more motivated than non-self-determined actions
Dörnyei's (1994) L2 motivation model	Language factors, learner factors, and learning situation factors all influence the motivation of the learner
Expectancy-value model	Values determine the personal importance of a task, expectancy is an assessment of the likelihood of success, and affective factors influence the motivation both positively and negatively
Goal orientation theory	Performance-oriented students focus on self-assessment, whereas mastery-oriented students focus on assessing the skills necessary for the learning task
Possible selves theory	Students have ideas about the sort of person they could become, and the more learning plays a role in an ideal self, the more likely a student is to be motivated to learn

Chapter 3: Pedagogical Applications of Motivational Factors

Humanizing the Target Culture

Because students in Texas have closer access to Latinos than many Americans, they have more potential, when it comes to SLL, to be integratively and instrumentally motivated, as described in the socio-educational theory of FLL motivation. Since Latino culture is a visible part of the society in which they live, it is possible for them to view it as something familiar and approachable, whereas students of other languages, or students of Spanish who live farther north, may find it more difficult to identify with their target culture. Since many businesses have and will increasingly have Spanish-speaking employees and clients, many students and parents believe that Spanish will help them succeed in their professions.

These positive environmental influences can be utilized by teachers in order to augment motivation in the classroom. In order to do this, teachers must acknowledge the reality of the local Hispanic community and encourage students to familiarize themselves with it. In other words, teachers must in their classrooms attempt to humanize Spanish speakers.

One of the most effective ways to humanize this cultural group is to expose students to real people who belong to the target culture, thus putting human faces to it. Though language learning is an exploration of humanity, it often becomes abstracted from its human focus. Though some abstraction is necessary, students must be reminded that they are studying the language and customs of real people, with whom they could interact and develop relationships.

There are several ways to show students individuals from the target culture. One obvious way is to allow students to have direct interactions with people in the Hispanic community. If time and resource constraints allow, this is a relatively simple task in many areas of Texas. Opportunities for service learning are plentiful, since there are many volunteer organizations that specifically aim to assist Hispanic families in Texas, such as Casa Marianella, an organization that helps immigrants with legal and medical issues and offers ESL classes, or Justice for Our Neighbors, another organization that helps immigrants with legal questions. Another possibility is bringing a native Spanish speaker into the classroom. A native speaker can talk to students about their life, what their culture means to them, and what they feel are the cultural differences between their community and Anglo-American culture. Finally, Spanish classes often have heritage speakers in the room already, and giving them a chance to speak about their culture (without putting too much pressure on them) can be both empowering for heritage speakers and informative for others in the class.

If bringing your students into contact with live native speakers is not an option, showing depictions of target culture individuals that are nuanced and realistic can achieve a similar effect. Movies in Spanish can be a way to accomplish this, since they often dive in depth into characterizing the protagonists. However, teachers must be careful to find movies that do not reinforce stereotypes. Documentaries, with their depictions of real people in real situations, can be effective at humanization. If there is not time for a full movie, the Internet contains many shorter videos that depict authentic situations in the lives of Spanish speakers.

A final way to allow students indirect contact with Spanish speakers is through social media exchanges. It is often possible to find a school group in a Spanish-speaking country that would like to exchange pen pal letters or start a bilingual conversation group with a group of American students. Such interactions can be a fun and interesting way to allow students to develop relationships with the target Spanish-speaking culture.

Overall, the importance of human connection in language learning cannot be underestimated. The currently popular communicative approach to language learning advocates for authentic communication to take place in language classrooms, apart from rote grammar drills and inauthentic textbook dialogues (Omaggio Hadley 2001). Similarly, in order to understand and appreciate the target culture, students must have authentic, interpersonal, cultural interactions.

Activating Intrinsic Motivation: Finding the Fun in the Foreign

Many foreign language students are motivated by intrinsic motivational factors separate from interest in the target culture, as noted in the discussion in Chapter 2 of self-determination theory. These students experience a curiosity for what they do not already know about the language, and a desire to receive the stimulation that comes from engaging in the target language in meaningful ways. Intrinsically motivated students are motivated to learn and practice because the acts of learning and practicing are “fun.”

The foreign language classroom offers the potential to be fun for students in ways that are not usually possible in other subjects. A significant difference is that social interaction is a crucial part of language learning. Social interaction brings about the possibility for new and interesting things to happen in the classroom. Further, teenagers

are at a time in their lives when social interaction is very important and meaningful to them. High school foreign language teachers can harness this reality by providing opportunities for classmates to authentically converse with one another in the target language. This can be accomplished through games that cause students to interact, or simply giving students time to chat in class, outside of pre-prescribed dialogues and grammar exercises. Even my least motivated students get excited when they get the chance to say something in Spanish that is truly authentic to their personality, so it is important to give students options about what to discuss.

Of course, games are an easy way to stimulate almost any class. However, there are a few ways in which games can distract students from content or even decrease motivation if teachers are not careful. First, games must accomplish learning objectives. It is easy for games to become more about accomplishing non-learning tasks, such as drawing a picture accurately or winning “musical chairs.” It is fine if the game has a non-linguistic element, as long as that element does not become more important than the language itself. Classroom games should augment FLL motivation rather than redirect the motivation away from learning. Second, games must not inadvertently encourage an unhealthy performance orientation. Competitive games can encourage students to compare their performance with that of their classmates. I have made the decision to limit the number of competitive games I use in my classroom, because my students tend to react to them by focusing more on the point count of each team and deciding if they are on the “smart” or “dumb” team, rather than trying to utilize critical thinking skills to win the game. Instead of competitive games, teachers can have students play cooperative games, in which the goal is for the entire class to solve a puzzle together. Teachers must

judge whether their students will react to competition by focusing too much on their own performance, or by rising to the challenge and doing their best to succeed at the activities. If games can stay focused on language learning and promote problem solving skills, then they become a great way to make the class more fun and increase stimulation IM in the students.

The “Cool Factor” of Spanish: Connections to What Teens Value

The influence of a teenaged student’s peer group, as discussed in Dörnyei (1994) and Bartram (2006b) can have significant positive or negative effects on that student’s motivation towards learning. Peer groups will often determine the status of a subject as “cool” or “not cool.” In the case of foreign languages, peer groups also make judgments about the “coolness” of the foreign language target culture. If the behavior of the target culture is entirely inexplicable from the students’ native cultural perspective, or if the target culture often displays behaviors that are significantly at odds with the students’ native cultural values, the target culture is at risk of being labeled “uncool.” Since foreign cultures often do things that seem from an ethnocentric perspective to be “bizarre” or “backwards,” the risk of the “uncool” label is ever-present in the high school foreign language classroom. However, student groups are more likely to evaluate the target culture positively if they can see the commonalities it shares with their own culture.

Spanish-speaking cultures have been interacting with American culture since the birth of the United States, and mutual influence between Latin American and Anglo-American pop culture is a fact of life. One sees the interaction of these two cultural communities particularly in music. Many genres of American music have commonalities

with parallel genres in Latin America and Spain. Rock is a popular overall music genre both in the U.S. and in Spanish-speaking countries. Hip hop has spread from the United States into Latin America to become a popular genre in Latin American music. Latin Americans, in turn, have entered the U.S. hip hop scene. The guitar, a staple instrument of all modern music that youths enjoy, originated in Spain and is also a key instrument in much of Latin American music. Celebrating these and other cultural commonalities can help students to understand, accept, and even enjoy the ways in which Spanish-speaking cultures differ from American culture, since they have something in common from which they can base their judgement.

In order to capitalize on this shared culture of music, teachers can play Latino music in class that is related to popular American genres. One example of a popular Latino artist is Juanes. His music, while recognizably Latin American, is not entirely alien to the ears of an American, and fits in with American pop and rock. (An added bonus is that most of his lyrics are both appropriate and very intelligible, making his songs available to use in a high school setting and excellent for listening activities.) Knowing what sort of music most students in the class enjoy can help teachers decide what music to play in order to appeal to a majority of the class. Using the shared cultural traits of music or other areas of culture, teachers can encourage student groups to promote a classroom climate that esteems rather than denigrates the target culture and language.

An Honest Conversation about Difficulty

In Chapter 2, expectancy-value theory and goal orientation theory were summarized, followed by a discussion of American foreign language student attitudes regarding the difficulty of FLL. Many American students seem to have low expectations of themselves regarding their FLL ability. Many seem to view the ability to learn another language as a “rare gift” that they do not possess.

Teachers can alleviate the situation by talking to students honestly about the difficulty that comes with language learning. As anyone who has learned a language can attest, it is a skill that requires much practice and time. This amount of practice is often not necessary in other academic subjects, which chiefly require memorizing information and understanding concepts. SLL requires not only remembering and understanding words and concepts, but also the additional duties of oral practice and creative recombination of learned elements. If Spanish students understand this upfront, they will be less likely to become discouraged when they make the inevitable mistakes that all language learners make. Spanish teachers must convey to their students that SLL requires a lot of effort and some unique practice techniques, but that increasing fluency and understanding is an achievable goal.

Just as familiarizing students with real Latinos can be effective for increasing integrative motivation, showing Anglo-Texan students examples of fluent, non-native Spanish speakers can help them to expect that they too can learn Spanish. Teachers who are L2 Spanish speakers themselves can periodically talk about their own experiences with language learning, explaining that they too struggled with particularly difficult aspects of the language and sharing tips for overcoming problems. Teachers who are

native speakers of Spanish, however, cannot share the same connection with the students over the acquisition of Spanish. To combat this, L1 Spanish-speaking teachers can find others who speak Spanish as their second language and interview them. Teachers who are native Spanish speakers can also relate their experiences of learning English as a second language. Although the challenges of learning L2 English are presumably different from those of learning L2 Spanish, each process is similarly challenging. When students see that their teacher can empathize with them regarding the language learning process, it gives them hope that they can succeed, and motivation to achieve.

A Future with Spanish: Possible Future L2 Selves

Students often have many ideas about the future. High school students rarely have a clear picture of which profession they will choose, or what sort of life they will live, but they often have ideas and aspirations. Teachers can cast visions for the future, encouraging their students to imagine possibilities for their lives. The more vivid these possibilities are in the minds of students, the greater the motivation to achieve them (Dörnyei, 2009).

If foreign language students are to value FLL, they must be able to incorporate foreign language speaking into their vision of who they will one day be. To this end, teachers can encourage students to imagine scenarios in which they would utilize their L2 in the near future and in their life beyond school. Having both short-term and long-term scenarios is important, especially for teenagers, who are preparing for adulthood, but often only think in the “here-and-now.”

Imagining the immediate future is often easier for students and therefore can initially provide more motivation for students to learn. Many students may feel that they know too little of the target language to start using it any time soon. However, teachers can point out that even saying “Hello” to someone in his native language can be an important way to demonstrate respect and kindness toward him. Realizing this, students can begin to imagine ways in which they could use their L2 next year, next month, and even next week.

In order to sustain motivation over the necessary years of FLL, however, students will benefit from envisioning themselves having achieved conversational fluency in the later future. Teachers should prompt students to ask themselves: What role will my L2 play in my life eventually? Who are the people I will speak my L2 with on a regular basis? In what situations will the L2 be useful? Having students brainstorm a list of these possibilities within the context of who they would like to be in the future, or their ideal selves, could allow them to tie their foreign language to what they hope to be and do in the future.

Many teachers concern themselves primarily with how to present the material of the class in a way that allows students to learn it most easily. While this is a crucial part of the job of teaching, equally as important is the task of motivating students to learn. Research in second language acquisition has provided various models for understanding what increases motivation to learn a second or foreign language. However, teachers also have experiences that help them shape their understanding of motivation and what pedagogical techniques affect it. Utilizing these experiences in conjunction with research, teachers can draw from the collective wisdom and empirical knowledge of the academic

world, while applying it specifically to their teaching situation. This chapter has been a resource to teachers wishing to apply research to the context of Anglo-Texan high school students enrolled in Spanish classes.

Table 2: Pedagogical Suggestions Based on Theories of Motivation

Theory of Motivation	Pedagogical Suggestion
Socio-Educational Theory	Spanish teachers should utilize the proximity of the Hispanic community in Texas to orchestrate live interactions between students and Latinos in order to foster integrative motivation.
Self-determination theory	Language teachers should utilize the interactive nature of language study to incorporate fun, stimulating activities into their lessons in order to foster intrinsic motivation.
Dörnyei's (1994) L2 motivation model	Spanish teachers should utilize the commonalities between Latino and American pop culture to encourage a positive peer group attitude toward the Spanish language by bringing elements of Latino culture (such as music) into the classroom.
Expectancy-value model & Goal orientation theory	Language teachers should recognize the unique challenges that students encounter in the language classroom and show students examples of successful language learners in order to foster healthy expectancy and goal orientations.
Possible selves theory	Language teachers should encourage students to imagine using their L2 in both the distant future, as a well-formed, fluent speaker, and in the near future, at whatever level of fluency they have attained, in order to cultivate a vivid L2 ideal self.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Anglo-Texan high school students who are learning Spanish have unique motivational opportunities and motivational challenges in their efforts to learn Spanish. On the one hand, most students in Texas have a vast number of ways to interact with the Hispanic community in the Spanish language; high school students often find communicative FLL activities to be fun; and Latino pop culture shares much in common with American pop culture and forms a bridge between Latino and Anglo-American youths. On the other hand, students can be alienated from FLL by peer group perceptions of the target language or culture; American culture appears to promote pessimistic self-evaluations of language learning ability; and many students do not envision themselves ever speaking a foreign language fluently. In both the positive factors and negative factors, there are influences that come from the socio-cultural situation of the students and influences that are inherent in FLL.

The FLL motivation literature, supported by the general educational motivation literature, supports a pedagogical framework with which teachers can enhance their students' motivation by removing potential barriers and augmenting potential motivational supports. Ultimately, however, a teacher's understanding of what sort of pedagogical framework will be best for her class is to examine the learning situation of her students. While some pedagogical techniques are broadly applicable to most contexts, others require an understanding of the particular situation of the students to be applied correctly.

The theories outlined in Chapter 2 guide the researcher toward a proper understanding of a learning situation and the effects it has on FLL motivation. Socio-

educational theory (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) provides a clear basis for recognizing the important role of the perceptions and beliefs that the language learner holds toward the target culture. If these beliefs are positive, learners will have enhanced FLL motivation; conversely, if views of the target culture are negative, learners will have a negative reaction to FLL. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, most Anglo-Texans are geographically close to Latino culture, giving them the chance to engage that culture and familiarize themselves with its people and customs firsthand. Spanish teachers in Texas can use the geographic proximity of Latinos to promote cultural engagement and understanding among their students.

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) demonstrates the importance of students feeling an inner drive toward a subject, rather than simply a necessity to pass the class in order to graduate. Students who are intrinsically motivated to engage in learning tasks will find it easier to stay motivated and will derive pleasure from engaging in classroom tasks. Teachers can cultivate intrinsic motivation by creating activities that are fun and stimulating. FLL has an advantage over other subjects in high school in that most modern language classes are meant to engage students socially and interactively. Because FLL requires out-loud, inter-personal practice, there are plenty of opportunities for foreign language students to engage in fun, stimulating activities while learning. Foreign language teachers should attempt to build fun, interactive activities and games into their curriculum and lessons in order to cultivate in students an intrinsic enjoyment of their foreign language studies.

Group expectations always play a role in any form of motivation, but they seem particularly powerful among teenagers. Dörnyei's (1994) model of FLL motivation

includes a group-specific component, in which the orientation of one's peer group toward the subject matter and the learning tasks affects how one is motivated to approach FLL individually. Though peer pressure in the United States often drives students away from attending to their studies, groups of students can come to at least value the study of the target language as something that is interesting and even "cool." Spanish teachers can convincingly connect Latino culture with the cultural forms that American teenagers most value, because Latino culture shares much in common with American pop culture. Particularly through music, teachers can connect Latino culture to what teenagers consider popular, thus enhancing the reputation of Spanish among peer groups, and reducing the negative effects of anti-school peer pressure.

The concepts of expectancy and goal orientation seem particularly salient in the high school years, where students are discovering who they are and who they want to be. The instability of this stage of life can cause many students at this age to adopt performance orientations, believing that they are in school merely to prove themselves to the world. Ames (1992) and Elliot and Dweck (1988) indicate that performance orientations tend to make students averse to the task and less successful, while their counterpart, mastery orientations, often engender a healthy attitude toward the learning task. For students to have a productive goal orientation toward FLL, teachers should be honest about the unique difficulties that FLL presents compared to other school subjects, while encouraging students to see that it is possible to become fluent in a foreign language. A main way in which teachers can accomplish this is introducing students to fluent L2 speakers. Either the teacher himself or another L2 speaker can share struggles while learning the L2 and relate the sense of accomplishment they achieved when they

had reached a satisfactory level of fluency. Interactions such as these can help to improve students' expectancy and keep them from focusing so much on evaluating themselves based on how much effort they have to expend in the foreign language classroom.

Finally, students are motivated by what they see in their future. Dörnyei (2009) and Uslu Ok (2013) discuss possible L2 selves, and how these conceptions of future identifies can help foreign language learners feel as though they are working toward an attainable goal. However, high schoolers are famous for living in the "here and now" without planning ahead and thinking of future consequences. This presents a challenge for high school language teachers, since language learning is an ongoing process, and L2 fluency will usually take years to achieve. Thus, foreign language teachers will do well to encourage their students to imagine the possibilities of a future that includes fluency in the L2; this may help them to bring the distant ambiguity of the future into the vivid immediacy of the now and help to further increase their SLL motivation. Teachers can also encourage students to have more immediate ideal future selves, imagining the sorts of L2 conversations (even rudimentary ones) that they could realistically have in a matter of weeks or months.

Overall, the present report has argued that theory and research can assist with creating explanations of motivational systems and pedagogical approaches for increasing SLL motivation among Anglo-Texan high school learners of Spanish. However, with little research on this particular student group, it is difficult to come to particular conclusions with the assurance of empirical validity. Thus, further research is called for in order to understand the motivating factors for this particular group of language learners. With more empirical data, foreign language education experts could make more

localized and accurate pedagogical recommendations to teachers of the Anglo-Texan community, helping to foster intercultural understanding in an increasingly diverse state.

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