

## **THE MOTIVATIONAL CHALLENGE FACING BEGINNER LEARNERS OF SPANISH AT A DISTANCE**

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*This paper presents some preliminary findings of an on-going longitudinal study of initial motivation and motivation maintenance in beginner distance adult learners of Spanish in the UK. Adapting a framework of executive motivational influences developed in the context of classroom teaching (Dörnyei, 2001a) to the distance learning process, data was obtained from questionnaires and follow-up interviews with a sample of questionnaire respondents. This paper explores meaningful descriptors of the most prevalent types of motivation found within this group. Drawing primarily on the interview data, it also presents early steps towards learner autonomy taken by these learners based on their own perceptions, and highlights the predominance of metacognitive over other strategies at this stage in their learning. Finally it analyses some of the motivational influences of tutors and of other learners, and their roles in supporting and affirming the learning endeavour, and indicates areas for follow-up research with beginner distance language learners within this study.*

*Key words: motivation, distance learning, beginner language learners, autonomy, support*

### **1. Introduction**

“When the leading theories on human motivation are viewed as a whole, five themes emerge: Human motivation is at its highest when people (1) are competent, (2) have sufficient autonomy, (3) set worthwhile goals, (4) get feedback, and (5) are affirmed by others.” (Walker and Symons, 1997, pp. 16-17) Achieving the five conditions in this résumé of leading theories on motivation might represent a challenge for any learner, so how much more so for someone learning at a distance, starting a new language, and who may have no previous experience either of learning a foreign language or of studying at a distance? This paper explores some issues related to these challenges.

Despite the substantial work carried out on L2 motivation, relatively little has focussed up to now on distance language learners, although a couple of studies have already indicated the importance that more advanced learners attach to motivation as a factor in successful learning (Hurd, 2000, p. 69; White, 1999, p. 453). An opportunity has now arisen for a large-scale motivational study of 3000 beginner learners of Spanish, German and French with the Open University in the UK (although this paper relates solely to the students of Spanish).

## **2. Context of the Study**

The Open University has been producing distance learning courses for over 40 years and courses in foreign languages for the last 10, originally from intermediate progressing to degree level. In November 2003 this provision was extended in the other direction to include beginners' courses. In common with the courses at higher levels, they consist of a set of specially designed course books with integrated audio material for home-based study. This is supported by optional group tutorials, either face to face or online using Lyceum, the Open University voice and visual conferencing system. Although tutorial time amounts to only a small proportion (approximately 20 hours) of the total learning on the course, qualitatively it has always been very important for many Open University learners.

Each section of the course has an assignment assessing both receptive and productive skills; this forms part of the final course result and is marked by the tutor. Detailed feedback from the tutor on each assignment also forms an essential part of the teaching. In addition tutors are available via e-mail or telephone to answer student queries at other times during the course. Each course also has a dedicated website.

## **3. Method of the Study**

This study is longitudinal in nature, deriving its data from pre- and post-course questionnaire responses, and two sets of interviews. The first set was conducted midway through the course; the second followed up students participating in those interviews who proceeded to the next level.

The pre-course questionnaire consisted of mainly closed questions covering (a) any previous experience of learning Spanish, (b) reasons for

studying the beginners' course *Portales*, (c) knowledge of other languages, (d) any previous experience of distance language learning, and (e) thoughts and feelings about language learning. It was sent by post to all 1961 students registered on the course and available for survey according to the University's guidelines. A covering letter asked for students' help and co-operation, explaining the research team's interest in finding out about their reasons for studying Spanish, and their views on language learning based on their previous experience. The return rate was 68.6%. See Appendix A for a sample of the questions directly related to this paper. Further papers will report on other aspects of the questionnaire.

The sample of students for the mid-course interviews was selected at random from those indicating in the pre-course questionnaire their willingness to take part and describing themselves in the pre-course questionnaire as having no or very limited previous knowledge of the target language. In total 29 students of Spanish were selected according to these criteria. The interviews focused among other things on the quality of the students' learning experiences in the first half of their course, on their own appraisal of their performance and the progress they had made, on support received, and any mechanisms they used to take control of their learning, in order to establish how these factors might affect their motivation. The interview questions are derived from an existing framework of executive motivational influences (Dörnyei, 2001a, p. 98), adapted to the distance learning context. See Appendix B for questions related to this paper.

This paper presents some preliminary findings from this on-going study. It draws on analysis of the mid-course interviews and some of the pre-course questionnaire data of the students of Spanish. It explores issues around the initial motivations of these students and their maintenance or enhancement.

#### **4. Profile of the Beginner Students of Spanish**

There were 1345 responses to the pre-course questionnaire. Demographic data was added to the data file prior to analysis of the questionnaire responses.

The students formed a wide spectrum in terms of age, and of educational and linguistic experience:

(a) Approximately two-thirds were women; ages ranged from 18 to 82, with the majority in the 25 to 55 range.

(b) 45% had a degree or higher qualification, whilst 15% had only very limited or no qualifications.

(c) A total of 66 languages were spoken at varying levels; this is in itself an interesting finding, as it breaks the image of the 'monolingual Brit'. On the other hand, however, nearly 20% did not speak any other foreign language.

(d) Around 40% had some past experience of independent or distance language learning of different kinds, some with the Open University.

(e) A third of the respondents indicated no previous knowledge of Spanish.

(f) Most of the others classified themselves within a range from *a few words* to *phrases for getting by* or, much more rarely, *basic social conversation*.

(It should be noted that the figures of 45% with higher education qualifications and 40% with some distance language learning experience are above those for the general population or for adult language learners generally.)

This paper analyses the initial motivations of students and addresses some issues related to motivation maintenance through the first half of the course. These issues are related to the potency of their goals, the extent to which students develop autonomy and set worthwhile goals, the types of strategies they use to take control of their learning, and sources of motivational support.

## **5. Reasons why Learners are Studying Spanish, and why it is Important for them**

The reasons behind their initial decision to study Spanish were established through the questionnaire. Their main reasons were as shown in the right hand column of Table 1. The single most important motivating factor is to communicate when visiting the country (29.4%), followed at some distance by pleasure or interest (19.1%); this suggests an interest in the country and its people, and satisfaction at the prospect of making contact with them in their own language.

The different reasons can be summarised into three main types. Following the traditional categories associated with Gardner (e.g. 1985), reasons 1, 3 and 11 reflected an *instrumental* orientation (which might be broadly defined as furthering in some way one’s career prospects); whereas reasons 4 and 6, and to a lesser extent 5, may reflect an *integrative* orientation, i.e. an “individual’s willingness and interest in social interaction with members of other groups” (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993, p. 159). Reasons 2 and 10, derived originally from Oxford and Shearin (1994) reflect previous research with Open University students. (The others barely figure as priority reasons.)

**Table 1: Reasons for studying Spanish at the start of the course**

	(N=1345)	(N=1345)
	All reasons that apply	Most important single reason
1 Credits towards a Spanish qualification	54.9%	14.5%
2 Pleasure or interest	80.1%	19.1%
3 Present or future work	29.8%	6.3%
4 Communicate with friends or family	27.0%	5.2%
5 Communicate when visiting country	80.8%	29.4%
6 Live in country	35.4%	10.4%
7 Understand TV, radio, films, songs	40.4%	0.1%
8 Read newspapers, magazines, books	47.1%	0.6%
9 Help children/grandchildren learn Spanish	14.9%	0.6%
10 Intellectual challenge	61.5%	5.5%
11 Part of a wider programme of study	32.0%	7.6%

However, learner motivations for studying Spanish are in reality much more complex, as shown in the left hand column of Table 1. The column for *all reasons that apply* shows some striking differences; whilst figures for reasons 1 (Credits towards a Spanish qualification) and 5 (Communicate when visiting country) are still high, other reasons now emerge as also very important, with 80% studying for pleasure or interest, and 61% as an intellectual challenge. These two reasons, which might be categorised as *personal satisfaction*, are clearly significant.

The figures in this table show that the range of motivating factors for individual learners may cut across different categories. So what might the underlying relationships be? Factor analyses of the pre- and post-course questionnaires will form part of the quantitative analysis in the study. But for the moment my interest is in looking at combinations of reasons for study at the start of the course, the most outstanding ones of which were as follows:

**Table 2: Combinations of reasons for study**

No.	Combination	Descriptor	N =
1	Pleasure or interest Intellectual challenge	Personal satisfaction	728
2	Pleasure or interest Intellectual challenge Communicate when visiting country	Personal satisfaction plus travel	638
3	Communicate when visiting country Present or future work Live in country	Active use of the language	195
4	Part of a wider programme of study Present or future work Credits towards a Spanish qualification	Instrumental	139

The combination of pleasure or interest and intellectual challenge can be summarised as *personal satisfaction*; this was also frequently combined with communicating when visiting a Spanish-speaking country, provisionally labelled as *personal satisfaction plus travel*.

A further combination to emerge can be described as *active use of the language*, and is exemplified in one of the students subsequently interviewed. Her husband had relatives living in Mallorca and was contemplating moving there when he retired; she wanted to learn Spanish not only to live there, but to get a job comparable to her present work in the UK, be able to create her own circle of friends and establish her personal independence there. It should be noted that this combination includes both integrative and instrumental types of orientation (as well as personal satisfaction or self-esteem).

Turning now to the final combination in the table: 5 of the 8 interviewees whose main reason for studying Spanish was described as instrumental wanted to gain a qualification; but with one exception this desire was also more motivated by self-fulfilment than career advancement. "It's very important, just to prove to me that I *can* do it. ... purely for me ... Just the fact that I've done something that I never did at school." (This and all other non-attributed quotations are taken from the mid-course interviews with learners of Spanish.)

Traditionally an instrumental orientation has been widely associated with extrinsic motivation, and as such, in many but not all studies, considered less likely to lead to effective learning than does intrinsic motivation. However, the type of motivation illustrated above appears to fit closely a pattern described in self-determination theory: "Motivated actions are self-determined to the extent that they are engaged in wholly volitionally and endorsed by one's sense of self" (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan, 1991, p. 326).

Within self-determination theory this can be classed as extrinsic motivation of a type where "the regulatory process is fully integrated with the individual's coherent sense of self" (Deci et al., 1991, p. 330). There is a close relationship between this type of extrinsic motivation and the intrinsic motivation that characterised most of the other learners in the study, and the interviews suggested that most of our learners whose orientation was defined

as instrumental shared a similar quality of learning to the majority whose motivation was clearly intrinsic.

In short, the beginner learners of Spanish within this study were at the outset generally highly enthusiastic and motivated, reflecting a wide variety of experience and range of motivational factors, strongly linked to personal satisfaction and fulfilment.

## **6. Goal Commitment**

One challenge would be maintaining those levels of motivation over the course of their studies. So the students' commitment to achieving their goals was one of the areas explored in the interviews. 19 out of the 29 interviewees expressed a high level of commitment to their goals. Just 3 were dissatisfied with the distance learning approach itself (one of whom had already left the course) and one with his progress on it. For 6 their studies were, for different reasons, a less important part of their lives. Two examples of different types of response:

Oh, I find it really important, I haven't done something like this before, but it's rather major for me, and I have never done Spanish before, and it is a nice challenge - it would be nice to be able to be an independent traveller and get a qualification, because an Open University qualification is always recognised.

It's not a huge priority, but at the same time I've wanted to learn Spanish for a while, and so – you know, I also think it probably takes a while to pick up a language anyway, so it is not the sort of thing you're going to be fluent at overnight so I'm prepared to put in a bit of time and have it as more of a long-term aim.

It also became apparent that of the 13 learners who had a quite tangible goal, for example spending time in residences in Spain (even if they did not intend living there permanently), or wanting to gain a qualification, 11 regarded this as very important, and a reason for devoting considerable effort to learning Spanish. 4 interviewees with goals of a less tangible nature expressed their commitment in terms of their determination to succeed. "It's not drastically important, but when I start something I like to finish it. I like

to succeed in it.” One respondent even sounded slightly apologetic: “It’s not vital at all, it’s just a way of enriching my life.”

Interviewees also recognised that achieving their different goals would require several years of study; 16 out of 29 interviewees appeared prepared to do this, 8 were unsure, waiting till later in the course to decide or, as one student put it, prepared to continue “as long as I enjoy it”, again reflecting the strong pleasure drive in the motivation of these learners. Only 2 did not, at this stage, intend continuing beyond the present course.

Overall, however, the picture emerges of individuals embarking on a journey without a clear basis at this stage for judging how far they would need or want to travel, or the luggage they would need to take.

## **7. Motivation Maintenance and Learner Autonomy**

A second issue related to motivation and its maintenance is that of learner autonomy. It has been claimed that “autonomous language learners are by definition motivated language learners” (Ushioda, 1996, p. 2).

Over the years interpretations of the concept of autonomy in language learning have tended to move from responsibility for decision-making about all aspects of learning (Holec, 1981, p. 3) to capacities that learners can develop (Little, 1991, p. 4). “Autonomy refers to the learner’s broad approach to the learning process, rather than to a particular mode of teaching or learning” (Benson, 2001, p. 1). On this basis “autonomy can be broadly defined as the capacity to take control over one’s own learning”. (Benson, 2001, p. 2)

To what extent do our beginner learners take control over their own learning? This is important in the context of learning on a highly structured language course of the Open University type, which has “a very rigid structure in which the amount, rate and content of the learning programme is determined by the course team, and not by the student” (Hurd, Beaven and Ortega, 2001, p. 344). Within this structure learner autonomy is derived from “the quality of the learning materials, the approach learners adopt towards these materials and the skills and strategies they already have at their disposal or succeed in developing as they progress through the course”

(Hurd et al., p. 344). In other words, learner responsibility rests less on *what* is learned, and more on *how* it is learned.

The elements of learner autonomy identified relate closely to three key issues associated with maintaining motivation (Dörnyei, 2001a, p. 98), starting with the quality of the learning experience with its elements of enjoyment, coping potential, progress made, and relations with others. The other two that I refer to in this paper are the use of language-learning and goal-setting strategies, defined as *self-regulatory strategies*. The conscious use of these self-regulatory strategies would to a certain extent determine the level of control exercised by learners over their own learning.

The interviews shed some light on the students' perceptions of these issues. In terms of quality of the learning experience, among the reasons given, after 5 months, in other words halfway through the course, 24 out of 29 interviewees were enjoying it; over half commented positively on its materials or structure, and 4 on their enjoyment of learning a new language. 22 felt that they were coping well or reasonably well, with only 3 struggling with this approach to learning. The other 4 were at the time of the interview battling with extra work or domestic pressures which were hampering their studies. Learners' perceptions of their own progress was largely based on marks in the assignments (17), tutor feedback on the assignments (4) or practical communicative performance in Spain (3 who appeared to make regular visits).

Half the interviewees felt that they had made conscious use of some new language learning strategies of a cognitive nature, either based on tips contained in the course materials or from other sources. Most frequently these related either to vocabulary or to grammar, the latter being the aspect identified by students in the pre-course questionnaire as the most difficult, based on previous experience of learning other languages.

At the same time there was evidence in the interviews of some avoidance of strategies with which they felt uncomfortable; these generally related to recommendations for practising their speaking skills, such as recording themselves in order to review their own performance. Some learners were aware of strategies recommended in the course even if they had not necessarily taken them up; usually they claimed that this was because of time constraints. In general, however, it was apparent that

relatively few of the strategies adopted involved active use of Spanish, although with some exceptions:

As I walk around and say something to people in the course of the day, in English, I'm for ever trying to work out how I would say it in Spanish. So I spend a bit of time doing that every day.

As for their use of metacognitive strategies, half of the interviewees reviewed their learning at regular intervals, with others recognising that they should do this, but lacking the time required. These reviews tended to result in the reflection that having embarked on the course speaking practice was the aspect now requiring additional attention, rather than grammar.

Short-term goals were largely restricted to maintaining, or in some cases staying ahead of, the course schedule; 4 interviewees regarded completion of the course as itself a short-term goal which would enable them to assess future action.

Setting relevant short-term goals is potentially a problematic area for beginner language learners, especially those without experience to guide them. However, 16 interviewees stated that they felt in control of their own learning, and a further 7 to a certain extent. Closer questioning revealed that half interpreted this primarily as effective time management, and the other half in broader terms of approaches to learning, for example:

I think I've got a basic understanding of my style, and I know what my responsibilities are and I know what works for me and what doesn't work for me ...

Data from the interviews appeared to demonstrate a link between this broader concept of control over learning, and perceptions of increased confidence as a language learner and progress in learning.

Nevertheless, goals and expectations of progress vary considerably within the group, and nearly all the learners were now planning their learning, and for the most part effective in fitting it into often already busy life schedules. 17 interviewees expressed happiness with what they had achieved at this point, a further 7 were fairly happy, and only 5 expressed dissatisfaction (mostly those with difficulties in coping, referred to earlier).

This equates closely with the figures given earlier for quality of the learning experience, and suggests that enjoyment of the learning experience is a major indicator of motivation maintenance for this group.

Whilst it is difficult to determine precisely what constitutes sufficient autonomy in this context, these findings do suggest that for adult beginner language learners motivation is a key factor that influences the extent to which they are ready to adopt more autonomous approaches in their learning, and that “motivation is a necessary precursor of autonomy” (Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan, 2002, p. 260), or even that “willingness [to assume responsibility for their learning] depends both on the *motivation* and the *confidence* to take responsibility for the choices required” (Littlewood, 1996, p. 428).

## **8. The Motivational Influence of Tutors and Other Learners**

Within classroom-based language learning “the teacher’s own behaviour [is] the single most important motivational tool” (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 31). In distance learning the language tutor is directly engaged in a far smaller proportion of the learning process, but is nevertheless regarded as the most valued source of support, as indicated by interviews in the study. Executive motivational influences in the language classroom highlighted by Dörnyei (2001a) include among others the dynamics of the learner group, the classroom climate and the type of performance appraisal, all of which are influenced or managed by the teacher.

How does this compare with the situation of the beginner distance language learner? An important element of the tutor’s role is to conduct tutorials at regular intervals, offering opportunities for active and enjoyable learning through a positive group dynamic: “... [the tutor] always makes sure you’re working with people you haven’t worked with before, and so you get a good interchange of ideas”, and “Listening to other people, making mistakes or not making mistakes, and you think: Oh, I’d have said it like that; so that’s good, learning from other students.”

The group dynamic can, however, also act as a demotivating influence; two interviewees reported negative feelings brought about by others in the group. This had an adverse effect on their own self-esteem and, presumably lacking the affective control mechanisms to deal with it, they

never returned to tutorials. However, even for a learner who is struggling, the group dynamic can be a motivating experience if appropriate affective strategies that “serve to regulate emotions, attitude and motivation” (Richards and Renandya, 2002, p. 121) are deployed. This student has recognised and accepted the challenge offered by the high standard of his peers:

You know, I'm really dreading not being able to answer the questions that are put in front of me, I am struggling with, you know, with the aces, the three or four best people there ... it's still a learning experience, you know, and when I see that other people can do things that I can't do, I suppose it does give me a motivation, you know ... it intimidates me really in a way, but I can face up to it.

In addition to increasing motivation through creating collaborative learning opportunities, tutorials offer a positive climate for performance appraisal from the tutor. “There's no sense of embarrassment or criticism, and the feedback you get is very positive from the tutor, so it makes you feel like you're making some headway.” For learners prepared to do so, tutorials also create potential for self-appraisal. “I think really from hearing other people as well is a good gauge, you know, to hear what sort of levels everybody else is at.”

So contact with the tutor and with other learners made tutorials a useful vehicle for maintaining motivation. One learner explained that “it's nice to be sort of all part of the same club, as it were”. However, this relationship did not appear to extend far beyond the club; and whilst learners are encouraged to draw on each other for additional practice and support, in reality only a third of the interviewees had contacted fellow students outside the tutorials, and half had not even contemplated doing so, partly but not wholly on grounds of time and logistics. One student who had gone down this road described her ambivalence about the experience:

Last time in the class I met a girl, and we started to communicate by e-mail, by sending little messages in Spanish to each other, and this is really nice and at one point when I was finding it difficult, for one week I had terrible trouble picking my books up; and then I got an e-mail from her which - and she sort of kick-started me back into it, but at the same time it could take me quite a long time to decipher

her e-mail and then write another one back and that's stopping me from - I could be doing my book. I should be doing my book. ... So you know it's really nice that she writes, but whenever I write to her, she writes back to me immediately and I think: oh, why does she reply so quickly? [laughs].

This reflects the tension between pursuing on the one hand the metacognitive strategies which had helped her progress in the early stages of the course, and on the other more social strategies leading her into the realm of authentic learner-generated communication. Only one of the interviewees appeared to attach real significance to the latter as an integral part of her learning.

There appears to be a real dilemma here, because “for distance learners, left to a large extent to their own devices, it could be that ... the development of metacognitive skills [is] not only an essential part of effective learning but also a pre-requisite to it” (Hurd 2000, p. 64). However, a broader concept of autonomy, as discussed earlier, would include not only managing learning of the course materials, but also socio-affective strategies for working more collaboratively with others, for example to increase opportunities for speaking practice.

Increasing strategies for developing speaking skills may be seen as particularly critical for success as a beginner distance language learner; however, data regarding their approaches to language learning strategies indicated that whilst at least half the interviewees had made conscious use of some strategies for learning vocabulary or grammar, far fewer had experimented consistently with strategies for improving their speaking skills, and indeed there was evidence of some strategy avoidance in this sphere.

## **9. Conclusion and Areas for Follow-up Research**

The challenges faced by beginner distance language learners are varied and considerable; and whilst the evidence of their initial motivations was very encouraging (predominantly intrinsic, a majority driven by a desire for personal satisfaction, with an apparently high level of goal intensity), the real challenge is one of motivation maintenance, especially since they recognised that achieving their longer-term goals would usually require a commitment to several years of study.

This paper offers an initial exploration of some of the key issues in motivation maintenance, for example the movement towards learner autonomy, development of language learning strategies, and ways used by beginner learners to obtain support both of a practical and of a psychological or motivational nature. Future work will explore these issues in more depth, involving beginner distance learners of other languages as well. It will also include identification and analysis of control mechanisms that can boost motivation. This opens up an area of self-motivational strategies in distance learners requiring further study.

Other areas for follow-up within the study include reasons *why* some learners have over the same period advanced further in terms of broadening their autonomy as learners than others, and the relationship between learner perspectives and those of their tutors, in order to identify implications for learner and/or tutor training.

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## Appendix A

### Portales: Pre-Course Questionnaire (Sample Questions)

#### Part A: Learning Spanish

Although *Portales* is a course for beginners, we realise that students may well have previous experience of Spanish. If you yourself do not, please respond “No” to Question 1 and then go straight to Question 6.

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	Yes	No
1 Do you have any previous knowledge of Spanish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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2 If you answered “Yes” to Question 1, how much previous knowledge do you have? Please put a cross against all the options that apply to you.

---

	All that apply
1. a few words	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. some simple phrases	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. phrases for getting by (e.g. when shopping or travelling)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. basic social conversation	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. basic work-related conversation	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. more extensive conversation	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

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3 If you answered “Yes” to Question 1, how did you gain this previous knowledge? Please put a cross against all the options that apply to you.

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	All that apply
1. from school	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. from college	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. from contact with native speaker(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. from self-study	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

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6 Have you had personal experience of or contact with any Spanish-speaking countries? Please put a cross against all the options that apply to you.

	All that apply
1. I have been on holidays in a Spanish-speaking country	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I have lived in a Spanish-speaking country	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I have friends in a Spanish-speaking country	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I have work contacts in a Spanish-speaking country	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I have watched Spanish films, plays or TV (*)	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I have looked at Spanish newspapers or magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

(\*) either in the original language or in translation

### Part B: Studying *Portales*

7 What are your reasons for studying *Portales* now? Put a cross against all the reasons that apply in the first column and against the most important reason in the second column.

	All that apply	Most important
1. to gain credits towards a qualification in Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. for pleasure or interest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. to assist me in my present or future work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. to be able to communicate with Spanish-speaking friends or family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. to be able to communicate when visiting a Spanish-speaking country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. to be able to live in a Spanish-speaking country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. to understand TV, radio, films or songs in Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. to read newspapers, magazines or books in Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. to help my children or grandchildren learn Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. as an intellectual challenge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. as part of a wider programme (e.g. to obtain a degree)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## **Appendix B**

### ***Portales: Mid-Course Interviews (Sample of Main Questions)***

1 Can I start with your immediate impressions of the course - has it turned out as you expected?

2 What is it that makes the course most enjoyable for you?

4 How do you feel you are coping with the course?

5 When you started you said that your main reason for studying on the course was [see questionnaire response] Can you tell me more about that?

7 How important is this for you?

8 How long do you think it might take you to get there?

9 Do you feel you are in control of what you are doing on the course? for example, how you are learning, and when you are learning it?

10 When you've finished a session or unit, do you try to take stock of what you have learned?

11 Have you made or noticed any changes in your approach to language learning?

13 Have you attended tutorials? Have you received any other help from your tutor?

14 Do you feel that other students in your group help you?

16 Of the types of support that you do get, which ones feel most important?

18 In terms of your progress on the course, how well do you think you are doing? (What makes you feel that?)

19 Do you set yourself any shorter-term goals?