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Individual Differences, L2 Development, and Language Program Administration: From Theory to Application

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Chapter 5

Hispanic Heritage Language Learners in the Spanish Classroom: A Semester-Long Investigation of their Attitudes and Motivation

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In an effort to account for the heterogeneity of Spanish heritage language (SHL) speakers in the U.S., Colombi and Roca (2003) emphasized the need to differentiate among student populations in different contexts, given that each group is affected by diverse attitudinal and social factors. In addition, a qualitative and longitudinal perspective to the investigation of HL students' attitudes and motivations is of relevance for several reasons. As Carrasco and Riegelhaupt (2003) argued, it allows students to become aware of their own learning processes over a period of time and in relation to the course, while teachers and administrators can use those insights to improve their teaching: "such research in the area of student perceptions is crucial in order to develop effect heritage language classes" (Schwarzer & Petrón, 2005, p. 577). Additionally, since attitudes and motivation are considered to be closely linked to external factors such as the language course, it is important to investigate these variables over time in order to explore variations produced by outside course factors and the attainment (or lack of) of certain goals (Mikulski, 2006).

In complete agreement with these views, we draw upon previous SLA research on motivational evolution (Ushioda, 2001) in order to explore the attitudes and motivations of SHL students in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. This population has not drawn much attention perhaps because this region is not one of the traditional immigration destinations for Hispanics in the U.S. However, the immigrant population in this metropolitan area has increased at an unprecedented pace since the early 1980s, making it one of the largest immigrant populations in the country, a significant percentage of which is Hispanic. As a matter of fact, the 2010 U.S. census estimated that 9 percent of D.C.'s total population was Hispanic. As a consequence, a great number of students of Hispanic background are enrolled in a variety of educational institutions in the area. At our research site (a large public university located in the suburbs of Washington, D.C.), as early as Fall 2004, 30 percent of the undergraduate Spanish majors were identified as Hispanic (Lacorte & Canabal, 2005).

Following the approach proposed by Lynch (2003a, 2003b), in which he encouraged the field of HL acquisition to pursue the lines of research opened up by researchers in the second language acquisition (SLA) field, this study investigates SHL students' attitudes and motivations using Ushioda's (1996, 1998, 2001) work as a theoretical basis. She proposed a cognitive approach to the study of these internal variables, which in her view are intrinsically dynamic depending on a myriad of factors. Some of these factors are undoubtedly related to the course and the activities that take place in it. This approach, naturally suited for a qualitative research

design, placed the emphasis on the students' opinions, which can be critical to making "the shaping and reshaping of SHL programs more of a bottom-up process" (Beaudrie, Ducar, & Relaño-Pastor, 2009, p. 172).

In SLA, early researchers who explored these variables took a quantitative stance (see, e.g., Gardner, 1985) and focused on the macro context (i.e., the community). In the mid-1990s and still mainly from a quantitative perspective, there was a shift championed by Dörnyei (1994) that made scholars turn their attention to the situational context in which language learning occurred. At the turn of the century, however, some researchers advocated for a view of motivation better suited for qualitative research designs. According to this point of view, motivation is seen as an internal dynamic variable subject to change over time depending on the environment and a number of external factors; in other words, motivation is "more than the demonstration of effortful activity or time spent on a task" (Ushioda, 1998, p. 78). Furthermore, we believe this is a relevant area to be investigated, because we consider motivation responsible for the processes that initiate certain actions, sustained and pursued, conditions that any learner should display during their learning development (Dörnyei, 2000). In addition, the investigation of motivation in relation to the course, as we propose, offers a good conjunction between learning and teaching, which could make it possible to gain valid insights, with the aim of improving SHL programs. As Julkunen (2001) suggested, teaching and learning can be seen as either motivating or demotivating and may have a reciprocal effect on each other.

This study thus follows a qualitative perspective in order to explore SHL learners' motivations and perceptions regarding the Spanish for Native Speakers (SNS) course in which they were enrolled. Three rounds of interviews were carried out in which participants were given the opportunity to express their attitudes, motivations, and perceptions about Spanish and the class they were taking. These interviews were based on Ushioda's (1996, 1998, 2001) work and, in line with her work, the focus was on how learners differ in their motivations and attitudes toward Spanish and how these internal thought processes vary during the semester.

Review of the Literature

The study of attitudes and motivation in the field of HLs in the U.S. is a growing strand of research. In addition to Spanish (e.g., Mikulski, 2006; Yanguas, 2010), German (e.g., Noels, 2005), Russian (e.g., Geislerik, 2004), Chinese (e.g., Comanaru & Noels, 2009), and Japanese (e.g., Kondo-Brown, 2001, 2009) have also been the subject of investigation. Unlike in the field of L2 acquisition, where there have been several recent attempts at developing theoretical models that account for motivation in the L2 acquisition process (for a review, see Dörnyei, 2005), in the context of Spanish as a HL, this variable has been generally researched following Gardner's (1985, 2001) conceptual dichotomy: integrative versus instrumental motivation. According to this dichotomy, "the integratively motivated individual is one who is motivated to learn the L2, has a desire or willingness to identify with the other language community, and tends to evaluate the

learning situation positively” (p. 6). Instrumental motivation is defined as the combination of instrumental factors that contribute to motivate learners (Gardner, 2001); getting a better job, being more successful in school, or being able to travel abroad would count among these instrumental factors. Yanguas (2010) closely followed this model in his investigation of Spanish HL learners’ attitudes and motivation in Washington, D.C. Results of his study revealed that the participants’ attitudes toward the Hispanic community were significantly related to motivation to study Spanish and that no variable in Gardner’s model (integrativeness, instrumental orientation, and attitudes toward the learning situation) was related to scores on a Spanish test. The outcome of this study substantiated the importance placed on integrative motivation by the model when investigating HL learners.

As far as Spanish HL speakers’ attitudes and profiles are concerned, and from an opposite qualitative perspective, several surveys have been carried out in the past decade. Schwarzer and Petró (2005) claimed that this is the area in which more research is needed in this field. These authors carried out a qualitative investigation of three Spanish HL students’ perceptions of their language classroom. Their aim was to use the students’ input to define the lines along which teaching practices should develop. Based on students’ expectations and goals and their pedagogical expertise, these authors designed a college-level heritage language class using Schwarzer’s eight principles for the development of a whole foreign language class (see Schwarzer, 2001). Ducar (2008) also surveyed Spanish HL learners, arguing that their voices were missing in the debate about heritage languages in the U.S. Answers to the eight-page survey that 152 students took at a large Southwestern university were qualitatively analyzed. Results showed that students want to be corrected in the classroom and that they want to learn a particular variety of Spanish in the classroom, in this case, a Mexican or Mexican-American variety. Along similar lines, Alarcón (2010) surveyed advanced HL learners in order to explore their language behaviors, attitudes, and backgrounds, and to compare them with lower-proficiency HL speakers. Results of this study show that these learners are primarily interested in improving their academic writing. Finally, Carreira and Kagan (2011) recently surveyed HL speakers of different languages and across different U.S. regions. These authors analyzed the data gathered through a questionnaire and showed that the general profile of the HL speaker that participated in this study had positive attitudes toward their HL language.

Beaudrie and Ducar (2005) explored HL speakers’ attitudes and perceptions; they were particularly interested in finding a definition for HL learners that could include all beginning-level university learners and investigating the relationship between their attitudes and their motivation. This study had two phases; in the first phase all students who were enrolled in two sections of first-semester classes for SHL ($N = 20$) took the survey, whereas in the second phase all participants who volunteered ($N = 8$) were interviewed. The survey measured contact with Spanish, attitudes toward Spanish and its varieties, and a self-assessment of their Spanish proficiency and background information. Their results showed that these students seldom use Spanish with their families, but they are usually in a Spanish-speaking environment. They displayed high levels of motivation to study Spanish. In a later

study, Beaudrie (2009) investigated the cultural and linguistic profiles of Spanish receptive bilinguals. In terms of students' attitudes, she concluded that the participants felt a strong connection with the Spanish language and their Hispanic culture, which would be very positive in their classroom learning efforts. Finally, Beaudrie et al. (2009) assessed a complete SHL program focusing on students' identity and culture. They administered a survey to assess SHL pedagogy from the students' perspective. In their view, results of this study confirm that students' opinions need to be taken into consideration when making curricular decisions.

Only Mikulski (2006) has previously explored how this affective variable evolves during a certain amount of time. This author focused on how the motivations, attitudes, and goals of the participants in her study evolved during a semester. Like Schwarzer and Petrón (2005), Mikulski identified motivations with reasons to study the language and enroll in SNS courses, which is, according to her, prevalent in the Spanish as HL field perhaps due to the widespread use of Gardner's dichotomy discussed above. She explored the motivations, attitudes, and goals of a class of Spanish HL speakers over a semester, using different data-gathering techniques. This author focused particularly on one student, but she concluded that the student's goals, motivation, and attitudes were representative of the four participants that took part in the study: the desire to improve her writing skills and other grammatical and formal aspects of her Spanish.

In the field of SLA, Ushioda (1996, 1998, 2001) explored how affective variables evolved using a qualitative research design. She focused mainly on the evolution of motivational thinking; she was not interested in what students were more successful with, but in how learners differed in the way they set their learning goals depending on the actual learning context and in the ways in which they were involved in their own learning. Arguably, this type of study is best suited for qualitative research, since the focus is on internal thought processes and the effect the actual classroom environment has on them. She conducted two interviews 16 months apart. The first one was open-ended and inquired about their general motivation to learn French. The second one was more structured in nature and comprised nine questions related to dynamic aspects of language learning motivation. Twenty students of French as an L2 at Trinity College Dublin were the participants in this study, but only 14 were available for the follow-up interviews.

Results of the qualitative analyses carried out yielded some interesting findings. In relation to participants' motivational thinking, results showed that most subjects defined their motivation in terms of a positive learning history and intrinsic enjoyment. On the contrary, only 11 participants placed importance on future-career-related aspects when conceptualizing their motivation. Regarding the follow-up interview, analyses showed that goal orientation "may be more appropriately conceived as a potentially evolving dimension of language learning motivation, rather than its necessary defining rationale" (Ushioda, 1998, p. 82). The researcher agreed that these results have to be interpreted bearing in mind the nature of the subjects that took part in this investigation: all of them "self-selected motivated language learners" (p. 83) that had chosen to further their study of the L2 after five years of learning in school. Furthermore, participants with more successful learning histories principally defined motivation in terms of

their positive learning experiences, but participants with less successful learning pasts tended to define motivation in terms of short-term specific goals and intentions. Ushioda argued that the less successful learners in her sample could not be defined as being less motivated or even demotivated by their negative learning experiences. In her view, they “seemed to define their motivation in qualitatively different way” (Ushioda, 1998: 84). These findings seem to support the view that cognitive processes play an important role in the shaping of the relationship between learning experience and motivation. Effective motivational thinking may therefore entail attitudinal processes that underscore the positive side of negative experiences in L2 learning. This effective thinking might not result in successful achievement, but in continuous involvement (Ushioda, 1998).

In the present study, we follow Ushioda’s approach with regard to her emphasis on the learners’ internal thought processes and the learning context. As in Ushioda’s work, we tap into the learners’ personal sets of beliefs and attributions toward the learning situation, their language communities, and their own motivations. There are, however, some methodological aspects that must be improved in order to gain a more accurate vision of language learners’ attitudes and motivations in relation to the academic environment. First, in the present study three rounds of interviews were conducted during one semester so that the influence of the course on participants could be better investigated. Second, the actual learning context played a more important role in our interviews so that learners’ motivational and attitudinal cognitions in relation to the course could be more accurately analyzed. Finally, like in most SHL research, motivation is conceptualized here as any reason (instrumental, integrative, or otherwise) to study Spanish or to enroll in the course.

In particular, an answer to the following two-fold research question was sought: Do Spanish HL learners’ attitudes and motivations evolve during the semester? If so, what role does the course play?

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were enrolled in two sections of a class designed for Hispanic heritage speakers at a major public research university on the U.S. Eastern Seaboard. This class was called “Review of Oral and Written Spanish for Native Speakers Educated in the United States” and was offered by the Spanish Department as part of a sequence of three courses for native speakers of Spanish. The first course in this sequence (Spanish I for Native Speakers) was designed for those students who spoke Spanish at home but who had never formally studied the language. This course provided a review of oral and written Spanish in the content area of Latinos in the United States. The program was developed around the topics present in the textbook assigned for the class: *Nuevos Mundos* (Roca, 1999). In order to be included in the study sample, participants had to be enrolled in any of these classes. Extra credit or any other type of incentive was not offered for participating.

The seven participants that participated in all three interviews were three female and four male students enrolled in two sections of the first course in the sequence for native speakers. As can be seen in Table 5-1, their origins are diverse; three participants were born in the United States; their families came from Puerto Rico, El Salvador, and Guatemala, respectively. The remaining four were born abroad (Honduras, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and El Salvador); their families migrated to the U.S. when they were between 4 and 12 years old. In all, more than half of the participants in this study's sample were to some degree of Central American origin, which seems to be an accurate representation of the Hispanic population in the area. Table 5-1 also displays information about the participants' use of Spanish, general language preference, and the number of years of Spanish taken in high school and college. *Use of Spanish at home* and *use of Spanish with friends* were presented on a six-point Likert scale ranging from *never* to *always*. Table 5-2 shows participants' perceived Spanish proficiency in the four skills. Students were asked to rate their Spanish abilities from 0 to 5. As the means demonstrated in Table 5-2 show, the students felt much more proficient in the aural skills, as is common among members of this population.

Procedure

At the beginning of the semester, the researcher introduced the study to all students present in the two classes discussed above. They were not given specific details, but it was made clear that the researcher was investigating some aspects of heritage language acquisition. With their consent, they completed a few activities

Table 5-1 Participants' Backgrounds, Language Preference, and Use of Spanish

	Parents from*	Born*	Age of arrival	Schooling abroad	Language speaking preference	Spanish/ home**	Spanish/ friends**	Spanish classes
Jimena	U.S. (mother) PR (father)	U.S.	NA	No	Both	Very often	Often	4 (HS) 1 (C)
John	ES (m) ES (f)	U.S.	NA	No	Both	Often	Never	2 (HS) 0 (C)
Juan	Hond. (m) Hond. (f)	Hond.	2	No	English	Very often	Often	0 (HS) 0 (C)
Natalia	DR (m) DR (f)	DR	7	K - 4 th	English	Very rarely	Very rarely	1 (HS) 0 (C)
Eugenia	U.S. (m) PR (f)	U.S.	NA	No	English	Always	Very often	0 (HS) 1 (C)
Mario	Peru (m) Arg. (f)	Venez.	12	K - 7 th	Both	Often	Very rarely	1 (HS) 2 (C)
Tomás	ES (m) ES (f)	ES	4	No	English	Very often	Very often	2 (HS) 1 (C)

*ES = El Salvador, Arg. = Argentina, PR = Puerto Rico, DR = Dominican Republic, Hond. = Honduras, Venez = Venezuela.

**Likert Scale: a) Always b) very often c) often d) rarely e) very rarely f) never.

Table 5-2 Participants' Self-reported Proficiency in Spanish

	Jimena	John	Juan	Natalia	Eugenia	Mario	Tomás	MEANS
SKILL (1-5)*								
Speaking	3	4	5	3	3	4	2	3.4
Writing	3	3	1	1	2	2	1	1.8
Listening	4	4	5	4	4	5	3	4.1
Reading	3	3	2	1	2	3	2	2.2

*1 uncomfortable, 2 somewhat comfortable, 3 pretty comfortable, 4 very comfortable, 5 more comfortable than in English.

during the semester that were be used for the study. This study was part of a larger longitudinal project that investigated general and specific motivation throughout the semester (see Yanguas, 2011 and Yanguas & Lado, 2012). During the same week in which the study was completed, an email was sent out to all students in both classes asking them to volunteer for three interviews during the semester. Twenty students responded to this email volunteering for the interview process; 16 of these actually completed the first interview, but only seven participated in the next two interviews due to scheduling problems or loss of interest. All time and place arrangements were made using email.

All interviews were carried out in Spanish, but it was made very clear that they could use the language of their choice at any time. Several participants resorted to English at some point during the interviews, mostly when they could not think of the Spanish term for some concept they wanted to express. The initial round of interviews took place during the first two weeks of the semester; each interview lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. Interview 2 took place between the last week of October and the first week of November; these interviews lasted between 12 and 15 minutes. Finally, Interview 3 was conducted during the last two weeks of the semester at a time chosen by participants; these interviews lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. All interviews took place on the university premises at the participants' convenience and were conducted and digitally recorded by the researcher.

Interviews

Interview 1 was intended to elicit both personal information and the participants' views and expectations in relation to the course. Interviews 2 and 3 elaborated on issues raised in the previous interviews. All three interviews were semi-structured in nature; there was a set of pre-arranged guiding questions (see Appendix A), but interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on any point raised in an exploratory fashion (Dörnyei, 2001).

These interviews were based on Ushioda's (1996, 1998, 2001) work. As in her work, the main purpose of these interviews was to assess the evolution of motivational and attitudinal thinking throughout the semester. In addition, an effort was made to more directly assess these motivations in relation to the actual course, which in Ushioda's interview was found to be lacking given the amount of time between only two interviews.

The following main factors were targeted in the interviews:

- Motivational and attitudinal evolution over time
- Factors negatively affecting HL motivation
- Participants' perceptions toward Spanish, the course, and their community

Results

Two raters transcribed and coded the interviews so that they could be analyzed. The content analysis had a two-fold goal: first, to detect motivational and attitudinal traits perceived to have changed; second, to identify how the course influenced participants' attitudes and motivations. Rather than using preconceived factors or categories, coders agreed on the main factors that emerged from the interviews and discussed their implications as suggested in the literature for qualitative analyses (McCracken, 1988). This qualitative analysis perfectly suits our study, given that it seems to be most useful when the researcher's goal is "to explore new linkages and causal relationships, external and internal influences, and internal priorities inherent in a particular context" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 193–194).

Five group categories emerged from the data analyzed (career goals, community integration, course-related developments, Spanish-related developments, and family integration), which helped us to determine whether any attitudinal and/or motivational fluctuations had taken place during the semester. A closer analysis of the data in each category clearly revealed qualitative changes in participants' motivation and attitudes during the semester. A certain number of perceived motivational modulations were found; as a matter of fact, we could find traces of motivational evolution in all participants. Overall, the data reveal three types of motivational developments during the semester: language-extrinsic (instrumental and integrative) developments, language-intrinsic developments, and course-related developments. In the academic realm and in accordance with Ushioda (1996), motivational patterns seem to be determined by either reinforcing or negative effects of the classroom experience or by the rate of achievement of participants' personal goals. Regarding language-extrinsic motivational developments, students seem to focus their motivation on short- and long-term incentives, such as speaking more Spanish with friends or getting a better job in the future.

The following modulations were found within each category:

1. Career goals
 - Development due to application in the work place
 - Achievement of career goals
2. Community integration
 - Sense of belonging to their community
 - Intrinsic motivational change due to experience with Hispanics outside of class
3. Course-related developments
 - Loss of motivation due to the amount of work
 - Negative feelings toward the course

- Intrinsic motivational change due to positive/negative experience in class
 - Stronger motivation for other subject/s
4. Spanish-related developments
 - Motivational development due to personal achievement goals in Spanish
 - Improvement of Spanish linguistic skills
 5. Family integration
 - Improvement of family relationships
 - Sense of belonging
 - Improvement of communicative skills when visiting abroad

Motivation is an internal variable that is subject to external factors. These external factors may affect students' motivations at different times during the semester, thus modifying learners' motivational patterns. As Ushioda (1998) discussed, strength of motivation does not depend only on L2 performance or perceived success, but also on factors from outside contexts. In this study, we found that both instrumental and integrative factors have to be taken into account when explaining motivational processes. Students want to do better in their professional lives and want to belong in their families and their communities. In addition, there are language-intrinsic factors, in Ushioda's (2001) terms, which determined learners' continued engagement with Spanish in the classroom; in other words, these could be seen as perceived developments in their Spanish abilities that would affect their motivation to study the language. Furthermore, the achievement of certain Spanish-related goals, or lack thereof, that the students had set prior to the beginning of the semester clearly marked their attitudinal and motivational developments.

As mentioned above, all seven participants showed in their final interview some type of motivational change since the beginning of the semester. No participant felt that their motivation was the same: four participants (Jimena, Eugenia, Mario, and Tomás) felt that they were more motivated in their third and final interview, whereas three participants stated that they had lost their motivation (John, Juan, and Natalia).

Looking at participants' motivation at the beginning of the semester, only two subjects (Mario and Natalia) were not strongly motivated. For example, Mario declared that while he wanted to improve his Spanish for professional motives, he was not willing to put in the extra effort: "...soy flojo... ahora están dando buenos trabajos para los que saben español e inglés..." (*...I'm lazy... There are good jobs available now for Spanish/English bilinguals...*). Along the same lines, Natalia did not seem to be very motivated but realized that improving her Spanish could be beneficial for her future career. Her priority was her major; she was not interested in even minoring in Spanish. Her motivation appeared to have been mainly instrumental; she wanted to become a social worker for Latino families.

The remaining five participants (Jimena, John, Juan, Eugenia, and Tomás) deemed their motivation to be high in taking this class and to improve their Spanish when the semester began. We find here a variety of factors, mainly language extrinsic. Jimena is a good example to illustrate how students are driven by both instrumental and integrative factors when taking SNS classes: "...antes mi tía

venía a enseñarnos y no me gustaba pero ahora sí, quiero comunicarme con ellos en español y que queden impresionados: mira vive en USA y habla español” (*I’m very interested...my aunt used to teach us Spanish and I didn’t like it, now I do, I want to be able to communicate with them in Spanish so that they are impressed: hey, look she lives in the U.S. and she speaks Spanish*). Jimena also envisioned herself as a Spanish news broadcaster. To achieve this goal, she would need to improve her Spanish and polish her accent: “quiero transmitir las noticias en español, algún día quiero trabajar en los medios Hispanos, como Oprah en la televisión... y quitar el acento” (*I want to broadcast the news in Spanish, I want to work in the Spanish media some day, like Oprah on TV and get rid of my accent*).

During the second interview, no participant declared that her or his motivation was lower than at the beginning of the semester. Four participants thought they were equally motivated (Jimena, John, Mario, and Tomás) with no significant motivational changes, whereas the remaining three believed they were more motivated than at the beginning of the semester. Up to this point, therefore, motivational evolution could only be confirmed for three participants (Juan, Natalia, and Eugenia). Interestingly, each of these three participants experienced changes in their motivation due to different factors: language related, integrative, and goal driven, respectively. For Juan, it was the fact that he noticed his Spanish had improved; this made him want to learn more. Natalia said she was now more aware that her family, of Dominican origin, spoke in a certain manner that distinguished them from other Hispanics; she wanted to speak like them. Finally, Eugenia knew that she could be successful learning the standard variety of Spanish and its proper use, and this knowledge was driving her toward her goal.

It was, however, during the third interview when more motivational fluctuations could be found. In all seven interviews, we could find evidence that their motivations had really evolved. Four participants (John, Juan, Natalia, and Mario) exhibited very significant changes (i.e., from low to high motivation or vice versa), whereas the remaining three (Jimena, Eugenia, and Tomás) displayed slightly higher motivational levels.

Juan and Natalia, who appeared to be more motivated during the second interview, claimed now to be less motivated. The former revealed that this class had not been what he expected and this had negatively affected his motivation. The latter believed that keeping up with the class required too much work and that this was interfering with her other classes. Clearly, these two cases show how the course can really affect learners’ motivation. John’s case was similar; he was worried about his other classes and the amount of work they demanded at this time. Finally, Mario was the only participant whose level of motivation appeared to have increased from lower levels during previous interviews. He considered several reasons for this fluctuation, which were both instrumental and integrative: “...mi motivación es mucha ahora porque sé que tengo errores y quiero tomar una clase y quizá un minor...quiero tratar de mejorar y tratar de hablar más con los amigos y la familia porque si se olvida el idioma con el que naciste es como una vergüenza” (*...my motivation is higher now because I know I make mistakes and I want to take another class and maybe do a minor in Spanish...I want to try to improve and speak more with my friends and family because it’s a shame*

if you forget your native language). The remaining three participants (Jimena, Eugenia, and Tomás) remained highly motivated during the semester. Eugenia stated that her motivation had increased even more, and that she now felt confident she could improve her Spanish: “Al principio no sabía si tenía el nivel... siempre he estado motivada pero hoy es más que antes, ahora sé que puedo hacerlo” (*I didn’t know if I could do it at the beginning... I’ve always been motivated but now even more, I know now that I can do it*).

Most important for our purposes here, the course stands out as one of the main factors that explain some of the motivational and attitudinal fluctuations that the students experienced throughout the semester. It would be safe to state that students’ attitudes and motivation were strongly affected by what was done in the Spanish classroom. Data from Interview 1 revealed four major areas in relation to what learners expected from the course at the beginning of the semester: (1) Vocabulary and grammar, (2) Improvement of their writing skills, (3) Spanish for the profession, and (4) Hispanic culture. For the most part, participants wished for an improvement of their Spanish that allowed them to use Spanish in formal contexts with confidence; meeting these expectations seemed to be a factor that determined their affective levels during the semester. If their expectations were not met or the course demanded more than students were willing to give, negative affective trends could be found. On the contrary, if learners experienced improvements in any area of their Spanish proficiency, positive motivational trends were established. There are several examples in the interviews. Tomás, for example, confirmed during the last interview that his motivation had always been high throughout the semester, but now his motivation had increased even more because he felt that he had learned so much in this class: “...ha subido mi motivación porque he aprendido mucho en esta clase, las lecturas me forzaron a aprender más...” (*...my motivation has increased because I have learned very much, the readings forced me to learn*). Juan, however, felt differently during his third interview: “...no me ha gustado la clase, quería que fuera más práctica, lo que quería es que me corrigieran palabras, que nos hiciera escribir...” (*I didn’t like the class, I wanted it to be more practical, I wanted to be corrected, I wanted to practice my writing...*).

The course did influence participants’ motivations but also their Spanish and their attitudes toward the Hispanic community. In their views, the course had a positive influence on several aspects:

- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Writing abilities
- Reading comprehension
- Overall language use
- Awareness of cultural differences among Hispanics

Let us quote some of the participants so that the reader gets a glimpse of how the course impacted their Spanish and their views on the Latino community. Jimena believed that the course had taught her about the groups in the Latino community and the differences that set them apart: “...me he dado cuenta de que

no estamos tan unidos, estamos divididos...no tengo una opinión fuerte como antes, me he dado cuenta de que pasa con todos los grupos.” (*I have realized that we are not united, we are divided...I don't have a strong opinion like I used to, I have realized this happens with every group*).

John considered that the course had had an influence on his written Spanish: “...me ha ayudado mucho a escribir un poco más y mejor, hablando estoy igual pero creo que escribiendo y leyendo he mejorado.” (*...it has helped me to write better, speaking is the same but I think I've improved my writing and reading abilities*). Furthermore, he believed that it had made an attitudinal impact on him: “...muchos Latinos ven que están perdiendo el español y este curso nos ayudó a ver que no hay que perderlo, también cosas que no aprendimos de chiquitos porque no vivimos en países hispanos...” (*...many Latinos notice that they are losing their Spanish and this course helped us see that we don't have to lose it, also stuff that we didn't learn at school when we were little because we don't live in Latin America*).

Juan felt that the class had made a positive impact on his Spanish: “...ha influido porque hemos repasado un poco de ortografía y gramática, y el diario me ha ayudado bastante porque me lo he tomado en serio pero todavía me siento incómodo cuando discuto algún tema no puedo argumentar bien.” (*...it has had some influence because we have reviewed some grammar points and the writing of the diary has been very positive because I have taken it seriously; I still feel uncomfortable when I discuss some topics because I cannot properly make my arguments*).

Natalia felt that reading in Spanish had helped her somehow: “Mi español ha mejorado, me ha ayudado a practicar la lectura en español ...me ha ayudado aunque no se vea el resultado tanto, pero tiene sentido por el hecho de que he tenido más contacto con la lengua...” (*My Spanish has improved, this class has helped me practice reading in Spanish... it has helped although I can't see the results, but it makes sense because I have had more contact with the language*). Concerning Hispanics, the course also had an attitudinal impact on Natalia: “Me ha ayudado a ver las diferencias entre los grupos sociales, sus historias, el conocimiento de mis amigos que vienen de otros lugares...pero por las mismas razones aprecio lo que nos une, me siento un poco más unida a la comunidad latina” (*The class has helped me to see the differences among the different social groups, their histories, the knowledge of my friends who come from different places... but for the same reasons I appreciate what unites us, I feel more united with the Latino community now*).

Eugenia, on the other hand, had a very positive attitude toward the course activities and their effect on her: “Creo que todo me ayudó...a veces pensaba que era mucho trabajo pero no me desmotivaba porque yo pensaba que me iba a ayudar, todo tiene sentido al final...” (*I think all the activities helped...sometimes I thought it was too much work but that didn't demotivate me because I thought it was going to help, everything makes sense in the end*). In addition, this participant believed that her Spanish had improved: “Creo que me ha ayudado a mejorarlo, pienso que lo hablo mejor y no tengo tanto miedo y también en leer y en escribir...” (*I believe this class has helped me to improve my Spanish, I think I speak a little better and I'm not as scared, also to read and write*).

This course also had an influence on Mario's attitudes toward Spanish and the Latino community. The activities carried out in the classroom had not been a concern for this participant until he realized that they were not so easy and that he would be tested on them: "Al principio no hacía las actividades porque pensaba que era fácil pero después del examen me di cuenta de que no era así...lo hice muy mal y ahí yo dije tengo que comenzar a hacer las actividades, por el grado bajo..." (*I didn't do the activities at first because I thought they were easy but after the exam I realized it wasn't like that...I did horrible on the exam and then I said I have to do the activities, because of the low grade...*). As shown in a previous comment, attitudinally, Mario felt more respect toward his native language and the Latino community as a whole. The class also made this participant more aware of the discrimination against the Latino community: "Más respeto...no sabía que serio era hasta que hablamos en la clase de las diferentes experiencias...y acá hay mucha gente que no quiere a los hispanos, cuando escuchas eso siendo hispano duele y hay que hacer algo, no sé cómo..." (*More respect, I didn't know how serious it was until we talked about it in class and there are a lot of people here who don't like Hispanics, it hurts when you listen to that being Hispanic yourself, we have to do something about it, I don't know how...*).

Summing up, the analysis of the data gathered in this study shows that motivational fluctuations do indeed occur during the semester. Language-intrinsic and language-extrinsic factors as well as the learners' subjective goals influence how the motivational trends evolve. In our particular study, three participants are found to be less motivated at the end of the semester than at the beginning mainly due to factors related to the course. The four remaining participants display higher levels of motivation at the end of the semester. The most important factors that influence these changes are learner related; it is their own sense of success in the class or of improvement in their Spanish that motivates them further. Finally, it can be claimed that in this academic context the course itself is one of the most important factors affecting students' attitudes and motivation.

Discussion

The main goal of the present study was twofold: on the one hand, its aim was to investigate whether motivational evolution throughout the semester takes place, and on the other hand, to assess what role the course and the class play on the motivational changes found.

The qualitative analyses carried out in the three interviews have provided us with very valuable insights into the participants' attitudes and motivations. As far as motivational evolution is concerned, several motivational modulations have been identified. Integrative, instrumental, or related to the course, these motivational changes affect students' efforts in the learning process. These results validate the stance on motivation that Dörnyei (2000) and Ushioda (1996, 1998, 2001) took in their work. These authors proposed that this affective variable is subject to variation, depending on external factors such as the task, the immediate learning environment, or the social context. Furthermore, this approach follows the latest

trend in motivational research, which places emphasis on learners and their specific needs so that they are not depersonalized (Ushioda, 2009).

Rather than focus on the relationship between motivation and students' degree of success, this study focused on the evolution of participants' motivational thinking (Ushioda, 2001). These students all differed in their involvement with the course, which seems to validate the cognitive and qualitative stance that recent studies take on the investigation of motivation (Ushioda, 2009; Yanguas, 2011). From this standpoint, the researcher can investigate the relationship between the learning experience and affective variables. In addition, the present results support those of Ushioda concerning the role of cognitive processes in shaping the relationship between learning experience and motivation (Ushioda, 1998). Participants enrolled in the course with certain expectations, partly derived from their own experiences and personal goals, which shaped their relationships with the course. Even if motivation did not decrease during the course, the activities taking place as part of the course affected learners in several complex ways, sometimes encouraging them and sometimes discouraging them.

Mikulski (2006) also followed a qualitative research design to investigate the motivations and attitudes of Hispanic heritage speakers. Her findings were based mainly on one student and her focus was partially on motivational change. It is therefore very difficult to draw any conclusions when comparing our present results with hers. Nonetheless, her results confirm that students re-evaluate their relationship with Spanish based on the development of their skills during the semester, which is reflected in our results. In our study, participants' progress in class clearly determines their attitudinal and motivational levels. This fact emphasizes the importance that should be placed on the actual learning environment when investigating affective variables in the field of heritage language learning. As has been widely discussed in the field (see, e.g., Colombi & Roca, 2003), heritage language learners bring to the classroom a very complex and heterogeneous set of linguistic abilities that critically interact with what is done in the classroom. The study of this learning environment and learners' affective attributes is thus vital to understand how these learners develop their linguistic skills in an academic environment. Ushioda's (1996, 1998, 2001) qualitative stance on motivation was very well suited for this type of investigation, but her studies lacked an emphasis on the learning context, given that her interviews were too far apart and disconnected from the course. The present study has shown that a longitudinal and qualitative research design focused on the academic environment is a valid strategic plan to explore heritage language learners' linguistic and affective development in the classroom.

For the most part, this course served to further motivate learners to improve language for their own personal motives, and, in this sense, motivational change could also be argued to have taken place. The data gathered through the interviews reflect an overall increase of awareness of the community among the participants. This new awareness is appreciated uniquely by each participant, since many express their desire to focus more on formal aspects of the language. As could be expected, family and the community are also key factors to bear in mind when analyzing participants' reasons for enrolling in the course. Data revealed

that the subjects' family and community experiences were important in shaping not only their Spanish skills, but also their attitudes toward the language, as in Natalia and Mario's cases. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of this type of integrative motivation in the HL context (Yanguas, 2010). Only one of the participants that took part in this study failed to hint at integrative motives for improving his Spanish; the remaining six placed some importance on learning the language in order to communicate better with their families or to enhance their own sense of identity. These integrative motives were present at the beginning or developed as the semester went on, which represents further evidence that motivational evolution takes place in relation to the course.

Another interesting piece of information gathered from these interviews is that learners implicitly considered the classroom as the legitimate place to improve their Spanish and stated their desire to continue taking classes in the near future. Furthermore, there are several examples in which the participants claimed that this course covered too much and that there was not enough time to cover certain important grammatical aspects. The importance, in students' own terms, of the standard variety and the learning of "good" grammar is also confirmed. Most of the participants believed that the course had had some impact on their Spanish. As Ducar (2008) and Alarcón (2010) showed in their studies, participants want to be corrected and want to improve their academic writing. Although it was not the focus of the present investigation, there is the pressing need, however, to acknowledge "the inherently political nature of education and [the need] to investigate how certain educational practices socialize students to comply with and uphold existing class and social divisions" (Leeman, 2005, p. 21). This could be a fruitful and relevant line of future research that might shed some light on the forces that shape Hispanic HL speakers' perceptions and motivations in the classroom.

Participants' attitudes toward Hispanics were also greatly impacted by the course. The interviews revealed that at the end of the course, these students were more aware of the other Latino communities in the U.S. This seemed to cause a change in their attitudes toward Hispanics, which also affected their longing to improve their own native language. An awareness of their shared culture as immigrant populations or increased respect for the other Latino communities could be seen at the end of the semester. Similar to findings in Carreira and Kagan (2011), overall, this SNS course helped improve the participants' attitudes toward other Hispanics in the U.S.

Conclusion and Implications for Language Program Directors

The analysis of these motivational and attitudinal variables reveals very important information about these HL speakers, which language program directors can use to meet their learning needs; something several researchers have categorized as a complex endeavor (Colombi & Roca, 2003; Roca & Gutiérrez, 2000; Valdés, 2001; Wiley & Valdés, 2000). Furthermore, this investigation provides the field with

data on a Hispanic population other than Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban-Americans, which are the populations traditionally investigated. As Roca (1997) stated, these populations are no longer the only Hispanic communities inhabiting the U.S. The Washington Metropolitan Area is probably the area with the largest growth in immigrant population since the 1980s, and it might be considered as the prototype of a new immigrant gateway (Price, Cheung, Friedman, & Singer, 2005). Investigating this population provides an insight that might allow researchers to discover common characteristics and needs among different Latino groups in different contexts, which could serve to advance the field from the particular to the general. As Colombi and Roca (2003) argued, these students' proficiencies and linguistic profiles are complex and depend on contextual educational and social experiences. It is therefore vital to gather this type of qualitative student-centered information in this new context so that language administrators have solid bases upon which to build their programs.

In order to improve the teaching and learning of Spanish as a HL in the U.S., SNS teachers and language program directors should be aware of students' attitudes, and the curriculum should address HL speakers' affective, social, academic, and linguistic needs (Potowski & Carreira, 2004). Students' voices could make SNS program building a bottom-up process (Beaudrie et al., 2009), and this study provides us with some of their voices. Most students in our sample were highly motivated at the beginning of the semester; therefore, the language classroom could easily become the ideal setting for learning to occur if students' levels of motivation were maintained. On the one hand, students seem to yearn for the formal study of grammar and the study of the variety of Spanish they consider correct; on the other hand, they leave aside their own linguistic capacities, toward which they seem to have somewhat negative attitudes. SNS courses should strengthen students' native linguistic abilities so that their attitudes can change and their motivational levels can be maintained.

Data from our interviews have revealed how several students display some type of integrative motivation to improve their Spanish. This motivation is in relation to their family, their community, or even their country of origin. It appears that for many heritage learners the sense of belonging is somehow tied to their linguistic ability. Besides including formal and informal readings on socio-cultural aspects, SNS courses should then include some component that would help students develop the specific sociolinguistic skills needed to acquire the appropriate registers to interact in their communities; for example, community service or language tasks that take students into the neighborhoods where their variety of Spanish is spoken in order for them to interact with other members of their community. These tasks or community service would include the use of certain linguistic forms and/or registers so that students realize the links between the formal study of Spanish and its real use.

Colleges and universities with HL programs should pay attention to what students have to say so their programs can help them achieve their academic and professional goals. These programs should run surveys at the beginning and at the end of every semester for every class. These surveys should aim at discovering students' linguistic abilities, but also contain questions that tap into learners'

expectations about the course, career goals, and contact with their community. These factors have emerged in our interviews as determining motivational change and, therefore, they would be good subjects to be taken into account when building a curriculum based on students' needs. Compiling and analyzing this information would necessitate a strong effort on the part of administrators, but the benefits in the long run would clearly help in the design of future programs and in the formation of teachers.

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Appendix A

Interview 1 (Beginning of semester)

- What language do you speak at home?
- Do you have other family here? What contact do you and your family have with the Hispanic community?
- How would you describe your friends? Do you consider yourself Latino? Why?
- What do you think of the Latino culture in the U.S.?
- Why are you taking this course?
- How would you describe your motivation to improve your Spanish?

Interview 2 (mid-semester)

- What influence is the course having on your Spanish?
- What influence is the course having on your motivation to improve Spanish?
- What influence is the course having on your vision of Hispanics in the U.S.?

Interview 3 (end of semester)

- How would you compare your motivation to improve your Spanish now with what you had at the beginning of the course?
- How did the activities you did in class affect your motivation?
- What kind of changes in motivation have you noticed along the course?
- What influence has the course had on your Spanish?
- What influence has the course had on your vision of Hispanics in the U.S.?