

The Impact of Motivation on Students' Desire
to Want to Learn a Second Language

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether holding students to higher standards, rewarding desired behavior, teaching interesting content, and creating student-to-teacher relationships would have an impact on students' motivation to want to learn Spanish in a Spanish 3 H class of 19. The study used a quasi-experimental pretest/posttest design to determine whether students' motivation would increase as a result of the strategies. The measurement tools involved a posttest/postsurvey designed by the researcher and two documents to track students' participation and homework completion. The study began at the end of February and was interrupted mid-March due to the shutdown of schools in Maryland. Because of the school closure, no significant improvement was recorded for motivation as the researcher did not have adequate time and a proper school environment to fully implement the strategies. The results of this study are inconclusive due to the fact that there was a pandemic and the researcher did not have any means to conclude the study. The mean participation rate increased by a statistically significant and practically significant amount from pre to partially implemented post. The homework completion rate for Tinita also improved by a statistically significant amount from pre to partially implemented post.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Motivating students to want to learn is challenging. Learning a second language is already a difficult task. The challenge is even more difficult at the high school level due to the fact that the older a student is, the harder it becomes to learn and absorb another language. Second language learning requires students to learn a whole new set of vocabulary and grammatical structures. In the United States, mastering a second language is not mandatory. High school curriculum only requires students to take two years of a second language. Students are reluctant to see the importance of learning a second language because they do not need it to get by on a daily basis. However, with the diversity that encompasses the United States, it is vital for future generations to have a second language under their belt as they will be forced to interact within these multicultural societies.

For the study in question, Spanish is the focus as it is the second most commonly spoken language in the United States. As such, students should be encouraged and pushed to learn Spanish since it is such a predominant language in this country. Learning a second language opens the door for many career opportunities. Employers are looking for employees who can speak more than one language as they are trying to expand their businesses to different cultural groups (Lazar, 2018). Therefore, motivation is a key component that is essential to learning a second language. However, motivating students to want to learn a second language is a tough goal. As a result, it is vital for teachers to implement motivational strategies to engage students in acquiring a second language.

Students in a second language classroom depend a lot on teacher input as they are susceptible to the teacher's attitude towards learning. When students are presented with difficult tasks, they may give up and disengage and no longer try to achieve. In order for student achievement to occur, there must be a balance between students' accountability, teacher authority, and freedom. Teachers can play a positive role in students' learning and their motivation by using role modeling, enthusiasm, and empathy. Schools are pushing for more rigorous lessons in the classrooms, and educators must find ways to raise students' determination to succeed.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study is to motivate Spanish 3H students to want to learn Spanish by integrating the several strategies. For one, students will be held to a higher standard and will be rewarded for the demonstrating desired behaviors. In addition, the teacher will deliver relevant and interesting content and work to build a strong student/teacher relationship. The latter two factors will be measured by the number of times students participate and by their homework completion.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis is that Spanish 3H students' motivation to want to learn Spanish will not be significantly affected by the different strategies implemented (higher standards, rewarding of desired behaviors, the teaching interesting content, and the creation of a student/ teacher relationship).

Operational Definitions

Students' motivation is defined as students' participation and engagement in class and homework completion. Motivation is measured operationally by how many times students

participate in class and the overall rate of homework completion for the class. Motivation is the dependent variable. Strategies to promote motivation are holding students to higher standards, rewarding desired behavior, teaching interesting content, and creating a strong student/teacher relationship. Holding students to higher standards is operationally defined as giving students more complex material. Rewarding desired behavior is defined as giving an incentive for participation, engagement in the class, and success in the class. Teaching interesting and relevant content is operationally defined as giving a survey to measure students' interest, giving students options depending on their personal preferences, or providing a relevant situation at the beginning of each class. Teacher-student relationship can be defined as outside of classroom interactions. These strategies constitute the independent variables.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review examines how to motivate students to want to learn a second language. The first section of the literature review examines the different types of motivations. It also explores the types of motivation that are most applicable to the foreign language classroom. The second section discusses how motivation and student achievement are correlated. The third section investigates different strategies that can be implemented to promote students' motivation. The fourth section summarizes how psychology affects motivation in the classroom.

Motivation

In order to motivate, one must understand what motivation is and the different types of motivations that exist. Ryan and Deci (2000) define motivation as wanting to do something. An individual who is actively trying to complete something, who is working towards a goal, is considered motivated. Our goals and how much effort we put into accomplishing them are both determined by motivation (Deniz, 2010). "Motivation can be construed as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)" (Deniz, 2010, p. 1270).

A person's motivation is influenced by many factors such as their opinions, beliefs, and judgements. Motivation is associated with words such as arousal, drive, stimulating, and desire (Deniz, 2010). Motivation varies widely between individuals. Different individuals can possess different amounts and types of motivations. The type of motivation exposes why a person is completing a task. The self-determination theory says that there are two main types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Intrinsic motivation is explained as completing something for the pleasure and enjoyment of it. Intrinsic motivation results in high quality and creative learning. Even though educators might be inclined toward intrinsic motivation, the importance of extrinsic motivation should not be diminished. Extrinsic motivation is affected by other factors. With extrinsic motivation, a person completes something because it leads to a separable product. It is true that extrinsic motivation can be negative because the individual might build/develop resentment, resistance, and disinterest. However, extrinsic motivation can also be viewed positively where an individual accepts the value of the task (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Mathewson (2019) explains that Stipek, the author of the book *Motivation to Learn: From Theory to Practice*, says it is extremely important to possess both types of motivation. While it is possible to rely solely on intrinsic motivation, doing so would mean not being concerned with what students learn. Nonetheless, in the current educational environment, there is a curriculum and set of required standard, so teachers cannot simply teach students just what they are interested in.

When it comes to the foreign language classroom, Wu (2003) explains that there is an assumption made that students have very little intrinsic motivation for acquiring a second language. As a result, in introductory settings in foreign language classrooms, extrinsic encouragements and controlling factors are seen as the only ways to engage students in learning enough of a language to develop their intrinsic motivation. Motivation is a key component that is necessary for an effective foreign language classroom. There have been many studies conducted that show that there is a correlation between motivation and second language acquisition (Deniz, 2010; Kato, 2016).

In addition to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, there are three more motivation types that are applicable to the foreign language classroom. Students can be motivated through instrumental, integrative, and situational motivations. Instrumental motivation refers to learning a second language for a practical purpose. Students may be motivated to learn a second language for advancing in their career, improving their social status, or for academic requirements. Additionally, integrative motivation refers to identification and desire to interact with another ethnographic group (Kato, 2016). Integrative motivation uses positive attitudes toward the learning goal in order to reinforce students' desire to learn. In this type of motivation, the teacher must take into account the learner's age, gender, educational background, level of motivation, language aptitude, desire to learn a language, and performance (Deniz, 2010).

The third type of motivation related to a foreign language classroom is situational motivation. Situational motivation is described as using factors such as tasks, learning activities, and instructional materials to motivate learners. The majority of learners do not have direct access to native speakers, the urgency of getting a good job, or entering higher education. They also do not need the target language in order to get by day by day as they are not fully immersed in the target language and culture. Therefore, situational motivation is imperative (Huang, 2011).

Students studying a foreign language in their native country often have limited opportunities to practice the language and knowledge they have acquired and often they do not have access to authentic language experience (Kato, 2016). For these reasons, learners' motivation and attitudes depend greatly on learning situations. In this type of motivation, students' engagement is mostly controlled by how lessons are taught, how interesting and meaningful lessons are to them, and how they feel about the learning environment (safe and capable) (Huang, 2011).

Relationship between Motivation and Academic Success

Motivation can positively or negatively affect a person's learning (Deniz, 2010).

Mathewson (2019) argues that an essential component of engagement is excitement, and yet many schools erase that excitement. Students are completing their work because they are being told to so or to receive a certain grade. Motivation and academic success are positively correlated.

Saito (2018) conducted a study to find out to what extent second language learners' motivation and emotion profiles predict the way they practice the target language inside and outside the classroom and how motivation, emotion, and experience relate to students' long-term achievement after several years of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) experience. His results indicated that there is indeed a moderate correlation between academic success in language learning and their motivational and emotional state. In his research, participants' performance was significantly and marginally correlated not only with their past experience (preschool) and current foreign language experience but also with their motivation factor. Saito also concluded that the degree of enjoyment is strongly tied to the learner's motivation and that it could forecast the quantity and quality of the most immediate and current EFL experience whereas the predictive power of negative emotions from previous experiences seemed to be weak. This shows that motivation is closely associated with second language learners' studying habits, usage of the language, and participation throughout their experience. The following ways and/or skills are examples of how motivation and academic success are correlated.

Active classrooms are known to help students stay engaged and acquire information more efficiently. "Physically active classrooms may slightly improve academic achievement compared to the traditional sedentary lessons" (Bedard, John, Bremer, Graham, & Cairney, 2019,

p. 1). The researchers explain that activity in the classroom causes students' blood flow to increase, which will increase their neurological responses and, in the end, increase their performance in the classroom. It has been demonstrated that physical activity helps improve cognitive function in many ways throughout childhood and adolescence. The effects of a physical active classroom are improved academic performance, cognitive function, attention in class and enjoyment (Bedard et al., 2019).

However, even though it has been proven that physical activity helps student learning, there is a still struggle to keep students active because of concerns with time and demands for curricular priorities. Students spend most of their day sitting in class; therefore, it is crucial that physical activity is integrated into their daily routines. Research suggests that physical activity be integrated into the classrooms. Certain teaching methods purposefully involve physical activity by blending it into core content classes. This technique will satisfy both needs without sacrificing one or the other.

In addition to creating an active classroom, many studies suggest that interactive note-taking helps in engaging students in the learning process. Students are more eager to learn and participate when the learning environment appeals to their needs. Different types of motivation attest that learners are more inclined to learn when they feel autonomy and competence (Wu, 2003). Interactive note-taking provides teachers with opportunities to encourage students' self-confidence to participate at a higher cognitive level. In interactive note-taking, the teacher facilitates the learning and contributes to the students' comprehension of the material. Droms (2013) defined interactive note-taking as a type of split-page note-taking. She explains that on the right-side important concepts are provided/written. On the left side students are encouraged to interact with the information by practicing, summarizing, or applying the new learning. Droms

finds that when students practice interactive note-taking, they demonstrate higher critical thinking abilities and perform better on all of the assessments. Students who are engaged in interactive note-taking activities are more engaged in the class and are more willing to participate (Droms, 2013).

Another approach offered to increase motivation for learning a language is the use of the flipped classroom, though this technique can have a negative effect on students' achievement in the classroom. Contrary to active classrooms and interactive note-taking approaches, a flipped classroom is a classroom setting where the teacher takes a facilitator approach and instructional tasks are reversed. In this approach, students are expected to learn at home and come to school ready to implement those newly learned skills. However, students may not possess the motivational skills that are needed to go home and learn on their own. Saunders (2014) concludes that there is not a significant difference between a flipped classroom and a traditional classroom when it comes to students' performance; therefore, teachers should avoid this approach as it does not benefit the students.

Strategies to Promote Motivation

Wu (2003) believes that in order to promote motivation, there should be a balance between teacher authority and student freedom. Students should be given a certain amount of freedom to choose what and how they want to learn. The teacher should create a supportive learning environment and intervene in the learning process. In order to create such an environment, the teacher needs to consider the students' perceived competence and autonomy. Students need to feel that they are in charge of their learning and that they are capable. Teachers can foster competence and autonomy by implementing a predictable environment with routines in place, having a variety of learning tasks varying from easy to challenging, providing

instructional support, and using an evaluation process that emphasizes self-improvement. The teacher can also promote group cohesiveness to help students with their perception of their autonomy in the class. This can be achieved by explaining the importance of the class rules and allowing students to help create them. In order to further promote learners' autonomy, the teacher needs to adopt the role of facilitator. Peer teaching and group presentation should be encouraged. Also, allowing students to assess themselves and providing students with the opportunity to decide how and when they will be assessed will help in developing the students' perceived autonomy (Deniz, 2010).

The teacher should also make the tasks students are presented with stimulating and interesting (Huang, 2011). Stimulating tasks break the routine and develop realistic beliefs about the language. This can be achieved by introducing various interesting topics with aids that are targeted towards the different types of learners (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, etc.) (Deniz, 2010). Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that people are inclined to want to do something when the tasks are enjoyable and provide the person a certain level of satisfaction. Competence and satisfaction are related. The individual is prone to feeling fulfillment when he/she feels self-efficacy. "Academic self-efficacy relates to the beliefs learners hold about their ability to be successful within a given subject and has been shown to be strongly related to academic outcomes" (Courtney, 2017, p. 464).

Courtney (2017) cites previous studies where the learners' perceptions of their own abilities decrease as they progress in their language learning journeys. The decrease also affects the learners' competence. This decline is attributed to factors such as firmer and more explicit success criteria and a decrease of the learners' autonomy. Other studies also show a similar pattern where the decrease is due to content but more specifically to how the it is delivered. The

cognitive evaluation theory relates motivation heavily to competence. The theory argues that any event that elicits feelings of competence during an action boosts the individual's motivation. These events can be rewards, communication, and/or feedback. Competence is a psychological need, and these events permit the gratification/satisfaction of such need (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

On the other hand, Fries (2009) claims that to keep students motivated or help initiate motivation, students need to be held to higher standards. "Holding students accountable with frequent quizzes forces students to stay caught up and pushes them to excel as many found the tests to be much easier because of the practice they received" (Fries, 2009, p. 3). Fries explains that having constant quizzes and assessments helps to develop students' study habits. Students respond and keep up with the demands of the class.

Mathewson (2019) believes that an important factor is having a balance between motivation and accountability. He expresses that many times schools are concerned only about the numbers and that they forget that tasks need to be engaging and address the students' preferences while still being challenging. A study conducted by Wu (2003) on how to promote students' intrinsic motivation shows that students are more motivated to complete the work when the tasks have a higher difficulty level. However, the teacher needs to make sure students are provided with the necessary instructional support such as modeling, prompting, and collaboration.

Another strategy to help students develop motivation is creating positive relationships with students. Teachers can affect students in many powerful ways: enthusiasm, role modeling, and empathy, to name a few. "A teacher who is a good model and shows that he/she takes great pleasure in teaching has a positive role in encouraging students to learn" (Deniz, 2010, p. 1271). Students feel more motivated to learn when their teachers are enthusiastic and passionate about

the material. Demonstrating proper teacher behavior can also help with students' motivation. Teachers can establish good rapport with students by showing students that they care and by being themselves in front of students. Moreover, a teacher should monitor students' progress and recognize their effort and achievement while still providing meaningful feedback.

In a foreign language classroom, a teacher should tell students that it is more important to be able to communicate than to be grammatically correct. If a teacher is looking to improve the students' motivation, then all learning tasks, including the materials, activities and books used should assist in meeting the students' needs. Teachers can display empathy by encouraging students to share personal experiences and thoughts and allowing students to get to know each other. Another way to build positive relationships with students is by creating a pleasant classroom environment. The teacher needs to develop a climate in which risk taking is promoted. Bringing in and encouraging humor and avoiding social comparison can also be used to help create such climate (Deniz, 2010).

Psychological Effect of Motivation in the Classroom

Motivation has several effects on the learners' psychological state. It is important that teachers use proper techniques in the classroom to promote motivation without impacting students negatively. Strategies to promote motivation can be effective and positive, but they can also be negative and ineffective. Promoting motivation incorrectly can negatively impact the learners' self-esteem. Mathewson (2019) explains that using grades to encourage motivation can have the opposite effect. Students stop challenging themselves because they fear trying and being incorrect. Students' eagerness to learn should be based on information and classroom dynamics rather than grades.

A positive way to help increase students' motivation is by providing engaging activities where learners are interacting with the materials. Instead of having a teacher-centered classroom, all types of motivations suggest a switch to a student-centered classroom. Teachers should help build students' confidence, competence, and autonomy to enable students to want to learn. Bedard et al. (2019) give specific examples of how students increased their participation and felt more competent completing the different tasks when the lessons targeted their interest and were more active.

The sympathetic autonomic nervous system is what arouses the body and energizes it. This system accelerates heartbeat, dilates pupils, and stimulates glucose release. On the other hand, the parasympathetic autonomic nervous system calms the body down. This system contracts pupils and slows heartbeat down. Both systems are self-regulating. An interactive classroom activates the sympathetic autonomic nervous system; in contrast, a lecture-based classroom will activate the parasympathetic autonomic nervous system. When students are just sitting in class listening to the teacher, students become sleepy and their heart rate goes down, causing their concentration and focus to decrease. Students then become disengaged and are no longer eager to learn. On the contrary, when students are moving around, interacting with the material or one another, the opposite happens. Students will become alerted as their heart rate and blood flow increase, causing them to become more engaged and motivated (Myers, 2011).

Conclusion

The literature review assessed the different types of motivation learners can possess, the relationship between academic success and motivation, strategies to promote motivation, and the psychological effects that motivation can have in the classroom. Teachers can implement many strategies to promote and improve students' motivation. Intrinsic and integrative motivation are

the most important types of motivation in a foreign language classroom. However, considering the reality and needs of the current educational climate, it is extremely difficult to achieve either motivation on their own. Intrinsic motivation can be enhanced with extrinsic motivation, and integrative motivation is practically unachievable when learning a second language in the native country. The research does show that motivation is key to learning a second language and that they correlate positively.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

This study consisted of a quasi-experimental design to analyze the impact of motivation on students' desire to want to learn a second language. This study employed four different strategies to determine whether students' motivation changed. The strategies included holding students to higher standards, rewarding desired behavior, teaching interesting content, and creating relationships with students.

Participants

The participants in this study were 19 students from one high school in Baltimore County, Maryland. All 19 members were part of the treatment group. There were 12 boys and seven girls ranging between the ages of 14-16. The majority of group was freshman with a few students being sophomores and juniors. Within this group there were 11 Caucasian and eight minority students. The minority population of the class was composed of African Americans, Filipinos, and some of mixed race. Only one student has a 504 plan for concentration and working. The researcher selected this class as it is the class that is showing the least amount of motivation and interest in the Spanish language.

Instrument

Three instruments were used in the study. The first instrument was a survey to assess students' perception and attitude toward the class before the implementation of the strategies. The survey was adapted from <https://sites.google.com/site/docenciainglesa/adquisicion-de-una-segunda-lengua/motivation-questionnaire> and was modified to suit the class. The survey included 18 questions that related to teacher approachability, opportunities for choices, difficulty

of the class, self-perception of students' ability to succeed, attitude toward Spanish, importance of bilingualism, and study habits. The questions were constructed on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The same survey was used again after the study was conducted; however, three questions were added. These questions asked students about changes in their perception and habits in the class. The questions required students to provide an explanation. There are no published results for reliability and validity of the survey.

The other two instruments were two documents created by the teacher to track students' participation and homework completion. Both trackers were used before, during, and after the study to analyze the frequency of students' participation and the rate of homework completion. Each document contained the student's name and space to track down the number of times students participated.

Procedure

The study began roughly at the end of February. The class met for 80 minutes on alternate days. The study lasted a period of six weeks. The students completed the first survey during the first week of the study. The researcher also tracked students' participation and homework completion during the first two weeks of the study. Students received instruction with the treatment (strategies) during March and April. The teacher used the feedback from the survey to teach content that targeted students' interest. The teacher incorporated lessons that addressed these interests while still teaching the required material of the curriculum (art). In addition, lessons involved more complex material and when asked to participate, a refusal was not accepted as an answer. Moreover, the researcher rewarded students for positive behavior.

The researcher also tracked down students' participation and homework completion during this period in order to determine whether progress was being attained. During the last

week of the study, students completed the survey with the additional questions. The researcher used the results from the second survey and compared them to the first one. Also, conclusions were drawn by comparing the first two weeks of participation and homework completion (before the implementation of the study) to the last two weeks of the study (after the students were treated with the strategies).

Analysis Plan

Since there were 19 students in the study, the survey responses will be converted to scale points (e.g., 1=strongly disagree...5=strongly agree). Tabulating frequencies across five categories with only 19 students is not feasible. Because the data are likely to be skewed to one side of the scale, a nonparametric alternative to the dependent t-test, for example, the Wilcoxin Sign-Rank, will test the null hypothesis that the median scale position did not change from pre-to-post. The three posttest-only questions cannot be used in comparing change over time.

The other two measures, class participation and homework completion, pre and post will be also compared with a nonparametric statistical tool because of the small sample and the likely skew in the responses.

To test the null hypotheses, the customary .05 alpha level will be applied to the sample results to assess whether they generalize to the population. For this study the population is all classes similar to the study section wherever they exist. The 0.05 alpha level implies that the researcher is willing to tolerate at most a 5% chance that a rejection of the null is in fact a false positive, rather than a true pre-to-post difference associated with a deliberate process change in the researcher's classroom.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether motivation to learn a second language could be improved by implementing the following strategies: holding students to higher standards, rewarding desired behavior, building relationships, and teaching interesting content. During the study, the researcher assessed students' motivation by giving students a survey and recorded participation and homework completion for two weeks before implementing the strategies.

During the third week, the teacher took the time to greet every single student as they entered the class and complimented some of the students' achievement. The teacher also rewarded student behavior by giving them candy. In addition, the teacher found ways to teach the material in ways that would engage the students better. The teacher used playdoh to help students in grasping and using the new vocabulary (art). The teacher also held students to higher standards during week three by refusing to accept "no" or "I do not know" for an answer. The teacher also introduced to students a new way of being eligible for a re-do by asking that students complete practice work that would help them do better on the assignment they were seeking a re-do for. The mean for the pretest/pre-survey for the class was 3.47, and the standard deviation was 1. The posttest/post-survey was not administered to the students as all schools in Maryland were shut down on March 16th (week three of study).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations Results for Survey per Question during the Baseline Period

stats	pre1	pre2	pre3	pre4	pre5	pre6	pre7	pre8	pre9	pre10
mean	4	3.052632	3.315789	3.894737	2.947368	3	2.894737	2.842105	3.368421	3.736842
sd	.745356	1.078769	1.204281	.7374684	1.129094	.745356	.9941348	1.167293	1.256562	.9334586

stats	pre11	pre12	pre13	pre14	pre15	pre16	pre17	pre18	pre19	pre20
mean	2.631579	2.842105	3.157895	2.736842	3.157895	2.894737	3.052632	2.684211	2.736842	3.052632
sd	1.116071	1.213954	.7647191	.9911893	.6882472	.875261	.8481145	1.15723	1.147079	1.078769

stats	pre21	pretot	preavg
mean	4	66	3.473684
sd	.745356	19.03214	1.001691

The mean for participation for the first two weeks was 1.05, and the standard deviation was .83.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 below show the participation baseline for the first two weeks of the study and progress made during the first week of treatment.

Table 2

Count of Weekly Participation by Sample of 19 Pupils

	Pre		Post
Score	Participate 1	Participate 2	Participate 3
0	3	10	3
1	9	6	2
2	3	2	6
3	4	1	5
4	0	0	3

Table 3

Test for Pre/Post Mean Difference in Participation for 19 Study Pupils

	Mean	Std Dev	t-test	p-value	Decision
Pre	1.05	0.83	5.41	.001	Alternative
Post	2.16	1.30			

Note: Due to the closing of schools because of the pandemic, the treatment was shortened. In addition, not all outcomes could be measured pre- and pos-test.

The mean participation count increased from 1.05 pre-treatment to 2.16 during treatment as shown on Table 3 above. The sample increase was sufficient to reject the null hypothesis of no change in the population mean participation at the .10 level. The population is all similar classrooms wherever they exist. Table 4 below indicates that during the pre-treatment time, 66% of the pupils participated, in contrast to 84% during the treatment.

Table 4

Percent of Participation Before and During Treatment

Participated	Pre	Treatment
No	34%	16%
Yes	66%	84%
Totals	100%	100%

The mean homework completion percentage for Tinita (reading comprehension homework) increased from 58% pre-treatment to 79% during treatment. The sample increase was sufficient to reject the null hypothesis of no change in the population mean homework completion at the .10 level. Table 5 below shows this change.

Table 5

Test for Pre-Post Mean Difference in Tinita Homework Completion

	Mean	Std Dev	t-test	p-value	Decision
Pre	0.58	0.51	1.71	.10	Alternative
Post	0.79	0.42			

Flashcard assignments were pre-treatment only. During Weeks 4-6, students were at home due to the shutdown and were assigned five days of practice work. This work was mandated by the Baltimore County Superintendent to be ungraded. As a result, homework completion declined drastically. The five DIA assignments were completed at home after the pre-treatment but without the treatment being implemented. Therefore, only descriptive statistics are presented. The flashcard completion rates were averaged, as were the five DIA assignments completion rates.

Table 6

Completion Percentage for Flashcard and DIA Assignments, Pre Only

	Flashcards	DIA
None Completed	21%	63%
Some completed	37%	11%
All completed	42%	26%

Without the treatment, less than half of the pupils completed the flashcard homework, and a quarter of the students completed the DIA assignments. There is no way at this time to determine the treatment effect on the flashcards and DIA homework completion. However, with the available data, the null hypothesis that Spanish 3H students' motivation to want to learn Spanish would not be significantly affected by the different strategies that were partially implemented (holding students to higher standards, rewarding desired behavior, teaching interesting content, and creating a student to teacher relationship) was retained.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The null hypothesis that that Spanish 3H students' motivation to want to learn Spanish would not be significantly affected by the different strategies that were partially implemented due to the global pandemic that forced schools' closings (holding students to higher standards, rewarding desired behavior, teaching interesting content, and creating a student to teacher relationship) was neither retained nor rejected overall. The results of this study are inconclusive. However, some of the data gathered do indicate significant improvement in students' participation and homework completion which could represent an increase in students' motivation. One could argue based on these improvements that the overall results were trending positive, and if the study had been finished, may have rejected the null.

Implications of Results

In this experiment, there was a mix effect on motivation to want to learn Spanish by the implementation of the following strategies (holding students to higher standards, rewarding desired behavior, teaching interesting content, and creating a student to teacher relationship). There was no way to measure significant change in motivation from the pre-survey results to the post-survey results as students never took the post-survey.

However, overall participation did increase from the pre/treatment period to the beginning of the treatment period. There was a significant change in the mean for participation. The data in Chapter IV revealed that the mean increased by 1.21 points from the pre- to during treatment. At the beginning of the study, 66% of the students participated, and during the treatment 84% participated. If using this data alone, then the null hypothesis that Spanish 3H students' motivation to want to learn Spanish would not be significantly affected by the different

strategies that were partially implemented (holding students to higher standards, rewarding desired behavior, teaching interesting content, and creating a student to teacher relationship) was rejected. Moreover, the homework data for Tinita increased by 21% from the pre-treatment period to during the treatment period. This data also rejects the null hypothesis. However, the results of the rest of the homework assignments (flashcards and practice work during closure) can't be used in totality to reject or accept the null hypothesis, as no treatment were applied during their completion period.

Threats to Validity

The results of this study were affected by threats to validity. When the study was being conducted, the WHO declared a global pandemic and many schools across the U.S. decided to close. Maryland issued a decree to close schools during this time period. The initial closure was due to last two weeks, but then it got extended an additional four weeks with a possibility of closing entirely for the rest of the school year. As a result of this closure, the strategies were not able to be implemented for the projected period. The researcher was only able to implement the strategies for one week, during week three of the experiment. The study was designed to gather data every two weeks; therefore, even the data that was collected during the treatment was incomplete and not comparable to the baseline data.

A second threat of validity because of the closure was that students were not receiving instruction in the same type of environment. Students were not receiving direct and physical instruction. They were not interacting with their peers and the researcher. In class, the researcher had already built a routine with the students, and this routine was broken due to school closure. Many students lack the organizational skills that routine in place already provides for them. In addition, because students were at home, they were dealing with other

distractions that they would normally not or cannot deal with in class (phones, tv, sleeping, taking care of siblings, etc). In class, some students might get distracted, but there is a teacher with them who guides them back on track.

A third threat of validity was that homework assignments that were completed during the closure were not to be awarded points (DIA homework). Students are used to receiving credit for what they do, and they know that this will impact their grades. In this case, the superintendent decreed that work completed during the closure was not to be graded and announced this decision publicly to students and their families, potentially causing their motivation to complete the work to decrease. Students knew that their effort and hard work was not going to be rewarded and that not completing work would have zero impact on their grades. In addition, many also felt that it was unfair for students to be completing work during the initial two weeks of the closure and having spring break taken away. One might consider that the five practice assignments during the closure would have had a different outcome if students were attending school at the time as we saw that Tinita homework and participation did increase when schools were still open.

A fourth threat of validity of the results is that the post-survey was never distributed to the students. The researcher had data from the pre-survey but had no data to compare it to. As a result, the findings of this study are deemed inconclusive.

A fifth threat of validity is that this study had no control or comparison group. The researcher had no way to actually determine whether the improvements made by students were because of the strategies being implemented or for other reasons. This could imply that the data collected is less meaningful as we do not know if the treatment precedes the outcome.

Connections to Previous Research

This study is very similar to the study performed by Henry in 2009. He also used several instruments to measure changes in motivation. The first instrument he used was a survey to assess the students' perception about the class, teacher, content, interest, etc. The other instruments the researcher used were two unit tests that would show improvement in students' performance. At the end of the study the researcher gave the same survey as a post-assessment but added six additional questions. The researcher concluded that students' perception about the class during the treatment period did not change. The current study used a pre-survey and was planning to conclude with a post-survey. In addition, the students' motivation progress was assessed through the completion of Tanita's chapter homework. Tinita's chapter homework had increased as the results of unit tests that were implemented in Henry (2009).

A study conducted by Jaimes in 2016 revealed that rewarding students' positive behavior such as participation would decrease unwanted behavior (off-task conversations). Even though the current study was inconclusive, students' participation began to increase as a result of the strategies that were implemented during week three of the study (rewarding positive behavior). In addition, Tinita homework also increased from the baseline to the treatment period as the researcher rewarded students by letting students take advantage of re-dos.

Another study conducted on motivation by Wu in 2003 found that moderately challenging tasks with the necessary support increased students' success in the classroom and the learner's self-perception. In the current study, the researcher held students to higher standards by not accepting "No" or "I do not know" as answer. While this was challenging, the researcher ensured that students had the necessary content and tools to be successful.

Implications for Future Research

Results from this study showed that rewarding positive behavior, holding students to higher standards, building teacher-to-student relationship, and teaching interesting content could potentially have a positive impact in students' motivation. Most research conducted on motivation suggests that it plays a big role in students' performance in the class. It would be beneficial to actually be able to finish the study to determine in the post-survey whether the students' perception changed at all. Even though the researcher did not complete the study and was not able to implement the post-survey, it was noticeable that students started to warm up and showed signs of increased eagerness to learn and wanting to be in the class. It would also be interesting to determine whether any of the four strategies had more weight on students' motivation as all four strategies were implemented at the same time. If time permits, it would be suggested to implement a different strategy with different but similar classes to determine what the outcome of each is. A future study could also include a larger population/sample to ensure reliability of the results. This future study should also include a control group that could be used as a way to measure the effectiveness of the treatment.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that implementing the following strategies: rewarding desired behavior, creating teacher to student relationships, holding students to higher standards and teaching interesting content might have a positive effect on the level of motivation of Spanish 3 students. There was some improvement in students' participation and homework completion during the only week that the strategies were implemented. The students seem to be appreciative of the teacher taking the time to individually connect with them. Students also showed more interest and excitement when the content and method of delivery appealed to their

interests. Students were enthusiastic and engaged during the lessons that used playdoh to practice the new learning. In addition, the students demonstrated a higher responsibility level to their work ethics as they started to request re-do's with the appropriate documentation (evidence that they had practice the content before asking for a re-do). Some students that were reluctant to participate, started doing so, as they knew that they were going to be called no and a response was going to be expected of them. However, the researcher noticed that grades play a big role in students' decision to complete assignments. Students demonstrated that if the work they were asked to complete was not going to receive any credit and that they were not going to be penalize, they were not willing or motivated to put in the effort. Future studies and research are necessary to fully assess the validity of the strategies that were implemented.

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