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The Impact of Learner Autonomy and Interrelatedness on Motivation and

Implications for the High School Foreign Language Classroom

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The Impact of Learner Autonomy and Interrelatedness on Motivation

and Implications for the High School Foreign Language Classroom

by

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2014

Dedication

To my students and my colleagues.

Acknowledgements

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

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High school students often face foreign language requirements, either to graduate from their high school or to be accepted at a college or university of their choice (www.ncssfl.org). These requirements serve as external motivators and may decrease a student's intrinsic motivation to learn a language. Indeed, researchers have determined that extrinsic motivation greatly undermines self-motivation (Deci, *et al*., 2011). Without intrinsic motivation, students struggle to learn in meaningful ways and fail to implement strategies that lead to meaningful foreign language learning and proficiency.

Educators must critically analyze their materials, instructional style, lesson plans and assessments and then remove from the curriculum any practice or task that does not foster learner autonomy that ultimately leads to intrinsic motivation. Further, to foster intrinsic motivation, language teaching and

learning must focus on the relational aspect of language, as the use of any

language is purposed to communicate needs and ideas with others   This report

explores how learner autonomy and interrelatedness aid the development of

intrinsic motivation and provides pedagogical implications for the classroom.

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Introduction

My experiences in teaching Spanish to high school students motivated me to enroll in the Foreign Language Education graduate program at the University of Texas at Austin. Why do students seek to become proficient in a foreign language, much less study one to meet a graduation requirement? Are grades and graduation requirements enough motivation? Are extrinsic motivators, like parties and stickers, increasing motivation at all, or do students perceive these attempts at encouragement as being treated like children? Would I lose complete control if I allowed more student autonomy? Why do my male students often seem so disengaged and unruly in class? Can a healthy and positive relationship with my students overcome challenges and ultimately increase their willingness and motivation to press on? The dilemmas and research presented in this report represent my own search for how the field of Foreign Language Education currently answers these questions and what it suggests as best practices.

In my experience, too much emphasis has been placed on extrinsic motivators, like grades and requirements, which have been proven to increase learner anxiety and demotivation. For the average high school foreign language student, these external motivators are not going away any time soon. Most lessons will seem inherently uninteresting and useless to students, especially if teachers simply follow the standard textbook suggestions and presentation models. Students, irrespective of gender, desire authenticity and purposeful,

task-based lessons. The concern should not be how teachers motivate students, as this is an external regulator. The real concern should be how to "create lesson and classroom environments that focus and attract students' intrinsic motivation; thus, increasing the likelihood students will actively engage in learning" (Rogers, Ludington & Graham, 1997; p. 2, as cited by Sullo, 2007; p. 14).

In high school foreign language classrooms, teachers are overlooking a vital component of meaningful learning: intrinsic motivation. In redressing this oversight, one must first consider how intrinsic motivation develops. Researchers are consistent in demonstrating that opportunities for learners to exercise autonomy foster intrinsic motivation (Dickinson, 1995; Benson, 2006). Additionally, the socio-interrelatedness between an educator and students can encourage the development of intrinsic motivation, even when a grade is at stake or the student is not the decision-maker (Bao & Lam, 2008).

Dickinson (1995) acknowledges the synergetic effect of success and motivation. Educators should not argue whether the former increases the latter. It suffices to state that motivation often leads to success which in turn increases motivation, and so forth. For Dickinson, common denominators for learning success and motivation are learner responsibility, learner initiative to take control of the learning environment, and the learner's realization that success stems from effort and good strategies. These three components aptly define learner autonomy.

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This report explores motivation for language learning among adolescents and how it is influenced by external regulators, autonomy, and the socio-interrelatedness of the teacher and student and the student and classmates. Classroom implications are outlined as they pertain to these factors. Chapter 1 discusses extrinsic motivation and defines several external regulators. In Chapter 2, I present a case for the development of intrinsic motivation based on current research in the fields of foreign language education and second language acquisition. Additionally, the roles of teacher and learner autonomy are explored. Chapter 3 focuses on student-teacher interrelatedness and Bao and Lam's 2008 seminal study in which they meticulously test their hypotheses about decision-making, autonomy and the role of interrelatedness. Chapter 4 presents possible classroom implications that consider specific pedagogical challenges in the high school foreign language classroom (e.g. lack of language lab facilities, Focus on Form, adolescent males).

Chapter 1

Extrinsic Motivation

Deci *et al.* (1991) propose four motivation types: introjected , identified, external and intrinsic. Introjected, identified and external regulations are variations of extrinsic motivation. Introjected regulation is when a learner accepts the external pressures of learning a particular subject in order to avoid embarrassment or feelings of insufficiency (Ortega, 2009, p. 176). Identified regulation is a step closer to intrinsic motivation in that the learner adopts the logic for learning presented by external factors and begins to see meaning and value in the task at hand and this decision to learn is an important step toward self-efficacy (p. 176). Within this scope of self-efficacy fostered through external motivators are integrative motivation and instrumental motivation (Cook, 2008, p. 138). The desire to engage with a culture and its people is integrative motivation, while instrumental motivation could be a career goal or personal enrichment through travel or relationships (p. 138). It is important for educators to understand the differences among these regulators in order to encourage intrinsic motivation in high school foreign language learners (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Once we recognize where students are on the continuum, we are better situated to equip them with the learning strategies necessary for proficiency and to modify our curriculum to meet students' needs.

Given the teaching and learning model in most educational institutions, I will begin with exploring extrinsic motivation and evaluate the effectiveness of its use for foreign language education. As Deci and Ryan (2000) aptly state:

Frankly speaking, because many of the tasks that educators want their students to perform are not inherently interesting or enjoyable, knowing how to promote more active and volitional (versus passive and controlling) forms of extrinsic motivation becomes an essential strategy for successful teaching (p. 55).

An external motivator is anything that externally prompts one to act (Deci *et al.,* 1991). Brown *et al.* (1998) summarize extrinsic motivation as follows:

- It is instrumental in form;
- It focuses on satisfactory completion of the course;
- It is strongly influenced by external rewards and pressures;
- It leads to surface approach to learning and fear of failure;
- It produces learning outcomes that are inflexible and not readily transferrable to other contexts (p. 16).

In most school environments, there are graduation requirements and grades. A common high school graduation requirement is having at least two years of foreign language, and in these courses, teachers assign grades to students based on their performance on assessments and class participation and preparation.

Brown *et al*. (1998) define external regulation as a "situation where someone can see no personal relevance or value in engaging in the activity but feels that he or she has no choice but to comply" (p. 62). Even if a student were given the personal choice of four foreign languages to study, given the graduation requirement, he or she must comply and study a foreign language. These learners may feel that their success is determined by factors outside of their control, like luck, other people, or limitations on their ability that cannot change (Dickinson, 1995). Such a self-concept would lead to the assumption that taking control or responsibility of the learning environment is impossible. The classroom environment created by the teacher could contribute to a student's sense of diminished control and may reduce opportunities for student responsibility.

Noels, Clément and Pelletier (1999, as cited in Dörnyei, 2001, p. 104) studied the degree to which the communication style of the teacher impacted learner motivation. They discovered that there is a direct positive relationship between the teacher providing meaningful feedback and supporting learner autonomy and the degree to which a learner feels autonomy and enjoyment. (Learner autonomy and interrelatedness will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively.) This finding might not be at all surprising and the connection to extrinsic motivation seems distant; however, the researchers also found that this directive did not have the significant, positive impact on learners who studied for primarily

extrinsic purposes. Students who chiefly identify their motivation as being external are not capable of taking advantage of even the best teaching methods and learner strategies. Referencing previous studies in the field, Vansteenkiste *et al.* (2005) state that an "excessive focus on extrinsic relative to intrinsic life goals is associated with lower well-being, increased ill-being, and less socially adaptive functioning" (p. 483). As these authors suggest, extrinsically-motivated students are at a greater risk of feeling anxiety and of having a higher affective filter than those who are intrinsically-motivated. Thus a larger pedagogical concern is the learners' lessened ability to adapt socially. Foreign language learning and speaking requires constant adaptation to new social environments given a new target culture and speech community.

Sullo (2007) posits that extrinsic motivation may cause students to comply with imposed curricular demands, but that it rarely ever inspires them to do their best and most gratifying work. For instance, Sullo notes that oftentimes students complete an assigned task simply to get those in authority to leave them alone. He adds that true gratification in one's work often is caused by interrelatedness, collaborative learning, feelings of competency, freedom of choice and execution, and some degree of challenge. Sullo calls the latter "inside out" motivation, or intrinsic motivation.

All is not lost for the extrinsically-motivated student. Dickinson (1995) does attribute some value in extrinsic motivation and argues that acquired skills,

strategies, and motivation enhancement can lead to intrinsic motivation eventually.   Learners should be encouraged to explore positive learning outcomes that go beyond getting good grades, avoiding punishment or negative experiences and meeting high school language requirements. Once positive learning beliefs begin to emerge, learners begin to consider possible learning strategies to achieve their learning goals. To this end, they are then able to take control of their own affective filter through these learning strategies. In order for this transition to occur, teachers must continuously develop and update classroom curricula and practices so that intrinsic motivation can eventually develop. To cite Jenson (1995, as cited in Sullo, 2007, p. 6), if teachers were to make lessons "meaningful, relevant and fun…[there would be no need] to bribe students" with rewards.

As has been discussed, extrinsic motivation tends to increase anxiety and diminish meaningful learning opportunities. We can combat these outcomes by creating opportunities for students to exercise autonomy and by increasing socio-interrelatedness between the student and teacher, students and other students, and students and the target language community. Each of these measures fosters the development of intrinsic motivation.

Chapter 2

Intrinsic motivation

In articulating their Self-determination Theory, Deci and Ryan (1985) sub-divide the category of intrinsic motivation into the "desire 'to know', 'to achieve' and 'to be stimulated'" (as cited in Brown *et al.,* 1998, p. 62). They also define intrinsic motivation as doing a task simply for the enjoyment of or interest in it, without regard for external consequences or reward (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Researchers define intrinsic motivation either based on the task's interest level or on the level of satisfaction one experiences from engaging in the task (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Learners with intrinsic motivation tend to learn better, learn for learning's sake, feel their success is directly related to personal effort above all else, and are more likely to persevere in the face of challenges or failure (Dickinson, 1995). They demonstrate an internal locus of control and self-determination, thereby creating autonomy.

Referring to the studies of Anderman *et al.* (2008), Maehr (1984) and Lepper and Hodell (1989), Vansteenkiste *et al.* (2005) state that children's intrinsic interest in learning diminishes over the course of their formative elementary school years and posit that this decline must also have an effect on their academic achievement. Researchers have often attributed this decrease in natural interest

to the way in which teachers and educational institutions approach the process of learning and how learning is assessed (p. 483).

Working within Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), Deci and Ryan (1985) state that even external motivators, like rewards and meaningful feedback that inspire feelings of competence, can enhance intrinsic motivation because competency is internalized as satisfaction and enjoyment. However, these feelings of competency can only develop into intrinsic motivation if the student also has feelings of autonomy. According to CET, external motivators like deadlines, threats, competition and directives all stifle the development of intrinsic motivation because they control how a student will act or engage. Further, a controlling teacher diminishes students' creativity, curiosity and the desire to explore that leads them to stretch themselves just beyond their current ability.

Deci and Ryan's (2000) psychological approach to defining intrinsic motivation and outcomes should be of particular interest to foreign language teachers, as their learning outcomes mirror the desired outcomes for foreign language learners in the target language – "competence, autonomy and relatedness" (p. 57).   When evaluating the implementation of curriculum, a teacher must carefully consider each task and the potential for intrinsic interest. As previously stated, not all necessary and worthwhile activities will seem inherently interesting and enjoyable to students; however, a teacher can take

measures to present activities in more attractive ways and to tailor the curriculum to allow for more student involvement with task selection and design. This approach to activity selection fosters autonomous learning that increases the potential for intrinsic motivation.

A balanced look at motivation

Students will rarely be completely extrinsically or intrinsically motivated. Perhaps they are even in a stage of amotivation in which they neither can find any internal or external reward for foreign language study. To better describe more natural student motivation, Ortega (2009, p. 186) references Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2009) that is comprised of three descriptions: the "Ideal L2 Self", the "Ought-to L2 Self" and the "L2 Learning Experience". The wording of these labels is reminiscent the types of motivations previously referenced in this report.

The "Ideal L2 Self" acts as a type of visualization, and the learner sees himself or herself as someday being a person who speaks the target language. Human nature is such that we try to reduce the discrepancy between who we hope to be and who we actually are. Though seemingly an extrinsic motivation, the learner identifies personally with an attractive benefit and sees the value in achieving the goal (Ortega, 2009, p. 186). The "Ought-to Self" is rooted in what the learner feels ought to be his or her motivation and meets necessary benchmarks to avoid any negative consequences. The learner may or may not

inherently want to engage. This scenario is much like that of the introjected regulator previously described in Chapter 1. Lastly, the "L2 Learning Experience" deals with the immediate environment and the learner's experience (p. 186). However, Ortega points out that students may not be able to identify with integrative motivation as the field has described it, stating that a full integration into the target culture is not likely in most foreign language learning contexts (p. 186). Students are more likely to see themselves as being the type of person who speaks another language, an "Ideal L2 self", not one who completely integrates into the target language community.

Agency is demonstrated when language learners maintain willpower and exercise the capacity to accomplish what they have purposed (Gao, 2010, citing Giddens, 1984). Additional research has indicated that successful learners often envision an "ideal self" to motivate them (Gao, 2010, citing Al-Shehri, 2009; Gao, 2010, citing Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Each "self" contains aspects of previously mentioned motivation models and deals with various conceptualizations of self. This is evidence that an individual student can be anywhere on the motivation continuum and that each student has a different self-concept, particularly as a foreign language student. Now imagine that a teacher has 35 students in a given class. How does one teacher respond to each learner's needs based on these motivations and self-concepts? Fostering autonomy is a proven method to ensure these meaningful learning outcomes (Bao & Lam, 2008; Dickinson, 1995).

Teacher autonomy

Before exploring the development of learner autonomy and how it can increase motivation, it is critical that teachers assess their own autonomy and comfort level with releasing some control to their students during the learning process. Little (1995) suggests that teacher autonomy will foster learner autonomy and posits that a teacher will ultimately teach as he or she has been taught. While he agrees that learning training and learner strategies are important in this process, he argues that the deciding factor in autonomy development is and always has been rooted in pedagogical dialog, thus interdependence. Due to this interrelatedness, one must consider teacher autonomy. Little's argument is valid: if learners are ever to become autonomous, teacher education must be restructured to include opportunities for negotiation, to be co-creators in their coursework, and to become increasingly more comfortable with less than neat, flexible lesson plans and objectives that provide meaningful learning opportunities. Too much time is spent during teacher training on how to reward and punish students based on behavior or "achievement", which devalues learning (Sullo, 2007, p. 5). How are educators to inspire and encourage autonomy in their learners if they themselves have never experienced autonomy as learners?

Little (1995) defines the autonomous learner as one who assumes responsibility for learning and states that learner autonomy is nothing new. Successful learners have always been autonomous, move comfortably between

learning and living, and their responsible handling of present learning leads to positive future attitudes. To develop language learner autonomy, students must have confidence to communicate in the L2 in ways meaningful to them. Teachers who believe strategies and learner training automatically translate to learner autonomy or who believe autonomy means learning in isolation with complete freedom will likely say that autonomy does not work. Autonomy will only work when teachers and students are co-creators of lessons, projects, and assessments. To this end, even institutionally-selected materials can afford opportunities for teacher-student lesson negotiation and co-creation.

Benson (2006) addresses the same concern. How would one go about designing an autonomy-focused course if the only resources and curriculum available were chosen by others? How would one become a co-creator and co-learner alongside students if these concepts were not introduced as part of their teacher education and training? To embrace autonomy, a learner must be comfortable tasking risks, assuming responsibility for him or herself and the learning environment and embodying a secure and accurate self-concept to effectively implement learning strategies (Bao & Lam, 2008).

Learner autonomy

The concept of language learning autonomy emerged in 1979 at the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project when Holec (see Holec 1981) defined autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". Allwright

(1988) called for "a radical restructuring of the traditional classroom" if autonomy were to fit within the confines of a classroom led by a teacher. More specific to the traditional foreign language classroom, Dam (1995) investigates how autonomy could be fostered in a traditional setting without actual self-access centers or specific training. Benson (2006) provides an in-depth, historical review of learning autonomy and foreign language education and outlines how the psychology of autonomy is becoming increasingly more a focus of research in the field given the various degrees of autonomy, ranging from Nuan's (1997) awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence to Scharle and Szabó's (2000) concentration on raising awareness, changing attitudes, and transferring roles. He includes Smith's (2003) notion of weak pedagogies in autonomy (training toward autonomy) and strong pedagogies in autonomy (students are already autonomous, therefore focus on co-creation with them) and Ribé's (2003) idea of convergence, a movement toward autonomy, and divergence, a more open approach to decision-making. Noteworthy to Benson is Oxford's (2003) recommendation for the blending of these ideas, in which he argues that no one idea is at definitive odds with another.

One common factor in the various definitions and aims of learner autonomy is the ability to overcome obstacles. Bown (2009) states that successful learners tend to set goals and deadlines for themselves and seek out oral practice, and each of these actions directly addresses common challenges seen in

independent learning environments. Bhattacharya and Chuahan (2010) also reported that participants were more confident, more willing to take risks, and began to seek out more challenging tasks given their new skill set after completing blog projects. As these various definitions and examples support, autonomy plays a critical role in the development of intrinsic motivation. In order for students to inherently value something, they must be given agency to make decisions and to prioritize.

Given the demands placed on classroom teachers, such as limited materials and over-sized classes, teachers may not readily embrace the concept of learner autonomy, perhaps feeling students already have ample autonomy. Often there is a misconception of what autonomous learning is. Contrary to popular belief, learner autonomy is not synonymous with complete freedom of choice or learning in isolation (Little, 1995; Vickers & Ene, 2006; Bao & Lam, 2008; Bhattacharya & Chauhan, 2010). Learner autonomy is fostered through interdependence and interrelatedness between teacher and student (Little, 1995; Benson, 2006; Bao & Lam, 2008; Bhattacharya & Chuahan, 2010; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011). Interrelatedness is vital to achieving autonomy, autonomy increases intrinsic motivation, and as stated in Chapter 2, research favors intrinsic motivation over extrinsic motivation (Dickinson, 1995; Benson, 2006; Bhattacharya & Chauhan, 2010). Dickinson (1995) states that socio-psychological considerations do not satisfactorily demonstrate the

interrelatedness between motivation and autonomy, but educational research and theories regarding cognitive motivation illustrate the link clearly.

The lack of research available on cognitive motivation and individualized learning, along with anecdotal and negative student comments about their own language learning success in Individualized Instruction, motivated Bown (2009) to present a rich qualitative description and a situated view of learner strategies and processes to manage their own affective filter and to control their own learning environment. The researcher compares and contrasts the environments of materials-based courses and self-instructional programs, acknowledges distance learning and self-access centers have become more popular than individualized instruction and confirms their popularity even though these environments share the common challenges of self-pacing, planning, isolation, need of self-regulating strategies, intrinsic motivation and lack of frequent interaction with instructors.

In Bown's 2009 study, 13 women and 7 men, ages 18 to 45, with a wide variety of language study backgrounds took part in the study. Some had significant previous Russian study, others were beginners, some had access to native speakers, others had very limited access to any Russian speakers, and they all had widely varying work situations, ranging from full-time employment to unemployed. Bown notes two types of strategies: those for control and ordering their environment and those for managing their affective filters.

Success in self-instructional or self-access programs, like those examined in Bown's study, require students to take control of their environment by being proactive in getting needs met. Short-term goal-setting and self-imposed deadlines were common strategies. With a lack of frequent oral practice, successful students proactively sought conversation opportunities with native speakers, advanced speakers, and round table discussions. Some even talked to themselves, to people who did not know Russian, or to pets. Bown points out the anxiety, frustration, and negative emotions that are experienced during foreign language learning and notes the degree to which students struggle with their self-concept, to express themselves, and to talk about important ideas (citing Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Avoidance of content or certain advisors was common, though learners admitted that evasion of lessons only proved to be a temporary relief. Self-talk was another common strategy, which filled the void of co-learners' or instructors' encouragement or help with prioritizing and motivation. Self-described "disciplined" students reported a more positive course view, while "lazy" or "disorganized" students had less favorable views. More successful students reported themselves as active agents who keenly secured their own outcome. Socio-relatedness and connectivity with a communication partner or group spurred on motivation in all cases.

This drive to take control of the learning process is one aspect of a student's willingness to engage or communicate with the target language. Bown suggests that administrators and instructors should be aware of common

struggles and frustration of students and empower them to see themselves as capable agents in control of their environment and emotions, and inform of available community of support either on campus, in the community, or online.

Students' willingness to engage

In immersion environments, one must communicate in the target language, even if all skills and functions are not in place. In the same situation, one might be willing to communicate on one occasion and, on another day, be unwilling to communicate. Adolescent immersion programs provide interesting contexts to examine how learners struggle with self-concept, not only because of their physical developmental stage, but also because of their new language environment. Researchers in this area have focused on the unique psychology of adolescents, pointing out that it is during this stage abstract thought and self-concept emerge (Santrock, 2005), and the lack of consistent self-awareness and understanding of their true self (Jacobs, Bleeker, & Constantino, 2003). Also discussed in the relevant literature is how communication restraints affect autonomy and self-expression.

Participants in the MacIntyre *et*. *al* study were 100 English-speaking Canadian students enrolled in a French-immersion program for 7th through 9th grade in Cape County, Canada, with ages ranging from 12 to 14 years old. Students had access to both English and French and immersion and non-immersion interactions during the school day. At the beginning of the 6-week

period of study, students completed a questionnaire about language background and French language use. Using a modified version of an orientation index (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983), researchers assessed the students' language learning motivations. Employment, travel, social, and cultural appreciation were top motivations for study. MacIntyre and Gardner's focused essay technique (1991) indicated the six situations in which students were most willing to communicate and most unwilling to communicate. In journals, students noted the places where these situations arose, how they felt, and who their conversational partners were. A qualitative analysis of journal entries indicated students' levels of willingness. Journal entries were typed exactly as the students typed them into e-documents "Most Willing" and "Least Willing", then grouped by themes. Via this method, researchers collected 241 "willing" situations and 179 for "unwilling".

The Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the Pyramid Model (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998) served as guides determining motivational factors and for measuring students' willingness to communicate. Ambivalence was demonstrated in the following areas: classroom language use with peers and teachers, error corrections and peer mentoring, control motives and others exclusion, perceived competence, and language use outside the classroom. In every instance, students indicated being willing to communicate under specific situations within these areas and then, later on, unwilling. All seemed to hinge on the students' perception of the situation: Am I

being asked to perform for the entertainment of others or am I being asked to help? Am I being corrected in order to help me or to make fun of me? I want to use language to be a part of a clique, but I dislike being excluded.

Implications of the McIntyre *et al.* study suggest teachers should consider the ambivalent attitudes of most language learners and allow this to shape their approach to teaching situations. As evidenced by this study, learners tend to be more willing to produce the target language in authentic, supportive, encouraging, empowering situations. Competence, relatedness, and autonomy as well as intrinsic and explicit motivation are all factors.

The researchers additionally explore fascinating territory in their study on ambivalence. Though their study focused on preteens and teenagers, their conclusions are appropriate considerations for all learners. Learners will produce and engage if they feel relationally connected to the people in their language environment, if they feel helpful to others, and if the language production is natural and authentic. Production is reluctant when learners feel like others are making fun of them, if they feel as though they are being asked to perform for the pleasure of others, or if they sense error correction undermines them. The learning environment, or students' perception of it, affects the willingness to produce and interact with the target language. These supportive, healthy personal connections and feeling of safety within a learning environment is interrelatedness.

CHAPTER 3

Interrelatedness and Intrinsic Motivation

In foreign language learning, teachers urge students to bravely tackle the target language with limited vocabulary and different accents. Adolescence is a time during which students are more preoccupied with not looking foolish than with a kitchen vocabulary list or the present progressive (Horwitz, 2013). How are students to meet these challenges and demands without the assurance of a safe learning environment and the basic element of trust in their teacher? Glasser (1992, p. 11; as cited in Sullo, 2007, p. 17) states:

> "Quality schoolwork (and the quality life that results from it) can only be achieved in a warm, supportive classroom environment. It cannot exist if there is an adversarial relationship between those who teach and those who are asked to learn...Above all there must be trust: They all have to believe that the others have their welfare in mind. Without this trust, neither students nor teachers will make the effort to do quality work".

Educators may feel that there are too many constraints beyond their control, such as parent relationships, limited opportunities for autonomy for themselves and for their students or limited time available to make meaningful relationships with each study. Bao and Lam take each constraint into account while conducting

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their seminal 2008 study. For this reason, I will devote a section to this study

and a related work (Rivers 2001) and highlight findings, that in my studied

estimation, that should influence foreign language pedagogy.

Bao and Lam (2008)

The role of interrelatedness in developing intrinsic motivation is

undeniable given the research. Most illuminating in this regard is Bao and Lam's

(2008) comprehensive study involving Chinese middle-adolescence aged

learners. In this important study, the authors part from the premise that

autonomy is synonymous with freedom of choice and they explore the roles of

socio-relatedness, choice, and autonomy. The authors posit that the self-identify

of Anglo- American children tends to be more independent than that of Asian

children, who lean more toward in-group decisions; for this reason the

researchers select Chinese children for the study. Through this study, they urge

educators to consider choice and autonomy anew and to view autonomy as the

degree to which a learner is able to buy into a decision or action. By this fresh

perspective, they purpose their study and ask: Is it possible for a learner to

experience autonomy even when decisions are made for him or her?

Additionally, how does the socio-relatedness between the decision maker and the

learner affect the learner's sense of autonomy and motivation? Is motivation in

Asian children greater when the task involves in-group relatedness and it is lower

when the task centered on autonomy, as Iyengar and Lepper (1999) suggest? In

addressing these questions, Bao and Lam conduct four studies focus on the middle childhood years, an important developmental stage, during which autonomy begins to surface, parents begin to share decision-making, and children are expected to become increasingly more independent and responsible.

In the first study, Bao and Lam focus particularly on mother-child relatedness. Based on the research of Chao (1994), Chen, Lee, and Stevenson (1996), the researchers point out that Chinese parents often have high expectations of their children and enroll them in many co-curricular activities. Given this parent-child dynamic, Study 1 explores the interaction between relatedness and personal choice and how that interaction may affect motivation. Their hypothesis was that if the mother and child had a close relationship, personal choice would not affect motivation; conversely, personal choice would greatly impact motivation if the relationship were strained. Since some children chose the course for themselves and some mothers chose the course for their children, participants were split into two groups. Children completed questionnaires that measured mother-child motivation and relatedness before the start of their lessons.

Bao and Lam found no compelling difference between the two groups when it came to perceived mother-child relatedness; however, motivation was reported higher in the child choice group. There was little correlation (.24) between relatedness and who chose the course, but a notable correlation increase

(.31) between motivation and choice condition, and an even greater correlation (.56) between relatedness and motivation. The closeness of the relationship predicted motivation, whereas freedom of choice did not. Bao and Lam state that, although motivation seemed higher in the group of children who selected their own course, the relatedness of the mother and child could reverse the effect, and explained 42% of the total variance. Also, if the mother-child relatedness happened to be low, motivation was higher in children who chose their own extra-curricular activity than those whose parents chose it. Finally, if the relationship was strong, motivation was not affected by free choice.

The hypothesis set forth by Bao and Lam is supported by Study 1 in that motivation and the impact that freedom of choice has on it is greatly determined by mother-child relatedness. Even if the participant did not select the course, motivation was still high in those with close relationships with their mothers. Student choice was only a factor when the relationship was strained. Based on these results, the researchers suggest that Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) findings only present the side of strained mother-child relationships and these data say nothing about pairings who have close mother-child relatedness. Again, the researchers note that freedom of choice is not the same as autonomy and, because of this distinction, they could not imply *autonomy* was unimportant to children with close maternal relationships based on findings from Study 1. Further, because of the closeness, participants could have valued and accepted

the choices made for them, as set forth by Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-determination Theory. Finally, Bao and Lam conclude their discussion of Study 1 by giving another explanation for their findings: perhaps, for example, the mothers made well-suited choices for their children because of their close relationship and they knew their preferences without having to ask them outright. To address this possibility, Bao and Lam initiate a second study.

Study 2 also focuses on mother-child relatedness, but contained elements of manipulated freedom, and was conducted during school hours. In this study, participants were not put into groups based on who chose the course, rather they were placed randomly into two groups: student-choice and mother-choice. Participants completed the same questionnaire as in Study 1 to determine mother-child relatedness. After a week, the participants returned to complete another questionnaire based on an anagram activity they completed. In the student-choice group, children were presented three types of anagrams and told to choose the one they liked most. After 10 minutes, students shared their thoughts and feelings about the anagram on a questionnaire and then were told about the study being conducted. The procedure was the same for the mother-choice group, but students were told that they must work on the anagram chosen by their mothers. After 10 minutes, they shared their thoughts and feelings about the anagram, and were then told about the study and that their mothers had not been contacted to choose an anagram after all.

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Motivation was measured by a 6-point Likert scale to answer two questions: How much did they like the anagram? and How interesting was it? The result was a .89 correlation between the two questions, and the average was used to determine the level of motivation. Mother-child relatedness was similar in the two groups, motivation was higher in the child-choice group, which outperformed the mother-choice group. No correlation was found between relatedness and choice conditions and little correlation between performance and relatedness (.15). Stronger correlations were seen between motivation and choice condition (.29), choice condition and performance (.30), performance and motivation (.39), and relatedness and motivation (.51). Other findings were that in strong mother-child relationships, the opportunity to choose the anagram did not overly affect motivation; however, if the relationship were strained, the freedom to choose increased participant motivation. With regards to task performance, academic standing and freedom of choice determined outcomes more reliably than relatedness.

Combined with Study 1, the results of this second study further imply that the freedom to choose only plays a large role in motivation when the mother-child relationship is weak or strained. Strong mother-child relatedness can foster internalization and an acceptance of choices made by trusted others. Realizing the mother-child dynamic is not the only one at play in education, Bao and Lam

carried about a third study which focused on the important role of the teacher and teacher-student relatedness.

Similar to the second study, Study 3 uses the same elements of manipulated freedom; however, it focuses on the teacher-student relationship, with teachers taking the place of mothers as the decision makers. The teachers in the study were subject instructors as well as mentors. The teacher-student relationship was calculated by reference to the short form of the Teacher as Social Context questionnaire (Portland State University, p. 3), which contained eight questions that depicted the student-perceived relationship with the teacher. Cronbach's alpha was .85, with higher scores signifying a closer teacher-student relationship.

The results of Study 3 show that teacher-relatedness was scarcely affected by choice conditions (.10 correlation), but the student-choice group demonstrated higher motivation and performed better on the anagrams. Correlations between motivation and choice conditions were .30, between performance and choice condition were .41, between motivation and performance were .55, and between teacher-child relatedness and motivation were .57. Interestingly enough, the correlations between relatedness and performance were only .17. If the teacher-student relationship were strong, the ability to choose had little effect on motivation. As with students with poor relationships with their mothers in Study 2, if the teacher-relationship were strained, motivation

increased with freedom of choice. Task performance mirrored that of Study 2 – academic performance and choice predicted a more positive outcome than relatedness. In conclusion, Study 3 produced nearly the same findings as Study 2. These two studies, however, had not addressed true *autonomy* and, therefore, the authors carried out a fourth study, which focused not on freedom of choice and relatedness, but on autonomy and relatedness.

As previously discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, external regulation controls behavior and limits autonomy by external forces. Recall that behaviors only controlled for the sake of protection or clarity are considered introjected regulation and fosters partial internalization. An even higher level of autonomy is seen in identified regulation, where behaviors are personal and important. The highest level of autonomy is intrinsic regulation, which includes the pleasure of performing certain behaviors.

Study 4 focuses on teacher-student relatedness. Bao and Lam define various levels of regulation. In this study, autonomy in school work was assessed using an adapted questionnaire from the Stepping Motivation Scale (citing Hayamizu, 1997). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with 20 statements about why they do certain things. The range of Cronbach's alpha was .69 to .82. Bao and Lam used this formula to calculate an RAI (relative autonomy index) score (Ryan & Connell, 1989): RAI = 2 x (introjected regulation) – 2 x (external regulation). Higher RAI scores meant

higher autonomy. Teacher-student relatedness was measured in the same manner as Study 3. Motivation was considered using the short form of the Engagement versus Dissatisfaction with Learning Questionnaire (citing Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Skinner & Belmont, 1993), which considered students' perceived effort and level of engagement with the task. Cronbach's alpha was .75, and the higher the score, the higher the motivation. As Bao and Lam hypothesized, autonomy had a positive association with motivation, independent of relatedness levels. Cross-studies performed did not indicate an interaction effect between relatedness and autonomy on motivation. At every point along the continuum of teacher-relatedness, a positive association between motivation and autonomy is noted.

As indicated through close examination of Bao and Lam's in-depth study, close socio-relatedness between decision makers and learners can actually reverse any negative feelings about lack of choice, motivation, or solid performance. This connectivity enables the learner to internalize decisions made by others as if the decisions were made themselves, thus fostering a sense of autonomy, which can lead to motivation, which can lead to success. This is an important implication given the traditional classroom setting in which students do not have a choice of their coursework, their textbooks, or their teachers.

A counterpoint to Bao and Lam's study is presented by Rivers (2001), who observes learners' reactions when the socio-relatedness between the learner and

decision maker is strained or non-existent. Learner questionnaires indicate their awareness of teacher-student and student-student conflicts in styles. Students are reported to have accurately identified their personal learning styles, preferences of strategies and, for some, their degree of field dependence. Further, Rivers states that that all learners demonstrated autonomous behaviors: they repeatedly demanded modifications to content and teaching styles and they sought the intervention of the administration when conflicts between the instructor and students were not resolved. Common student requests or demands were extra time to produce better quality work, materials (e.g., dictionaries, books, primers, transcripts), more writing activities, other instructors for tutoring, and less homework. The Soviet-trained instructors in this study were not accustomed to autonomous actions by learners; they often rejected student input, resulting in administrative intervention on occasions.

The findings reported by Rivers show that general learner dissatisfaction and frustration even affected student-student interactions; this is important to note given the negative ramifications on the learning environment. Rivers concludes that the "hallmark" of a good language learner is flexibility. If true, educators might question whether a good language learner can be considered "flexible" if autonomy means demanding change when course content does not suit the learner's preferences.

Chapter 4

Implications for the traditional foreign language classroom

The adjacent literature on learner autonomy has been too theoretical for too long and calls for more empirical research to substantiate initial findings in previous research (Benson, 2006). Autonomy with regards to cultural implications, teacher-student interrelatedness, teacher education, educational and policy reform are worthwhile for future study if we are to understand what learner autonomy is and empower learners to transcend the classroom by influencing and interacting with the world beyond its walls. The teaching context for most foreign language teachers is a traditional classroom, with a fairly set curriculum, textbooks, desks and possibly a language lab. Teacher and student autonomy could seem considerably out of reach; however, there are steps that teachers can take to secure autonomous spaces within the most rigorous curriculum, even if the curriculum were developed by someone else.

Autonomy and self-access resources

Cotterall and Reinders (2001) investigate independent language learning outside the traditional classroom and its effectiveness, particularly in self-access language learning centers at the Victoria University of Wellington through the Self Access Centre, the English Proficiency Program, and the Language Learning Program. The researchers cite Gardner and Miller (1999) and Crabbe (1993),

who coined the term "bridge", for centers serve as a bridge between classroom learning and independent learning. The research for the study took place over 12 weeks in an intensive English course at the university's Language Learning Centre (LLC) with included 153 students from 25 countries. Each student received an orientation to the LLC prior to the study. Roughly 40 students per day visited the Self-Access Room, although many more visited other rooms within the center. Seventy-one point eight percent of the visitors indicated that they came at least once or twice each week, and about 50 students checked out books regularly. Reports showed that listening activities were the most used resource. Ninety percent of the participants felt the LLC played a "quite" or "very" crucial role in their English learning, 88% felt the center helped them learn English independently, and 93% expressed that independent English learning was a dominant goal for the course. This study strongly supports the effectiveness and the need for self-access learning opportunities.

While many teachers do not have access to such state-of-the-art facilities that are completely devoted to foreign language learning, other steps can be taken to simulate a self-access center within the traditional classroom. The classroom could be set up in various modules in a clock-wise orientation, with no more than five students together at one module. Possible stations could be active study, listening or viewing, journaling or other writing, culture exploration with teacher-created or textbook materials or with a computer, or speaking with a teacher or

heritage speaker as a moderator, or acting out a skit.   After students have chosen where they would prefer to begin, a timer is set for at least seven minutes, allowing a minute or so for students to rotate to the next station. Teachers could adapt the suggested modules as needed to meet the needs of their students.

Additional module considerations could be a grammar instruction and practice station, a tutoring station instead of the active study module or including a station that focuses on current events for more advanced learners. This self-access module approach could be used for every class or one day each week could be dedicated to modular study. To foster a sense of autonomy, students could suggest module themes and choose from a variety of activities or prompts that meet the lesson's objective at the different output stations. This design expands students' minds about what it means to study a foreign language and guides them as they seek to access the language. Learners must know how to access resources to better meet their individual needs and to envision more realistic learning plans for themselves.

Focus on Form, writing and the autonomous learner

Vickers and Ene (2006) posit that autonomy is not isolated activities without instruction, rather an aim of teaching that eventually ends in training the learner to act independently (citing Benson & Voller, 1997). Expanding on the findings of Ferris (2002), the researchers examine the use of L2 writing to foster

autonomy as the learner notices his own errors and sets forth to amend them. Focus on form (FonF), they argue, affords opportunities for learning skill development that transcends the classroom. Moreover, advanced writing should be chosen, as this skill not only works toward autonomy, but also provides useful feedback in becoming more accurate. In further support of their claims, they cite Izumi (2002) and propose that learners gain autonomy by comparing what they produce against that of a native or other advanced source, thereby promoting noticing and acquisition.

Seeking to contribute to the debate articulate to the debate in Leki (1991), Vickers and Ene explore the value of explicit activities with regards to autonomy. Participants for this study were 13 ESL undergraduate students at a university, all enrolled in two ESL composition courses. Learners took a pretest, and those scoring higher than a 90% were released from the study as they demonstrated mastery of the target language. The past hypothetical conditional was selected as the target form because it seemed the most useful for advanced thought, expression, and writing. Ten picture-based prompts and some key words to be included were given to the students to write their own sentences. The average score on this assignment was 68%. The next day, the learners were given a fairly simple 400-word reading selection in the target language that incorporated the same keywords as in the assignment and were asked to find the differences between their sentences and those seen in the text. Over the course of 10 days, additional tasks were completed. A week after all tasks had been accomplished,

students returned for another writing test, and the average score was 93.05%. Even five weeks later, they continued to perform well, with the an average score of 92.46%. Vickers and Ene conclude that students were able to self-correct by engaging in noticing and that these findings show that explicit error self-correction is a worthwhile activity to achieve grammatical accuracy.

Not all writing must be accomplished in a classroom setting. Diary or journal entries are worthwhile exercises of autonomous writing. Blogging takes this concept to a technologically-advanced and public level and might be more interesting to language learners in this day and age, given the popularity of social media sites. Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010) explore the effect of blog creation, through Blog-Assisted Language Learning on autonomy. Their study included 35 participants who were second year MA English Language Teaching students at the H M Patel Institute of English Training and Research in Gujarat, India. All had limited access to English and to technology and had differing English language abilities and computer literacy. The purpose of the blog project was for students to showcase what they were learning in an attractive way online. When the project was completed, participants turned in reflective reports, and some participants were then interviewed based on their reports.

A questionnaire was given at the start of the study to gather information about perceived independence, leadership skills, relational skills, and computer literacy. Of the 35 participants, the 12 with the highest scores were appointed as group coordinators and six of these coordinators were additionally tasked with

serving as project coordinators based on their levels of language or computer skills. All 35 participants kept a reflective journal that answered prompted questions about the experience. Blogger and WordPress sites were used for blog creation, and students were required to post at least one academic article and one topic of personal interest. Bloggers could apply to receive compensation though Google AdSense, which served as an extrinsic motivational factor of financial gain. Eight steps were given to students to complete systematically in the creation of their blogs. Project coordinators posted their blogs first to serve as examples. The blogs were monitored for data collection over the course of the month. Also, an analysis was performed of the 35 reports submitted at the end of the project.

The findings of the Bhattacharya and Chauhan study indicate four sub-categories of autonomy: independent language-learning skills and strategies, motivation, the ability to make decisions and overcome obstacles, interdependence which leads to independence. During the blog project, 61% experienced the greatest improvements in research, purpose setting, and brain storming. Some groups exercised autonomy by choosing to change from Blogger to WordPress so that they could upload videos to enhance their blogs. Despite limited computer access and other technological challenges, 63% reported feeling in control and able to meet challenges. With regards to autonomous interdependence, 52% had no problems with seeking help from classmates. Despite the external motivator of compensation though Google AdSense, 67%

reported that their motivation was intrinsic: achievement, self-correction, trying something even more creative or challenging, or working independently with new skill sets.

Foreign language learning and the adolescent male

Ask any high school teacher of any subject matter to name one of the biggest challenges he or she faces each day, and chances are the answer would be capturing the interest of the male students in the classroom. It is not within the scope of this report to restate the field's discoveries of various learning differences according to gender; however, it is important to consider how males approach foreign language learning. Designing a rich curriculum that adolescent males would find meaningful and interesting would be enriching and beneficial for all students, regardless of gender.

In their book, *Boys and Foreign Language Learning,* Carr and Pauwels (2006) explore the boys' experience with foreign language learning in a classroom setting in North Queensland, Australia, over a two year period. Carr summarizes the impetus for the book was her observations of common attitudes about gender and foreign language learning as "a general understanding that languages are, on the whole, what girls do…and they are 'good' at them [while] boys are 'better' at other things" (p. x). This attitude continues to shape school-wide policies and curriculum. Even though Carr perceived herself to be "boy-friendly" with regards to subject matters in her French class, despite her "best

efforts to keep them…they continued to disappear" from her class rosters (p. x). She acknowledged that there "were some powerful influences in play" that she did not understand at the time.

In the interviews that Carr and Pauwels conducted with some 200 boys in a large public high school, it was evident that most of the boys found foreign language "irrelevant, uninteresting and – for many boys – discouragingly difficult" (p. xii). The researchers note that the most poignant finding was that the boys themselves considered languages as something girls "do". By citing other research in the field, they summarize that often adolescent male behavior is contrary to productive schooling. Male students often are

> "more reluctant to communicate, [desire] to be 'cool' and…disengaged
> from academic effort, reluctant to assume leadership positions, use
> aggression and violence in conflict resolution, and are
> [unable/disinclined] to develop literacy and oracy skills – in either their
> first or additional languages" (p. 25).

In short, rather than expand on what schools can do to be more "boy-friendly", their study sought to find ways to encourage male students to be more "school-friendly" while making the academic classroom seem more "masculine" to them. This effort centers on curriculum modifications.

Carr and Pauwels state that curriculum is often a gendered area, and students perceive this "truth" (p. 41). One of the most standout observations in

the book is that many of the boys were shocked that they were being interviewed about how they felt about foreign language learning and school in general . Contrary to common thought, the researchers hold that all the boys were eager to share, had plenty to say, and even thought the process was "fun!" (p. 59). This revelation alone should guide decision-making in high school classrooms. Students are capable of providing meaningful feedback about how they learn and what interests them. Scharle and Szabó (2000) state that teachers can attempt to provide an ideal learning environment and input, "but learning can only happen if learners are willing to contribute" and that "their passive presence will not suffice" (p. 4). Creating space for this discourse is a step toward promoting autonomy and student responsibility for learning.

One comment by a 13-year-old boy demonstrates the student need for autonomy in choice-making. Using a banner posted in the school that reads "I choose my own behavior", the boy enthusiastically agreed. He confirmed that he is his own decision maker and he chooses to "muck up" and to not conform "like the girls" (Carr & Pauwels, 2006, p. 62). Teachers must find ways to encourage positive, constructive decision-making that provides opportunities to be "school-friendly", not just "boy-friendly".

Lastly, interrelatedness is crucial for creating an autonomous space for learners, regardless of gender. Carr and Pauwels interviewed a teacher beloved by many male and female students. He shared what it means to be a good

language teacher, stressing the importance of a good command of the language and grammar system,

> "but only as a tool and not as an ideology; an affinity with the students in terms of their interests – you've got to like them; and of course that means being equitable, catering for individual needs as well as working for the common good.   […] I work hard on group cohesion – try to convince them that I'm on the same side, I want the same thing as them…sometimes you'll veer off what you're supposed to be doing, but you're building relationship, which then makes it easier to come back onto task" (p. 146).

As stated by this teacher, interrelatedness creates the environment that makes any number of meaningful learning outcomes possible. Although deviations from the lesson plan seem distracting and a waste of time, the time lost if often regained by the students' motivation to work with a teacher whom they feel supports and cares for them.

The above-referenced teacher's comments echo the sentiment expressed by many of the boys interviewed for this study. They reported their dislike of feeling completely dependent on the teacher, their frustration with the teacher-centered nature of the classroom, their hopelessness when "treated like kids", and their desire to have "real work", not the customary fill-in-the-blank worksheets so commonly used in language instruction (p. 174). Teachers viewed the boys as disinterested and hard to reach, and the teachers felt that they needed to make

the language more accessible by simplifying it or reviewing concepts repeatedly. From the boys' perspective, they wanted more target language use and more challenging, task-based and authentic practice. These sentiments hold, regardless of gender, and present opportunities for teachers to make modifications to lessons and their teaching style with these considerations in mind.

Most foreign language curriculua concentrate on the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. While all are important and necessary in achieving language proficiency, slight modifications to activities can make foreign language classes appeal to more students. For example, instead of having a conversation circle, ask students to divide themselves into their own groups and allow them the choice of sitting and talking or acting out a skit based on their own interests. This slight change fosters autonomy and creates space for learners to explore their own interests and preferences. If students choose a topic that is beyond their immediate vocabulary and grammar abilities, it presents an opportunity for the teacher to relate to students through a topic of personal interest to them. Additionally, students leave the exercise knowing vocabulary and phrases that are applicable to their lives outside of the classroom. Anytime they engage in the hobby or activity portrayed in their skit, they will reinforce the newly-acquired vocabulary and grammar. Lastly, any such performance, be it a student-planned skit or a process drama that retells a story, "allows students to take on an experience different viewpoints, social behaviours and emotions from a safer position of in-role characterisation", situated in the concept of play, that is

"designed to support cognitive, affective and social development (O'Toole, 1992, as cited by Carr & Pauwels, 2006, p. 187). Further, it shifts the power role from teacher to the student, thereby increasing intrinsic motivation, interest and autonomy .

Conclusion

The field of foreign language education constantly provides new and improved methodologies based on the latest developments in neuro-science, second language acquisition research and educational theory. Much data have been collected, and the evidence is clear: intrinsic motivation is the key to meaningful learning experiences. In many classrooms, curricula are set by the state or by the school. As previously discussed, often these curricula are not inherently interesting to students; however, teachers can modify lesson plans in ways that increase opportunities for autonomy and interrelatedness. Through student-teacher interrelatedness, both parties share a connectivity that compliments the shared role of decision-making, much like we see with the well-connected mothers and teachers in Bao and Lam's (2008) study and evidenced by the teacher's comments quoted in the book by Carr and Pauwels (2006). Perhaps even more than the latest research trends, knowing students and their needs enables teachers to make better pedagogical (and more attractive) decisions for students.

Carr and Pauwels (2006) report that supervisors of student teachers often advise them to "forget all that theory" and to "watch, listen and learn the 'real' nature of teaching" (p. 180). The researchers suggest that teachers perhaps now find themselves in a "post-methods" period, that foreign language teaching "must always be context-responsive, student-specific and culturally attuned", and that

such a focus on methods "take[s] insufficient account of the agency of learners or the significance of context" (p. 181). Teachers feel as though they are not autonomous to do as they feel they need to do to reach and build relationship with their students, often commenting the imbalance between what they "want to do" and "have to do" (p. 182). Unless the teacher personally experiences autonomy, how can learners be led toward autonomy? The ability to act autonomously empowers teachers to modify lessons so that they are more interesting for students.

Benson (2006) advocates that more research should be dedicated to the implications of language learning autonomy and education policy globalization given the growing interest in language teaching worldwide. He proposes that more attention should be directed to autonomy and sociocultural theory and suggests that empirical research is needed to anchor, what has traditionally been, a highly-theoretical field due to earlier trends in autonomy that leaned more towards advocacy. If this shift is made, Benson surmises we can truly begin to understand how autonomy may change given a learner's individual needs.

This report provides a mere glimpse of what researchers in the field of foreign language education have discovered in the last couple of decades. Their data span the globe, and each study focuses on a target demographic that would yield answers to proposed hypotheses and research questions. Though seemingly diverse, each selected study that I have incorporated specifically addresses

questions that ultimately led me to seek answers through my coursework. As demonstrated by the results presented here, our focus as teachers must be fostering intrinsic motivation through autonomy and interrelatedness. Although students may not be able to articulate their learning needs using the pedagogical terminology found in the studies that shape this report, they do often indicate their preferences and make suggestions regarding how lessons and assignments can be made more fun or applicable to their lives outside of our classrooms.

Ideally, our language classrooms should create a safe environment for expressing ideas and one that fosters curiosity. Any time a student asks if an "assignment could be done *this* way", we should give pause to consider what need the suggestion truly addresses. Would the objective be better met through the student's recommendation? Is this interpretation of how to meet the lesson's objective more engaging and does it foster more autonomy? Students across academic disciplines often lament: Why do we have to learn this? Or, When will I ever use this information in my life? These are valid and important questions to which we must have a viable and honest answer. Teachers may feel that it would be best to squelch such student feedback, but developing agency is supremely important in the development of autonomy. McLean explains that students who feel valued by their teachers think positively about school and their relationships there. These students are "likely to take on board the values of those teachers who help them meet their affiliation needs" and "gradually change from feeling

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imposed [on] and externally control[ed] to internally motivate[ed]." (McLean, 2009, p. 18).

As teachers, we must become comfortable with having less control over all decision-making in our classrooms and commit to the mindfulness of adapting lessons so that they are more attractive and interesting to students, rather than subjecting the students (and ourselves) to curricula created by another. Our students should consider us to be co-learners in their learning environment. Through this interrelatedness, our students will inform us of how they best learn, and through our knowledge of them, we will design better lessons that still meet lesson objectives while affording more and more opportunities for autonomy. As McLean points out, "autonomy is...a process not an event" (McLean, 2009, p. 21).

What happens in the classroom matters far more than the grades we assign. We should view our classrooms as training grounds for future influential leaders. As Little (1995) asks: unless one has experienced autonomy, how can he or she guide and allow others to act autonomously? As foreign language teachers, we train and seek to inspire students to use another language and to know another culture so that they are equipped to experience the world beyond our classroom walls in meaningful ways. Regardless of the professional field, intrinsic motivation yields the most meaningful, creative and satisfying work. Additionally, McLean explains that

"motivation does not come from getting what you want from others or your environment. Neither does it come entirely from within. It comes from the interactions between yourself and others, the task and your surroundings" (p. 22).

If our language classes were to provide students with the opportunity to discover these truths, perhaps our class truly could change the world by creating leaders who know the value of autonomy and interrelatedness and who happen to have studied another language and its culture (Pink, 2009).

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Vita

Angela Tauscher Pittman was born in Bristol, Virginia. After graduating from high school, she entered Ferrum College in Ferrum, Virginia, earning degrees in both Spanish and International Business. She quickly left the world of international business to pursue her true dream, to become a high school Spanish teacher, and took courses at Meredith College and North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina, while teaching high school Spanish at a private K-12 school. In 2003, she moved to Austin, Texas, to work at the largest private, Christian, classical K-12 school in the country. In August of 2012, she entered the graduate program in Foreign Language Education at the University of Texas at Austin.

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