



Never Too Late: Why Students Begin Learning a Second Language at the University Level

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Introduction

- Ages 18–64, **5%** of Wisconsin identify as Spanish speaking, **.53%** are German speaking, and **.11%** are Russian speaking. (Migration Policy Institute, 2021)
- Decrease in language education in US universities
- Reasons and motivations of students starting their L2 journey
- Data from Spanish, French, Russian, and German **100-level** students at University of Wisconsin – La Crosse



Theoretical Orientation

- Three types of language-related motivation (Gardner's Motivation Theory, 2010)
 - Intrinsic motivation
 - Interest and enjoyment
 - Integrative motivation
 - Attitudes toward the language and culture
 - Instrumental motivation
 - Practical and pragmatic benefits





Review of Literature

Importance of Second Language

- Memory improvement
- Enhances ability to multitask
- Improves performance in other academic areas
- Increases your understanding of the languages you already speak
- Creates a stronger career profile

(Middlebury Language Schools, 2020)

Review of Literature

L2 Enrollment

- High school enrollment
 - Graduation requirement
 - Engaging teacher/content
 - Variety
- Still no enrollment?
- Decrease of L2 enrollment 16.6 percent between fall 2016 and fall 2021
- College/University enrollment
 - 7% of students in the U.S studying a language
 - 94% of students in Europe studying **at least** one language (2018)
 - 71% of those students learning a 2nd language
 - 21% of those students learning more than 3

(Iula, 2021)
(Detlef, 2023)
(MLA, 2023)



Review of Literature

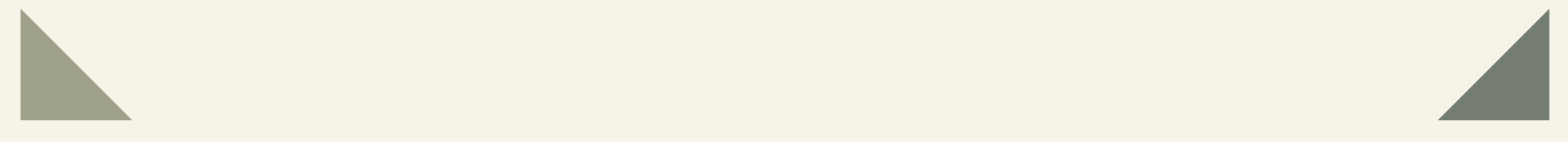
Benefits of Teachers' Strategies

- Two categories of motivational strategies
 - Instructional interventions
 - Self-regulation
- Influences
 - External and internal

(Moskovsky, C., Arabai, F., Paolini, S., & Ratcheva, S., 2013)
Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008)



Why did we do this research?

- Decline in L2 enrollment at the university level
 - Importance of bilingualism
 - Responses will benefit understanding of student motivation
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Research Questions

What motivates students to begin learning a new foreign language at UWL?

What impacts students' decision to continue studying their L2?

Methods: Data Collection

Survey

- 8-question Google Form
 - Sent to 9 professors
 - Spanish, Russian, Japanese, German, French, Chinese, and Arabic

Questions:

- What course are you currently enrolled in?
- What made you decide to take your current course?
- What activities and/or teaching methods have you found beneficial in your language course?

Methods: Data Collection

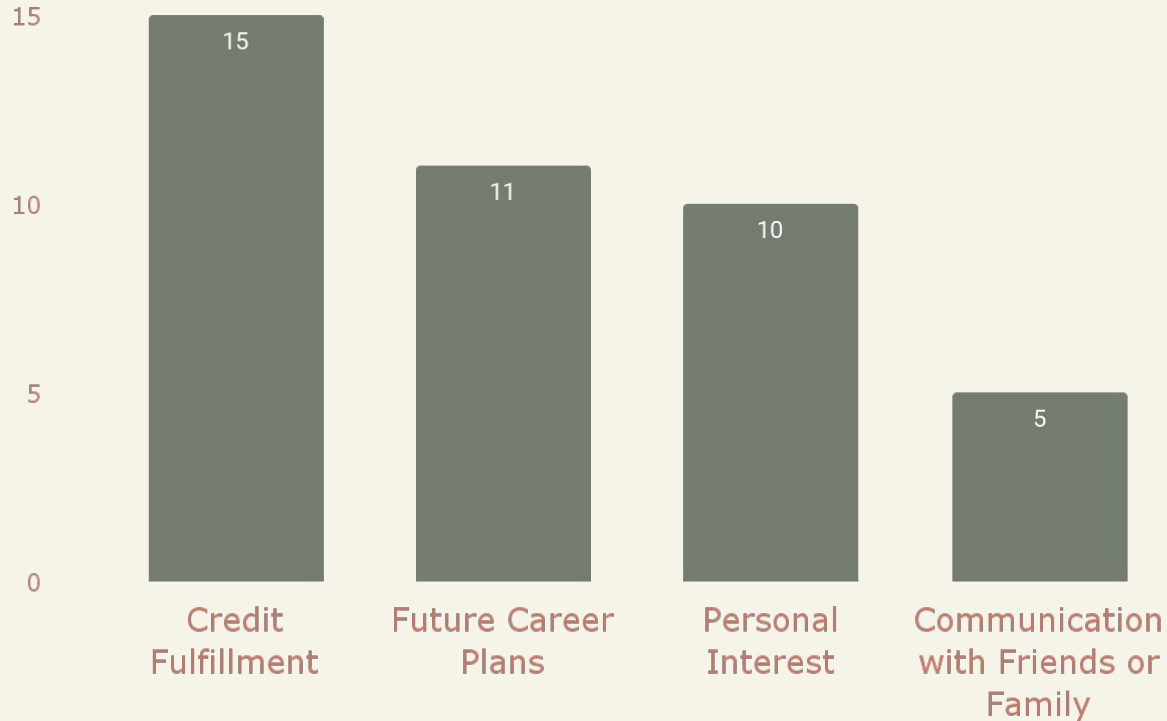
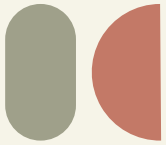
Participant Info

- 35 University of Wisconsin - La Crosse students
 - 16 freshmen, 9 sophomores, 4 juniors, and 6 5th years
- All enrolled in a 100-level language course
 - 16 in Spanish 103, 15 French 101 or 102, 2 Russian 101, and 1 German 101
- 10 participants (out of the 35) have not previously taken their enrolled language course
 - 7 in French 101 or 102, 2 are in Russian 101, and 1 in German 101

Data Analysis

- 35 **total** participants
- Qualitative: Identified common themes in participants' responses
- Quantitative: Calculated percentages
- 10 participants have **not** previously taken the language they are currently studying
 - Separately organized these responses by identifying common themes and calculating percentages

Why Take a New Language at UWL?

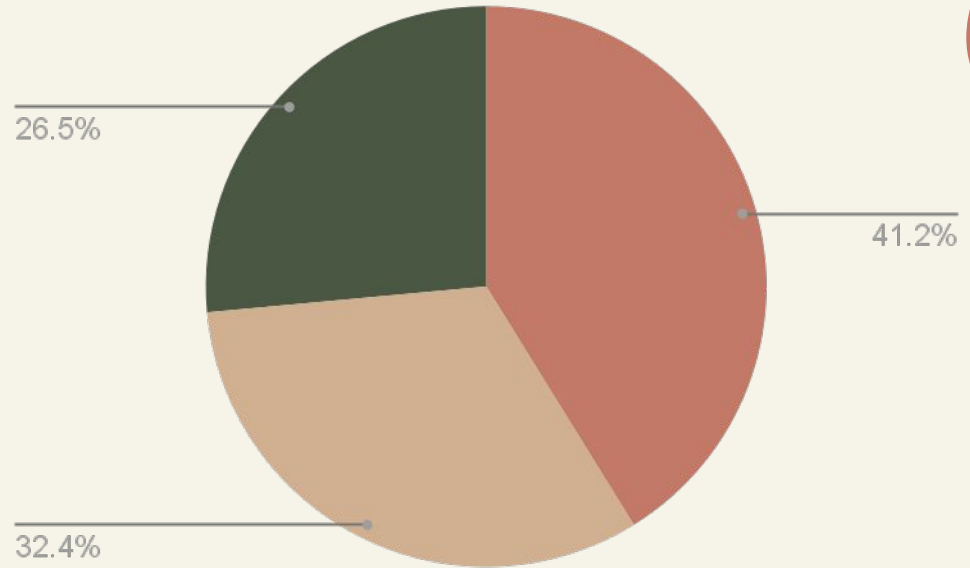


Teaching Methods that Promoted Motivation

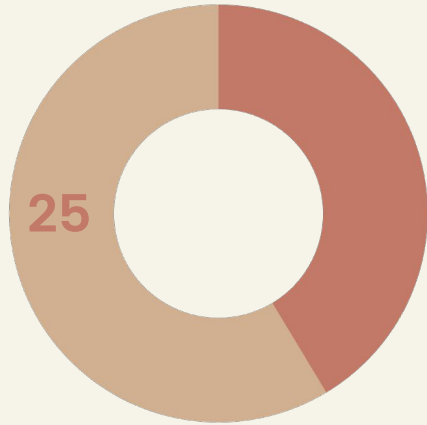
● Conversation Partners

● Immersion in the Classroom

● Repetitive Practice



Who Will Continue? Why?



● Will

● Will Not

Total 35 responses

16/35

Major requirement

5/35

Basic knowledge

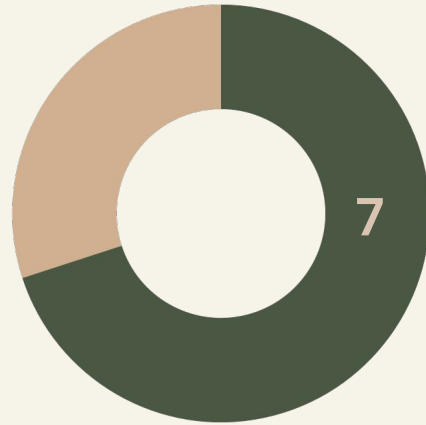
2/35

Travel plans

2/35

Friends/Family

Who Will Continue? Why?



Will

Will Not

10 responses
(those who have not previously taken
this language)

4/7

Major requirement

3/7

Basic knowledge

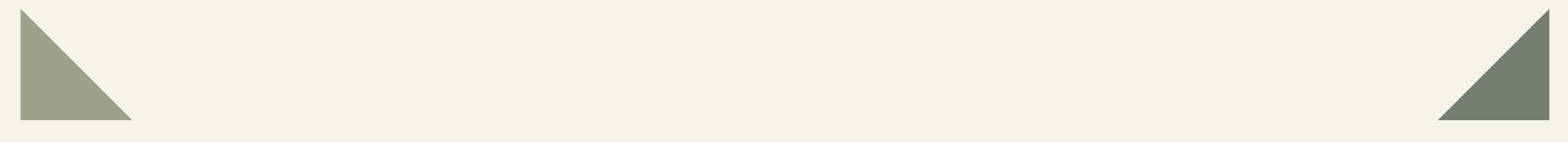
How it Connects

- Intrinsic motivation
 - 10 of 35 (29%) responses shared their desire for taking a language at the university level out of interest and fascination
- Integrative motivation
 - 11- continuing due to immersion in the classroom
 - Mentions culture of film, music, and dialogue
- Instrumental motivation
 - Most apparent among the responses
 - 11- chose to take for benefit for their future career
 - 5 - chose to take for communication with family/friends





Contribution to the Field

- Students are motivated
 - Better understanding of effective teaching methods for motivation in L2
 - UWL will acknowledge the positive effective offering L2 courses has on their students
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Questions?

