

Thematic Article

Increasing Motivation among Language Learners through Individualized Assessment

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Abstract

An extensive body of research has shown that motivation is integral to successful and sustained language learning (Carreira, 2005; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003; Gardner, 2005; Matsumoto & Obana, 2001; Yang, 2008; Yu & Watkins, 2008). Maintaining student motivation in all aspects of language instruction, particularly assessment, can be challenging for multiple reasons, including learner differences, access to technology, and, most recently, reactions to pandemic learning. Instructors therefore face the challenge of creating assessments that not only evaluate students' performance but also promote their ability and desire to learn. Based on the results of an action research project, this article highlights the benefits of two types of individualized assessment used to improve students' motivation while evaluating their performance: work cycle projects and a course portfolio. Using qualitative data collected from student reflective statements, I argue, first, that the ability to choose assessment topics and types motivates students to focus closely on course content and work creatively; these choices ultimately improve their desire to learn course material more than traditional assessment types. Second, encouraging learners to utilize and reflect on their strengths using a portfolio as assessment allows students to understand their strengths and weaknesses and empowers them as learners, thereby improving their motivation.

Keywords: assessment, second language instruction, learning motivation, learner autonomy

Introduction

Research has shown that motivation plays a seminal role in the success of language learners (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003; Matsumoto & Obana, 2001; Yang, 2008; Yu & Watkins, 2008). Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) point out that motivation is particularly important in the long-term goal of attaining proficiency because “even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language proficiency” in the absence of an underlying motivation to learn (p. 153). Among the many studies that have explored the theory behind motivation in second language acquisition (Chen, Warden, & Chang, 2005; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994), only a few have suggested practical strategies for classroom instruction (Chalupa & ter Haseborg, 2014; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Even fewer have examined the link between motivation and assessment in the second language classroom (Birjandi & Tamjid, 2010; Fletcher & Shaw, 2012; Tse, 2000).

While there is a significant body of research dealing with second language assessment, it largely deals with high-stakes proficiency testing that is not linked directly to classroom contexts, and its primary focus rests on quantitatively sophisticated methods of test development that are not immediately accessible to practicing teachers in the field (McNamara, 2001). Assessments that reflect classroom practices, such as the ACTFL Integrated Performance Assessments, are a more accurate measure of student ability than discrete-point, grammar-driven tests of the past (Adair-Hauck, et al., 2006); nevertheless, their content and delivery are still

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determined by the language instructor. In order to maximize student motivation for learning a language, efforts for increasing student motivation must extend to assessment as well as classroom practices.

With this directive in mind, the current study focuses on the effect of individualized assessment on students' motivation to learn and their awareness about how they learn best. Two types of individualized assessment were used in the study: 1) written and spoken work-cycle projects based on topics and formats of the students' choice; and 2) a course portfolio in which students evaluated their overall learning in the course. The portfolio included a reflective statement in which students analyzed, among other things, their areas of greatest improvement in the course and how the ability to choose assessment topics and types affected their learning. Based on qualitative data taken from the student reflections, this study sought to answer two questions:

1. How did the ability to make individualized decisions about the content and format of course projects affect students' motivation to learn?
2. What conclusions did students make about their own progress during the course and how did the process of reflection affect their motivation?

The first question examines directly the link between student motivation and individualized assessment. The second documents the students' ability to evaluate their performance and identify areas of need, a practice that is indirectly connected to increased motivation. The answers to both questions can ultimately serve as the foundation for recommendations about instructional and assessment practices that maximize student autonomy and motivation.

Motivation and Individualized Assessment

The foundations of motivation in language learning are based on two primary models: 1) learning inspired by the promise of outside reward or recognition, and 2) learning driven by an internally motivated desire. Gardner (1985) refers to the former as *instrumental* motivation (based on a practical reason for learning a language, such as fulfilling a course requirement or finding employment) and the latter as *integrative* (based on the desire to become incorporated into the target culture and to communicate with members of the target culture). Dörnyei (1994) expanded on Gardner's foundation by creating a model that emphasized motivations that are both *intrinsic* (based on the individual's internal desire to do something) and *extrinsic* (based on a goal that is separate from the activity itself). In the analysis of internal and external motivations and their influence on language learning, intrinsic motivation has often been considered the more influential source of motivation (Brown, 2001). Deci and Ryan (1985) stressed the importance of intrinsic motivation to successful learning in an educational setting explaining that, "[i]ntrinsic motivation is in evidence whenever students' natural curiosity and interest energize their learning. When the educational environment provides optimal challenges, rich sources of stimulation, and a context of autonomy, this motivational wellspring in learning is likely to flourish" (p. 245). Motivated learners want to learn, take concerted steps to do so, and ultimately enjoy the learning process (Gardner, 2001). This emphasis on intrinsic motivation and its link to learner autonomy suggests that educators can maximize motivation for learning in the classroom by establishing choices in instruction, including assessment.

According to Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985), learners must exercise autonomy in order for an activity to be motivating. When they express choice in their learning, their intrinsic motivation is likely to rise, which in turn leads to more effective learning. Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (1991) explain that SDT, when applied to an academic context, requires instructors to nurture in students "an interest in learning, a valuing of education, and confidence in their own capacities and attributes" all of which are the manifestations of intrinsic motivation within an extrinsically motivated setting (p. 325). Consequently, teachers who seek to improve student motivation can use autonomous choices, both through their classroom practices and the types of assessments they choose, as a means of promoting interest and confidence among learners.

While today's teachers provide a variety of individualized tasks and activities in their classrooms to keep students engaged, often they do not apply the same emphasis on individuality in assessment. Research has shown, however, that in addition to providing choice in terms of the topics and types of activities used in assessment, there is also a clear connection between heightened motivation and individualized assessment in the form of self-evaluation. Birjandi and Tamjid (2010) argued that self-assessment can be used as "an effective tool for enhancing learners' intrinsic motivation and improving their self-confidence" (p. 216). McMillan and Hearn (2008) maintained that "student self-assessment stands alone in its promise of improved student motivation, engagement, and learning" (p. 40). Through self-assessment, students learn how to evaluate their own performance and identify their strengths as well as areas of difficulty (Birjandi & Tamjid, 2010). They also

gain a better understanding of their needs as well as their individual goals and how to achieve them (Liang, 2006; Oscarson, 1989). Based on their ability to identify their own needs, students have the opportunity to think about their progress and consider ways to change or adapt their learning and ultimately make improvements (Kavaliauskiene, 2004). In this regard, self-assessment is more proactive than traditional types of assessment because it is an ongoing and active process, which continues beyond the assessment activity into daily learning. In short, when students are involved in reflection and self-evaluation, assessment can become a form of learning along with other aspects of the course.

Research Design and Methods

The purpose of the current study was to understand how two types of individualized assessment, work-cycle projects of the students' choosing and a self-assessment in the form of an end-of-semester portfolio, can contribute to student motivation and how this information can influence instructional practices. Students reported on both types of assessment in an end-of-semester reflection, the primary data collection method in this study. The study featured six iterations of a course (German 304), taught by the same instructor in the German Studies curriculum at a large state institution in the United States. Students typically took the course in the sixth or seventh semester of study, although some took it in the fifth semester or later in their studies. The course was designed around an interdisciplinary cultural and historical theme addressing the occupation of the *Sudetenland* during the Nazi period and using Josef Holub's novel *Der rote Nepomuk* (1993) as its primary source material. The book, written for adolescents, examines through the eyes of a young protagonist, Joseph, the contentious co-existence of multiple cultural groups living in the border regions between Czechoslovakia and Germany in 1938. For most students, the course content was unfamiliar, given that this aspect of the Nazi period is not often addressed in history or political science courses.

In addition to the acquisition of new course content, students focused on the development of communication skills in the interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) through intensive work with authentic print and audiovisual materials. The course targeted students at the Intermediate High to Advanced Low levels on the ACTFL proficiency scale (ACTFL, 2012); however, some students exceeded those levels based on study abroad experience or a heritage-learning environment. The students were typically self-declared majors or minors in German Studies who took the courses to fulfill a curricular requirement; however, some students took the course out of personal interest. There were 63 participants in the study; 62 were undergraduate students, ranging in age from 18 to 60. The average age of students was 20; one student was non-traditional and participating in a study program for retirees.

Individualized Assessments: Work-Cycle Projects and Portfolio

Each iteration of the course featured three five-week work cycles in a seventeen-week semester. A one-week introduction and a concluding week rounded out the calendar. Students received a course syllabus that described the concept of and rationale for the work cycles and the criteria for grading the spoken and written projects holistically as well as the portfolio rubric (Appendix 4). Each work cycle had a thematic focus that encompassed a different aspect of the course topic. During the work cycles, students completed course readings and homework and participated in face-to-face and online course discussions. These course components ensured that students received adequate training in interpretive and interpersonal communication and allowed for an informal assessment of their abilities. At the end of each work cycle, students were assessed formally in presentational communication through 1) a written presentational project, the topic and format of which they determined (Appendix 1); and 2) a spoken presentational project, on a related topic of their choice (Appendix 1). These two complementary assessments served as the first component of individualized assessment featured in this study.

For the assessment, students were given a variety of choices within each work cycle in terms of content and format of the spoken and written presentational tasks (e.g., role-play, interview, short film, podcast, brochure, letter, cartoon, or poster session). Students could choose from the variety of formats or suggest one of their choice; this approach provided structure while still allowing for individualization. During the final work cycle, students decided whether the assessment would be spoken or written based on their perception of greatest need or strength. While students had opportunities to personalize their written and spoken assessments in each work cycle, some restrictions were in place. For example, the length of the projects was set, and there needed to be a close connection between the project topics and the work-cycle theme. Finally, students could not repeat

the project format; during each work cycle, they needed to demonstrate written or spoken proficiency using a different approach. Spoken presentational projects like short films, formal presentations, or role-plays were presented in class, and written presentational projects were turned in for evaluation and returned to be revised in a second draft.

The second component of individualized assessment occurred at the end of the semester in the form of a culminating course portfolio. The portfolio featured a collection of artefacts on which students reflected using a Task Reflection Guide (Appendix 3). Students were encouraged to be creative in the composition of their portfolios, drawing on practices or materials outside of class that enhanced their learning, such as works of art or literature, images, music, and individual research. Most importantly, as part of the portfolio, students completed a three-page self-reflection in which they discussed their learning in the course. They used a set of guiding questions to complete the reflection and were asked to comment on components of the course, their learning and areas of greatest progress during the semester, and their opinion about individualized assessment choices. The reflection was written in German but not graded and allowed students to think about and describe their learning and the factors that contributed or detracted from its efficacy in a low-stakes manner in which self-reflection was the focus.

Data Collection

In order to understand the link between individualized assessment and learner motivation, the student self-reflections were used as a source for qualitative data in this study. Past research in second language acquisition has made use of qualitative data in the form of written reflections by students (Allison, 1998; Bailey & Nunan, 1996, Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Peck, 1996). Reflections can provide seminal information about learners' experiences and how they view their language learning experiences (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983). As Tse (2000) explained, introspective evaluations in the form of journal or diary entries generally focus on singular activities about which the learners are asked to reflect. The autobiography, by contrast, allows learners to reflect on their language learning experience over time. In the autobiography, learners reflect about their experiences using open-ended questions as a guide; they then write up their conclusions in a short paper (Tse, 2000).

The reflection included in the end-of-semester portfolio served as the autobiographical text in which students analyzed their learning in the course and their reactions to individualized assessment. As with any qualitative research, there are shortcomings to using reflections for data collection. As Tse (2000) indicated, "retrospective selective memory" can impact validity (p. 74). In addition, in using the narrative format students did not always directly answer the questions but instead employed indirect language to relate their experiences. Additionally, the students wrote their reflections in German; while they were encouraged to write freely and the reflections were not graded, the answers to the guiding questions may have been more truncated than if students had written in their first language. Despite these limitations, the reflections provided useful insights into students' perceptions of their learning over time and supplied the instructor with important directives in classroom and assessment practices.

As part of the reflection, students answered eight questions, which are included in Appendix 2. Two of the questions, in particular, formed the basis for the research in the present study:

In what ways did the ability to make your own decisions about the content and format of the projects help you to learn?

How did your learning develop during the course of the semester? In which areas (vocabulary, writing, speaking, reading, listening, ability to express opinions, etc.) did you make progress?

The first question sought to determine whether choosing individual assessment topics was viewed positively by students and directly affected their motivation level. The second question was more holistic and designed to engage students in self-assessment with the hope of increasing their sense of empowerment and, by extension, motivation.

Results

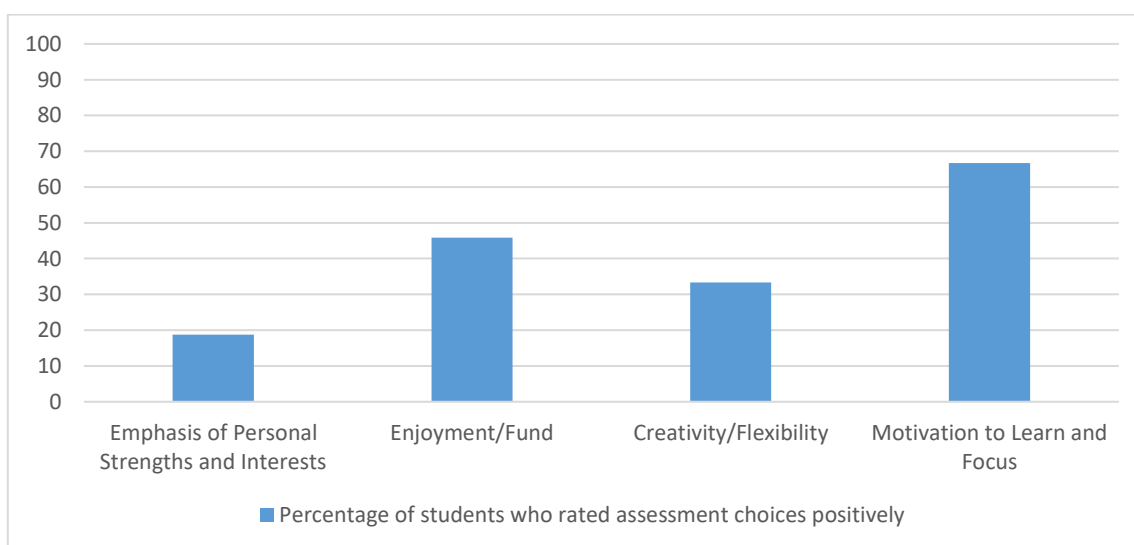
The participants' reflections were analyzed qualitatively using an open coding technique. Responses were read and re-read with particular attention to the responses regarding 1) the ability to make choices regarding projects; and 2) the learning progress participants had noted. Based on the analysis of these segments, clear categories emerged regarding participants' views about individualized assessment choices (i.e. the work-cycle projects) and their progress in learning as featured in the portfolios. The categories of responses are interpreted by question in the discussion below.

Individualized Projects

Sixty-three students wrote the reflection. Of these students, 10 did not respond directly to the question concerning the effect that choosing topics and formats had on their learning. Of those 10, however, 7 still talked about their learning based on the projects and the difficulties and benefits they perceived. Four students answered the question neutrally, stating that the ability to choose was neither positive nor negative. Of these, 3 stated some positive aspects about having choice regarding projects, including that they were more interesting, allowed one to show strengths, and enabled students to share their knowledge. Two students attributed their ambivalence to the fact that students could make projects too easy on themselves by choosing a topic with which they were already familiar. One student noted that being provided with a topic was as helpful as having a choice in topic. The final student in this group stated no preference for the work-cycle projects but did not express a particular criticism of them.

The remaining 48 students rated the ability to individualize the work-cycle projects through choice of topic and format overwhelmingly positively (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1. Categories for Positive Ratings of Individualized Assessment



Through the open coding of responses to the first question, four major categories emerged among the reasons why students thought choice with regard to topics and formats was helpful. The categories included: Emphasis of Personal Strengths and Interests (18.75%), Enjoyment/Fun (45.83%), Creativity/Flexibility (33.33%), and Motivation to Learn and Focus (66.67%). 43.75% of the students who listed Motivation to Learn and Focus as a justification for individualized choices also noted Enjoyment/Fun as a positive characteristic of the work-cycle projects, indicating a clear link between enjoyment and the motivation to learn. 21.88% of those participants who listed Motivation to Learn and Focus also noted Emphasis of Personal Strengths and Interest as a basis for positively rating individual choices, likewise indicating that the overlap of topics with students' interests (most often another area of study) and strengths led to increased motivation and focus. 21.88% of those listing Motivation to Learn and Focus also noted Creativity/Flexibility as a positive characteristic of individualized choices, thus suggesting that students are motivated by the ability to work creatively and have flexibility with their choice and format of project.

The theme of increased motivation based on individualized assessment choices ran across all course sections. Student testimonials, translated here from German, underscore the positive view they had of the projects. One student mentioned motivation directly, explaining:

“The format of this course is helpful. One had to think more about the topic than an assigned topic. Also, there is more motivation for every student. One can learn about topics that one finds interesting. Then it is easier and better for the student and the teacher.”

In this remark the participant emphasizes the importance of personal interest in a topic and its link to increased motivation, an observation that was supported by another student who remarked:

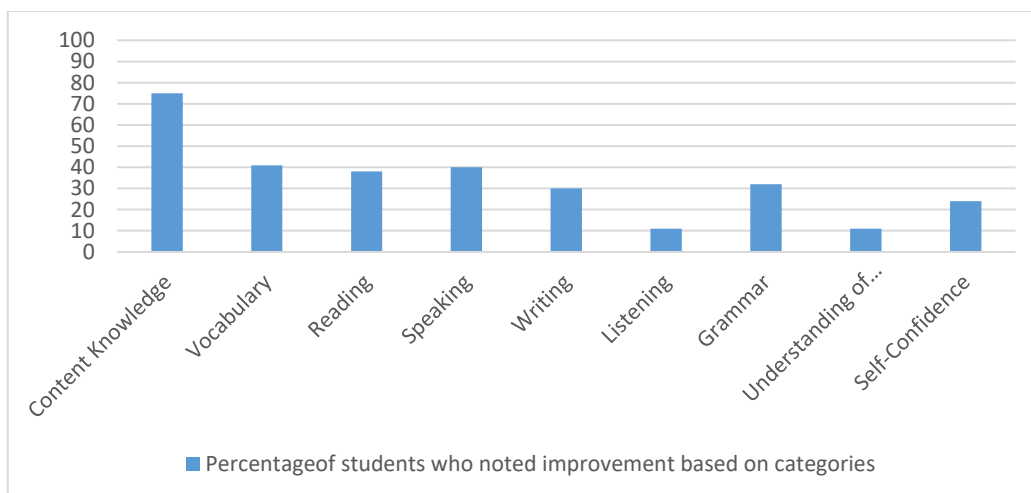
“I think that the work cycles were good because we could choose our own ideas. That is good because I learn the content better when I research, present, and write about my own ideas. The work cycles help me with my intrinsic [motivation].”

A final student noted: *“Through the choice of my topics, I studied topics that interested me. That improves the learning experience.”* These narrative comments are representative of the majority of respondents and demonstrate that individualized assessment choices were clearly linked to students’ motivation and played an important role in their commitment to and interest in learning.

Learner Progress

Of the 63 students who wrote about their progress in learning, an overwhelming majority noted that they had made significant improvements during the course. Only two students noted that they had made only some improvement. As with the first question regarding students’ ability to make choices regarding projects, the narrative responses to the second question regarding learner progress was analyzed using an open coding technique. The analysis of the narrative statements produced nine categories (see *Figure 2*) in which students noted progress during the course of the semester: Content Knowledge, Vocabulary, Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Grammar, Self-Confidence, and Understanding of Learning.

Figure 2. Categories for Noted Areas of Improvement



Given that the course was based on a novel that focused on a relatively obscure aspect of WWII history, 75% of the students noted that they acquired new content knowledge. Many stated they had never heard of the *Sudetenland* and its history, culture, and peoples. Students also attributed the broadening of their knowledge to work they did on the individualized projects given that many of them chose topics in which they were interested but about which they knew little. 38% of the students observed that they had improved their reading skills based on work with the novel and the accompanying assignments. They also explained that doing additional reading for their individualized projects helped develop their reading comprehension. Based on their reading of the novel and work with the text in class, 41% of the participants identified a development of their vocabulary and an improvement in their ability to use new words.

The second greatest area of improvement noted by students was speaking. They identified their progress primarily in presentational speaking and attributed it to their work on the individualized spoken projects, which they delivered in a variety of formats. Thirty percent noted an improvement in presentational writing and again linked it to the work done on the individualized projects. Interesting to note is the improvement students saw with regard to their understanding of grammar. Thirty-two percent perceived progress in their ability to understand and apply grammar conventions and attributed it to contextualized class work covering targeted grammar concepts as well as their work with a correction key in writing the second draft of essays. One student commented on the manner in which the written projects helped solidify grammar principles: *“The written projects were good exercises, and my ability to write quickly and grammar both improved. German 304 had no particular focus on grammar, but it helped me to correct the essays.”* Students noted less improvement in

listening. Isolated interpretive listening (not to be confused with interpersonal listening that took place during discussions and group work in the course) was primarily targeted during student presentations. Given that students presented on topics that covered a unique and separate aspect of the course theme not covered in the course, they often introduced new vocabulary and concepts that were challenging to their classmates. As a recommendation for the future, students suggested listening aids, such as handouts and vocabulary lists, to help in their comprehension of other students' spoken projects.

The final two categories in which students recognized improvement do not directly relate to course content or the mechanics of language learning. Instead, they relate to affective aspects of language learning and the students' perception of their progress. Eleven percent of the students noted that during the course and in the process of doing the final portfolio, they made discoveries about how they learn and what is most productive in their study of German. They described the ability to identify their own mistakes and correct them as both empowering and confidence-building. One student explained:

“During the course of this semester I became better at listening and speaking in my opinion. I feel comfortable when I give a presentation in front of the class. I also think that my grammar is better. I can now check myself. I found, and now I know, that I have to test myself before speaking [...] Practice makes perfect – I always have to check myself.”

Other students underscored the importance of the portfolio and the process of self-reflection it entailed as a key factor in the ability to be aware of their own learning. One student noted, *“Through the coursework in German 304 and after I finished work on my portfolio I believe that I really improved my abilities in the German language.”* Another student explained that in reviewing the semester's work in the portfolio and writing the essay, areas of improvement and need became apparent, stating: *“Through writing this essay, I learned about my strengths and weaknesses. In the future, I will know what the weaknesses are. Then the weaknesses will become strengths.”* These comments suggest the importance of self-reflection in the form of a portfolio that allows students to identify how they learn best and to take charge of their own learning.

Through reflection, the students become empowered, and, as a result, more self-confident. Of those students who identified progress in understanding how they learn, 46% stated that they were more self-confident. The following comment explains the connection:

“An important thing for me this semester was self-confidence. [...] I was proud that I could read an entire book in German. I had never done that before this semester. [...] Not many students can say that they have read a book in German. I was also good at quizzes this semester. That was helpful for my self-confidence because it showed me that I had learned the material. It is nice that I can see exactly how my German has improved.”

By examining their work, students discovered the areas in which they had improved, which in turn, improved their confidence. Having the opportunity to look at their course work and performance in an organized and critical way enabled them to better understand what and how they learned – knowledge that can be helpful in the language classroom and beyond. In some cases, the amount the students had learned surprised them, as is indicated by the following comment: *“[...] I made progress, but not as much as I wanted at first. By the end of the semester I surprised myself because I had learned so much and more than I had thought.”* The process of reflection at the end of the course allowed students to examine the totality of their work as well as the different stages of learning throughout the semester. As such, they could engage in self-discovery and enjoy a sense of accomplishment while completing the culminating assessment of the course.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that there is a clear connection between individualized assessment, in the form of individualized projects and a portfolio centered on student self-reflection, and the motivation for learning a second language. A majority of participants reported an increase in their level of motivation based on the individualized assessments used, and both types of assessment helped students to capitalize on their strengths and think about ways for improving their weaknesses.

The students liked being able to determine the content and format of the written and spoken projects and believed having the ability to choose helped them learn. Although a small number of comments were neutral, the majority of students expressed a positive opinion of the ability to make choices in the way their coursework was assessed. They likewise linked choice to an increased motivation to learn, stating that flexibility in the choice of topic heightened their desire to conduct research and share it with others. In summation, the

individualized projects enabled students to capitalize on their strengths and pursue areas of interest. As Ehrman, Leaver, and Oxford (2003) suggested, learners find reward in the enjoyment of the learning activity itself. In turn, the greater effort they apply to the learning activity results in a better understanding of the topic and a greater sense of competence when sharing their research with others. The enjoyment students experienced in preparing for the assessment activity of their choice and the feeling of competence they enjoy based on the successful completion of the task led to a feeling of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2007).

The final portfolio, too, offered benefits to learners based on its individualized nature. During the reflection process, students had the autonomy to include the artefacts they felt best demonstrated their learning. In doing so, they incorporated aspects of their own research but also the results of collaborative interactions, such as pair work, group discussions and writing, and presentation preparation with a partner. As a natural part of the process, they examined their language abilities at the start of the course and their progress over the course of the semester. Many learners used the opportunity, particularly if they were nearing the end of their studies, to examine the whole of their language career at the university. In doing so, they were able to observe the competence in the language that they had developed over years of study.

Conclusions

It is clear that maintaining motivation among students along the path to proficiency is not only important for learners but also for language programs. Although lower-level courses often boast robust enrollments, the number of students who go on to complete a major or minor is small, particularly because of the perception that upper-level coursework is much harder (Tse, 2000). Keeping learners motivated in all aspects of the curriculum, including assessment, is crucial, particularly when it comes to the upper-level courses. Tse (2000) argued that “*student views of their FL study experiences can have a dramatic impact on FL programs through the decisions students make on whether to continue their study beyond required course work,*” in this case, the basic language requirement (p. 73). For this reason, particularly in small programs, it is imperative for teachers to rethink their approach to assessment and consider a form of what Fletcher and Shaw (2012) call “assessment as learning” through forms that are largely determined by the students (p. 245). The ability of learners to participate in individualized choices regarding assessment profoundly influences their motivation in learning a language and the likelihood that they will continue language study (Chalupa & ter Haseborg, 2014).

Work-cycle projects and the course portfolio provide two opportunities for individualizing assessment while working within existing curricular structures that can be easily implemented. In addition to increasing student motivation, these types of assessment increase collaboration between students and teachers and allow the former to take on a greater responsibility for their learning. Teachers also learn from students about the types of adjustments they can make to better fit students’ needs. The students’ self-reflection on learning can serve as an impetus to self-reflection by the teacher. As a result, assessment can become a learning opportunity for both teachers and students and result in a more efficacious learning environment.

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Appendix

Ideas and Activities Bank*

Written and spoken presentational formats

Written:

- position paper;
- creative response to the material read in class;
- letter to the editor;
- historical reportage written from eyewitness perspective;
- letter or e-mail to character in course readings
- short film (script);
- cartoon;
- diary from the perspective of a famous German-speaking person;
- personal media diary;
- newspaper article about a technological invention;
- a brochure for a political party.

Spoken:

- role-play thematizing a historical event or a scene from the course readings for the class;
- talk show debate involving various parties in the discussion;
- recorded interview;
- short film (acting/delivery of the script);
- interview with a historical figure;
- another spoken assignment based on a cultural artifact or historical event and/or figure related to the course topic;
- formal presentation with PowerPoint;
- short film/video reportage relating to topics discussed in class;
- formal presentation with presentational software.

Important guidelines for the written project:

You are allowed to bring ONE 3x5" Index Card with vocabulary (noun + article, verbs in the infinitive, adjectives without endings). The card may **NOT** contain the following things:

- translation
- conjugation tables
- declination tables (e.g., adjective endings)
- verb tenses (e.g., imperfect forms)
- full sentences or paragraphs

The cards will be checked. If they are not created according to the guidelines above, you will not be able to use them for your written project!

Important guidelines for the spoken project:

- The spoken projects are designed to provide practice in vocabulary acquisition, speaking, fluency, and pronunciation.
- Your effort to speak freely is an important part of the grade for the spoken projects.

- You should create and present your project in a way that is appropriate to your audience. That means, for example, that you need to make an effort to explain uncommon vocabulary (e.g. through pictures, or explanations in German) that is specific to your project topic.
- As part of your project, you should create a list of interpretive questions for your classmates to answer at the end of the presentation. Show the questions at the beginning and end of the presentation. This will allow you to engage your audience in the interpretive process.

Portfolio Checklist *

Collect artefacts from the course for your portfolio and reflect on the importance of individual activities for your learning. You can also be creative, including playlists, images, or works of art, literature, or research that were helpful or inspirational as you completed course work.

Checklist

- _____ Homework und discussion forum submissions
- _____ Written projects (both versions)
- _____ Spoken projects (include posters or presentation files)
- _____ Rubrics with comments on both written and spoken projects
- _____ Quizzes and other graded assignments
- _____ Reflective Statement (3-page minimum).

Reflective Statement

At the conclusion of your portfolio, write a three-page essay in which you describe your view of the material worked on in the course as well as your evaluation of your own learning process. Use the following questions as a guideline for your essay:

- What did you learn in terms of content that surprised you or that you were not aware of before?
- What is your opinion of the topics and materials used in class (textbook, activities, worksheets, articles, films, etc.)?
- Did you find the format of the course (work cycles with individualized projects) helpful/not helpful? Why (not)?
- In what ways did the ability to make your own decisions about the content and format of the projects help you to learn?
- What would you have liked to work on more (topics, grammar, vocabulary, etc.)?
- How did your learning develop during the course of the semester? In which areas (vocabulary, writing, speaking, reading, listening, ability to express opinions, etc.) did you make progress?
- What suggestions would you make for the future?

Task Reflection Guide *

Use these questions to guide your reflection about individual tasks and record them in your portfolio.

1. This task helped me to learn about a new topic. What was the topic and why did it help?

2. What did you learn from completing this particular task? What was new about it? (This can have to do with the content as well as the process of working on the task.)

3. Did this task inspire in you an interest in other aspects of the topic? If yes, what would you like to learn about in addition to what you have already learned?

4. Did anything surprise you as you were working on this task? Did you surprise yourself during the process? (Perhaps you knew more about the topic than you realized or it was easier to understand than you anticipated).

5. If you were to talk to a friend about the topic you investigated, which aspect of the topic would you emphasize? What did you find to be especially important?

Portfolio Rubric

Evaluation Criteria	Exceeds Expectation=4 (90-100%)	Meets Expectation=3 (80-89%)	Approaches Expectation=2 (70-79%)	Does Not Meet Expectation=1 (60-69%)	Work Cannot be Assessed =0 (59% and below)
Required items	All required items are included, with a significant number of additions.	All required items are included.	Some required items are not included.	A significant number of required items are missing.	Work is incomplete.
Reflective Statement	Reflective statement provides a well-developed assessment of learning with regard to the content of the course; creates a clear picture of the learning process during the semester; identifies most and least helpful formats and activities with regard to learning; addresses all points of the portfolio checklist.	Reflective statement provides a satisfactorily developed assessment of learning with regard to the content of the course; provides general observations about the learning process during the semester; identifies some helpful and less helpful formats and activities with regard to learning; addresses all points of the portfolio checklist.	Reflective statement on the assessment of learning with regard to the content of the course approaches expectation but has limitations; provides some observations about the learning process during the semester but leaves large gaps; does not identify most and least helpful formats and activities with regard to learning; addresses most points of the portfolio checklist.	Reflective statement on the assessment of learning with regard to the content of the course fall below expectation; provides limited or no observations about the learning process during the semester; does not identify most and least helpful formats and activities with regard to learning; addresses some points of the portfolio checklist.	Work is incomplete.
Organization	Items are clearly introduced in each section; portfolio contains a well-developed table of contents; materials are well organized and presented neatly and in logical order.	Items are introduced with a basic title page; portfolio contains a general table of contents; materials are organized and presented neatly but could show more attention to detail.	Items are introduced but portfolio lacks title pages; table of contents is not well organized; work demonstrates need for improvement with regard to neatness.	Items are not introduced and lack organization; portfolio contains no table of contents; work is unsatisfactory with regard to neatness.	Work is incomplete.
Fulfillment of Task/Overall Impression	Final product is displayed creatively and demonstrates a high level of effort with regard to preparation and detail.	Final product is well developed but is not displayed with extensive creativity; work demonstrates a satisfactory level of effort with regard to preparation and detail.	Final product displays little creativity; work demonstrates level of effort with regard to preparation and detail that approaches expectation.	Final product displays no attention to creativity; work demonstrates level of effort with regard to preparation and detail that falls below expectation.	Work is incomplete.

Portfolio Grade: Required items _____ + Reflective statement _____ + Organization _____ + Fulfillment of task _____ / 16 = _____



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