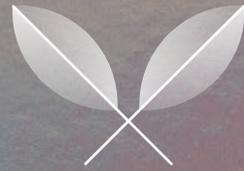


# Exploration of Second Language Learners' motivation and Simpatía: Students in West Texas



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# Bilingualism in America



Research about second language learners (L2's) is not new to the world as bilingualism continues to grow across the world.

Research suggests that at least half the world's population is bilingual (Vince, 2016). Many Americans are monolingual and are not interested or motivated to learn another language. The fact is 21.6% of the US population speaks another language at home other than English (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States, n.d)



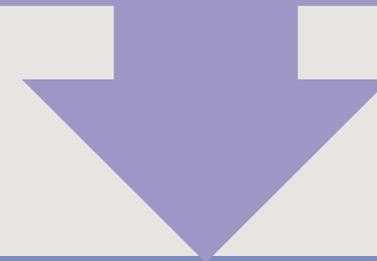
# Monoglot Cultures



- Oakes (2013) discovered that the majority of university students learning French and Spanish as a second language in the United Kingdom (UK) reported perceiving “poor language skills of British people” (p. 185) as a motivating factor. It is worthy to note that the UK is an English-speaking region that has a monoglot culture, which means that people are primarily only able to converse in one language.

# The Simpatía Scale

Another possible motivation to become bilingual is that L2's are more likely to have positive feelings. Simpatía means to have the tendency to prefer and create social interactions characterized by warmth and emotional positivity while also avoiding conflict and/or overt negativity (Acevedo, et al, 2020, p. 419).



Simpatía has only been used to measure cultural values but not for other areas, for instance motivations to learn other languages

# Research Questions



What factors shape choice for choosing a second language and ongoing motivation?



How do L2's Simpatía Scale scores compare to L1's?





# Participants

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There was a total of 47 participants in the study with 20 L2s and 27 L1s.

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The majority of the participants reported being female (79%) and being of Hispanic origin (64%).

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After excluding participants who (1) did not complete the survey; (2) provided no details of their families' origins; (3) were outside the age bracket of 18-34; and (4) were born outside of the US and Mexico, the final sample was 16 participants in both groups



# Results

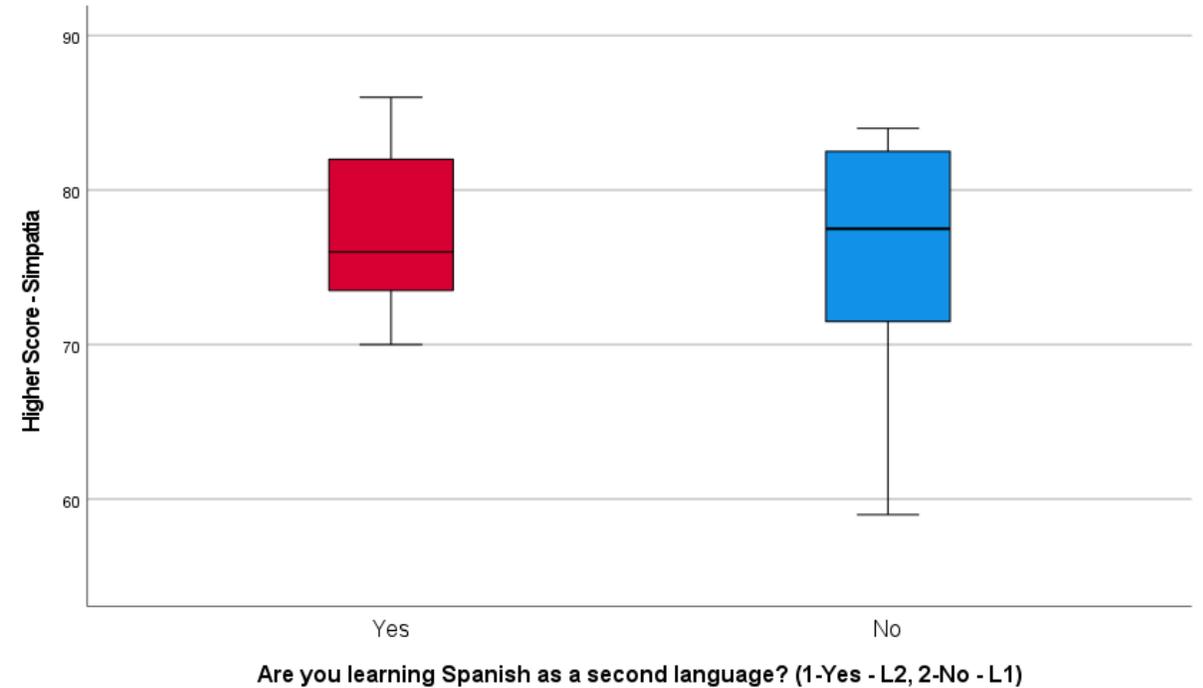
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What factors shape choice for choosing a second language and ongoing motivation?

Thematic category	One Example
Connections with native speakers	"And it certainly motivates me to learn Spanish, so that way I can communicate with them. Most of it has to do with connecting with people and misconnections in the past where I have not been able to get over the language barrier."
Connections with family	"My family, my mom's first language is Spanish. I would really love to connect with her and with my family members that only speak Spanish."
Job/career goals	"I'm thinking of going into nursing and that is going to be a big help with talking to people. I feel like hospitals are not that diverse when it comes to different languages. and knowing I am one of them this nice to know I am helping."
Identity factors	"For me I'm Hispanic. Everyone in my family speaks Spanish"

## Motivation to Learn Spanish

# How do L2's Simpatía Scale scores compare to L1's?



## *Pearson Correlations of Simpatía Scores between L1s and L2s*

<b>Simpatía Statement</b>	<b>Simpatía Scores</b>
1. When I have free time, it is good to spend it with others laughing and joking.	.459**
2. It's most important to be yourself, whether people like you or not.	.323*
3. When I spend time with my family, we make each other laugh a lot.	.551**
4. In my everyday life, I try to be an agreeable person.	.543**
5. In social situations, one should not create conflict.	.545**
6. It is important to me to be someone people like to be around.	.593**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

# Discussion

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My results of L2s interviews showcased the *Ideal-self* and intrinsic motivation to learn Spanish. L2 participants had a higher Simpatía score and many of them were from a Hispanic background or come from a Spanish speaking region.

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Based on the results, L2s may have had a greater advantage than the L1s because second language learners may have a broader rationale for living in two worlds: one with family, and the second in society they have acculturated to.

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Possibly, the L2s recognize that they do not share the same advantages as those who are in the majority in terms of race and social class, and position themselves in such a way that is amenable to all.

## Discussion

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In an effort to avoid conflict, the L1s or the monolingual learners scored more significantly on the two statements categorized with distancing: (1) It is important to me to be someone people like to be around; and (2) one should not create conflict.

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The division does not help these two groups interact with each other in meaningful ways which may result in the prejudice and discrimination that are still relevant between those who only speak English, and those who speak English and Spanish.

# Limitations



- The limitations of the study included not obtaining a clear picture of participants' generational history. In other words, even though some participants identified as Hispanic, they did not disclose their origins. As a result, we could not report on whether they differed for those who recently immigrated to the United States or were here for more than two generations.
- The data was not normally distributed so these results are not generalizable.
- Self-report is the third limitation and it is not clear if all participants were honest with their answers in the interview.



# Conclusion

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- There is a stigma to learn Spanish that is a disgrace because of the belief that the United States should remain as a monoglot culture.
- Hispanic participants appeared to do their best in this unstable environment to still own their identity and share their positive traits with those outside of the Hispanic community.
- The author hopes that individuals in America will become more open to a bilingual or multilingual nation. Like Simpatía, we should welcome individuals with warmth and positivity.



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