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World Languages Literatures and Linguistics

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Student perspectives on the value of language learning: An example from Appalachia

In the current academic landscape, language programs, irrespective of their institution's classification, face the ongoing need to articulate their value to stakeholders. This imperative necessitates continuous self-evaluation using empirical data to actively contribute to the academic conversation. The present study builds upon the findings of my previous work (Morgan & Thompson, 2023), offering a deeper exploration of postsecondary students' interest in minoring or majoring in a language degree program.

The earlier study provided a glimpse into this interest, revealing both positive and concerning results for the future of language education in Appalachia. Informed by these findings, the present study employed a recently published motivation survey with a focus on Expectancy Value Theory (EVT; Nagle, 2021). The study targeted postsecondary introductory and intermediate Spanish courses at a large Appalachian university, involving 535 respondents from both face-to-face and asynchronous modalities.

The data analysis yielded several key findings: i) Nagle's (2021) survey proved to be an appropriate instrument for measuring expectancy-value motivation in introductory and intermediate postsecondary Spanish courses, ii) asynchronous students exhibited lower expectancy-value compared to their face-to-face peers, iii) interest to minor or major (IMM) was positively correlated with EVT scores, and iv) EVT scores were higher in Introductory Spanish 1 and progressively lower through the four course levels. Open-ended responses from participants provided insights for stakeholders, offering valuable inferences for their holistic opinions and evaluations of language study.

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12:30 PM – 1:30 PM

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