The Role of Motivation in Russian Heritage Language Learner Performance

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Abstract:
Heritage language learning is an interesting phenomenon that affects students of any heritage language. In this paper, I am putting my focus directly on Russian heritage language learners. Through research on pedagogical learning theories, students' motivation to take heritage language courses, and current Russian heritage language learning studies, I am exploring the impact that motivation has on Russian heritage language learners' performance in these specific courses, and some of the problems these students encounter in the classroom. This paper highlights the connections between motivations in learning and the specific problems Russian heritage language learners struggle with in the classroom and offers suggestions towards improving heritage language learner motivation.

Keywords: Heritage Language Learners (HLLs), motivation, performance

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Introduction

Heritage language learners (HLLs) of Russian often face similar difficulties when learning Russian in a formal classroom setting, due to their valuable, but incomplete, exposure to the culture and language earlier in life. These difficulties most often come into play during intermediate Russian courses. HLLs in any language tend to excel in introductory courses of their given languages, which may build up their confidence in learning the language but may also keep them from practicing vital study habits that will help them in future coursework. Once they begin their intermediate courses, grammatical errors soon seem to surface, which may induce HLLs to begin struggling in an effort to "catch up". Grammatical errors, particularly using the correct case and tense when speaking or writing, are the most common errors HLLs make in their studies. This situation is problematic because of how common these errors are in HLLs, and the impact it has on their future studies. Solving this problem can help shape both heritage and non-heritage Russian courses in a way that is beneficial to all types of students, as well as bring

about new generations of Russian speakers who have had the benefits of being exposed to the language earlier in their life.

A Russian heritage speaker is a bilingual individual living in the United States, who grew up speaking Russian at home, but was almost exclusively educated in English once they entered the education system, making Russian their weaker language.[1] A Russian heritage language learner (HLL) is a Russian heritage speaker who studies Russian at an American institution, typically in college.[2] Russian HLLs can also be considered native speakers[3] due to their cultural ties to the language, though in the case of this paper, they will be differentiated by their differences in language proficiency. Native speakers are people with high levels of Russian proficiency and/or are fluent in Russian. Russian HLLs typically fall into three groups: first generation Americans, 1.5 generation Americans, and second-generation Americans. First generation HLLs are children of immigrants from Russian speaking countries, 1.5 generation HLLs are students who immigrated from a Russian-speaking country in early childhood, and second generation HLLs are children of first-generation Americans who maintained their cultural identity. The benefit of being a HLL is that due to their previous exposure to Russian language and culture, they commonly require less time than non-heritage learners to develop skills.[4] Heritage language learners often lack the same proficiency as native speakers, but at the same time are more advanced than traditional second language learners. This "in-between" often creates various dilemmas between HLLs and their professors, as the students feel out of place in

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[1] Kagan, *Russian Heritage Language Speakers in the U.S.: A Profile*, 3.

[2] Kagan, *Russian Heritage Language Speakers in the U.S.: A Profile*, 4.

[3] Zyzik, *Toward a Prototype Model of the Heritage Language Learner: Understanding Strengths and Needs*, 22. Hornberger and Wang, *Who are our heritage language learners? Identity and biliteracy in heritage language education in the United States,* 3.

[4] Brecht and Ingold, *Tapping a national resource: Heritage languages in the United States*, 3.

both heritage Russian and second language classes. Students can also have difficulty choosing between these courses, as they are not sure which track is the best fit for their level of linguistic proficiency. Similarly, it can be difficult for professors to assess these students, especially those students who seem to have very high or very low proficiency levels.

Most universities tend to have a similar set-up of heritage and traditional second language Russian courses. At Binghamton University, for example, traditional second language Russian courses go from: introductory (RUSS 101, RUSS 102), intermediate (RUSS 203, RUSS 204), and advanced (RUSS 305, RUSS 306), while heritage courses go from introductory/intermediate (RUSS 111) to intermediate/advanced (RUSS 212). The focuses of the traditional introductory courses are to introduce students to the language through the Cyrillic alphabet, basic vocabulary, the cases, tense and aspect. The intermediate courses switch their focus to higher level vocabulary and grammar, including more detail on verbs of motion, case, tense and aspect. The advanced courses emphasize all the knowledge the students have acquired thus far, and work on perfecting these skills. For the heritage courses, a basic knowledge of Russian is generally assumed, with the expectation that students have a satisfactory listening proficiency, a decent vocabulary, and previous exposure to the alphabet. Thus, they put a greater focus on grammatical accuracy, as well as increased reading, writing, and speaking skills. Depending on their previous exposure, HLLs may find that heritage courses are too intimidating or too advanced for them, or that traditional second language courses are too basic for them. Along with the potential of being "too basic," sometimes a traditional second language course may be more detrimental than beneficial to a HLL, depending on their prior knowledge.[5] A majority of the time, HLLs will feel

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[5] Zyzik, *Toward a Prototype Model of the Heritage Language Learner: Understanding Strengths and Needs*, 29.

out of place in either course, and it is their motivation that drives them to persevere through their struggles.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role that motivation plays in Russian heritage language learning and show the problems that these learners face and the effect motivation has on these issues. Pedagogical theories on motivation demonstrate that a combination of grammar exercises and a student's background can complicate HLL's motivation. Being able to name and describe these complex factors in HLL motivation is helpful in conceptualizing the HLL experience in the college Russian classroom. This paper will move on to define different types of motivations and discuss potential motivators and de-motivators that influence HLLs in their studies and discuss common errors and problems that they face in their studies. Throughout the definitions and discussions of these topics in relation to the problem being studied, an analysis of how a specific textbook produced for HLLs targets student motivation and is utilized to correct common errors will be conducted. Following this analysis, potential solutions to HLL motivation deficiencies will be proposed.

How Textbooks Target Motivation

How might textbooks target the motivations of a heritage language learner? Olga Kagan proposed that HLLs get either their own course, or at the very least, their own textbook. Kagan was a professor of Russian at UCLA for over 35 years, and was also the Director of the National Heritage Language Center. By 2018, she had spent around ten to fifteen years studying and observing heritage languages in students, particularly Russian, but not limited to others. Kagan is one of the co-authors of *Russian for Russians*, a textbook designed for Russian HLLs, along with

Tatiana Akishina and Richard Robin. As the title suggests, *Russian for Russians* is a textbook designed for native speakers and HLLs.

In *Russian for Russians*, a basic knowledge or previous exposure to Russian is expected. In order for instructors to demonstrate relevance and to maintain interest, each chapter is assigned a specific theme: Chapter 1-Alphabet; Chapter 2-Name and Family; Chapter 3-Childhood; Chapter 4-Education; Chapter 5-Society and Communication; Chapter 6-Work, Money, and Business; Chapter 7-Tools of Mass Communication (Newspapers and Internet); Chapter 8-A Little Bit About History and Geography. These topics tend to coincide with student interests, while also maintaining cultural relevance and feeding into student motivations.

Russian for Russians contains a plethora of exercises within it, including: translating exercises, exercises for practice with case endings, exercises for practice with tense and aspect, and interactive exercises. These exercises are designed to stimulate student interest and to keep them thinking and practicing. What is particularly important are the variety of interactive exercises. For example, in the third chapter, which focuses on childhood, there is an interactive exercise called "interview."[6] Within this exercise, students are instructed to call their parents or some other family members and ask them questions about their childhood. The students should treat this phone call as an interview, and it should be held completely in Russian. After the phone call, the students are instructed to either write about or discuss the phone call in class. This is a fun exercise designated to help students come into contact with not only their culture, but their familial ties, while practicing their Russian skills. Exercises like this also help motivate students by positioning the learner in comfortable social and speech roles and help shape the path of the

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[6] Kagan et al., *Russian for Russians =: Russkiĭ Dli͡a Russkikh,* 94.

student's language development through their family's genuine reactions and responses.[7] Throughout this paper, pedagogical and psychological theories of motivation will be applied to this particular exercise, in an effort to observe the effect exercises like this have on HLL motivation to learn and improve their Russian skills.

Common Struggles Heritage Language Learners Face in their Studies

Common Errors - Overview

Typically, HLLs have very good listening comprehension, a moderate to extensive vocabulary, and proficient reading skills; however, they often tend to struggle with speaking and writing. The Russian language has six cases: nominative, prepositional, accusative, genitive, dative, and instrumental. Cases are used when nouns change their forms and get different endings, with each case showing the role the noun plays in the given context. Each case has two corresponding questions and several prepositions to go with it in order to figure out the correct noun endings. Similarly to English, Russian has three tenses (past, present, and future) and two aspects (perfective and imperfective). The perfective aspect infers there was a complete action, and the imperfective aspect infers the opposite. When HLLs make errors, they often mix up case endings or use the wrong tense and/or aspect.

Why Do Heritage Language Learners Make These Mistakes?

It is impossible to sit down and say why every HLL makes these mistakes - but it is important to acknowledge that they make the same mistakes because of similar factors. Kagan posits that a student's ability to succeed in their class as a HLL depends on the following factors: motivation, previous language exposure, and age at immigration (if applicable).[8] Geisherik, on the other

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[7] He, *The Heart of Heritage: Sociocultural Dimensions of Heritage Language Learning*, 77.

[8] Kagan, *Russian Heritage Language Speakers in the U.S.: A Profile*, 3.

hand, claims that the majority of HLLs come into Russian studies unaware and unprepared for the challenges ahead of them, because they do not see themselves requiring a separate language class.[9] Previous language exposure at a young age can often confuse a HLL, as they may think that they heard things differently at a younger age than they do now, especially since being grammatically correct was not yet important to them. Russian HLLs are often creative when it comes to filling in gaps in their speech or writing; this same creativity is often seen in children learning their first language.[10] Both children and HLLs will sometimes ignore certain grammatical rules and overgeneralize[11] in order to achieve this creativity. This previous experience from childhood could be what causes the same errors in HLLs, as they draw from these early experiences. Previous exposure acts as a confidence booster—or motivating factor—until students realize that what they think they know is apparently not correct. The outcome often goes one of two ways: the student will switch their focus to correcting their mistakes, or they will become demotivated and stop trying.

It has also been hypothesized that heritage language learners make these mistakes because, unlike native speakers and second language learners, they are creating their own language constructions that do not exist in either English or Russian.[12] Vyrenkova et al. have found four types of these constructions in their research: an explanation type, a generalization model type, a simplifying grammar type, and a simplifying language construction type.[13] Ludmila Isurin also found supporting evidence for Russian HLLs creating their own language,

[9] Geisherik, *The Role of Motivation among Heritage and Non-Heritage Learners of Russian*, 4.

[10] Rakhilina, Vyrenkova and Polinsky., *Linguistic Creativity in Heritage Speakers*, 23.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Rakhilina, Vyrenkova and Polinsky., *Linguistic Creativity in Heritage Speakers*, 9-13.

[13] Ibid.

suggesting that they are "'lost in between' in the continuum of language speakers."[14] Within Isurin's grammatical findings, she found that the HLLs interviewed had uncharacteristic utterances and tense and aspect alterations:

"Example 1: Потом мальчик одевается и собака назад на берегу пришла.

Direct Translation: Then boy get dressed (present-imperfective) and dog back to shore came (past-perfective).

Translation: Then the boy got dressed and the dog came back to the shore.

Example 2: Рыба взяла крючок и мальчик тянет, тянет, рыбу.

Direct Translation: Fish take (past-perfective) fishhook and boy pull (present-imperfective), pull (present-imperfective) fish.

Translation: The fish took the fishhook, and the boy pulled the fish out."[15]

These examples of inconsistencies in tense and aspect were consistent among the students surveyed, especially in terms of past-perfective. This can potentially be attributed to students wanting to imply the given actions have already been accomplished and that when using present-imperfective, the actions are still in progress.[16] Following Vyrenkova's lead, this could be due to the HLL simplifying language construction.

Examples of Common Errors

In an interview with a Russian HLL, done by Kagan and Kudyma, the mistakes that the HLL made were bolded:

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[14] Isurin, *Lost in between: The case of Russian heritage speakers*, 98.

[15] Isurin, *Lost in between: The case of Russian heritage speakers*, 75.

[16] Ibid.

"Question: Каковы, по вашему мнению, преимущества и недостатки учёбы в большом университете?

Answer: Ну, я люблю, что это университет большой, что есть много студентов. Я думаю, что здесь **учат** [учатся]около, около сорока тысяч студен..., около сорока тысяч студентов, но, и это **мне** [для меня] хорошо, потому что значит, что я могу встретить … встретиться с **многим** [со многими], **многим** [многими], **людей** [людьми], но думаю, что плохо, потому что, особенно на, на первом курсе, на втором курсе классы очень большие и **профессоры** [профессора] обычно не..., **профессоры** [профессора] обычно интересуются больше с собственным, как сказать, исследованием, чем, чем, и они не так интересуются **преподавать** [преподаванием], **преподавание** [преподаванием] **курс** [курсов].

Translation:

Question: What do you feel are advantages and disadvantages of being a student at a large university?

Answer: Well, I think it's good that the university is large, that there are a lot of students. I think we have about forty thousand students, about forty thousand students, but it's good for me because it means I can meet a lot of people, but it's [also] not so good because in the freshmen and sophomore years, classes are very large and professors, usually not professors... professors are more interested in their own research and are not so interested in teaching classes."[17]

Within this transcript, it can be easily observed that the student knows a good amount of vocabulary and struggles with case endings. In a similar interview with a heritage language learner, done by Polinsky, the mistakes the student made are also bolded:

[17] Kagan and Kudyma, *Heritage Language Learners of Russian and L2 Learners in the Flagship Program: A Comparison*, 31-32.

"Mal'čik, on imel **sobaka** i **ljaguška**.

On ljubit ego **ljaguška.**

Sobaka, on tože ljubit **ljaguška**.

Mal'čik, on spat'. On spit.

Sobaka tože spal, ljaguška vyxodit iz (jar) i on uxodil.

Translation:

[A] boy, he had a dog and a frog.

He likes his frog.

The dog, he also likes the frog.

The boy, he sleep. He sleeps.

The dog also slept, the frog comes out of jar and he left."[18]

Within this transcript, the HLL makes a few mistakes: first, he uses nominative case instead of dative case for the "dog" and "frog" and second, he does not use the infinitive for "sleep." However, his use of the Russian word for frog is impressive for a beginner student; a traditional second language learner would not be expected to know this word during their first year of Russian language studies. Errors, like the ones observed in these two subsections, can be targeted by Kagan's "interview" exercise. Although it is not constructed as a grammatical exercise, this exercise forces students to think about case endings, tense, and aspect when interviewing their family members and when relaying their questions and answers to their peers and professors. Though the HLLs may not have grammatical precision when first speaking with their family members, it is expected that their family members will correct them and help them figure out

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[18] Polinsky and Kagan, *Heritage languages: In the 'wild' and in the classroom*, 27.

their errors; rehearsing the corrected questions and statements in their classroom will act as a matter of repetition that reinforces grammatical rules inside the student's head.

Learning Motivation

In the broad field of education psychology, Maehr and Meyer have theorized motivation as an individual's "personal investment" in attaining a desired outcome.[19] For a HLL, the learner's personal investment in terms of studying and actively completing their assignments will help them attain their desired outcome of learning Russian. The desire and motivation of a student to learn strongly correlates to their persistence, intensity, quality, and course of the learning behaviors they engage in.[20] It is important to remember that students' goals will not always match professors' expected outcomes, and that this is alright.[21] This can be due to a misalignment between student and professor's expectancies, and should not be taken as an act of rebellion or disrespect; it can simply be due to different prioritizations in language acquisition. In the field of second language acquisition, Gardner defines motivation as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and satisfaction experienced in this activity."[22] Simply put, the amount of effort a HLL puts into learning Russian is what the student will get back in the end. Working in the same field, Geisherik identified the following factors as the basis of language learners' motivation: attitude towards the population who uses the given language, attitude toward the language itself, attitude toward the acquisition of a language, both in general and personally, and the learner's goals in the pursuit of learning

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[19] Maehr and Meyer, *Understanding motivation and schooling: Where we've been, where we are, and where we need to go*, 4.

[20] Ambrose, *How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles For Smart Teaching*, 68-69.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Gardner, *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning. The Role of Attitudes and Motivation,* 32.

the given language.[23] A positive attitude for all of the aforementioned factors is ultimately what will work towards the HLL's goals in pursuing Russian.

Types of Learning Motivation

There are five different types of learning motivation that can be discernible between students: 1) performance goals, 2) performance-approach goals, 3) performance-avoidance goals, 4) learning goals, 5) work-avoidant goals.[24] These goals will be analyzed within the context of heritage language learners. Performance goals can be seen in students who wish to maintain their self-image and project their desired image positively in public.[25] HLLs with performance goals want to appear as if they are proficient, if not fluent, in Russian, and maintain this self-image, whether they actually know Russian or not. Not reaching this goal can serve as a de-motivator, resulting in negative effects. A performance goal for Kagan's "interview" exercise would be seen in the classroom; a student achieving this performance goal would ideally pronounce everything correctly and eloquently, use correct grammatical structure, and entertain their audience. Performance-approach goals are when students meet normal standards to maintain competence in the subject matter and fulfill their goals.[26] HLLs with performance-approach goals will meet the bare minimum to maintain competency in Russian and fulfill basic goals. Students with performance-approach goals will not take the next step to learn and retain more information, as it is not needed to remain competent. For Kagan's exercise, a HLL with performance-approach goals would complete the bare minimum that was required of them by the exercise, and present well enough to appear competent in front of their peers and professor. Performance-avoidance

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[23] Geisherik, *The Role of Motivation among Heritage and Non-Heritage Learners of Russian*, 1.
[24] Ambrose, *How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles for Smart Teaching*, 71-73.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ambrose, *How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles for Smart Teaching*, 71.

goals are when students meet the same normal standards as those with work-approach goals, only they meet these standards to avoid incompetence rather than maintain competence.[27] HLLs with performance-avoidance goals will meet the bare minimum to keep from being incompetent in their Russian classes but will not do any additional work. Similarly, to the HLLs with performance-approach goals, HLLs with performance-avoidance goals will complete the bare minimum of what was required by Kagan's exercise, and present well enough to not seem incompetent. There is a good chance that if they received feedback from their family members on the phone, they would not refer back to this feedback during the presentations unless they felt they were appearing incompetent in front of their peers. Learning goals are when students actively work to learn and understand the information they are being taught.[28] HLLs with learning goals will strive to grasp the material to the best of their ability and go further in order to fully learn Russian. Learning goals are the best-case scenario for both professors and students in the heritage language setting. HLLs with learning goals will try their best in completing Kagan's "interview" exercise; they may make more errors than students with performance goals but would be expected to learn more from the exercise than the performance goal students, or at least understand and work on their errors. Finally, work-avoidant goals are seen in students who put minimal effort into their work in order to attain their goal.[29] HLLs with work-avoidant goals often take Russian courses as "Easy A" courses, believing that they will excel in these courses without putting in much effort due to their previous exposure. HLLs with work-avoidant goals are typically the students who make the most errors in their work, which can be attributed to any of the reasons covered earlier in this paper. With Kagan's "interview" exercise, HLLs with

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ambrose, *How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles for Smart Teaching*, 72.

work-avoidant goals will do the bare minimum to complete the exercise, similarly to performance-avoidance and performance-approach HLLs, only they will put in enough to pass, rather than to appear competent or to keep from appearing incompetent. They may also not feel motivated to complete this exercise, as they have to actually talk to family members and keep the information from them handy in order to present it in class. To further understand these goals and motivations, the aspects affecting them must also be understood.

Value and Expectancy

Value and expectancy are two important aspects of understanding student motivation. The subjective value of the goal the student is pursuing along with the expectations for successfully completing that goal are at the core of the motivational framework.[30] The interaction between a student's values and expectancies is what results in the student's motivation, which leads to goal-directed behavior, which supports learning and performance.[31] The value HLLs have in learning Russian and taking these courses often lies within their reasons for taking these courses; examples of such values would be familial and cultural value. The expectancies of these students could then be seen as learning Russian to whatever degree fulfills their value, which can vary between levels of proficiency for basic communication and levels of fluency for advanced communication and meaningful conversations. If value and expectancy are lined up correctly, then a learning goal can be expected as a type of motivation for HLLs. However, if expectancy is off (the expectancies of the student and professor don't line up; the level of difficulty of the course was not expected by the student; the amount of work required; etc.), then other types of motivation (like work-avoidant or performance-avoidant) may overpower learning goals.

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ambrose, *How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles for Smart Teaching*, 70.

Professors of both native and traditional second language courses value accuracy, precision, correctness of case, making connections with all verbs, and understanding how to use tense and aspect. HLLs may have the same values, but their expectancies may not be aligning with these values. This misalignment could be due to them being in the wrong type of classroom. In the traditional second language classroom, the traditional learners will benefit more from grammar lessons than HLLs due to the primary implicit knowledge of Russian making the lessons appear less desirable to the HLL.[32] Precision may not be as meaningful to HLLs sometimes, because they know the vocabulary, and "feel" as if they are using it correctly. If value and expectancy are not aligning for the student, this does not mean that they are a bad student or that they do not care, it may just mean that they do not understand their mistakes yet. It is important to observe these misunderstandings, because demotivated students may stop studying, and will not end up achieving their learning goals. If learning Russian has both familial and cultural value, and the expectancy is to be able to converse in Russian or to improve Russian language skills, then an exercise, such as Kagan's, that has students practice speaking with their family and relaying new information to their peers and professor would work to motivate them. However, if this does not fit the student's value or expectancy, and the student is evidently work-avoidant, this same exercise can work to demotivate the student. The ultimate expectations of the heritage language classroom are that what the HLL "feels" is correct will slowly shift to more accurate performance, and that if motivation is maintained, students will continue studying and learning will be ultimately achieved.

Relevant Non-Learning Goals

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[32] Zyzik, *Toward a Prototype Model of the Heritage Language Learner: Understanding Strengths and Needs*, 29.

Along with the five types of learning motivation goals, there are also two relevant non-learning goals to keep in mind: affective goals and social goals.[33] An example of an affective goal is taking part in a goal-stimulating activity. If taking Russian courses stimulates other goals for a HLL, then they are achieving their affective goals. Examples of a social goal are making connections and making friends. If taking Russian courses will help a HLL make more connections in the future and more friends in the moment (or benefit current friendships and connections), then they are achieving their social goals. Generally, a person is more motivated to pursue an activity that fulfills multiple goals, as opposed to just one goal. As the Kagan "interview" exercise demonstrates students are able to achieve both their affective and social goals. An affective goal can be achieved through this exercise if one of the goals in taking the Russian course was to speak more fluently with family. Students who complete this exercise improve their skills while also having positive social interactions with family members, which simultaneously activates their social goals.

Cultural Motivation

Reasons for Taking Russian

When surveying Russian HLLs, most scholars have found that the underlying reasons are encapsulated by cultural motivation. The most common reasons are: to be able to integrate into the culture and society,[34] to improve/relearn the language,[35] linguistic competence,[36] the students' desire to achieve instrumental goals,[37] and family, to preserve their culture, future career, and to

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[33] Ambrose, *How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles For Smart Teaching*, 73.

[34] Geisherik, *The Role of Motivation among Heritage and Non-Heritage Learners of Russian*, 2.

[35] Kagan, *Russian Heritage Language Speakers in the U.S.: A Profile*, 7.

[36] Polinsky and Kagan, *Heritage languages: In the 'wild' and in the classroom*, 3. He, *The Heart of Heritage: Sociocultural Dimensions of Heritage Language Learning*, 67.

[37] Geisherik, *The Role of Motivation among Heritage and Non-Heritage Learners of Russian*, 2.

read Russian literature.[38] If students value these reasons for taking Russian as a college subject, then the expectancy is that they will set up learning goals for themselves in order to achieve their goals. However, if their motivation is thrown off, or if they do not see the value in certain exercises or lessons, then they may not continue to move up in coursework and study enough to retain information and learn.

Russian Language and Cultural Identity

It is important to understand HLL's cultural identities when investigating cultural motivations. Kagan states that self-identity is an important factor when studying one's own heritage language, as it was learned first and primarily the dominant language before attending an American educational institution.[39] It is almost important to note that not every HLL was exposed to just one Slavic language at a young age; many HLLs are first or 1.5 generation children of immigrants from former Soviet Republics.[40] This exposure makes every HLL unique, with their own perspective and motivations in the language classroom. Whether they consider themselves Russian, American, or any other combination of identities, the heritage student's attitude towards Russian will always differentiate them from a traditional second language student.[41]

Language Anxiety

Language anxiety, a potential demotivator for HLLs, has been defined by Karapetian[42] as occurring "where exposure to the heritage language is naturally limited, speakers' proficiency often remains underdeveloped and noticeably weaker than their dominant language", and stating that the HLLs "may be subjected to teasing, ridicule, error correction, and criticism by more

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[38] Kagan and Dillon, *Issues in Heritage Language Learning in the United States*, 6.

[39] Kagan, *Russian Heritage Language Speakers in the U.S.: A Profile*, 7-8.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Karapetian, *Defective Armenian: The Destructive Impact of Heritage Language Anxiety*, 1.

proficient speakers in the family and the wider heritage language community, which leads to internalized feelings of incompetence and fears of judgement."[43] While acting as a de-motivator, language anxiety can also be interpreted as a reason as to why HLLs would choose a traditional second language learner Russian course as opposed to the native language course. However, language anxiety may also work as a potential motivator. The anxiety of speaking to family members or speaking in front of other heritage language community members can be worked on in the classroom setting as a way of practicing Russian skills in order to begin overcoming this anxiety. The idea that these anxieties can be overcome is why it is extremely important for professors to understand the reasons their HLL students are taking these courses and focus their attention to ways they can teach their course while also hitting these motivations along the way. Language anxiety in terms of heritage language learning has not been extensively researched at the moment, creating an oversight in addressing this issue. While Russian textbooks do not yet have exercises that address language anxiety, it would both fascinate and benefit HLLs if their textbooks began to integrate this information.

Suggestions for Increasing Motivation

Kagan suggests that the following may help increase HLL motivation within heritage learner courses: understanding students' backgrounds, understanding how students' families and the role that language plays in their families may be motivating the students, focus on what is important for the students themselves by assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and potentially rethink traditional approaches to language learning curriculum (this is not always necessary, but it may be beneficial).[44] Another scholarly suggestion for increasing motivation in the heritage classroom

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Kagan, *Russian Heritage Language Speakers in the U.S.: A Profile*, 13-14.

is to conduct courses exclusively in the heritage language,[45] as it forces HLLs to think more in that language, as opposed to translating first and responding second. Paying more attention to how a HLL knows something, as opposed to what they know from prior exposure, can also contribute to better performance.[46] Knowing where the student got their information can better assess whether it is part of the HLL-created language construct, or whether it is attributed to something else. Some other suggestions include: praise, self-efficacy, choices, and relationships.[47] While praise should not be overwhelming, a positive environment increases student value and motivation.[48] Likewise, fostering self-efficacy also improves student motivation by making students feel more confident and capable in completing given tasks.[49] By giving students choices, they feel more in control than when simply given a task, and this has been shown to increase student's intrinsic motivation.[50] By building meaningful relationships with HLL students, professors provide support and help to develop their skills, while also increasing student motivation.[51] Talipova offers five types of teaching styles: grammatical, lexical, situational, text-based, and functional-semantical.[52] HLLs may be introduced to the five teaching styles early on, and the style that suits the HLLs the best can be adopted to increase motivation. Tolstova and Kozlovtseva offer yet another approach: create a project tailored to student's interests in order to increase their language skills, which will also teach students how to better understand and communicate about the specific field, materials, and information needed to present the project in

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[45] Cummins, *A Proposal for Action: Strategies for Recognizing Heritage Language Competence as a Learning Resource within the Mainstream Classroom*, 588.

[46] Zyzik, *Toward a Prototype Model of the Heritage Language Learner: Understanding Strengths and Needs*, 14.

[47] Fluke et al., *Motivation: Strategy brief,* 3-5.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Talipova, *Ob obychenii russkomu yazihku po funktsional'no-semanticheskimi programmam*, 104.

Russian.[53] As stated previously in this article, it is important to understand the HLL's motivations for taking the course, their background, and how to stimulate their motivations in class in order to illuminate the importance and relevance of the lessons and assignments. Not only will understanding a HLL's motivation for taking a language course influence the professor's teaching style, but it will also provide the HLL with the language skills they seek. Most importantly, it will foster a positive relationship between the language and student, which will yield beneficial outcomes for both the professor and the students.

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[53] Tolstova and Kozlovtseva, *Mezhdistsiplinarnihy podhod k obucheniu detey-immigrantov v poccii: opiht finansovo universiteta*, 82.

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