

Chinese Learners of Portuguese and Spanish Majors in Macau: A Comparative Case-Study of Motivation Aspects

Oksana Kharlay¹, Martin Bagheri² & Jeremy D. Philips³

¹ Macau University of Science and Technology, University international College, Macau, China

² ATMC NZ, Auckland, New Zealand

³ Institute for Tourism Studies, Tourism College, Colina de Monga Ha, Macau, China

Correspondence: Wisam Chaleila, Department of English, Al-Qasemi College of Education, Baqa Elgharbia, Israel.

Received: June 8, 2019 Accepted: July 8, 2019 Online Published: July 10, 2019

doi: 10.5539/elt.v12n8p54 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v12n8p54>

Abstract

This study investigated multiple learning motivation aspects of Chinese university students in Macau majoring in Spanish and Portuguese. A mixed methods research was employed by using questionnaires and interviews. 181 learners (96 Portuguese and 85 Spanish majors) were surveyed about ten language-learning motivation dimensions by using a questionnaire. A subset of participants from questionnaires were later given follow-up interviews. Quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the students in these majors had strong intrinsic motivation but limited integrative motivation towards the target language community. Other motivational pull-factors were the heritage connection between the language and the place of study and interest in the pop-culture associated related to the target language. Students reported a decline in motivation during the middle years of study, however, Spanish students' interest resurged by the end of year three. There was also a gender imbalance, suggesting that career-related aspects of motivations were stronger among males. The results also revealed that language learners had an ideal-self that was multilingual and cosmopolitan but did not aspire to integrate into a specific target-language community.

Keywords: motivation, LOTE, Chinese learners of Portuguese and Spanish majors

1. Introduction

Both frontline practitioners and academics consider motivation as one of the vital factors in effective foreign language learning. Yet, contrasted against an exponential growth in research on the motivation for learning English as a second language (L2), the study of Languages Other Than English (LOTEs hereafter) has lagged considerably behind (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). The current research project aims to contribute to the better understanding of foreign language learning motivation, focusing on acquiring Portuguese and Spanish in a foreign language context. The geopolitical and historical environment of Macau (SAR, China) is deeply rooted within the Lusophone community after nearly 500 years of Portuguese rule. However, since the return to Chinese political control in the year 2000, Macau has undertaken a rapid reintegration process into the Chinese nation, both culturally and linguistically. The 2011 census indicates less than 3% of Macau's current population speaks Portuguese at home (Macau Government Statistics Service, 2018), whereas the integration of Mandarin Chinese into daily life and local schooling is pervasive. However, the vestigial colonial language retains some cachet in Macau. Locally, Portuguese ability is seen as an entry criterion for the Macau Civil Service, while globally, the Central Government of the people of Republic of China seeks fluent Chinese Lusophones to further China's political and economic ambitions in Portuguese-speaking parts of Africa. Macau is seen as ideally-positioned to become a hot-house learning centre for mainland students studying Portuguese (Bilrero, 2018).

Unlike English and Portuguese, Spanish has no historical links to the region. This juxtaposition offers a rare opportunity to study motivation variables for LOTE majors in one context, studying two similar languages, which have widely different associations in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic learning drives.

This research was undertaken because the setting offers a rare opportunity to study motivation in its own pure form, unencumbered by learning histories (either positive or negative). It is also free from contextual extrinsic requirements, unlike English learning or the study of Mandarin by Cantonese Chinese speakers. Through a

cross-sectional study, access to undergraduates in all four years of their degrees, it allows investigation of the year-by-year temporal dimensions of how drives, attitudes, and expectations evolve.

1.1 Language Learning Motivation and LOTES

The essential role of motivation in language learning has ensured that it has been extensively studied, dissected, classified and reclassified. Earl Stevick (1982) compared motivation with food, as it is vital for the continuation of the learner's journey. The growth of the global English teaching "industry" and its academic foundations have resulted in a broad range of research investigating English language learner (ELL hereafter) motivation. LOTE learner (LOTEL hereafter) motivation is an emergent complementary topic with a rather more modest history of academic enquiry, theorisation, and practical applications.

What is the degree of relationship between ELL and LOTEL motivations? Should wholesale cross-applicability be assumed? Are the concepts and theories of learner motivation shared or so specific as to be distinct for individual target languages? The clearest way to differentiate is not by target language but by learning context. A broad-based, frequently universalised concept such as Dörnyei's Ideal L2 Self (2009), applies more strongly in contexts where the learner has concrete reasons to envision a future self by using the language for self-fulfilment related purposes. Whereas learning the language of a conquering military power in a prison camp context, for instance, would facilitate a much weaker personal vision of the ultimate L2 self. The study of learning motivation is predicated on the assumption of a common core of motivational forces at work in all learning.

An early motivational dichotomy that language teaching inherited from general learning theory, is the division between intrinsic motivation(s), which is self-selected, personal and unlinked to tangible rewards, and extrinsic motivation. Bruner (1966), for example, classified the learner's aspiration to learn just knowing something new as a powerful form of intrinsic motivation for classroom use. Extrinsic motivation(s) is learning aspirations born from the desire for some form of reward, incentive or tangible positive outcome, now or in the future, resulting from successfully learning the target. All learners have a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, however, one or the other force may be dominant in the critical choice to undertake, continue or abandon studying a language (Cho, 2012; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

This binary breakdown of motivational forces has proven unsatisfactory and most contemporary scholars have sought to augment this division and alter or reclassify ELL motivations beyond the psychological dyad of intrinsic/extrinsic. Stevick (1996, p. 8) identified "academic motivations" such as getting the right answer in a classroom situation and the more common and much more powerful "life motivations", like ego-fulfilment or functionality in a society where the target language is spoken. Life motivations are of course fully context-dependent and often involve an assimilation of intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

Integration is a frequent, bedrock goal of language learning. The idea of integrative motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), defined as learning from a desire to blend into the target language community, is contrasted with instrumental motivation where learning the target language (TL hereafter) is a means to a goal that does not involve actively assimilating with the language's speakers. Again, this motivational dichotomy is largely context-driven, with immigrant learners presumed to have a much stronger integrative pull than Foreign Language (FL) learners, especially those learning an "exotic" language in a classroom context with limited other exposure, such as the Japanese learners of Welsh targeted by Nagata and Koike (2011).

Just as the widespread use of English, and thus English learning is a result of globalisation forces, LOTEL motivation functions within global cultural and economic fluxes. In the current global context, LOTE learning motivation bases are linked to a form of new cosmopolitanism which means that the necessary education is available to those with the economic means. In many local contexts, learners may be exposed to multiple regional or national languages before they encounter English in an institutional or commercial teaching situation. These polylingual individuals have language learning profiles shaped by studying one or multiple LOTES while simultaneously learning English as part of their basic education. This can be seen in Cantonese speakers learning Mandarin in south China, or Malay speakers learning Mandarin in Singapore. This kind of educated cosmopolitanism fuels LOTEL motivation since learning an additional language is not seen as peculiar. What constitutes integrative motivation is less clear-cut because there is no single target group for social or economic integration. The motivational field for young "global cosmopolitans" is diverse.

Going from external factors to internal influences on LOTEL motivation, Dörnyei's (2005) ideas about a self-based approach to language learning motivational forces, have strong applicability in assessing the motivations of global cosmopolitans even though they are not technically studying an "L2". Specifically, the L2 Motivational Self System (2005, [L2MSS hereafter]) provides a useful lens to identify the types of motivation applicable to a non-local LOTE learning situation in the South China context. The key components from

Dörnyei's (2005) L2MSS, that lend themselves to research reproducibility, are the contrast between the Ideal L2 self and Ought-to L2 Self. The influential, motivational vision of the Ideal L2 Self, as contrasted with the more socially situated, extrinsic Ought-to L2 Self, is particularly relevant to learning in the context of assessed, institutional, tertiary-level language learning.

1.2 Rationale and Research Questions

In examining the motivation to study Portuguese or Spanish by students now living in South China, we are going to understand the reasons that underlie students' drive to invest time and effort in language learning. Macau's history is deeply rooted in the Portuguese culture, language and traditions which continue today. It is bound to develop even further following the One Road One Belt Initiative, a key Chinese central government project aimed at strengthening cultural and commercial ties within historical trade routes. Thus, Macau and its cultural legacy could influence decisions when selecting to study a LOTE. In comparison, Spanish has no privileged historical connection to the region. Though Spanish is "second only to English in its international reach" (Crystal, 2011, p. 72), this is not the case in Southern China. Despite the high number of speakers globally and a broad span geographically, Spanish does not fully enjoy the prestige of being a 'commercial facilitator' LOTE, such as German, Japanese or Russian.

It is worth noting that within the SAR's universities, only 5% of all local students are currently enrolled in Portuguese courses and no Macanese students have chosen Spanish as their sole focus of study since 2013.

This study aims to explore Chinese students' motivation to learn Portuguese and Spanish languages in general and identify and compare factors that influence their motivational behaviour in particular. The key research questions that this study will address are:

- (a) What motivational factors contribute to the decision to study Spanish or Portuguese in an FL context?
- (b) Are there any differences in motivation among Portuguese and Spanish language learners?

We will identify the motivation variables and compare the results between Portuguese and Spanish majors to determine any significant differences. We will also discuss the motivational role of social and political aspects that promote interest in Portuguese and Spanish language learning among Chinese learners.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

Mixed methods research (MMR) can be used for five main reasons including triangulation, complementarity, initiation, expansion, and development (Riazi, 2017). This study drew on MMR to triangulate both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve an in-depth understanding of motivations aspects by enabling the researchers to cross-validate one set of findings against the other (Creswell, 2012; Riazi, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2011). We collected quantitative data from questionnaire responses and qualitative data from interviews. The data were designed to provide complementary perspectives.

2.2 The Context of the Study

The study was carried out at the Macau University of Science and Technology (M.U.S.T.), a private tertiary institution founded in 2000 in Macao, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) in Southern China. There are 12 faculties and academic units that run a wide range of courses. The University International College (UIC), a relatively new university faculty established in 2010, provides both degree and non-degree programs in English, Portuguese, Spanish, and Chinese. All the study participants are currently undergraduate UIC students enrolled in Bachelor of Arts in Foreign Language Studies program with Portuguese or Spanish as their major.

2.3 Participants

A nested sampling was employed in this study as a subset of participants from quantitative strand (questionnaires) was used for qualitative strand (interviews). Nested sampling can be used in studies like the current one as the main purpose is triangulation (Riazi, 2017). The survey participants included a total of 181 undergraduate students from two majors (Portuguese and Spanish) at a private university in Macau, China. 52% of learners were Portuguese majors; 48% from Spanish majors. The gender distribution is highly skewed towards female learners. Details about participants are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Participant information

Year	Portuguese majors				Spanish majors			
	male (N)	age (m)	female (N)	age (m)	male (N)	age (m)	female (N)	age (m)
1	12 (57%)	18.8	23 (31%)	17.8	8 (46%)	18	15 (22%)	17
2	3 (14%)	19.0	22 (30%)	19.0	3 (18%)	20	26 (38%)	19
3	5 (24%)	21.0	17 (23%)	20.0	3 (18%)	22	16 (23%)	20
4	1 (5%)	22.0	12 (16%)	21.5	3 (18%)	22	12 (17%)	21
total	n = 21		n = 74		n = 17		n = 69	
	n = 95				n = 86			

95% of the students (172) are native speakers of Mandarin from the People's Republic of China and 5% of students (9) are Macau Chinese speakers of both Cantonese and Mandarin.

All participants studied English as a foreign language in their schools starting from the primary school (for more than 12 years on average) as required by the Chinese educational system. Additionally, four learners (4.2%, including one male) among the Portuguese majors and three learners of Spanish (3.5%, all females) had had some previous experience of studying these languages ('a little time' as described by one of the Spanish major respondents) before they entered university.

2.4 Instruments

The quantitative method including questionnaires was employed to address the key questions and gain further insights. To better identify relationships between variables, along with eventual trends and patterns, a quantitative approach was preferred in collecting data in order to allow the analysis of a large pool of candidates (Dörnyei, 2007). The questionnaire was adapted from Dörnyei et al. (2010) and it consists of two main parts (10 dimensions, 62 items in total):

Part I includes six dimensions (A-F), with 46 items presented as statements about ideal LOTE self (dimension A; 9 items; $\alpha = .93$), ought-to LOTE self (B; 9 items; $\alpha = .91$), parental encouragement / family influence (C; 9 items; $\alpha = .86$), instrumentality-promotion (D; 12 items; $\alpha = .9$), travel orientation (E; 3 items; $\alpha = .74$), interest in the Portuguese/Spanish language (F; 4 items; $\alpha = .91$). Part I was based on a six-point nominal Likert scale ranging from six ('strongly agree') to one ('strongly disagree').

Part II comprises of four dimensions (G-J) focusing on attitudes toward learning Portuguese/Spanish (G; 5 items; $\alpha = .92$), integrativeness (H; 3 items; $\alpha = .61$), cultural interest (I; 4 items; $\alpha = .9$), attitudes toward LOTE community (J; 4 items; $\alpha = .9$) with 16 close-ended questions based on a six-point nominal Likert scale ranging from six ('very much') to one ('not at all'). The questionnaire items were written in English and translated into Chinese by qualified translators. The raw data were then analysed using SPSS 24 tests to identify differences in motivational variables in Portuguese and Spanish majors.

In terms of qualitative strand, 31 of the Portuguese majors (years 2 and 3) and 24 of the Spanish majors (years 3 and 4) students were later interviewed. Five open-ended questions were used, aimed at delving deeper into the Chinese learners' motivation to study Portuguese and Spanish. The foci were: the motivation for learner's LOTE choice; family influence; general LOTE culture perception; and LOTE perceived usefulness. The nuances exposed through the interviews complemented the research findings from the statistical analyses. All interviews were conducted separately and lasted an average of 5-6 minutes. To avoid subjectivity bias, the interview data were discussed by all the authors. Responses were distilled into recurrent patterns, allowing for coding into seven distinct categories (Table 2).

Table 2. Categorisation and coding of interview responses

Categorisation	Code	Description
Interest in LOTE	IL	Interest for the language
Interest in LOTE Culture	ILC	General interest for the culture
Multilingual Self	MS	Interest to learn an additional language
Low-Ability Other subjects	LAO	Least resistance path to further qualification
Employment/Fam. Business	EFB	Enhance employability and/or running family business
Macau Lusophonic Heritage	MLH	Macau's strong European language heritage

2.5 Data Collection

The data collection process was from October to December 2017. The process of questionnaire distribution was enabled by colleagues who ensured a high collection rate. All the respondents were informed of the purpose of the survey and given instructions. Teachers offered their class time and imposed no time constraints on the questionnaire completion. At the end of the questionnaire, there was a statement that invited participants to take part in interviews. As a whole, 51 students accepted to take part in interviews.

2.6 Data Analysis

2.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The Cronbach's alpha (α) test was used to verify the dimensions of the responses expressed as a reliability coefficient, a parameter that will be included in further analysis. For Portuguese learners, most of the dimensions gained high-reliability coefficients. Integrativeness for Spanish students; however, has low-reliability scores for years 1 (.33), 2 (.51), and 3 (.16). To some extent, this could be explained by the small size of the research pool (only three questions included). Nonetheless, the α results for integrativeness dimension among Portuguese language learners instead reveal acceptable scores (.65-.69). We found a comparable high number for year 4 Spanish language learners (.66). As a possible interpretation, we may consider that first, Spanish major learners may not have had the economic means or time available for overseas travel or study experiences and thus may have had limited opportunity to increase their familiarity with Spanish culture. Second, these students are not sufficiently confident in their command of the language to be able to assimilate with another culture different from Chinese. Under those circumstances, integrativeness does not influence language learning motivation. The change in score for year 4 can be accounted for by the fact that the majority of students take courses offered by universities in Spain during the summer after completing year 3. These training sessions could be the main reason for the score differences. Subsequently, integrativeness dimension results for years 1 to 3 were excluded from further analysis. Similarly, we had to remove year 1 travel orientation results ($\alpha = .45$) due to the students' limited travel experience, as mentioned previously.

2.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

All students' interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researchers. All transcriptions were entered into NVivo to be analysed. This program does not analyse the data, however, it facilitated the process of coding, analysing, and presentation of data (Creswell, 2012). Students' responses were coded against the five predetermined categories: the motivation for learner's LOTE choice; family influence; general LOTE culture perception; and LOTE perceived usefulness.

3. Results

3.1 Motivational Variables Correlations

The Pearson correlation (r) test was conducted to identify the specific interconnections between the motivational variables in each of the languages. Correlations between motivational variables can be described as ranging from 'very weak' to 'moderate'. However, a strong correlation was observed between ought-to LOTE self and parental encouragement variables ($r = .77$ [Port.] / $.69$ [Span.]), which might reflect the contribution of family influence in actively shaping a learner's motivation and outlook. Next, there is a strong link between interest in the Portuguese/Spanish language and attitudes toward learning Portuguese/Spanish dimensions ($r = .76$ [Port.] / $.78$ [Span.]). This can be explained by the existing positive in-class environment that contributes to the students' enthusiasm about the language learning process. Similarly, the results indicate positive associations between

integrativeness and cultural interest ($r = .62$ [Port.] / $.61$ [Span.]), integrativeness and attitudes toward LOTE community ($r = .65$ [Port.] / $.61$ [Span.]).

Regarding differences across languages, the integrativeness variable seems to be more closely related to interest in the Portuguese language ($r = .66$) and attitudes toward learning Portuguese language ($r = .61$). In Spanish, the relationship between interest in the Spanish language and cultural interest ($r = .71$) and attitudes toward LOTE community ($r = .66$), reveal particularly strong links. The ideal LOTE self and interest in Spanish language were found to be closely related ($r = .63$).

Instead, the analysis revealed mixed results. Specifically, in both languages, ideal LOTE self correlates weakly with integrativeness ($r = .38$ [Port.] / $.30$ [Span.]). This is opposite to Dörnyei's (2005) model of a Second Language Motivational Self System or L2MSS which included integrativeness in the Ideal L2 construct. In addition, students seldom associate language proficiency with possible successful career growth, grading it as "non-significant". Instrumentality-promotion shows a relatively weak correlation with ideal LOTE self with $r = .54$ in Portuguese and $r = .34$ in Spanish respectively. Again, this result differs from Dörnyei's conclusion that instrumental (promotion) drives are closely linked to the ideal LOTE self (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 31).

3.2 Comparative Analysis of the Motivational Role of Variables

Independent-samples t-tests were carried out to compare the differences in motivational variables for the two majors. In general, there were no significant variations identified in the dimensions analysed. However, the results highlight a significant difference in the integrativeness dimension in item H2 "How much would you like to become similar to the people who speak Portuguese/Spanish?" [Port. ($N = 95$; $m = 4.78$; $SD = 1.25$) / Span. ($N = 15$; $m = 3.47$; $SD = 2.07$); $t = 2.9$; *Sig.* (2-tailed) = $.03$; effect size = 0.07 ; $p = 0.000$]. The data show a higher motivational level for the Portuguese cohort. This is probably due to the unique cultural links between Macau and Lusophonic countries, given that Portuguese still plays a role in most aspects of local life, including the names of businesses or streets and the local laws. There were no significant differences between LOTEs in terms of using the languages as a mean to a deeper cultural understanding. Likewise, both majors overall share the same commitment towards their subjects of choice.

Tables 3 and 4 present the combined results of the examined motivational role of variables within two majors and four years of study. Overall, the data demonstrate a wide range and high rank of the overall mean values ($m =$ from 3.1 to 5.4), suggesting a positive tendency in motivation towards both Portuguese and Spanish learning among Chinese students.

Table 3. Descriptive data for Portuguese majors

Year	A		B		C		D		E	
	m	SD								
1	5.2	.9	3.1	1.7	3.2	1.9	4.7	1.3	4.2	1.5
2	4.8	1.0	3.3	1.6	3.7	1.7	4.6	1.0	3.8	1.5
3	4.6	.9	3.2	1.4	3.5	1.6	4.4	1.2	3.6	1.2
4	4.9	1.2	3.3	1.8	3.5	1.9	4.7	1.2	3.5	1.5
Year	F		G		H		I		J	
	m	SD								
1	4.9	1.2	4.9	1.1	5.2	.9	4.5	1.3	5.4	.7
2	4.7	1.2	4.8	1.2	4.6	1.3	4.0	1.2	5.1	1.0
3	4.4	1.0	4.8	1.0	4.5	1.1	3.8	1.0	5.2	.7
4	4.3	1.5	4.5	1.3	4.8	1.0	3.8	1.2	5.2	1.1

Table 4. Descriptive data for Spanish majors

Year	A		B		C		D		E	
	m	SD								
1	5.2	1.1	3.0	1.6	3.3	1.8	4.8	1.3	--	--
2	4.9	.9	2.6	1.6	3.1	1.9	4.3	1.4	3.7	1.6
3	4.3	1.0	2.7	1.5	3.2	1.8	4.4	1.3	4.5	1.4
4	5.0	1.2	2.8	1.7	3.4	1.9	4.8	1.2	4.3	1.4
Year	F		G		H		I		J	
	m	SD								
1	5.2	.9	5.5	.7	--	--	4.9	1.0	5.4	.7
2	4.5	1.3	4.4	1.3	--	--	4.5	1.3	5.2	.9
3	3.6	1.4	4.3	1.3	--	--	4.1	0.9	4.6	1.1
4	5.0	1.1	4.9	0.9	4.6	1.6	4.6	1.3	5.0	1.2

Attitudes toward the LOTE community questions (dimension J) received the highest mean values in the two majors ($m = 5.2$ [Port.] / $m = 5.1$ [Span.]). This group shows consistency in high scores in Portuguese with a slightly higher result for year 1 students ($m=5.4$), which may be explained by an overall more favourable attitude towards their studies among freshmen, who feel enthusiasm about new prospects. However, Spanish year 2 students demonstrated a weaker interest compared to other years. The attitude towards people of Portuguese and Spanish origin or culture is comparable between majors, both conveying a very positive response during the whole course length. Nonetheless, we identified higher than average scores for year 1, possibly driven by expectations and their initial enthusiasm. The correlation between languages is modest ($r = .4$) and mostly due to a year 3 outlier among Spanish students (Table 4). The results revealed a clear link between the cultural interest and the taking up of the course, separate from any eventual benefits in career and education progress.

Overall, dimension A scores highly (the overall $m = 4.9$): students' answers suggested a strong ideal LOTE self as a powerful motivator to learn Portuguese and Spanish. Learners of both majors tended to portray themselves as successful LOTE users aiming to eventually reduce the difference between themselves and native speakers. Two of the highest scores observed were in year 1 and in year 4 Spanish major, while the lowest mean was in year 3. The mean index variation between groups was very modest (1%), with a nearly identical year-by-year difference ($r = .9$).

The dimension of attitudes towards learning the LOTE proves to be an influential variable in the students' motivational disposition. In terms of students' engagement in LOTE classes, dimension G responses indicated a range of scores with the lowest correlation ($r = .1$). There was a slight decrease in years 1 to 3 and a noticeable fall in year 4 Portuguese majors. Instead, Spanish learners' responses showed a dramatic shift from one of the highest scores in year 1 ($m = 5.5$) to $m = 4.4-4.3$ in years 2 and 3. The response partially reverses again in the final year of studies.

Integrativeness (dimension H) scores reveal very mixed results. Portuguese students appeared strongly integratively motivated, with the highest mean score in year 1. A decline was observed over the next two years with a slight increase in year 4 and in year 4 Spanish. The conclusion is that learners' general interest in Portuguese culture has a considerable influence on their language learning motivation. However, in Spanish, we believe the analysis was not conclusive since it is based only on year 4 data. In our opinion, this result is non-variant due to a limited research pool and requires further investigation.

Results for instrumentality-promotion dimension (D) indicated broad similarity in patterns across years of study with a small variance in years 2 and 3 in both languages with the highest scores in the years 1 and 4. There was a very high correlation between years ($r = .7$). Although not one of the strongest motivational variables, it appears that students are likely to be motivated by the ideas of further studies overseas and/or achieving success in their future career pursuits.

Dimension F assessed the level of subjective interest in the language and the level of personal engagement and liking. The comparison between the languages showed that the students' interest in Portuguese appears to decrease progressively during their studies. In Spanish, the scores, although starting from a high mean of 5.2 in

year 1, drop significantly in year 2, reaching a very low score in year 3. However, there was a clear upward turn in the final year of studies. Low correlation ($r = .4$) reflects the marked and steady decline in the agreement index for Portuguese students.

The motivational influence of dimension I (cultural interest) was relatively strong with an overall mean of 4.3. Students revealed an interest in Portuguese and Spanish mass media and popular culture. There was a very high correlation trend through the years ($r = .8$), although agreement indexes were notably higher for Spanish majors compared to Portuguese. However, as we can infer from data in Table 3, if Spanish students' enthusiasm about Spanish culture fluctuates, it withers progressively with Portuguese majors.

The results for dimension E (travel) were unexpected. Regarding its motivational force, the travel orientation variable seems to be unremarkable. The second highest anti-correlation index ($r = -0.8$) was mostly due to a marked increase in interest in travel by the Spanish majors in the last two years (+20 % in comparison to Portuguese), which was the opposite of the Portuguese students' response. However, it was interesting to observe a continuing decline in scores among Portuguese majors in comparison to score fluctuations from Spanish majors, although there was an underlying upward trend. Again, this conclusion is far from definite since year 1 data were not taken into consideration, as seen in Table 3.

Parental anticipation (dimension C) is traditionally believed to be a powerful motivational factor for Chinese students. Nonetheless, it was one of the lowest-ranked variables among those analysed (overall $m = 3.4$). Anti-correlation between languages was moderate/strong ($r = -0.6$), with Spanish agreement indexes remaining fairly constant through the years. The highest discrepancies were found between year 1 and year 2 (19%) where it raised by 0.5 (median) for Portuguese but dropped by 0.2 for Spanish. It might signify a perceived disconnection between students' background and their own choices made regarding their future life journey.

The ought-to LOTE self (dimension B) was the lowest ranked motivational variable in both languages (overall $m = 3.0$). The difference in terms of percentage was relatively high (16%) with a strong anti-correlation between languages ($r = -0.8$). Students seemed to not recognise social expectations as a motivating force. We may conclude cautiously that external restrictions are of very little influence on shaping students' motivation to study Portuguese/Spanish. In Portuguese, mean scores demonstrated a minimum positive change by 0.2 between year 1 and year 4, whilst in Spanish, the trend is reversed.

To summarise, the correlations between the agreement indexes varied considerably over the years according to the investigated categories. Within the spectrum, we found very strong correlations (dimensions A, D, H and I), strong anti-correlations (dimensions B, C, E) and weak correlations (dimensions F, G, and J). Anti-correlations are the easiest to understand due to either a common increase or decrease in interest through the years regarding the subject in question. Weak correlations and anti-correlations are more complex to explain but a strong factor appears to be the higher variability between the different years' responses for the Spanish cohorts. This could be due to the slightly different motivation in learning aims between the languages. While Portuguese was seen as a relevant career-enhancing skill in Macau, learning Spanish had a stronger personal/cultural/leisure dimension.

3.3 Relationships Between Motivational Variables and Gender

Two-way ANOVA tests were conducted against two dependent variables: major and gender. Levene's test for equality of variances was found to be violated in ought-to LOTE dimension (B) [$F(3,177) = 3.747, p = 0.012$]. Owing to this violated assumption, the degree of freedom was adjusted. Two-way ANOVA tests of between-subject effects revealed no statistically significant interactions between two independent variables – gender and major and the dependent variables – analysed dimensions.

Independent samples t-tests were also carried out to examine the relationships between motivational variables and gender and to ascertain to what degree Portuguese and Spanish language learning motivation could be gender-related. The results showed that in all cases males scored quite higher above average in comparison with females. Looking at the Portuguese students first, significant differences were observed in three dimensions: ought-to LOTE self, family influence, and attitudes toward learning LOTE. Males scored higher on item B8 "Studying Portuguese is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of Portuguese"; item G2 "Do you always look forward to Portuguese classes?"; item G3 "Do you find learning Portuguese really interesting?". Females scored higher in item C2 "My parents encourage me to study Portuguese in my free time". The effect size in all items was very small, indicating that even though the gender differences were statistically significant, their extent makes them ignorable (see Table 5). Taken into account all findings suggests that for men 'losing face' and disappointing expectations were stronger motivators in terms of commitment to the courses. As per the relatively higher scores for items G2 and G3, they probably were the result of different gender attitudes towards a subject that includes a higher level of social interaction than other,

more lecture-based academic disciplines. This would offer the more socially awkward males the opportunity to relax and to express their feelings.

Parents within the Chinese cultural framework see the education of their children with subtle variations between genders: this would explain why females feel a stronger encouragement (or perhaps pressure) to do schoolwork during their free time. The ought-to LOTE self-variable appeared strongly skewed, with an agreement mean score nearly 10% higher for the males. Just two other variables differ between responses: instrumentally-promotion and integrativeness (both ~ 0.27). These three dimensions have in common the emphasis on career-drive as a priority, which motivates males more in their language learning. In particular, Portuguese was seen as a tool for improving employment opportunities and faster promotion. However, we need to emphasise that the extent of these variations, although real and consistent, were modest both in range (3 out of 10 dimensions) and representation given that female cohorts outnumber males by 3 to 1.

Table 5. T-Test results for Portuguese majors

Question	Gender	N	m	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Effect size	<i>p</i>
B8	males	21	3.9	1.26	.34	.013	.001	0.022
	females	74	3.41	1.53				
C2	males		4.57	1.57	-1.33	.02	.003	0.025
	females		5.05	.99				
G2	males		4.86	.79	1.382	.02	.02	0.012
	females		4.55	1.16				
G3	males		4.85	.85	.778	.044	.02	0.038
	females		4.68	1.21				

Among Spanish majors, t-test revealed significant gender-related differences in eight items in four dimensions: ought-to LOTE self, instrumentality-promotion, travel orientation, and integrativeness (see Table 6). Males scored higher in item B2 “Learning Spanish is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so”; item B5 “Studying Spanish is important to me in order to gain the approval of my peers/teachers/family”; item B6 “I have to study Spanish, because if I do not study it, I think my parents will be disappointed with me”; item B9 “It will have a negative impact on my life if I don’t learn Spanish”; item D7 “Studying Spanish is important to me because I would like to spend a longer period living abroad (e.g. studying and working)”; item H1 “How important do you think learning Spanish is in order to learn more about the culture and art of its speakers?” and item H3 “How much do you like Spanish?”.

Females scored higher on only one item, E1 “Learning Spanish is important to me because I would like to travel internationally”. Males are clearly more affected by the expectations of family, peers, and self. They also apply a more practical and career-oriented motivation to their study, planning to live abroad and integrate in their country of choice. Females instead scored higher motivational drive in terms of temporary travelling strongly linked to leisure. The medium effect size was identified in two instances related to integrativeness H1 and H3, which signifies statistically important magnitude for these aspects.

Table 6. T-Test results for Spanish majors

Question	Gender	N	m	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Effect size	<i>p</i>
B2	males	17	3.00	1.97	.777	.011	.007	0.013
	females	69	2.6	1.33				
B5	males		3.24	1.95	.955	.035	.01	0.03
	females		2.75	1.44				
B6	males		3.41	2.00	2.078	.04	.05	0.026
	females		2.33	1.52				

B9	males		2.82	1.88	1.957	.04	.04	0.03
	females		1.88	1.25				
D7	males		4.76	1.75	.480	.03	.003	0.007
	females		4.55	1.13				
E1	males	9	3.78	1.92	-.783	.045	.009	0.036
	females	54	4.29	1.24				
H1	males	3	6.00	.00	3.447	.005	.44	0.015
	females	12	5.25	.75				
H3	males		6.00	.00	5.631	.000	.68	0.045
	females		4.83	.72				

Overall, Spanish learners' responses (in contrast to Portuguese majors) were much more strongly differentiated by gender, with males scoring higher average agreement responses in all but three dimensions: parental encouragement, travel orientation, and attitudes to the LOTE community, all of which were nearly identical. It is not unexpected to find gender to be of some significance in intra-family interactions in terms of filial piety in Confucian cultures. A predilection for travel relates more closely to an individual's personal interests rather than their gender. Yet, based on the surveyed students, both males and females agreed that learning Spanish could increase travel opportunities to Spanish-speaking countries. This also explains the students' favourable attitude to the countries where the language is spoken. The widest gap is related to attitudes toward learning Spanish, with males scoring an average 0.61 (*m*) higher than females. All the other dimensions scored high, especially in comparison to Portuguese, with averages higher than 0.4 (*m*).

In terms of the differences between males' mean factor score when comparing the two languages, the results show all scores to be higher for Spanish. The comparison revealed predominantly larger differences between the mean scores for variables A, F, and G (Ideal LOTE self, interest in the language, attitude towards the language). That is, male students majoring in Spanish presented stronger motivation for the construct of an ideal LOTE self (A) (*m* dif. =.45) compared to their Portuguese major counterparts. The results indicated the learners' stronger interest (F) (*m* dif. =.42) and a positive attitude to learning Spanish (G) (*m* dif. =.50). However, we believe that gender-related differences regarding motivational variables should be approached with caution due to the unequal sample sizes and should be investigated further in future studies.

3.4 Findings From Interview Data

Face-to-face interview data provided further insight into Chinese learners' motivation to study Portuguese and Spanish. Altogether, 55 interviewees (hereafter presented using pseudonyms) produced a total of 85 quotations. Figure 1 presents the overview of the interviews results.

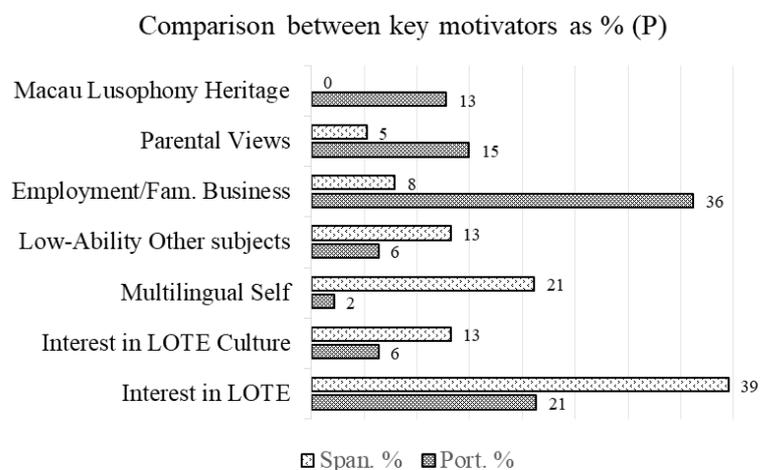


Figure 1. Motivational factors for learning Portuguese and Spanish

Similar to questionnaire results, interview findings indicated interest in LOTE as a powerful motivation factor among learners of both majors. As one Portuguese major student commented: “I like studying foreign languages best” (Shimley, year 3). However, it is interesting to note that although students perceive the importance of English as the world’s *lingua franca*, they reported reluctance to carry on further studies due to “subject fatigue”, English having been part of the Chinese national curriculum since their childhood. All interviewees claimed to be satisfied with their English proficiency and do not perceive any need to further their language development. As one student explained: “I was studying this language (English) for basically my whole life, since I was two. I don’t think it can make any difference if I study English at the university and I don’t want to” (Fernando, Spanish major, year 3).

Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed that some learners pointed to the advice from their parents as the major factor for their choice. Fifty-three of the learners interviewed in both majors received full parental support and encouragement in terms of their major choice. Only two male learners mentioned their disagreement with the family members. Their fathers apparently expected their sons to have a career in a different line of work that might be described as more ‘masculine’, as one participant stated: “Actually, my family members didn’t support me to choose this major because I could have a better job in my hometown. All my relatives work in the police system. They could help me to get a job” (Samuel, Portuguese major, year 3).

In some responses, students emphasise their perceived aptitude to study a LOTE. As one Portuguese major student elaborated: “I think I am talented in studying languages. I was good at English in school, so I can manage another foreign language easily” (Francisca, year 3).

Additionally, three Portuguese and five Spanish students said that their past poor academic achievements in science and social science classes led them to choosing a LOTE to avoid these subjects at university. Some also view languages as “easier” majors. For example, one participant said: “Because in the high school I studied humanities and I hated Math. I don’t want to do any calculations anymore. I think Spanish is easier than other majors” (Alicia, Spanish major, year 4).

Four out of the 55 interviewed learners acknowledged their choice of major was due to their keen interest in Portuguese and Spanish sports and pop culture. Two students even transferred from English major to Spanish for this reason: “I am a huge fan of football. I like Messi. So I transferred to study Spanish.” (Cecelia, year 3)

Yet, year 2 Portuguese majors (8 out of 11 students) admitted to a very limited understanding of Portuguese-speaking countries’ cultures, which resulted in negatively biased perceptions. Students repeatedly used phrases like “people are lazy”, “people seldom take a shower”, and “countries are not developed” when talking about the Portuguese-speaking countries. Unlike year 2, year 3 Portuguese majors expressed a more positive attitude towards the Portuguese culture describing it as “different”, “interesting” although “hard to understand” as a participant said: “I like Portuguese culture because their pace of life is very slow, is very easy and comfortable to live. (Yara, year 3)

These results are not surprising, given that 15 out of 20 year 3 students had visited Portugal in the first semester of their year 3 compared to no students in year 2.

Answers from Spanish majors are completely the polar opposite: 23 out of 24 interviewees expressed strong positive attitudes towards the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries. In particular, 19 out of 24 Spanish majors learners travelled to Spain and 3 visited other European countries as exchange students or as part of their field studies. They perceive Spanish culture as “passionate” and “fascinating” and people are viewed as “outgoing”, “enthusiastic”, and “emotional”. As a male student said “The Spanish culture is quite distinguished compared to Chinese culture and it’s interesting. What attracts me most in Spain is that people are more open-minded than in China.” (Julio, year 4)

Regarding the significant differences in motivation between the learners of two majors, the most frequently reported were employability perspectives (EFB), Multilingual self (MS), and Macau’s Lusophonic heritage (MLH).

In contrast to Spanish majors, employability was a strong motivation factor for the Portuguese students (17 instances in Portuguese vs. 3 in Spanish), which not surprising is given their awareness of the recent One Road One Belt initiative. Thus, learning Portuguese is perceived as a long-term investment in terms of future job opportunities since Mavis mentioned: “I think Portuguese is more prospective than Spanish because China is trading with Portugal, One Belt One Road initiative” (Mavis, Portuguese major, year 3).

Due to its historical links with Portugal, Macau is perceived by the Portuguese majors as a unique learning hub within China. Six learners (compared to no respondents in Spanish majors) specifically targeted this city to study

Portuguese. For example, Charlotte said: “I think Macau is a good city which uses Portuguese as an official language” (Charlotte, year 3).

In contrast to Portuguese, Spanish learners voiced plurilingual aspirations as a key motivational factor to study this LOTE. The respondents’ aim to achieve high Spanish proficiency is clearly associated with LOTE culture appreciation. They perceive Spanish’s usefulness in multinational and multicultural environments. While talking about their travelling experiences overseas, five interviewees described situations when the knowledge of Spanish helped them to get out of difficult situations in Italy and France. Victoria believed that “It [Spanish] was very useful when I travelled in Italy. I don’t know Italian but when I was in a train station, I asked people in Spanish and they understood” (Victoria, year 3).

4. Discussion

This study investigates and compares motivational bases for Portuguese and Spanish language study among Chinese students. In general, they recognised the importance of the LOTE languages in their future professional and personal development.

The findings highlight how students self-select these LOTE as their majors based on their personal (intrinsic) interest. The data illustrated that students of both majors were strongly motivated to become proficient LOTE speakers. However, Spanish-major students demonstrated a stronger ideal LOTE self-compared to Portuguese majors. One of the possible reasons for this result is that they are more intrinsically motivated than their Portuguese counterparts, whose learning behaviour is directly (i.e., employment opportunities) and indirectly (local heritage, relations) shaped by extrinsic local benefits.

In the case of Spanish majors, aside from those unidentified students who might share a direct link with Spanish culture (maybe through either family or business ties), the language represented a primarily personal interest with possible future vocational use.

The independence of language choice was also revealed as being the least significant in relation to students’ language learning motivation of both majors in the strong correlation between the ought-to LOTE self and parental encouragement variables. The interplay between these two variables was not unexpected. For the ought-to LOTE self, our results corroborate Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie’s (2017) findings that ought-to LOTE self may represent a minor aspect in language learning motivation when it is separated by a vast geographic/cultural distance (like Spanish in Macau), given that the ought-to LOTE self is all about obligations. Following the tenet of filial piety as one of the central values in Chinese society, students tended to adapt their ambitions based on their parents’ expectations. However, in practice, the motivational dispositions of university students were only marginally affected by the motivational factors of societal conventions and family influence in comparison to the pre-university stage. These results mirror You and Dörnyei’s (2014) findings relating to the motivational factor power of avoiding “losing face” (p. 514).

Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 71) concluded that “social environments can facilitate or forestall intrinsic motivation” and “autonomy – supportive parents, relative to controlling parents, have children who are more intrinsically motivated”. These results are culturally specific as shown by a study by McEown et al. (2017), which identified a noticeable influence of social factors on the ideal LOTE self in the Japanese context and deserves further cross-cultural analysis.

Additionally, our results partially align with Csizér and Dörnyei (2005, p. 29), who regard instrumentality-promotion as one of the representations of one’s ideal self. However, the data showed very weak correlations between these variables in general and even weaker ones for Spanish majors. We conclude that, on the whole, students did not perceive a LOTE competence as crucial for their career development but only a complementary skill aimed at improving future career opportunities. One possible explanation lies in the choice of students’ minors. According to background data, 41% of the Portuguese-major students took courses in the School of Business and 37% in the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, while 47% of Spanish language learners minor in business courses. One of the possible implications is the emergence, or in some contexts increased prevalence, of ‘LOTE for Specific Purposes’ (LOTESP) in specific language learning milieus such as hospitality training. The use of materials to teach Portuguese for the hospitality industry needs was mirrored at a rival tertiary institution in Macau (The Institute for Tourism Studies or IFT) and the major local course provider for public, open-enrolment Portuguese classes (the Portuguese Institute of the Orient or IPOR) had several professional specialism language courses available (IPOR, 2018).

The local administration in Macau, driven by the Chinese central government policies of extending economic ties and influence around the globe, known as the One Belt One Road programme), has been fostering closer and

closer ties with Lusophonic countries, mostly aimed at emerging African economies with Portuguese cultural ties (i.e., former colonies) and Brazil. Thus, apart from the local heritage and language requirements for employment, Macau has been selected as a location of various conventions and seminars relating to the Portuguese language. Further, a number of Macanese citizens of Chinese heritage hold Portuguese/EU passports, giving them rights of work and abode in Europe, making the study of language attractive if not immediately necessary.

Spanish students instead enrolled mostly to add to their multilingual arsenal, which often encompasses two forms of Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) and English. Spanish ranks fourth in the most spoken language in the world (following Chinese, English, and Hindustani) and first among Latin languages, making it the most natural choice as a LOTE for aspiring plurilinguals. Indeed, this study found that in general sociocultural factors have a confined influence on motivated learning behaviour for Spanish majors, where students are weakly integratively-driven to become ideal LOTE speakers, unlike Portuguese students, who were strongly integratively motivated. Busse (2017, p. 578) and others (i.e., Henry, 2017) reported that about 9% of students hold positive attitudes towards foreign languages and stress how the image of an ideal self, speaking various languages can strongly influence learning motivation. This ideal future self, carried forth throughout the language learning process, makes the learning purposeful and in its stronger manifestations turns the acquisition process into the crafting of a positive self-image, rather than looking at language study just as an unavoidable chore. The fixed mindset of compulsory efforts being purposelessly foisted on the student, gives way to a vision-driven view, where the learner sees a future when the target language is used effectively, promoting ownership of the process and tying self-esteem into the language development journey.

Although the findings revealed students' keen interest in the Portuguese and Spanish language, culture and lifestyle, they did not aspire to assimilate into the target language community. These results support those from Khong et al.'s (2017) and are consistent with Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie's (2017, p. 465) opinion that "the motivation to study LOTEs is usually associated with the generation of positive attitudes toward this community". This may seem contradictory since the same learners who hold positive outlooks towards the TL community (as they perceive it) do not seek integration into that community as a likely outcome of their learning. However, positive perceptions and desire to integrate are not synonymous, nor are they inevitably tied to language learning. English is widely used as a global *lingua franca* by users who may be indifferent, ambivalent or even hostile to the perceived cultures of 'inner-circle' (Krach, 1992) English-speaking countries. Of course, cultural esteem promotes positive feelings about the target language which can positively impact learning, but the goal of integration is independent of this and only applicable in certain contexts. The young globalised cosmopolitans studying here, learning languages from southern Europe from a Chinese perspective, were targeting use, not integration. They like the culture of the TL and wish to be comfortable and competent with it one day, but do not strive to be incorporated into that cultural milieu.

That said, results from this research showed LOTEL motivation increasing after learners have had the opportunity to visit the TL countries (Spain and Portugal) as part of their learning program. Given that LOTEL motivation increases with learner experience of the LOTE as a living language, interaction with the target language community, and by extension, some aspects of the culture of the origin nation, promotes learner positivity.

Contexts supportive of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were found to foster greater internalization and uptake of learning than contexts that thwart the satisfaction of these needs. This study also found that motivation lags in the middle years and picks up again at the end of the course, especially for Spanish. This difference can be accounted for partly because Spanish is a largely intrinsic choice of majors, whereas the choice to study Portuguese links with both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in this context.

Differences between genders regarding instrumentally-promotion and integrativeness shows some modest evidence that career advancement motivators to be stronger among males.

5. Conclusions

This study finds that the choice between Spanish and Portuguese as a LOTE for students based in Macau is motivated by different needs. Unlike Spanish, Portuguese has strong local socio-cultural ties and is still commonly used in business and law practices in Macau. Consequently, most students take up Spanish either for personal interest or to augment their polylingual arsenal.

The data showed that during the length of the four-year course both interest and motivation decline progressively for the Portuguese cohorts. Comparatively, Spanish learners appear to rekindle their interest at the end of year three, presumably triggered by the time spent in an educational institution in Spain as part of their course. The

study finds only modest gender differences in both majors, mostly relating to comparatively stronger career advancement motivators in males.

The results show that the selection of LOTE languages is driven by several motivators relating to personal circumstances but also cultural perceptions and biases. In essence, the two main factors appear to boil down to the ‘usefulness’ of the language in terms of career/job development and to the TL’s broader cultural appeal: their relative weight will tilt the balance towards one LOTE instead of the other.

When planning to introduce a new LOTE major, these considerations should be taken into account in forecasting potential uptake and success of the courses.

Acknowledgments

Sincere thanks to Prof. Kata Csizér for her insightful comments.

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