

# Improving Student Motivation through Autonomous Learning Choices

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**Cynthia Chalupa**, *West Virginia University*

**Heiko ter Haseborg**, *West Virginia University*

## Abstract

Numerous studies have examined the manner and degree to which increased motivation can improve student learning and performance in a foreign language. Others have drawn a connection between the implementation of autonomous learning choices and an increase in motivation among students to learn. Few have put together theory and practice to suggest methods for teachers to improve student motivation through the use of autonomous learning choices in the classroom. This article addresses that gap by outlining concrete instructional ideas for promoting learner autonomy, which can improve student motivation to learn a language. The study was conducted over two semesters with 108 university students taking intermediate and advanced German courses in which an autonomous learning framework was implemented. Data were collected using a self-assessment survey, an autonomous learning survey, and reflective statements to illustrate the positive impact of autonomous learning choices on student motivation.

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**Cynthia Chalupa** (Ph.D., The Ohio State University) is Associate Professor of German at West Virginia University where she directs the basic German language program and teaches all levels of German language, culture, and literature as well as foreign language methods. Her research interests span German-language literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, assessment, foreign language pedagogy, and media literacy in the foreign language classroom. She has written articles on *fin de siècle* poetry, the mirror and self-portraiture, and E.T.A. Hoffmann. She has also published on international TA training, assessment development, the use of live television programming in the German classroom. Most recently she has published an AP/Intermediate German textbook with Heiko ter Haseborg.

**Heiko ter Haseborg** (Ph.D., West Virginia University) is a Teaching Assistant Professor at West Virginia University. He teaches at all levels of the basic German language program, and offers courses for pre-service teachers in the field of world language education. His interdisciplinary research interests include foreign language pedagogy, motivation in foreign language learning, curriculum design, curriculum evaluation, and assessment. He has co-authored a standards-based AP German textbook with Cynthia Chalupa.

Numerous studies have documented the positive effect that motivation can have on the success of learners in the foreign language (FL) classroom and have identified it as one of the affective factors that significantly differentiate successful learners from unsuccessful ones (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003; Matsumoto & Obana, 2001;

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Yang, 2008; Yu & Watkins, 2008). Motivation plays an important role in language learning in particular because of the long-term effort involved in gaining proficiency (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). Although any given motive can serve as the catalyst for beginning the study of a language, if the initial motivation is not maintained, “even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language proficiency” (Cheng &

Dörnyei, 2007, p. 153).

Motivation is not only a significant factor in a learner’s choice to begin and continue FL study; it can also positively influence achievement in the language (Brown, 2001; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Guilloteux & Dörnyei, 2008; Skehan, 1989, 1991). Researchers have noted that motivation contributes as much, or more, as aptitude to success in FL learning (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Gardner, 1985; Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2000). Regardless of aptitude and the reasons for learning a language, whether personally driven or determined by outside factors, motivation is a key factor in guiding a learner from initial interest in a language to the development of proficiency.

While research has clearly indicated that motivation is an important factor in successful language learning, few studies include concrete suggestions for increasing motivation in the classroom. Many studies have explored the theory behind motivation in FL acquisition (Chen, Warden, & Chang, 2005; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994), but only a few suggest practical strategies that can be implemented in classroom teaching (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) have stressed the importance of testing the effectiveness of motivational strategies in the classroom and argued that empirical data are needed to substantiate current hypotheses about motivation based on teacher, student, and outside observer perspectives. While investigations of the classroom-

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based use of motivational strategies are still emerging, current work in the field clearly indicates that educators and students will benefit most from motivation research when its ramifications can be connected concretely to course planning, instructional approaches, and in-class relationships.

The aim of the current study is to move from theory to practice by offering clear steps for improving motivation through autonomous learning choices, which have been tested in a classroom and evaluated by students. Based on the examination of quantitative and qualitative data

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collected from student surveys and reflective statements, we argue, as Deci and Ryan (1985) have suggested, that autonomy is a necessary precondition for increased motivation, although other factors certainly play a role. We therefore provide a framework for incorporating autonomous learning choices in class through the use of work cycles, four-week units of instruction that include spoken and written presentational assessments of the students' choosing. Students exercise autonomy not only in the choice of assessments but also through an ongoing analysis of their learning in the form of a learning journal and in their choice of materials in an end-of-semester portfolio, the keystone of which is the reflective statement.

## Motivation and Foreign Language Learning

A large corpus of research has been devoted to examining the link between motivation and FL learning. Initially, theories of motivation were based on two orientations, described by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner (1985) as *integrative* (based on the desire to become integrated in the target culture and to interact with members of the target-language culture) and *instrumental* (based on a functional reason for learning a language, such as fulfilling a language requirement or getting a job). Gardner, Tremblay, and Masgoret (1997) provided substantial evidence to correlate integrative motivation with successful FL learning and suggested that motivation can have a powerful impact on language achievement, especially with regard to students' perceptions of learning and to learning outcomes. Chen et al. (2005) explained, "Integrative motivation is effective because language skills are perceived as integral to participation in the social groups that use the target language" (p. 612). The motivated learner is one who wants to learn, takes concrete steps to learn, and enjoys learning (Gardner, 2001).

Dörnyei (1994) expanded on Gardner's model of motivation by adding multiple, situational components. He emphasized the importance of the environment in which learning occurs, stating "the exact nature of the social and pragmatic dimensions of second language motivation is always dependent on who learns what languages where" (p. 275). This multifaceted model emphasizes motivations that are both *intrinsic* (based on the individual's internal drive to do something) and *extrinsic* (based on a goal that is separate from the activity itself). Intrinsic motivation has often been viewed as the more influential motivator, with some researchers suggesting that outside regulatory factors can, in fact, diminish internal desires to participate in an activity or succeed (Brown, 2001). Deci and Ryan (1985) underscore the importance of intrinsic motivation to the success of learning in an educational setting explaining that, "[i]ntrinsic motivation is in evidence whenever students' natural curiosity and interest energize their learning. When the educational environment provides optimal challenges, rich sources of stimulation, and a context of autonomy, this motivational wellspring in learning is likely to flourish" (p. 245). This emphasis on intrinsic motivation within the academic framework suggested that educators could modify the educational setting in a way that optimizes motivational factors in order to improve student learning. Subsequent research focused on elements beyond the individual

learner that might affect motivation levels and suggested practical applications of motivation research in the classroom (Brown, 1990, 2001; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Julkunen, 1989; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Skehan, 1989, 1991).

Other researchers demonstrated that extrinsic motives do not necessarily undermine intrinsic ones, but rather, that they can promote overall motivation if learners understand the extrinsically motivated behaviors to be self-determined and internalized. Key to this understanding of motivation is the concept of self-determination, which serves as the basis for Deci and Ryan's Self-determination Theory (1985). According to Self-determination Theory (SDT), autonomy is necessary for an activity to be gratifying (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When an individual wholly endorses an activity by oneself, that activity is considered self-determined, and the regulatory process is choice. If, by contrast, the behavior is externally controlled, the process by which the activity is carried out is instead compliance or defiance (Deci et al., 1991). Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (1991) explain that SDT, when applied to an academic setting, requires educators to promote in students an interest in learning, a valuing of education, and confidence in their own capacities and attributes, all of which are the manifestations of intrinsic motivation within an extrinsically motivated setting.

Deci and Ryan's (1985) three-pronged understanding of motivation, which includes the need for competence, autonomy, and psychological relatedness, underscores the importance of self-determination and choice in raising motivation and points specifically to the role that autonomy plays in the learner's overall interest and success in learning. Ultimately, when learners express autonomy in their learning, their intrinsic motivation is likely to rise, which in turn leads to more effective learning. A teacher who seeks to improve motivation supports learner autonomy by providing more flexibility and learner choice related to the activities and assessments implemented in the classroom.

### **Defining Learner Autonomy**

Learner autonomy and autonomous learning are synonymous terms that refer to the complex process by which students are able to make choices regarding what and how they learn (Barfield & Brown, 2007; Broady & Kenning, 1996; Cotterall & Crabbe, 1999; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2003; O'Rourke & Carson, 2010). Sinclair (2000) described autonomous learning as a capacity that involves learners' willingness to take responsibility for their own learning. This includes the responsibility for making decisions concerning learning goals, content, format of activities, and types of assessment. Little (2007) and Benson (2001) developed a more dynamic concept of learner autonomy, emphasizing that autonomous learning encompasses not just the learner's skills but is an ongoing process of interaction between students and the teacher. Learner autonomy is, as

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ter Haseborg (2012) also notes, realized to varying degrees, depending on the learning context:

Learner autonomy is an ever-increasing awareness of one's own learning process, which is achieved through negotiation with others and enables learners to make their own decisions as to what goals, contents, and methods are most beneficial for their learning. (pp. 20-21)

While complete autonomy for learners is desirable in terms of maximizing motivation, institutional requirements such as assessments, grades, curricula, and requirements of state and national accreditation ultimately inhibit the exercise of choice to some degree. Consequently, it is most helpful for the classroom teacher seeking to incorporate more learning choices to view learner autonomy on a continuum. This continuum, with complete choice on one end and no choice on the other, establishes parameters within which teachers and students can negotiate to make choices regarding learning goals, content, format of activities, and types of assessment that still adhere to institutional requirements. Given the aforementioned constraints, most autonomous learning scenarios in the classroom are likely to fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

### Learner Autonomy and Language Learning

The implementation of learner autonomy in instruction has been clearly identified as an effective strategy for motivating FL learners. To date several studies have examined the role of learner autonomy in the overall success of FL learning. Dickinson (1995), Ushioda (1996), and Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) have assessed the link between language learning, learner autonomy, and motivation, and provided evidence that learner autonomy positively affects motivation and performance in language learning. Ushioda (1996) posited that “autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners” (p. 2), and Dickinson (1995) argued, “enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning . . . and perceiving that their learning successes and failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control” (pp. 173–174).

Although there is a great deal of research on the connection between learner autonomy and motivation in language learning, relatively little has been done to investigate how autonomous learning choices can be made available in the classroom and how those choices affect learner motivation. Little (2007) stated that despite the work that has been done so far, “the practical realization of language learner autonomy remains elusive” (p. 15). Furthermore, Little pointed out that a better understanding of the integration of learner autonomy and target language proficiency is necessary in order to “implicate learner autonomy in a theory of language teaching” (p. 15). If autonomous learning is integrated

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into classroom instruction and students find intrinsic motivation for learning the language, they are more likely to continue learning beyond the classroom. Given the constraints of programs at the secondary and post-secondary levels in the United States, however, teachers are often not aware of the types of choices they can integrate or how to do so.

### This Study

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This study suggests a model for the practical implementation of learner autonomy, a concept that has, to date, primarily been discussed in theory. The study was conducted over two semesters with 108 university students taking intermediate and advanced German courses in which an autonomous learning framework was implemented. In order to determine the influence of autonomous choices on student motivation, quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the form of surveys and narrative reflective statements to investigate the following three-part research question: How does the ability to make autonomous choices regarding (1) format, (2) content, and (3) timing affect students' motivation? Given that we sought to understand the level of motivation that students actually experienced, the data collected in the study were entirely perception-based; no achievement data were collected. While one could attempt to draw correlations between autonomous learning choices, motivation, and student performance, such an examination reaches beyond the limits of the current study and calls for further research.

### Method

#### *Participants*

This study was carried out within the context of five separate German courses at a large state institution; 108 undergraduate students were enrolled across the five courses. The students were at two points in the German-language curriculum: (1) fourth semester (204), which is at the end of the basic language sequence and targets the proficiency levels Intermediate-Mid to Intermediate-High; and (2) sixth semester (304), which is at the end of the bridge sequence and targets the levels Intermediate-High to Advanced-Low. Given the varied background of the students enrolled in these courses, there can be significant variance in proficiency level and performance among the learners. Both the 204 and 304 courses included students who (a) began the language sequence with the first semester; or conversely, (b) had been placed into the courses out of high school. Some students in the 304 course had studied in a German-speaking country; most students at the 204 level had not yet been abroad. The study was conducted over two semesters. In the first semester, 37 students were enrolled in 204, and 18 students were enrolled in 304. During the second semester, all 53 participants were at the 204 level. It should be noted that not all of the 108 students enrolled in the courses participated in every survey because of absence, or because they chose not to participate. The differences in the number of students enrolled and the number of students who

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completed the surveys are indicated in the tables below. The designation (n=x) indicates the number of students who completed the survey.

### *Design*

The study was based on a course designed around work cycles, an idea first explored by Legenhausen (2003) and Luke (2006). The work cycles in this study were adapted to the needs of the FL classroom and used to structure both course topics and instructional time. The work cycles were four weeks in length and consisted of three key elements. Over the course of each work cycle, the students were asked to (1) keep a student learning journal in which they documented their views of the learning process (Appendix 1); (2) create a written presentational project, the topic and format of which they determined (Appendix 2); and (3) design an oral presentational project, the topic and format of which they determined (Appendix 2). At the end of the semester they reflected on the project work they completed for each work cycle in a portfolio (Appendix 3) in which they included all of their work throughout the semester. A second culminating activity was the reflective statement in which they discussed the contents of their portfolio and their learning and personal experiences related to course material during the semester. While the formal work cycle projects focused primarily on the presentational and interpretive modes of communication, in-class activities and homework activities targeted the interpersonal mode of communication. The teachers' goal was to provide balanced practice in all modes of communication during class and create opportunities for additional practice outside of class in preparation for individual projects.

Several principles of learner autonomy were implemented in the classes to improve student interest and motivation. Given that the courses are part of a larger curriculum in which certain skills and content areas are covered on a course-by-course basis, some constraints in terms of autonomy were placed on the course design. The structure was flexible enough, however, to offer students choices in terms of the content, the distribution of instructional time, and the timing and focus of assessments. At the beginning of the semester students were given the course syllabi, which described the concept of and rationale for the four-part work cycle: (1) Topic Choice, (2) Negotiation, (3) Presentation, and (4) Assessment. The syllabi also contained details about course evaluation procedures and holistic rubrics for grading the assessments and portfolios. In order to provide structure but allow for the greatest flexibility and potential for learner autonomy, students were given a range of choices within individual work cycles regarding the content of individual assessments and the format of the spoken or written presentational tasks (e.g., film, role-play, brochure, letter, cartoon, interview, or poster session). Students could choose among a variety of formats (see Appendix 2) or suggest a format of their own choice. During the final work cycle, students decided whether the last assessment (the only one in the fourth work cycle) would be oral or written in nature depending on their perception of greatest need. Students were also given the opportunity to focus on certain skills through a flexible timing structure. They could choose which project they wanted to do first, written or oral, and at what

point in the work cycle they wanted to complete the assignment. For example, those students who felt they were weakest in speaking typically chose to do the oral assessment later in the work cycle. Students were also given a choice about which homework assignments to do and when they were to be turned in, as long as they completed a minimum number of assignments for the whole semester.

In both semesters, the work cycles were repeated four times at four-week intervals. The fourth work cycle was truncated to two weeks in order to adhere to the semester calendar. Each work cycle had a thematic focus and contained formative assessments in the form of quizzes and graded role-plays as well as a cumulative work-cycle project. Throughout the work cycle, students were able to refer to a bank of ideas and activities to receive guidance on and ideas for the work cycle projects. The example provided in Appendix 2 has been kept general for illustrative purposes; students in the course received clear guidelines, including content-based themes, deadlines, and a list of expectations, in the target language. In the first phase of the work cycle, Topic Choice, the students were asked to choose topics about which they would produce one written presentational and one spoken presentational project for the work cycle. Students had the freedom to choose the content and format of their projects and the order in which they completed them. Students chose which project they would do first based on their comfort level in the modes of communication. Both projects were based on the same topic chosen by the student so that work in all modes of communication became an iterative process, with many of the students developing aspects of both the spoken and written presentational projects in tandem.

In the second phase of the work cycle, Negotiation, students discussed with their instructors proposals for written and spoken assessments, and together they decided on a plan and format for the project that was feasible in terms of time and scope. At this point in the work cycle, students also found partners for the spoken presentational projects and discussed with them a project plan, checked resources, and learned about technologies that they would use to complete the project. During this phase, the students also completed the first section of the learning journal, in which they stated their personal goals for the work cycle. While completing this segment of the learning journal, the students described their work-cycle project and a plan for accomplishing their goals. As part of this process, students often sought teacher guidance to help them with issues that arose in relation to project work. The teachers also provided assistance by directing students to resources regarding the content and delivery of the project. While the students worked on their projects primarily outside of class, instructors allotted course time for discussing projects, asking about students' progress, and providing assistance where needed.

The third phase in the work cycle, Presentation, featured the delivery of project research in one of many forms (see Appendix 2) to classmates and the teacher. Spoken presentational projects like short films, PowerPoint presentations, or role plays were presented in class, and written presentational projects were turned in for evaluation and returned to be revised in a second draft. On each project, teachers provided feedback that was independent of the grade. The main



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purpose was to coach students in the learning process and prepare them for the subsequent work cycle.

During the final stage of the work cycle, Assessment, the teachers evaluated the students' work while the students used learning journals to self-assess. Using the list of goals they had set for themselves, they evaluated their progress toward the achievement of those goals over the course of the work cycle. The learning journal self-assessments provided an important foundation for the students' reflective statements, which they completed at the end of the semester. Based on the ongoing self-assessments, students were able to create a composite image of their progress and performance by the end of the four work cycles to gauge their overall improvement in the course. As part of that process, they determined which aspects of language learning they should focus on and evaluated their ability to plan and carry out individual research in a timely fashion. They learned when they should devote time to areas of weakness, and they often discovered new technologies with which they subsequently became familiar. The learning journals and culminating reflective statement encouraged students to monitor their progress on an ongoing basis, to recognize goals and the steps required to achieve them, and to celebrate their successes or consider strategies for improvement in the next work cycle and course.

During individual work cycles and in the course as a whole, the instructors acted as facilitators. In this capacity, they helped the students find useful materials, suggested helpful activities, and answered questions. The instructors also attended to organizational tasks, which involved coordinating activities, determining a presentation calendar, and assisting in the research of a variety of topics. The teacher never created tests focusing on specific thematic content, for which students were expected to study. On the contrary, the students drove the selection of course content based on the choices they made for each work cycle project. Their responsibility was not merely to listen and follow the teacher's instructions. Instead, they made choices about their goals for language learning and assumed responsibility for their own learning, relying on their teacher as a resource and a mentor.

### *Data Collection*

In an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the link between autonomous learning choices and learner motivation, data were collected from three sources: two surveys, which included both Likert-scale and open-ended items, and reflective statements written by participants at the end of the semester. The first instrument, a self-assessment survey (Appendix 5), was designed to gather basic information about participants' experience with German, their reasons for studying the language, their study abroad experience, and their language-learning background. The final two instruments included (1) the autonomous learning survey, through which students assessed the perceived effect of autonomous learning choices on their motivation to learn (Appendix 6), and (2) the reflective statement, which was discussed above, as part of the end-of-semester portfolio. In the reflective statements, students described in narrative fashion the effects of

autonomous learning choices on their motivation to learn the language. These instruments were designed to answer the three-part research question: How does the ability to make autonomous choices regarding (1) format, (2) content, and (3) timing affect students' motivation? The purpose of this question was to examine whether or not students' ability to make decisions about the types of assignments and assessments they complete, the content of those assignments/assessments, and the timeline according to which they turn them in positively affects their motivation level in a particular course and their motivation for language learning in general. In conjunction with this question, the study also sought to look at the relationship between self-empowered learning and increased motivation. If students feel capable of directing their own learning, they are more likely to carry on the learning process outside of the classroom, potentially to seek out study abroad experiences, and to continue language learning as form of personal growth.

## Results

The cumulative analysis of the data revealed that the participants had a positive view of autonomous learning choices, and the ability to make choices increased their motivation for learning. Using a triangular approach, data from the pre-study self-assessment survey were analyzed in relation to the results of the autonomous learning survey and reflective statements. The self-assessment survey provided insights into learner motivation prior to exposure to autonomous learning choices. The comparison of data from the self-assessment survey to information from the learner autonomy survey and reflective statements provided a clear measure of the degree to which learner motivation had increased based on learner choices in class. Because the number of 304 students was lower than the number of 204 students, all data were disaggregated according to course level.

### *Self-assessment survey*

The self-assessment survey provided a baseline understanding of the learners' interest in German and established a clear starting point from which to measure their perception of the effects of autonomous learning choices on their motivation level in individual skill areas and on their overall desire to learn the language. The first half of the survey included eighteen items pertaining to language ability that students rated on a 1-4 Likert scale. The second half of the survey consisted of a variety of questions designed to establish a learner profile, including whether the students were majoring in German, fulfilling the FL requirement, or participating in extracurricular activities. These items consisted of yes/no questions and Likert-scale items. For the purposes of this study only the second half of the survey was used because those items pertained directly to motivation. A total of 63 students completed the survey.

Table 1 provides an overview from the self-assessment survey on both participant groups and gives initial information about their reasons for studying German.

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**Table 1.** Student Dispositions toward learning German

German 204	German 304
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90.5% took German to fulfill the university's foreign language requirement</li> <li>• Of the students surveyed, none had yet decided about a major in German.</li> <li>• 6% of the students had studied abroad in a German-speaking country.</li> <li>• 31% of the students planned to study abroad in a German-speaking country.</li> <li>• 56% said that their study of German helped them in other academic areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 88% of the students were taking the course as a requirement for their major or minor.</li> <li>• 72% of the students planned to major in German; 28% planned to minor.</li> <li>• 67% of the students had studied abroad in a German-speaking country.</li> <li>• 61% of those who had not yet studied in a German-speaking country planned to do so.</li> <li>• 89% said that their study of German helped them in other academic areas.</li> </ul>

Table 2 below shows that a large number of students in the 204 courses took German to fulfill the FL requirement for their program of study (i.e., their participation in the course was driven by extrinsic motivation). By contrast, the 304 students had already completed the university FL requirement and had chosen to continue their study of German for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons (e.g., out of enjoyment or because they were majoring or minoring in German).

**Table 2.** Response (in percentages) to item "Are you taking German to fulfill the FL requirement?" (N= number of students surveyed)

	Courses by section					
	204 001 Spring 2011 (n=11)	204 003 Spring 2011 (n=6)	304 001 Spring 2011 (n=18)	204 001 Fall 2011 (n=9)	204 004 Fall 2011 (n=19)	Total (N=63)
<b>No</b>	15.4	0	70.6	25	22.2	26.64
<b>Yes</b>	84.6	100	29.4	75	77.8	73.36

Because most 204 students took German to fulfill the university's foreign language requirement, their reasons for completing the course were more extrinsically motivated than those of their peers at the 304 level who were completing the major or minor. While the motive of fulfilling a foreign language requirement is similar to the need of completing requirements for a major or minor, students in the latter group had already self-selected the area of study based on interest and therefore included the need to fulfill requirements as part of their decision. The 304 group, then, was driven by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Tables 3 and 4 show that, unlike the 304 students, many of the 204 students did not plan on majoring, double

majoring, or minoring in German and completed the course simply to check off an item on the list of requirements for graduation.

**Table 3.** Responses (in percentages) to item “I am majoring or plan to (double) major in German” (N= number of students surveyed)

	Courses by section					
	204 001 Spring 2011 (n=11)	204 003 Spring 2011 (n=6)	304 001 Spring 2011 (n=18)	204 001 Fall 2011 (n=9)	204 004 Fall 2011 (n=19)	Total (N=63)
<b>No</b>	100	100	27.8	77.8	94.4	80.00
<b>Yes</b>	0	0	72.2	22.2	5.6	20.00

**Table 4.** Responses (in percentages) to Item “I am minoring or plan to minor in German” (N= number of students surveyed)

	Courses by section					
	204 001 Spring 2011 (n=11)	204 003 Spring 2011 (n=6)	304 001 Spring 2011 (n=18)	204 001 Fall 2011 (n=9)	204 004 Fall 2011 (n=19)	Total (N=63)
<b>No</b>	57.1	50.0	80.0	85.7	77.8	73.9
<b>Yes</b>	42.9	50.0	20.0	14.3	22.2	26.1

Despite the large number of students who took German to fulfill a foreign language requirement and the fact that the 304 class was required for students completing the major, 97.78 percent of all participants in the study described their interest level in learning German as either “interested” or “very interested” (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Responses (in percentages) to item “Describe your interest level in learning German” (N= number of students surveyed)

	Courses by section					
	204 001 Spring 2011 (n=11)	204 003 Spring 2011 (n=6)	304 001 Spring 2011 (n=18)	204 001 Fall 2011 (n=9)	204 004 Fall 2011 (n=19)	Total (N=63)
<b>indifferent</b>	0	0	0	0	11.1	2.22
<b>interested</b>	46.2	55.6	11.1	22.2	27.8	32.58
<b>very interested</b>	53.8	44.4	88.9	77.8	61.1	65.2

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For this item, the scale included four options: “not interested,” “indifferent,” “interested,” and “very interested.” None of the students surveyed selected the item “not interested” in learning German, and only 2.22 reported feeling indifferent about learning the language. These numbers suggest, again, that intrinsic factors played a role along with extrinsic motives in the students’ choice of German for the language requirement or major.

The results from the self-assessment survey show that the participants in this study can be categorized in two ways: (1) according to level; and (2) by the reason for taking the language course, given that the lower-level students nearly always cited the FL requirement as their purpose for taking German. Nevertheless, their interest levels in taking the course were similar, a fact that likewise factors into their similarly positive reception of autonomous learning choices.

### *Autonomous learning survey*

The autonomous learning survey consisted of a total of sixteen items. Thirteen of them were Likert-scale items designed to rate students’ perception of autonomous learning choices. These items were based on a scale of 1-5 (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree). The survey also included items that required students to identify areas in which they recognized the most improvement based on autonomous learning choices. For the purposes of this study, only those items dealing directly with learner motivation were used. A total of 80 students completed this survey.

Results of the autonomous learning survey revealed, in an overwhelmingly majority of the data, the positive effect that choices about format, content, and timing of work-cycle projects had on students’ motivation levels. Table 6 on the next page provides an overview of the scores for the items pertaining to the students’ level of motivation.

In the first question, students were asked to evaluate the effects of autonomous learning choices in general in order to determine the perceived overall effects of choice on their motivation. The subsequent questions focused more closely on each individual aspect of autonomous learning (choices regarding format, content, and timing) to gain a more nuanced view of the effects of choice on motivation. Overall, the students reported their motivation to be influenced most by the choice of content in doing the work-cycle projects (mean= 4.41). The item that focused on the impact of format was scored lower (format mean= 4.28) than content but was still considered quite important by the majority of students. Timing was rated least influential (timing mean= 3.85), but a majority of students agreed that it was still a factor in their motivation. The students also rated flexibility with regard to homework activities and due dates positively (mean= 4.21); the 304 students, in particular, appreciated having flexible homework deadlines.

Two items on the autonomous learning survey questioned students about how the ability to make choices affected their self-confidence in producing the language. The responses to these items are listed in Table 7.

**Table 6.** Student motivation levels based on autonomous learning choices regarding format, content, and timing of projects (N= number of students surveyed)

	Courses by section											
	204 001 Spring 2011 (n=16)		204 003 Spring 2011 (n=18)		304 Spring 2011 (n=17)		204 001 Fall 2011 (n=8)		204 004 Fall 2011 (n=21)		Total (n=80)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
The ability to make individualized choices about the format, content, and timing of projects has increased my level of motivation to learn German.	4.13	.885	4.33	.767	4.35	.786	3.75	1.04	4.33	.658	4.24	.799
The ability to make individualized choices about the format of projects has increased my motivation to learn German.	4.25	.683	4.33	.594	4.35	.786	4.13	.835	4.24	.539	4.28	.656
The ability to make individualized choices about the content of projects has increased my motivation to learn German.	4.19	.750	4.50	.707	4.35	.862	4.38	.744	4.57	.598	4.41	.724
The ability to make individualized choices about the timing of projects has increased my motivation to learn German.	3.88	.806	3.94	1.06	3.88	.928	3.50	1.20	3.86	.727	3.85	.901
Having flexibility with regard to homework assignments and due dates has helped my ability and motivation to learn.	4.06	1.23	4.33	1.03	4.71	.470	3.38	1.51	4.14	1.11	4.21	1.10
<b>overall</b>	4.10	.673	4.29	.673	4.33	.515	3.82	.671	4.23	.581	4.20	.620

## Improving student motivation through autonomous learning choices

**Table 7.** Students answering “Yes” to “Making individualized choices about the format, content, and timing of spoken presentations has helped me most in these areas...” (in percentages) (N= number of students surveyed)

	Courses by section											
	204 001 Spring 2011 (n=16)		204 003 Spring 2011 (n=18)		304 001 Spring 2011 (n=17)		204 001 Fall 2011 (n=8)		204 004 Fall 2011 (n=21)		Total (N=80)	
	%	SD	%	SD	%	SD	%	SD	%	SD	%	SD
self-confidence in speaking German	75	.447	67	.485	65	.493	88	.354	57	.507	68	.471
self-confidence in writing German	56	.512	67	.485	59	.507	88	.354	71	.463	66	.476

Table 7 shows that the majority of students reported improved self-confidence in both speaking and writing based on the ability to make choices regarding format, content, and timing. Seventy percent of the students believed that they had more self-confidence in speaking based on the ability to make choices, and 67.83% had gained more confidence in their writing skills. Ultimately individual learner factors affect the basis of this rating. By choosing a content area, students expressed an interest in a topic and therefore had intrinsic reasons for pursuing a topic. The selection of a given format allowed students to capitalize on their natural learning strengths and creativity. Finally, making choices about timing allowed the students to minimize time constraints and thus work in a less stressful environment. While this item did not differentiate between each component as it related to their feelings of self-confidence, taken as a whole, students felt the course format helped them improve in this area.

### *Reflective Statements*

Students submitted reflective statements with their course portfolios at the end of the semester. In order to gain a better understanding of trends within the statements, individual comments were coded according to the type of activity and its relation to motivation (positive or negative) using HyperRESEARCH, a qualitative data analysis software. Based on the analysis of the reflective statements, clear categories emerged regarding student views of the courses they were taking and their opinions about autonomous learning choices. Seven categories in total were identified, and student responses were coded positive or negative as they pertained to these categories. The categories included: Goal Setting, Greatest Challenges, Most Helpful Activities, Most Improved Areas, Perception of Autonomous Learning, Ability to Make Connections, and Effect on Motivation. For the purposes of the current study, only the comments pertaining directly to the categories Perception of Autonomous Learning and Effect on Motivation have were included. While some of the categories had subdivisions, those addressing autonomous learning and motivation did not; therefore all comments regarding

autonomous learning and motivation were organized according to whether they were positive or negative. Among the reflective statements gathered over two semesters, only two contained comments that described the autonomous learning framework negatively. Given these broad trends, illustrative excerpts from the reflective statements will be discussed below to provide detail about students' views of autonomous learning and its effect on their motivation.

The analysis of the reflective statements revealed an overwhelmingly positive reaction to autonomous learning choices. Although some comments were more critical, the majority of students reported a positive class experience based on the ability to make learning choices and a subsequent increased motivation to learn. Students stated that flexibility in the choice of topic and the form of oral or written format ultimately increased their desire to complete assignments and also heightened their sense of responsibility and investment in the course. The following narrative comments are representative of the majority of respondents and demonstrate that autonomous learning choices and motivation played an important role in the students' commitment to and interest in learning.

One 204 student commented: "The ability to choose the topics that my project was on made it far easier to do and made me more involved with my work." Another student at that level commented:

Being able to make my own decisions only increased my commitment to learn. To use another analogy, it was something like owning a business. If one owns a business, one is much more likely to put in more work with more enthusiasm. If I owned a business, I would not grumble at putting in fourteen-hour days, because it would be mine, and therefore, I would be devoted in a less begrudgingly way. The freedom to make my own decisions and to be creative made me invest in learning on a different level than I had previously experienced, and what I did learn about German culture, history, and language skills will not soon be forgotten.

In this excerpt, the student chooses an analogy that combines extrinsic with intrinsic motivations for learning. Using a metaphor of monetary and time investment, the business model indicates bigger returns based on a greater commitment to doing the work. While monetary rewards indicate extrinsic motivation, the notion of an entrepreneur suggests intrinsic motivations such as the desire for self-realization, interest in the business, and self-confidence based on the success of the enterprise. Similarly, because the students chose an idea that they intended to bring to fruition, the stakes in ultimate success were much higher. Not only was the language proficiency of the students measured, but also the validity and creativity of their ideas. In keeping with the business metaphor, one could argue that the student's sense of ownership was greater after having made choices, which suggests a link between decision-making, motivation, and a sense of achievement in the course.

Another student made a similar link between autonomous learning choices and motivation:



## Improving student motivation through autonomous learning choices

The ability to make my own decisions on the topics [we] would cover in the presentation projects was a great idea and I loved it. I loved that I could pick a topic in which I felt more comfortable and interested in speaking about in German [...]. It gave me more of a “drive” to learn about a favorite topic of mine while speaking German.

The theme of increased motivation ran across all course levels and sections. While the students in the 204 classes wrote their reflective statements in English, the students in the 304 class wrote them in German. Below is a translated excerpt from the reflective statement of a 304 student.

I was able to make my own decisions about materials and assignments and that improved my experience because I enjoyed the creative control it gave me over the projects. Especially because of the videos, I worked harder on the projects that I chose and also wanted to do more than I would have done on projects that were simply assigned to me. Although the oral projects were usually PowerPoint presentations, I appreciated the other options and the opportunity to work alone or in small groups.

This student acknowledged the positive effect of creative freedom and the control over his own work on his desire to invest greater effort. The ability to work alone or collaboratively also played a major role in the student's overall sense of motivation by addressing a very fundamental aspect of learning style. The flexibility in format allowed this student to complete the project alone, which was his preferred way to learn and work.

Although a majority of participants affirmed the helpful effect of autonomous learning choices on their motivation to learn, a small number of students expressed a different view of the freedom to make choices with regard to learning. One student noted:

The ability to choose materials and activities helped in some ways but was less effective in others. It helped by letting us pick the things we were interested in and needed to learn. Because we were interested in learning the material we chose, it made learning more fun and therefore more effective. One reason I think it's less effective is because we might not always pick the material we need to learn. I think if the teacher picks the material then he or she would probably pick the material the students need to learn instead of the material they want to learn.

The two perspectives described in this statement are a good example of the students' discerning evaluation of their own learning and motivation. While the student acknowledges that the ability to work on topics of personal interest increased the effectiveness of learning, this comment also reveals uncertainty about learning the “right” thing and draws a distinction between *needing* to learn versus *wanting* to learn. The acknowledgment of this contrast demonstrates the student's understanding of the potential disconnection between learner choices and important course fundamentals about which the teacher is better equipped to decide. This comment also suggests that, in the future, the autonomous learning

framework should include an additional assessment administered prior to the initiation of each work cycle. Such an assessment, which can be more formal or ungraded and reflective in format, would help both the teacher and the student to identify areas of weakness prior to the goal-setting phase of the project. Together with the teacher, the student can identify areas for improvement and make choices about learning that also address their weaknesses. This added form of collaboration and feedback will help students feel more confident about the choices they make and ensure that they are focusing on fundamentals necessary for future learning.

## Discussion

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*The findings of this study show that there is a clear connection between autonomous learning choices and increased student motivation in the FL classroom.*

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The findings of this study show that there is a clear connection between autonomous learning choices and increased student motivation in the FL classroom. A majority of participants reported an increase in their level of motivation based on the autonomous learning choices they were able to make. Evidence included high scores on the learner autonomy survey and primarily positive responses to autonomous learning choices in the reflective statements. Students noted, in particular, improvement in their speaking and writing abilities based on a greater sense of self-confidence. This trend is noteworthy because self-confidence has been identified as one of the most important factors in motivating learners to study a language (Clément, Dörnyei and Noels, 1994).

Regardless of their reasons for taking the course, nearly all the students were more motivated to learn based on the ability to make choices. One might expect that those students who had an extrinsic motivation for taking a German course might be less motivated by choices in the autonomous learning model because theirs was not a self-determined choice to take a foreign language. In fact, one might speculate that those students who were required to take the course would find it more difficult, in general, to direct their own learning and create their own project ideas than intrinsically motivated students because their participation in the class was necessarily not driven by interest. As Dörnyei (1994) pointed out, “several studies have confirmed that students will lose their natural intrinsic interest in an activity if they have to do it to meet some extrinsic requirement (as is often the case with compulsory reading at school)” (p. 276).

It is important to note, however, that an independent samples t-test showed that the students’ reasons for taking the course (FL requirement or not) did not lead to a difference in how they responded to the autonomous learning choices. Those students who cited an extrinsic motive as the reason for taking the course responded similarly to students who were taking the course for intrinsic reasons. While this finding runs somewhat contrary to what was expected, it is significant that all students reported an interest or strong interest in learning the language. This suggests that the reason for taking a course and interest level are not necessarily correlated. The results of the motivation data are determined more by the students’ overall interest in learning the language, regardless of whether they were required to take a particular course or not.

## Improving student motivation through autonomous learning choices

### Conclusion

The powerful relationship between learner autonomy and motivation to learn a language was an important trend in both the autonomous learning survey and the reflective statements. The close connection between the two that emerged in this study confirms previous claims by other authors that a deep psychological link exists between autonomy and motivation. As Deci et al. (1991) explained, “motivation, performance, and development will be maximized within social contexts that provide people the opportunity to satisfy their basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy,” (pp. 327-328). The need of learners to express autonomy has a profound effect on their motivation in learning a language and pursuing proficiency throughout what often becomes years of study. By making choices, learners are able to incorporate their strengths and interests and thus make the most of the learning experience. Even incremental opportunities for autonomous decision-making, such as homework assignments and due dates, made along the autonomy continuum, have the potential for greatly increasing students’ interest and motivation and ultimately their desire to continue studying a language.

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*The need of learners to express autonomy has a profound effect on their motivation in learning a language and pursuing proficiency throughout what often becomes years of study.*

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Autonomous learning choices can easily be integrated into classroom teaching if educators are willing to give some responsibility for decision-making to students. Burkert and Schwienhorst (2008) argued that teachers must become autonomous themselves in order to help their students to develop as independent and responsible learners. Little (2007) and Benson (2001) claimed that learner autonomy is not just a skill of the learner but instead the product of an ongoing process of interaction between the learners and the teacher. An essential aspect of promoting this interaction is for teachers to work with their students to create an autonomous learning environment, which requires the teacher-student relationship to become one of collaboration. The autonomy continuum provides a model for manageable ways in which teachers can incorporate autonomous learning choices into their instruction. Such changes can also be incorporated incrementally, as both students and teacher learn how to work together within a framework based on autonomous learning. For teachers, it can be rewarding to see the variety of topics that emerge and the creativity that learners exhibit when given the opportunity to choose. For students, the increased motivation derived from autonomous learning choices may lead to extended study of the language, increased self-confidence in the language and in other areas of study, the interest and desire to study abroad, and an overall sense of achievement. While this study focuses on the link between autonomous learning choices and student perceptions of motivation, there is still a need to understand the efficacy of autonomous learning choices on student performance. Future studies will need to examine whether the motivation derived from making autonomous learning choices leads to higher achievement in addition to an increased desire to learn.

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# Improving student motivation through autonomous learning choices

## Appendix 1: Learning Journal\*

### A. Before the Work Cycle Begins: My Goals

1. How important are these areas to you?

	Not Very Important	Important	Very Important
Vocabulary			
Grammar			
Content			
Speaking			
Writing			
Ease/Confidence			

2. What would you like to improve? (e.g., “I would like to learn ten new words.”)

3. What might help you achieve this goal? (e.g., „Making flashcards.“)

4. How much time do you think you will need to attain the goals you have set for yourself?

### B. During the Work Cycle

In your opinion, what are the five most important words in this work cycle? Write the words along with other vocabulary items that you do not understand. Write the word first followed by a definition in German. Think of synonyms, antonyms, and descriptions to help you with the definitions.

**Word**

**Description**



**\*For the original study, this handout was written in German.**

5. Describe the new concepts that you have learned during this work cycle. How did you learn them?

6. What are you finding particularly difficult during this work cycle? Why?

**C. After the Work Cycle**

- |                               |     |           |    |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----------|----|
| 1. Did you attain your goals? | Yes | Partially | No |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----------|----|
2. What helped you to do so? (Class time, help from the teacher, work at home, homework, work with classmates, etc.)?
  3. What would you do differently the next time to help you achieve your goals?
  4. Comments?

**Appendix 2: Ideas and Activities Bank\***

**Written and spoken presentational formats**

**Written:**

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

**Spoken:**

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

**Important guidelines for the written project:**

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

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • English Translations                 | • Verb tenses (e.g., imperfect forms)          |
| • Conjugation Tables                   | • Declination Tables (e.g., adjective endings) |
| • Full sentences or sentence fragments | • Tiny Handwriting/Printouts                   |



## Improving student motivation through autonomous learning choices

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

### Important guidelines for the spoken project:

- The spoken projects are designed to provide practice in vocabulary acquisition, speaking, fluency, and pronunciation.
- Your effort to speak freely is an important part of the grade for the spoken projects.
- You should create and present your project in a way that is appropriate to your audience. That means, for example, that you need to make an effort to explain uncommon vocabulary (e.g., through pictures, or explanations in German) that is specific to your project topic.

**\*For the study, this handout was written in German.**

## Appendix 3: Portfolio Checklist\*

### German 204/304

Make copies of all your materials and collect them in a folder. The copies can be double-sided. Please do not hand in original texts!

#### Checklist

- \_\_\_\_\_ original versions of all learning journals
- \_\_\_\_\_ all written projects
- \_\_\_\_\_ print-outs of presentation slides (6 slides per page)
- \_\_\_\_\_ rubrics with grades for the projects
- \_\_\_\_\_ quizzes
- \_\_\_\_\_ reflective statement (3 pages)

#### Reflective Statement

Write a 3 page essay in which you describe your view of the material worked on in the course as well as your evaluation of your own learning process. Use the following questions as a guideline for your essay:

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

- In what ways did the ability to make your own decisions about materials and activities help you to learn the material? Or, did you find the format less helpful?
- What suggestions would you make for the future?

**\*For the study, this handout was written in German.**

**Appendix 4: Portfolio Rubric**

**Portfolio Grade: Required items \_\_\_\_ + Reflective statement \_\_\_\_ +  
Organization \_\_\_\_ + Fulfillment of task \_\_\_\_ / 16 = \_\_\_\_**

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectation=4 (90-100%)</b>	<b>Meets Expectation=3 (80-89%)</b>	<b>Approaches Expectation=2 (70-79%)</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectation=1 (60-69%)</b>	<b>Work Cannot be Assessed =0 (59% and below)</b>
<b>Required items</b>	All required items are included, with a significant number of additions.	All required items are included.	Some required items are not included.	A significant number of required items are missing.	Work is incomplete.
<b>Reflective Statement</b>	Reflective statement provides a well developed assessment of learning with regard to the content of the course; creates a clear picture of the learning process during the semester; identifies most and least helpful formats and activities with regard to learning; addresses all points of the portfolio checklist.	Reflective statement provides a satisfactorily developed assessment of learning with regard to the content of the course; provides general observations about the learning process during the semester; identifies some helpful and less helpful formats and activities with regard to learning; addresses all points of the portfolio checklist.	Reflective statement on the assessment of learning with regard to the content of the course approaches expectation but has limitations; provides some observations about the learning process during the semester but leaves large gaps; does not identify most and least helpful formats and activities with regard to learning; addresses most points of the portfolio checklist.	Reflective statement on the assessment of learning with regard to the content of the course fall below expectation; provides limited or no observations about the learning process during the semester; does not identify most and least helpful formats and activities with regard to learning; addresses some points of the portfolio checklist.	Work is incomplete.

## Improving student motivation through autonomous learning choices

<b>Organization</b>	Items are clearly introduced in each section; portfolio contains a well developed table of contents; materials are well organized and presented neatly and in logical order.	Items are introduced with a basic title page; portfolio contains a general table of contents; materials are organized and presented neatly but could show more attention to detail.	Items are introduced but portfolio lacks title pages; table of contents is not well organized; work demonstrates need for improvement with regard to neatness.	Items are not introduced and lack organization; portfolio contains no table of contents; work is unsatisfactory with regard to neatness.	Work is incomplete.
<b>Fulfillment of Task/ Overall Impression</b>	Final product is displayed creatively and demonstrates a high level of effort with regard to preparation and detail.	Final product is well developed but is not displayed with extensive creativity; work demonstrates a satisfactory level of effort with regard to preparation and detail.	Final product displays little creativity; work demonstrates level of effort with regard to preparation and detail that approaches expectation.	Final product displays no attention to creativity; work demonstrates level of effort with regard to preparation and detail that falls below expectation.	Work is incomplete.

**Comments:**

Appendix 5: Self-Assessment Survey

Dear student, thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please read the three descriptors for each category and mark the one that best describes you. Please be advised that this survey will not affect your grade in any way, so we encourage you to be honest.

	4 Above expectation for my level	3 Meets expectation for my level	2 Approaching expectations for my level	1 Below expectation for my level
<b>Linguistic Competence</b>				
Language control: My ability to engage in basic conversations and provide/obtain detailed information is ...				
Language control: My ability to express feelings and emotions and exchange opinions in German is...				
Vocabulary Usage: My ability to recognize and produce common words and concepts necessary for carrying on basic conversations in German-speaking cultures is...				
Analyzing language I have a rich understanding of how the grammar of the language works.				
<b>Socio-cultural Competence</b>				
My understanding of the practices (i.e., behavior, attitudes, values, rituals) and products (i.e., music, food, art, films, TV programs) of German-speaking cultures is...				
My understanding of the perspectives and viewpoints of members of German-speaking cultures on a variety of topics (the environment, media, holidays, family, relationships, history, multicultural society) is...				

## Improving student motivation through autonomous learning choices

My understanding of how the products, practices, and perspectives of my home culture relate to those in the German-speaking culture is...				
<b>Actional Competence</b>				
Comprehensibility: My ability to make myself understood on a variety of topics using spoken language is...				
Comprehensibility: My ability to make myself understood on a variety of topics using written language is...				
Comprehension: My ability to understand and interpret spoken language on a variety of topics is...				
Comprehension: My ability to understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics is...				
<b>Strategic competence</b>				
My ability to maintain communication by using circumlocution (i.e., using other words to describe what I want to say in German is...)				
My ability to maintain communication by using gestures, body language, and other strategies to what I want to say in German is...				
My ability to clarify something I have not understood by asking someone to repeat or rephrase what was said is...				
<b>Making Connections</b>				
My ability to use what I have learned in German class to understand better what I am learning in other subject areas is...				

My ability to see connections (historical, artistic, cultural, political, etc.) between what I have learned in German class and in other subject areas is...				
<b>Lifelong Learning</b>				
My interest and confidence in using the language outside of class (e.g., at <i>Stammtisch</i> or during other extracurricular activities) is...				
My interest and confidence in using the language for personal enjoyment (e.g. at concerts, while surfing the web, for reading pleasure, in German-speaking cultures, etc.) is...				

- I am majoring or plan to (double) major in German?  yes  no  
Other major(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- I am minoring or plan to minor in German.  
Other Minor(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Is German a required course?  yes  no
- At what level do you see your interest in German? Please check one.  
 very interested  interested  a little interested  not very interested

**Connections to other disciplines**

- I am able to make connections between my knowledge of German and other subject areas.  yes  no
- My study of German has helped me in my learning of other subjects.  
 yes  no  
If so, explain in which subjects and how:

**Lifelong Learning**

- I use German in activities outside of class.  yes  no  
If yes, I participate in the following activities.  
 Language honorary societies  Language clubs  
 Language tables  German-language films  
 Immersion experiences (other than study abroad)  
Others \_\_\_\_\_

## Improving student motivation through autonomous learning choices

4. I use German for personal enjoyment in activities outside of class. \_\_\_ yes  
\_\_\_ no

If yes, check all that apply.

- \_\_\_ listening to music    \_\_\_ communicating with German speakers in  
writing or speech  
\_\_\_ watching movies    \_\_\_ reading for personal enjoyment

Others \_\_\_\_\_

5. Have you studied abroad? \_\_\_ yes    \_\_\_ no

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

What were the greatest benefits of your study abroad experience?

6. If you have not yet studied abroad, are you planning to do so? \_\_\_ yes  
\_\_\_ no

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you expect the greatest benefits to be?

### Appendix 6: Autonomous Learning Survey

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I enjoy having the opportunity to make individualized choices about how I learn German.					
2. The ability to make individualized choices about the format, content, and timing of projects has increased my level of motivation to learn German.					
3. The ability to make individualized choices about the format, content, and timing of projects has improved my awareness about the way I learn best.					
4. I would like to have more teacher guidance in choices about the format and content of projects.					

5. I would like to have less teacher guidance in choices about the format and content of projects.					
6. Identifying my difficulties and preferences with regard to course materials in the form of a journal has helped me to identify how I learn best.					
7. The ability to make individualized choices about the format of projects has increased my motivation to learn German.					
8. The ability to make individualized choices about the content of projects has increased my motivation to learn German.					
9. The ability to make individualized choices about the timing of projects has increased my motivation to learn German.					
10. The ability to make individualized choices about the format of projects has increased my awareness about how I learn best.					
11. The ability to make individualized choices about the content of projects has increased my awareness about how I learn best.					
12. The ability to make individualized choices about the timing of projects has increased my awareness about how I learn best.					
13. Having flexibility with regard to homework assignments and due dates has helped my ability and motivation to learn.					



## Improving student motivation through autonomous learning choices

1. Please elaborate on the items for which you marked “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree”.
- 
- 

2. Making individualized choices about the format, content, and timing of spoken presentations has helped me *most* in these areas (please check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> grammatical accuracy	<input type="checkbox"/> cultural understanding
<input type="checkbox"/> pronunciation	<input type="checkbox"/> self-confidence in speaking German
<input type="checkbox"/> my ability to understand spoken language	<input type="checkbox"/> my motivation to experiment with new technologies
<input type="checkbox"/> my ability to make myself understood in speaking	<input type="checkbox"/> my motivation to investigate a topic

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Making individualized choices about the format, content, and timing of written presentations has helped me *most* in these areas (please check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> grammatical accuracy	<input type="checkbox"/> cultural understanding
<input type="checkbox"/> spelling	<input type="checkbox"/> self-confidence in writing German
<input type="checkbox"/> my ability to understand written language	<input type="checkbox"/> my motivation to experiment with new technologies
<input type="checkbox"/> my ability to make myself understood in writing	<input type="checkbox"/> my motivation to investigate a topic

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_