

READERS THEATRE AS A WAY TO INCREASE MOTIVATION AND SPANISH
READING AND ORAL FLUENCY

Readers Theatre as a Way to Increase Motivation and Spanish Reading and Oral Fluency

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Abstract

Due to the fact that learning Spanish as a Second Language (2L) can be a stressful and difficult process for college students, Readers Theatre (RT) is a strategy to motivate them to read more texts in Spanish, improving their oral and reading fluency and lowering their affective filters. RT has been proven to motivate students to voluntarily review the texts at home to help them retain better the information along with the gestures and repetition of the performance. Also, RT helps students to improve their comprehension and accuracy, negotiating meaning through collaborative learning and implementing the teachers's feedback. The four books selected for the *Common Issues* topic are interesting so students can feel motivated to read in Spanish and the four *Classic Fairy Tales* books will also help them because they experience less anxiety when they talk about topics that are familiar to them. The implementation of this project needs to be assessed in the future and complemented with a rubric to evaluate RT in the Spanish classroom, as there is a lack of studies and materials in Spanish. Also, the benefits of RT could be implemented in other 2L teaching.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Pew Research Center has reported only 20% of the U.S. students are learning a foreign language in school. In comparison, 92% of European students start learning a Second Language (2L) when they are only six to nine years old (Devlin, 2018). Learning a second language is difficult for everyone especially because as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) posits, "To achieve a level of fluency or even proficiency in another language requires many years of study and immersion (AACSB, 2011, p.148)." Also, as Liao (2009) describes, many language teachers do not focus on language fluency but on language accuracy, which leads to students worrying only about their mistakes. In addition, as he argues, most of the books are full of grammar, reading materials, and boring vocabulary exercises, which do not help to maintain students' motivation.

In addition to the materials, Bykova, Kuvaldina, Mashkovtseva, and Malova (2018) claim that facts like the lack of practice, not being in the right environment and not having the right textbook contents, do not take into consideration the individualization and differentiation in education, making the act of learning a second language harder. Moreover, various authors like Mraz et al. (2013) argue that if students do not recognize the words, they will not understand the 2L texts either, which will reduce their readings and desire to reread texts, decreasing the pleasure of their reading experience due to the

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lack of motivation. Thus, that lack of motivation will make them feel frustrated, and, as a result, they will stop learning the language.

However, speaking a foreign language is probably the most difficult part when people are learning that language. One of the reasons why the majority of college students experience underachievement in 2L learning is they lack confidence in speaking, and, as a result, they experience anxiety and failure, which makes them want to stop learning the language (Chou, 2013).

During the past three decades, many researchers have studied anxiety in 2L learning. Actually, most of the studies about 2L anxiety indicate that the moment in which every 2L student experiences higher levels of anxiety is during the oral performance. As an example, Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) argue that students who exhibit higher levels of language anxiety perform more poorly grammatically on their oral exam because they feel there is nothing they can do. In the following section, some key aspects to understand oral anxiety in the 2L classroom will be introduced.

1. Oral Anxiety in the 2L Classroom

Anxiety, described by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) define 2L anxiety as a different type of anxiety, due to the complexity of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning that comes from the uniqueness of the foreign language learning classroom.

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As one possible explanation to 2L anxiety, Ganschow and Sparks (1996) indicate that foreign language educators might consider variables such as the student's basic native language ability, so these authors say there might be a connection between anxiety in the 2L classroom and with native language skills. However, Price (1991) administered the FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) which was developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) to measure test anxiety, public speaking anxiety, and foreign language aptitude of second language learning students, and the results indicated that foreign language anxiety was negatively associated with foreign language aptitude, but positively associated with test anxiety and public speaking anxiety.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) further claim there are some variables that may cause foreign language anxiety such as the communication apprehension (a type of shyness characterized as fear or anxiety about communicating with people), the test anxiety (the type of performance anxiety resulting from a fear of failure in an academic evaluation setting) and the fear of evaluation (understood as apprehension about others' evaluation and avoidance of evaluative situations).

In the 2L anxiety literature, authors like MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) make a difference between the three levels of anxiety in the 2L classroom: high anxiety, medium anxiety, and low anxiety. Regarding this, these authors state that students with high levels of general anxiety will tend to experience anxiety more often when they learn a second language than those with lower levels of anxiety.

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In relation to this, Woodrow (2006) noted that anxiety has an adverse effect on the language-learning process. Krashen (1981) agrees, saying that language learning can be a particularly nerve-racking undertaking in which emotions such as anxiety and self-doubt interfere with the process of acquiring a second language. Therefore, he explained that teachers should be aware of the affective filter hypothesis in order to create an anxiety-free environment for their students to acquire a second language. This implies that learners who are more comfortable and have a positive attitude when they learn a second language have their affective filters lower, so it is easier for them to learn than it is for students with a higher affective filter.

Therefore, teachers should try to lower their students' affective filter so they will feel less anxious and practice their speaking until they reach proficiency. That is why there is a clear need for creating a safe classroom environment in which students feel free to speak without 'freezing', and in Readers Theatre, as Worthy and Prater posit (2003), students can practice, perform successfully, and increase their self-confidence, which will help them to feel less anxiety. One tool that will be addressed to face this anxiety will be humor because, as Weaver and Cotrell (1987) claim, it may help to break the gap between teachers and students, reducing fear and tension and revealing humanness.

Readers Theatre, referred to as RT by Shepard (2005), is a simple strategy for struggling readers and speakers based on interpreting and rereading texts aloud. With RT, readers can express ideas, opinions, and emotions through their voices, facial expressions, or gestures. However, there are no background props, line memorization, makeup, or lighting so it is easier to put this in practice in a regular classroom (Chou,

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2013). That is why RT can be a great tool to help students struggling with speaking in the language they are learning as it allows them to read different texts aloud until they understand the content and feel comfortable with it.

Reading, as Tindall and Nisbet (2010) define, has five components: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. According to this, Griffith and Rasinski (2004) posit that oral fluency is the key to reading proficiency because it affects reading effectiveness and understanding. Furthermore, Rivers (1968) argues that reading, writing, and speaking are actually connected skills. Therefore, RT, consisting of reading aloud, can actually help students to improve the four skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking) when they learn a language. The question now is: How can teachers make students feel motivated to read texts to achieve their language proficiency?

2. Motivation in Reading 2L Texts

Guthrie (2001) identified 10 elements that form the foundation for motivation in reading: conceptual orientation, real-world instruction, autonomy support, collaborative learning, praise and rewards, interesting texts, strategy instruction, evaluation, teacher involvement, and cohesion. Related to these elements, RT is one strategy that allows collaborative learning to take place when students work together to solve a problem or interact to complete a task in groups. According to this, university teachers applying collaborative strategies have reported higher scores between the students saying they have experienced better results in their success and learning (Creasey, Jarvis, & Knapcik, 2009; Rodriguez, Delgado, & Colon, 2009).

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RT also helps to create autonomy as the students make decisions regarding the roles they want to have or choosing the scripts, allowing them to control their learning while collaborating, two essential keys to achieve motivation. Therefore, due to the components of repeated practice and performance, RT also motivates students to participate in class, to read, and to increase their interest in reading texts as well as their self-confidence (Rinehart, 1999; Rizopoulos, 2004; Tsou, 2011; Young & Rasinski, 2009).

In addition, Young and Rasinski (2009) further declare that RT usually consists of listening to a text read fluently by another person so the student can see how it should sound, assisted reading which involves a reader reading a text and simultaneously listening to a fluent version of the same text, and repeated readings that involve the reading of one text until the level of fluency is achieved. This implies strategy instruction, evaluation, and teacher involvement which are three of the characteristics of the motivation according to Guthrie that RT also helps to achieve. Additionally, there is a wide variety of texts that teachers can use in order to make it more interesting to them. So, according to Guthrie's elements of motivation, RT will cover most of the elements of motivation a learner needs.

Statement of the Problem

Some researchers, such as Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) or Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) have examined how anxiety negatively impacts students' speaking a 2L. Moreover, some other researchers as Mraz et al (2013) point out that the lack of motivation students have towards reading in their second language is due to the fact that they do not understand or recognize the words, which impacts their reading level in a 2L.

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Readers Theatre can benefit these students learning Spanish because it helps them to understand the texts, making them feel more motivated and self confident and reducing their affective filters through humor and other ways that will be addressed.

Purpose of the Project

The main goal of this project is to create a toolkit for Spanish language college instructors for how to integrate Reader's Theatre into their courses so their students will feel more comfortable in speaking Spanish and be motivated to read in order to achieve fluency in speaking and reading Spanish.

Guiding Questions

The following key questions are based in the two fields in which students struggle the most when they study a second language: the anxiety towards speaking and the reading fluency. Therefore, these questions can help second language teachers to implement speaking and reading strategies while they teach.

- How can Readers Theatre make students feel less anxious when they have to speak Spanish as a 2L?
- To what degree can humor help reduce students' anxiety when they learn Spanish as a 2L?
- How can Readers Theatre motivate students to read Spanish texts as a 2L?
- To what degree can students benefit from participating in Readers Theatre when they learn a 2L?
- What kind of texts should Spanish language college instructors include in Readers Theatre to motivate their students and therefore to help them to achieve fluency?

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- What kind of activities should Spanish language college instructors include in Readers Theatre?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

As we have indicated in the previous chapter, the aim of this thesis project is to provide a guide for college Spanish language college instructors so they may be able to implement Readers Theatre (RT) in their courses in order to reduce their students' anxiety in speaking Spanish as a second language (2L) and motivate them to read Spanish texts. RT, stated by Shepard (2005), is a simple strategy for struggling readers and speakers to increase their reading fluency by interpreting and rereading texts aloud. With RT, readers need to read their scripts in Spanish and speak Spanish in front of other people along with their voices, facial expressions, or gestures (Chou, 2013). In order to implement RT in their college Spanish courses, it is necessary for Spanish language college instructors to understand the major components of RT and benefits of implementing RT in the classrooms, choose suitable Spanish texts for RT, use some strategies to motivate students to read Spanish scripts, and integrate some techniques to reduce their students' anxiety when speaking Spanish as 2L.

Therefore, in this chapter, some major components of RT and benefits of implementing RT in the classrooms will be first discussed. Then, some tips or strategies on how to select suitable 2L texts for college students while implementing RT in the college classrooms will be summarized. Thirdly, different ways on how to motivate

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students to read text materials in 2L will be described. Finally, various techniques for how to reduce students' anxiety when they speak 2L will be presented.

1. Components and Benefits of RT

Readers Theatre, consisting of rereading aloud and interpreting scripts, can help students achieve a better fluency and pronunciation in the 2L. RT motivates students to read by themselves and help improve their reading proficiency (Worthy & Prater, 2003). In this section, the major components of RT will be described and some benefits of implementing RT in the 2L classroom will be summarized.

According to Flynn (2004), students may need to rehearse the same script between 15 and 20 times if they participate in RT. Shepard (2005) further states that RT consists of rereading script texts aloud in front of other people. While students read their scripts in 2L and speak 2L in front of other people, they can also use their voices, facial expressions, or gestures (Chou, 2013; Jensen, 1986).

So far, some researchers (Chou, 2013; Tsou, 2011) have already successfully implemented RT for elementary as well as college students when those students learn a 2L. Tsou (2011) conducted a study to investigate the impact of RT on the reading performance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students by using a mixed method through triangulation. Two groups of students from two different fifth grade classes (31 for the control group [CG], and 29 for the RT group [RT] at an elementary school in Taiwan participated in this study. The participants' English level ranged from beginner to low intermediate level. To control the possible heterogeneity in English proficiency in both groups, the researcher conducted a series of independent t-tests, and both groups

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resulted in homogeneous English literacy. The researcher taught the two groups forty minutes per week throughout one semester.

The researcher used six stories from the textbook for the RT group and the CG. The CG used the original stories while the RT group used scripts modified from those stories and added repetitions. In the RT group, the researcher emphasized students' phrasing, expressive reading, and punctuation giving them feedback and negotiating meaning with them. After assigning roles to them for their presentation, the students rehearsed and performed their reading in front of an audience. For the CG, however, the researcher only presented the material, introducing topics and repeatedly reading the content with the students. Then, they reviewed the material using a pattern drill practice, games, and role plays and worked with worksheets individually or in groups. Finally, the researcher checked the students' work and reviewed the things they did not understand.

Hill and Feely's (2004) Alpha Assess Kit, measuring accuracy, fluency, and comprehension, was administered before and after RT was implemented for the treatment group. Two stories from the same textbooks were also selected and modified as the pretest and posttest reading passages. Then, interviews were conducted in small groups of six with standard open-ended questions at the end of the semester. Each interview lasted from forty to sixty minutes. The researcher took notes and recorded the interviews.

The results from ANOVA indicated that RT had a significant impact on EFL children's reading proficiency and motivation. Students from the RT group greatly improved their reading accuracy (pretest=68.103; posttest= 78.517) and their reading fluency (pretest=66.551; posttest=75.862). However, they did not make significant

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improvement in their comprehension. Students in both RT and CG thought that the group activity was helpful and they felt they had improved. Students in the RT group said that RT was more interesting than the regular classes. In addition, students in the RT group also liked the discussions, performances, and taking turns to read as they found these interesting and fun.

Differently from Tsou (2011) who focused on elementary school students, Chou (2013) conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of RT as remedial instruction for college English underachieving students. Forty-nine participants from a university of science and technology in northern Taiwan were randomly assigned to either the control group (CG= 25) or the experimental group (EG= 24). Both CG and EG received remedial instruction in English from the same instructor 50 minutes per class, twice a week, throughout 15 weeks.

In the CG, students reviewed materials from the regular course with handouts, including vocabulary and sentence reviews, repetition of oral reading, textbook oral reading and writing, and conversation practices. However, in the EG, students read the short plays, watched RT DVD clips, had group discussions about the scripts, did some oral readings repetitions, and performed a video recording to review the materials and improve their oral reading abilities.

The ‘One minute oral reading fluency probe,’ based on Hasbrouck and Tindal (1992), and ‘One minute reading probe,’ based on Rasinski’s (2003), were administered to measure students’ reading fluency before and after the RT implementation. Also, the English learning attitudes questionnaire was administered to measure differences between

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the students in those two different groups regarding their self-efficacy, learning anxiety, and motivation before and after the RT implementation. In order to examine students' English learning achievement, students' semester grades were also collected and examined to measure their learning progress and achievement using the paired-samples t-test. Observations, video recordings, and interviews were conducted too. Finally, at the end of the RT implementation, the researcher conducted a questionnaire with ten randomly selected students from both groups to examine the students' learning attitudes.

The t-values revealed that students in the EG scored higher than students in the CG (EG=126.40; CG=103.25) in oral reading fluency and in learning achievement (EG=72.48; CG=65.33). Students in the EG scored higher than students in the CG in self-efficacy (EG=2.60; CG=1.97) and motivation (EG=2.79; CG=2.47). However, the levels of anxiety of the EG compared to the CG did not reach significance. Due to RT, students in the EG saw improvements in their diction and speaking ability. They were also able to understand more and found the classes more interesting. Because of the group work, students felt a sense of achievement. Students in the CG, however, still felt afraid of communicating in English even though they thought that the remedial instruction gave them opportunities to practice English and make them feel more confident in the class, but not in a daily conversation, in which they still showed high levels of anxiety.

Summary. As these two studies have shown, RT has been proven to be a very useful tool to achieve a better 2L proficiency and motivate the students to voluntarily review and rehearse texts in 2L by themselves at home. Also, the repetition of the text as well as the

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gestures along with the reading of 2L texts leads to a better retention of the content. Additionally, RT also helps students improve their fluency, comprehension, and accuracy in 2L through cooperative learning.

2. How to Select 2L Texts?

The importance of the text selection is clear for appropriate texts and will motivate learners to learn 2L. Some researchers (i.e., Atterdo & Raskin, 1991; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998-1999; Young & Rasinski, 2009) have recommended different ways to select appropriate texts for students when they learn a 2L. In this section, different ways on how to select suitable 2L texts for RT when college Spanish language college instructors want to implement RT in their course, will be presented. Young and Rasinski (2009) created a website in which a number of materials were offered regarding RT <http://www.thebestclass.org/rtscripts.html>. Although some of the materials may seem too basic for college students, there are still some valid and interesting scripts that originated from many stories in various areas (such as classics tales, animals, holidays, and families) that could be used in basic Spanish courses.

As Chee (2006) proposes, humor can be categorized according to four categories: 1) textual (jokes, stories); 2) pictorial (comics and cartoons); 3) action/games (video, contests, theatre, simulation, and role play); and 4) verbal (acronym, puns, and word games). Therefore, all of these categories can be integrated in RT scripts as a way to make students enjoy, focus, and reduce possible tensions related to the 2L anxiety.

Bilokcuoglu and Debreli (2018) further indicate that humor can be used on every language level: lexical (playing with morphemes), phonological (playing with sounds,

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stress, intonation, and pronunciation) syntactic and lexicon (playing with the ambiguity of the word meanings regarding the structure of the sentence) and pragmatic (playing with the hidden or indirect meaning in a particular communicative situation). Meanwhile, Atterdo and Raskin (1991) also suggest there is a need to use semantic scripts (The students apply the linguistic ability relating it to the real world). Based on what the previous researchers recommended, instructors can use verbal humor like wordplays, irony, and puns that usually oppose two concepts such as normal vs abnormal, actual vs non-actual, or possible vs impossible to reduce their students' anxiety while they speak Spanish.

Spanish language college instructors can also select their scripts by integrating humor into their students' different Spanish language domains in order to reduce their language anxiety. To make this possible, instructors should select their scripts according to topics that students can relate to in the real world (meaningful to them) to motivate them. In addition to the selection of scripts and the integration of humor into the scripts, some authors further provided several recommendations on how to choose or create appropriate scripts for RT. As an example, Martinez, Roser, and Strecker (1998-1999) suggest that it is better if the texts are not above readers' levels. Moreover, they need to contain straightforward plots with characters working through dilemmas. Actually, some books are already written as scripts. In fact, books related to real content (science or history, as an example) are good for fluency and acquiring general knowledge. Students can also create songs and poems for their performance because sometimes students are more creative than the teachers (Worthy and Prater, 2003). According to Flynn (2004), it

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is better for the students to get involved in the script development process so they will be motivated to read and understand factual texts.

Summary. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no researchers have discussed how to select Spanish text materials for RT. However, the current literature has provided some guidance on how to select English text materials for RT such as integrating humor into texts and choosing texts that are suitable for students' reading levels as well as getting students involved in the script development process.

3. Ways to Motivate Students to Read 2L Texts

It is evident that motivation plays a very important role in making people read materials. Due to the often tedious and non-motivational grammar books students need to read in their 2L classes as well as the difficulties students face when they read 2L texts, most of them feel frustrated and unmotivated. Therefore, some tips on how to motivate their students to read 2L texts will be described in this section.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation is when a person carries out an action for the satisfaction she/he finds in the action itself while extrinsic motivation is when a person carries out an action for the goal of a separate and tangible outcome. In order to make students intrinsically motivated, Kazina (2019) recommends some tips such as making the students feel involved, giving them the chance to shine, making the lesson fun, giving clear instructions, talking to them, or putting them into groups. Another element to motivate students, as we have seen previously, could be the Instructional Humour Processing Theory (IHTP) proposed by Wanzer, Frymier, and Irwin (2009). IHTP emphasizes that the humorous messages used by instructors should

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be able to increase motivation, raise attention levels, and create a positive effect in language students.

As for the intrinsic motivation, Komiyama and McMorris (2017) conducted a study to examine the motivation of those students who were in the US Intensive English Program (IEP) to read in English through the SDT (the Self Determination Theory). This theory is composed of three types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, identified regulation motivation and controlled motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the most autonomous of the three types (the students' desire to read just for the enjoyment of doing it) while identified regulation is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation (That encompasses the desire to read because of the values related to the target activity) and controlled motivation, which represents the desire to read because of some external control (rewards and punishments) or the internal feelings (guilt, shame, and pride). Amotivation represents the lack of motivation; this is the least autonomous of the motivation types.

Seventeen students (11 females and six males) aging between 21 and 51 who were from seven different countries participated in a high-intermediate/advanced ESL course on reading and vocabulary in a university-affiliated IEP in California. Participants received two hours of instruction twice per week during this eight-week course. Students read one chapter of a book each week and articles related to the theme. The first day, the students took a comprehension quiz and a group discussion on the book chapter. On the second day, they discussed an article in small groups, watched a TED talk about the

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theme, and compared the three materials such as book chapter, an article, and a TED talk. Each week, they wrote one page about the book chapter.

The authors developed a motivation survey with 16 items (4 Likert scale) based on the question, “What motivates you to read in English?” The process had five items for each of the types of motivation, including one item for amotivation. Two surveys were used at the beginning and the end of the course, both with the 16 items (semi-randomized, as the five items were the shortest to make it easier). The Likert-scale items were followed by an open-ended question about their other motivations to read in English. In the second end of the course survey, they had to respond to another open-ended question about their class experience. Data on the students’ age, gender, country, and L1 were collected at the beginning of the survey.

Results indicate that the average score of participants was the highest for identified regulation motivation, followed by intrinsic motivation and controlled motivation when they were asked, “What motivates you to read in English?” The score for amotivation was the lowest. To some of the reasons why they were motivated, participants gave responses such as, “because I like to read English” as an intrinsic motivation; “when I can apply the content to my own ‘real’ life as an identified regulation; and, “I have to read English for my work” as a controlled motivation. In relation to the classroom experience, there was not a big change in the scores between the beginning and the end of the course, so the open-ended questions were useful to seek for more information. According to the participants’ responses, the content of the classes as well as opportunities to discuss motivated them. Few said that weekly vocabulary was

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motivating while the quizzes were not (as these were mandatory). One student talked about supplementary materials as a motivating factor. The lack of L1 translation was also seen as a positive factor of motivation once they experienced success reading in English.

In general, the importance associated with the task (identified regulation) and the enjoyment of the activity itself (intrinsic motivation) were seen as essential for L2 reading motivation. However, students showed higher levels of intrinsic motivation towards L1 than L2, as it seems difficult for them to switch from one language to the other. The reason why they considered reading in English valuable was mainly for academic success in the future, and also because it could provide them with more opportunities to increase their knowledge and interaction with people. The intrinsic motivation was related to curiosity. With regard to the aspects of the classroom experience that affected their motivation, the content of the reading was an essential factor and the second was to discuss the readings with the others, which could lead to relatedness. Also, they found the absence of L1 translation motivating, something related to the role of competence; as the better students read, the more motivated they were.

As pedagogical implications, students should have the teachers' support to be autonomous to feel competent rather than controlled. Meanwhile, teachers should find reading materials and activities with valuable and interesting topics to make their students be engaged and motivated to discuss with their peers in order to achieve relatedness, which is essential for motivation.

Also, as students' daily use of technology is today a reality, Yilmaz (2018) conducted one study to investigate the impact of the use of computers on L2 students'

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motivation in reading and writing skills at the Department of English Language Teaching (ELT) at a State University in Turkey during the fall semester of the 2016-2017 academic year. Thirty-five students (nineteen females and fifteen males) participated in the study, and they had studied English for more than eight years (their level was upper-intermediate). The students needed to fill out the Reading and Writing Motivation Survey (RWMS) consisting of their demographic information and computer-related characteristics and a motivation scale to measure students' L2 motivation level in reading and writing. The scale had thirty-six items with a 5-point Likert-scale. RWMS had nine negative items to make sure that students were reading the test.

Three computer programs were used for the study's purposes, and the students had to read two classic stories and do the writing and the tasks related to the stories. The first program was Snagit™ (11.1 in Windows) which allows users to capture a text, image, or video of what they have on their screens and edit and save their captures in different formats (PDF, GIF, JPG and EPS) into Word, PowerPoint, or Excel and share them via Screencast, Youtube, Twitter, or Facebook. The second program is Screencast, which enables students to create an account to upload files and documents in their libraries and share those documents with others. It also allows them to comment on each others' files or documents. Thirdly, email services (MSN, Gmail, and Yahoo) were used to send and receive links to access others' shared content.

Two stories used in the study were *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson and *The Cask of Amontillado* by Edgar Allan Poe. These texts were chosen for their authenticity, length, and adequate level of difficulty. During a five-week treatment phase, students did

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some pre- and post-reading activities and tasks related to the stories. In addition, the students also received a one-week intensive tutorial on how to use Snagit™, Screencast, and email services. A sophomore student helped them. The researcher sent the stories through a Screencast account using his own account.

Students followed a certain procedure during the treatment phase. At the pre-read, students took the RWMS to measure their motivation in reading and writing and had a brainstorm activity related to the title of the story. Then, they looked for a picture on the Internet related to the title and had to prepare a cover for it using Snagit™, sharing their captures through Screencast and also making comments about the others' covers. While reading, students did three activities; they read the story on their computer and had to describe the time and place using a video captured by Snagit™. Afterwards, they had to write the rest of the story integrating pictures via Snagit™ into their texts. At the end, they read questions to see if they understood the story using the text capture feature of Snagit™ and share their captures. At the post-stage, students were asked to write a summary of the story using Snagit™, share their captures, and make comments on the other's recordings. RWMS was re-administered to measure their changes in motivation.

SPSS was used to calculate the statistics, and a paired samples t-test was run to see the difference between both RWMS tests. Correlation analysis was conducted to see the relation between students' L2 reading and writing motivation level and their experience of computer use on both tests. Results indicate that there was an increase of motivation L2 reading and writing skills after the use of computer technology. However,

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no significant correlation was found between the students' motivation in L2 reading and writing and the frequency and experience of computer use. On the other side, high levels of frequency were associated with higher levels of experience of computer use. From this study, it can be inferred that the interactive platform students used was the major factor that increased their motivation as they could share their work and therefore build a network between each other. Also, the use of visuals and videos was another factor for their motivation increment because it helped to improve the quality of their projects.

Summary. Based on what we discussed in this section, the content of the texts selected by the teachers is essential for 2L students' motivation as discussion in groups also seems to make them feel more engaged when they learn in their 2L. Additionally, the use of technology tools as a platform to discuss seems to be creative, and sharing their projects also improves their motivation towards 2L reading.

4. Ways to Reduce 2L Learning Anxiety

During the last three decades, exhaustive research has been conducted on different types of 2L anxiety. According to this, Spielberger (1966) makes a difference between state anxiety (the in-the-moment experience of anxiety) and the tendency to become anxious (trait anxiety). Additionally, many researchers such as Horwitz & Cope (1986) and Macintyre & Gardner (1991) maintain that, due to the exposure of the students to speak publicly, speaking anxiety is the most common 2L anxiety when they learn a second language. Therefore, in this section we will address different ways that

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have been proven useful for teachers to reduce their students' anxiety when they need to speak that second language.

Humor, defined by the psychologist Davies (2013) as something funny, involves delivery, context, and reception and depends on how these three components interact, requiring empathy or imaginative identification with the other. It is one of the most effective tools that teachers could use in order to reduce anxiety in the classroom. As Bilokcuoglu and Debreli (2018) state, humor increases students' motivation, decreases anxiety, and creates a more humanistic and authentic environment. Further, Bains and colleagues (2014) point out that humor can help to lower defenses and establish rapport as students may be able to be more focused on the information they are exposed to. To reinforce this position, another benefit of humor, according to Check (1997) is that it releases endorphins, which actually function as a natural pain-killer in our brain improving mental health. Also, as Banas et al. (2011) and Berk (1996) maintain, humor helps to keep the students focused and gives them a break, improving their mood, and making the learning process more memorable and enjoyable.

However, it is important to be careful with it because, as Zillmann and Bryant (1983) claim, the use of some types of humor, such as sarcasm, can lead to misunderstandings and make the students feel uncomfortable, especially those who are listening carelessly. Additionally, Wanzer et al. (2009) disrecommend the use of topics such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, creed, political party affiliation, or sexual orientation preference, intelligence, physical appearance, and area of residence for humor in the classroom.

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In order to measure the effect of humor in Spanish learners' performance, Swanson (2013) through the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) emailed teachers who were preparing the National Spanish Exams (NSEs) to participate in this study about the relation between humor and teaching, and 102 teachers participated. The NSEs are the most used tests of Spanish in the US and are available to teachers who are part of the AATSP, assessing grades from six to 12. It measures the student's achievement -vocabulary and grammar based on 200 points- and the student's proficiency -interpretive reading and listening based on 200 points.

For the purposes of this study, the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS) by Thornson and Powell (1993) was used. It consists of 24 items in a five-point Likert format, and its four subscales measure humor production and social uses of humor, adaptive/coping humor, humor appreciation, and attitudes toward humor.

SPSS 19.0 was used, and statistical power analysis was conducted to prove if the sample was large enough for the study's purposes. Teachers' scores were divided into quartiles to differentiate between groups with high and low sense of humor when comparing high and low achievement scores. Data from the two middle quartiles were not studied. The fourth quartile included teachers who self-reported a strong sense of humor, and the ones who self-reported a lesser sense of humor were in Q1. Students' scores at the NSEs were compared for Q1 and Q4 teachers using MANOVA.

As a result, students whose teachers reported a stronger sense of humor scored 242.93 points on the exam, and the students whose teachers reported a lower sense of humor scored 237.51 points. Additionally, at the subtests of the exams, a larger 15.18

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mean difference was found as students whose teachers had a stronger sense of humor showed a higher vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

Regarding the management of groups and reduction of tension using something funny, students whose teachers did scored 35.89 points more than the ones who did not. The same was true for the achievement subtest, in which those whose teachers used humor outperformed with 30.71 points. On the Adaptive/Coping Humor subscale, a difference of 20.43 points showed that Spanish teachers using humor to manage difficult situations had a better impact on the student's learning as this group scored 12.47 points more than the other in reading and listening comprehension. On the Appreciation of Humor subscale, students whose teachers reported a higher sense of humor outscored by 39.42 points on the total exam score. At the final subscale about Attitudes Toward Humor, there were differences on the total score (28.40 points): 19.08 on the achievement subtest and 9.32 more at the proficiency subtest for those whose teachers reported a higher sense of humor.

Garner (2006) conducted one study to measure the effect of humor in the classroom in which ninety-four undergraduate students volunteered to watch three statistics classes of one hour each in a distance-education format. Participants had to complete a survey after watching the recorded class. Questions were organized in a Likert-type format, and their content was related to the material of the class, followed by their assessment of the lecture and one exercise in which they had to recall the content of the three viewings.

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Participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups (forty-two in the humor condition and fifty-two in the control one), and both watched the same digitally video-recorded information of the topic (research methods and statistics) by the same instructor. However, the humor group watched a version with a humorous story at the beginning and at some points of the recording, so the humor's group presentation was longer. Participants could watch the videos over 14 days, which was beneficial to make the study fit in their schedules.

In the results, there was a significant difference between both groups as the humor condition group showed higher ratings for overall opinion of the lesson ($F [1, 92] = 21.02, p < .001$), how well the lesson was communicated ($F [1, 92] = 54.86, p < .001$), and rating of the instructor ($F [1, 92] = 43.33, p < .001$). Most importantly, the humor group components retained better the information ($F [1, 92] = 73.81, p < .001$).

As another interesting alternative to measure and reduce 2L anxiety, Chen and Lee (2011) conducted one study with four students and one English teacher from a senior high school in Taiwan. Students were assigned numbers from one to four. Before the instruction started, the students completed two pretests, the Foreign Language Anxiety Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the Anxiety Toward In-Class Activities Questionnaire (ATIAQ), which have 25 and 15 items. After the pretests, each student and the teacher had to wear a micro and speak to each other in English via JoinNet (an online platform to learn English). The content was planned before the session to ensure that individual emotions could be evoked during the class. The teacher had no emotional references while he was teaching to Students 1 and 2 but had emotional references while

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teaching Students 3 and 4 because they wore a human pulse sensor on a finger and only their speaking sessions were recorded. The emotion variations of Students 3 and 4 were recorded by the embedded human emotion recognition and sent to the teacher's monitor while he was teaching. The speaking processes of Students 3 and 4 were also displayed on the teacher's computer screen. The system predicted learner emotions every 0.5 seconds. Therefore, learners' emotions were transmitted to the teacher's computer every 2.5 seconds, based on these two facts: Emotions last a short time so the system determined the students' emotions based on the result of five emotions over 2.5 seconds, and the second, having a learner emotion every 0.5 seconds confuses the teacher and interferes with her/his speech.

Considering peacefulness and nervousness, results have indicated that Student 4 was more nervous than Students 1 and 3, who had better English skills and experienced less nervousness than Students 2 and 4, with poorer English skills. Moreover, students' emotions changed depending on the topics. They felt more relaxed when they talked about family and more nervous when they had to talk about examinations and the future.

The study also pointed out how personal features could intervene in language learning anxiety for Student 3 was a nervous person in general so it was predictable that she/he was going to experience more anxiety during the study. Therefore, it is important for teachers to understand the emotions of individual learners during their language learning process, which can lead to a reduction in language learning anxiety and increase the effectiveness of language conversation training.

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Meanwhile, teachers must also be aware of the students' anxiety and create a calm learning environment for them to feel less anxious (Sparks & Ganschow, 2007). Furthermore, support from the teacher, such as the help and friendship the teacher shows, openly talking to the students, and trusting them and their ideas (Trickett & Moos, 1995) are directly connected to the students' feelings of anxiety (Izadi, 2012). Anxiety increases when students' errors are corrected in a non-supportive way as most are afraid of being incorrect in front of their colleagues or sounding inept (Horwitz et al., 1986).

As an example, Izadi (2012) conducted a study to reduce students' language anxiety and increase their listening comprehension. Based on their results in an English language proficiency test, 60 out of 120 students were selected for the study. Participants aged from 19 to 30 years old (male and female), and their English level was intermediate. The instruments such as an English language proficiency test, the FLCAS with a 33 item Likert-type scale -with possible answers such as always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never- scoring from 5 to 1 point, and two listening comprehension tests, to measure vocabulary and speed with 30 multiple-choice items, based on short conversations (These tests were taken before and after a treatment against anxiety) were administered with the participants.

After all the 120 students took the 100-item language proficiency test, the selected 60 intermediate students (scoring between 40 to 70) took a listening comprehension test for the elementary-level students who had not taken enough courses to feel anxious and advanced students. Participants who took the FLCAS and scored the highest anxiety levels (between 90-150 in the FLCAS) went to take a treatment session to reduce their

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anxiety (n = 30). During the treatment session, the researcher talked to the students with cordiality and tried to delete their fear of evaluation, telling them that, if they did poorly, they could repeat the test. Moreover, the tester created a friendly and anxiety-free atmosphere by encouraging the testers to tell them positive things about them to reinforce their self-esteem, offering them real support. After the treatment session, the highly anxious intermediate students took a post-treatment listening comprehension test.

The scores of the 120 students from the proficiency test, FLCAS, and listening comprehension were computed by appropriate measures and compiled for data analysis. The correlation between anxiety and listening comprehension was calculated through correlational analysis. Furthermore, the influence of the treatment on the listening comprehension performance was also analyzed through a T-test. The results revealed there was a small negative correlation between students' anxiety scores on the FLCAS and their listening comprehension performance. The results also indicated that the treatment session had a significant impact on the students' listening performance. Students who received the treatment had significantly higher scores on their listening comprehension test. At the end, the author suggests that teachers should identify the students who are anxious in language learning, offer positive reinforcement by creating a friendly environment to help them build their self-esteem, and lower their anxiety feelings by providing treatments (e.g. telling them they had a chance to repeat the exam if they failed and ensuring them no negative score would be considered if they did poorly). In that way, teachers can offer their students real support and motivate them to learn a second language.

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Summary. As we have seen in this section, teachers must be aware of the students' needs and feelings and create a safe learning environment for them to feel less anxious. Moreover, the support from the teacher is essential. Thus, they should try to connect with their students by being open and friendly, through humor, and correcting their mistakes always in a supportive way. In this regard, RT can be used to create that desirable atmosphere in which students can work with humorous scripts in groups while teachers observe and guide them, always correcting their students in a supportive and constructive way.

Chapter Summary

To sum up, there are plenty of books, songs, or famous speeches (meaningful and related to the real world) that teachers could use as RT scripts to motivate their students to read in 2L as long as they are at the students' level. Additionally, the integration of humor according to every dimension of language (phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic) seems to be helpful to decrease anxiety and create a friendly atmosphere through jokes, videos, comics, or word games that can help students to feel free to speak without fear. However, scripts can also be created by the students as they usually are very creative. Regarding the scripts selection, it must be said that, even though there are many scripts available for ESL teaching, there is a clear need to create new scripts in Spanish for Readers Theatre.

Chapter 3

Criteria

Purpose

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The purpose of this project is to provide college Spanish language college instructors a guide on how to use RT to make their students feel less anxious when they speak Spanish, as well as help motivate their students to read more texts in Spanish so they can achieve better fluency. Due to the tedious grammar books and the routines of the Spanish classroom, the materials that have to be covered and the fact that normally students do not even understand what they read, all this can lead to a general amotivation to read as they feel frustrated and they give up most of the time, making the reading fluency very difficult to be achieved.

For the speaking part, the fact that they live in a non-Spanish speaking country makes it harder for them to be able to communicate with fluency. In addition, the 2L anxiety is a phenomenon that exists and that we cannot ignore as it is proven that students learning a language experience higher levels of anxiety when they have to talk in front of the class in their 2L. Some students may even feel inadequate when they speak a 2L. Therefore, Spanish language college instructors should find some ways to reduce students' anxiety and motivate them to speak Spanish in front of other people. Thus, Readers Theatre is a strategy that can help students to feel more confident when they speak Spanish due to the repetition and rehearsal of the scripts selected by the teachers for them to perform.

RT scripts, such as texts that can include some of the books' materials or real stories, are perfect for teachers to use during the Spanish classroom. Also, something that students appreciate and can motivate them is working in groups, and in Readers Theatre, collaborative work is essential. Students can also be creative and modify the scripts,

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change the end, and finally rehearse them at home to perform in front of their peers in an expressive way, which makes the class fun and more interesting. In addition, the repetition helps with retention so in case the teachers want to use the classroom materials, the students will probably remember them better than without this strategy.

Therefore, using Readers Theatre scripts in second language classrooms can be very beneficial since they are a valuable source for helping with reading and speaking fluency, motivating them to read more texts and making them feel engaged and relaxed, in a collaborative and friendly atmosphere. In order to choose the appropriate scripts, the selection criteria mentioned in chapter two were followed, according to students' needs and interests. Also, some examples of Readers Theatre scripts were proposed.

Expert Panel

To gain further insight into how to choose RT scripts for teaching Spanish, the researcher consulted with three experts to review the research along with the criteria for choosing the most appropriate texts.

The first expert, Expert A, a native of Spain, Maribel Morales Martinez, joined the Carthage faculty in 2006 and became a full-time faculty member in 2011. She teaches Spanish language and literature and heritage courses. She earned her Ph.D. in American Literature from the University of Cadiz, Spain, specializing in regionalist American women writers from the end of the 19th century. Her academic interests include gender and ethnic studies.

Prior to earning a doctorate in American Literature, Prof. Morales Martinez earned a Master's and a Bachelor's degree in English Literature and Linguistics from the

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University of Cadiz, Spain. She studied at the University of Dublin, Ireland, with an Erasmus scholarship in 2001.

Prof. Morales Martinez came to Carthage after teaching at the Kenosha Unified School District in the Transitional Bilingual Program for three years. At Carthage, she has continued promoting multicultural awareness participating at numerous international events. She is the advisor of the Latin/Belly Dance Club, a group of Carthage students who have performed at many cultural events both off and on campus.

The second expert, Expert B, is also a native of Spain, who has taught Spanish and French since 2004 as an assistant professor at Carthage. Professor Isabel Rivero-Vilá has taught Spanish and French since 2004 as an associate professor at Carthage. Before coming to Carthage, she taught French and Spanish at several institutions in France and Spain, at the Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, and at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in French education (Universidad de Burgos, Spain). She earned her Master's degree from the Université de Caen-Basse-Normandie (France) and did her doctoral research at the Université de Paris 13. She holds a Ph.D (Doctor Europeus) in Francophone cultures and multimedia from the Universidad de Salamanca (Spain), for which she obtained the Extraordinary Award. Her thesis, 'L'interculturel à travers le multimédia dans l'enseignement du français-langue étrangère,' provides a method with activities that she developed to teach intercultural

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aspects of the Francophone world and its representation in Francophone movies for French learners. Her thesis is published and can be accessed online.

In France, she filmed an interactive documentary, ‘5 mois à Nantes, ville vivante,’ that she uses in her classes and that is currently used for teaching French in many different countries. This interactive documentary is available online. At Carthage College, Prof. Rivero-Vilá has developed a successful connection between Carthage and the Universidad de Salamanca, from where she selects the Spanish Target Language Experts.

Prof. Rivero-Vilá actively promotes international events at Carthage with the organization of the Tournées Film Festival and the first West African Film Festival. She is a filmmaker as well as a college professor, working with award-winning African filmmakers and is co-producing a short fiction film in Senegal. Her next project will be a feature film documentary in Senegal.

The third expert, Expert C, was born in Wisconsin, and joined the Carthage Education Faculty in 1990, where she teaches courses in Children’s and Young Adult Literature, Creative Arts, Social Studies Methods, and Poetry Theatre. She is the Director of the Center for Children’s Literature in the Hedberg Library at Carthage. Expert C earned B.A.s in theatre, social studies and education from the University of Wisconsin- Parkside, an M.A. in children’s theatre from Northwestern University, and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction (Children’s Literature and Gifted and Talented Education) from the

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University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She has published books and articles on international and multicultural children's and young adult literature, children's and young adult fiction on disabilities and differences, and social studies trade books.

Chapter Summary

The researcher wants to offer a guide to help Spanish language college instructors reduce their students' anxiety and motivate them to read texts in Spanish through the Readers Theatre strategy. By using that guide which includes some Spanish scripts as well as some suggested activities, instructors are expected to teach Spanish in a more dynamic and creative way. The panel experts will be asked to provide insight and feedback about the research literature and the guide based on their individual expertise. The researcher will then incorporate the suggestions proposed by those experts into the guide for Spanish language college instructors.

Chapter 4

Project

Purpose

In this chapter, the planning and the structure of the RT toolkit will be summarized and described. Meanwhile, different RT activities for each book will be presented in order for Spanish language college instructors to implement RT in their own courses. By implementing RT, their students may be encouraged to speak Spanish in front of other people and eventually increase their Spanish reading fluency. This RT project may be implemented in Spanish 1020 classes, which corresponds to the second level of Spanish taught at college, the A2 level of The Common European Framework of

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Reference for Languages (CEFR), and it will last a month, during the second semester.

This project will count as their classwork grade. The following two themes are selected for this project:

Common issues stories: This theme includes four stories from the Hispanic world covering specific issues such as family, immigration, squatters, wishes for the future, and Hispanic cultural and geographical input. As these topics talk about common issues around the world, students may empathize or feel intrigued and therefore motivated to read original texts in Spanish in order to better understand the Hispanic world through interesting activities. Meanwhile, working on the same text for six hours will give them enough confidence to see their anxiety being reduced.

Classic fairy tales: This section consists of four different scripts from the classic world-known fairy tales such as *Snow White*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Puss in boots*, and *Pinocchio* (in Spanish *Blancanieves*, *Caperucita roja*, *El gato con botas*, and *Pinocho*). These books may be appropriate as students probably know the stories in their own language with some possible small cultural changes. Therefore, they will probably feel more relaxed, with a lower affective filter, about working with the texts even if these are in Spanish and more motivated to know the differences between those stories and the American versions and discuss them with their peers. Moreover, they will eventually become more fluent in speaking and reading in Spanish.

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Feedback from Experts:

Expert A reviewed the project and commented that the selection of the books was interesting and varied and that a rubric could be developed to assess the effects of RT while the Spanish language college instructors actually implement RT in their courses.

Expert B reviewed the project and commented that further research could be done on how to use RT to reduce students' anxiety and motivate them to speak in front of other people for whose native language is Spanish.

She also wondered if there was a way to engage with the students in the script development process so they could feel more motivated to read. Moreover, she recommended the use of second language learning apps, such as Duolingo's texts (scripted) for the literature review and Dictogloss reading at a normal speed for students to focus on form and meaning to promote the understanding and to present the material. Finally, she proposed the use and creation of audiobooks as a way to introduce RT.

Expert C reviewed the project and suggested some grammatical changes. For instance, instead of using 'Spanish instructors,' she proposed 'Spanish language instructors' as it might be misunderstood that only Spaniards were being included.

Chapter Summary

This section briefly describes the reasons why *Common issues* and *Classic fairy tales* were selected based on the literature so students who learn Spanish will feel motivated while they gain mastery in reading and speaking Spanish through interesting books.

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Toolkit outlined the activities originated from the literature in order for Spanish language college instructors to have enough instructions to follow while implementing RT in their own courses. Feedback was received from three experts who have different and extensive expertise in education and Spanish language teaching. Some changes were made to this toolkit based on their feedback. In conclusion, the toolkit has been created and enhanced to be used as a resource for Spanish language college instructors if they want to implement RT in their courses in order to motivate their students to read in Spanish and improve their Spanish oral fluency.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to create a guide for Spanish language college instructors on how to integrate RT into their second level of Spanish (A2) courses so their students will feel more comfortable in speaking Spanish and be motivated to read in order to achieve fluency in speaking and reading Spanish.

In order to develop a toolkit for Spanish language college instructors to implement RT in their Spanish classes in order to motivate their students to read in Spanish and speak Spanish in front of other people, a literature search was conducted to identify major components of RT and benefits of implementing RT in the classrooms, and some tips or strategies on how to select suitable 2L texts for college students while implementing RT in the college classrooms were summarized. Thirdly, different ways on how to motivate students to read text materials in 2L were described. Finally, various

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techniques on how to reduce students' anxiety when they speak 2L were presented. For Chapter four, the two different themes of the books (Common issues and Classic Fairy Tales) were described, and the activities on how to use those books to implement RT were created and included in the Appendices section. Finally, the feedback of the Expert Panel was added.

Conclusions

Recommendations

The purpose of this project was to provide Spanish language college instructors with a RT toolkit so they could implement it in their 2L classes in order to motivate their students to read Spanish books and help those students achieve reading and speaking fluency and lower their anxiety levels. The researcher recommends that this toolkit be implemented at Carthage College as a resource for 1020 Spanish language instructors who want to improve their students' reading and speaking skills and motivate them to speak Spanish, lowering their anxiety levels.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the project is the fact that six sessions is not enough for students to work with the text. As Flynn (2004) posits, students may need to rehearse the same script between 15 and 20 times. Another limitation was that the researcher did not have access to a wide array of Spanish books while living in the US.

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Modifications

Further modifications would be beneficial as much research needs to be done in the field, especially as a consequence of the lack of RT materials and research articles on RT available in Spanish. Once more research will be done, modifications on the selected books and the impact of the RT implementation in the Spanish classroom could also be included.

Strengths

The research project was peer-reviewed by experts who have an extensive expertise in education and second language acquisition. Each expert provided some insightful and valuable recommendations on how to create and enhance this user-friendly toolkit. Meanwhile, the activities outlined in this project were based on those practices suggested by the literature. Students who learn Spanish will be more likely to improve their Spanish performance if their instructors implement those activities recommended by this guide.

Weaknesses

The fact that the researcher has not yet implemented the toolkit in the actual Spanish courses could be considered as a weakness because there may be some blind spots that have not been addressed in the thesis project. For instance, the researcher does not know to what degree the toolkit will be able to motivate students to read in Spanish and whether it will lower their anxiety levels when speaking Spanish. After the

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implementation in the future, the toolkit may need to be changed and improved in order to help students who learn Spanish as a second language achieve those goals.

Future Inquiry

Further research should be conducted to provide more RT materials for Spanish learning as there is a lack of studies and materials on RT in Spanish as a Second Language. This toolkit could serve as an example so that, in the future, the researcher or other Spanish language college instructors will have more experience in the field and will be able to add more examples and components. Also, as Expert A recommended, a rubric could be used to assess the effectiveness of RT. Additionally, as Expert B suggested, RT strategies could also be used in order to improve the reading and oral fluency in the students' native language of Spanish. Moreover, the use of language learning apps such as Duolingo or Dictogloss could be implemented in RT. Finally, students could be further involved in the creation of audiobooks in order to make their reading experience richer and more creative.

Implications for Practice

This toolkit could have implications on the Modern Languages department as RT could be used to teach any other language. Moreover, the toolkit suggests books that could be used and a six steps/activities toolkit for each of the two topics selected that may help Spanish language college instructors to help their students' fluency, motivating them to read and lowering their anxiety levels.

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Chapter Summary

The project, called *Readers Theatre as a way to increase motivation and Spanish reading and oral fluency* will be useful for Spanish college instructors to include in their practices, being also a useful tool for other languages' instructors. The project was created by a researcher completing her Master's degree in Education and Leadership at Carthage College. The guide could be modified in the future by the researcher once the researcher will be able to examine its validity as a tool to improve students' speaking and writing fluency in Spanish.

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Appendices

A) Common Issues Stories

Activities

For each individual theme, there will be four books, so groups will be formed based on those books. After two weeks, each of the four subgroups should perform their book in front of their peers. The activities chosen for these books are based on the two purposes of the project: first, lowering the students' anxiety when they speak in Spanish, and secondly, motivating them to read books in Spanish, helping them to improve their fluency while enjoying it through the humor component integration. The project will require students to complete a series of activities within six classes (i.e., three days a week for two weeks), and after each class, they will rehearse their individual scripts at home to make sure that they make changes based on the instructor's feedback. For that purpose, they will record themselves every day after the class as homework and will send the recordings to the instructor in order for the instructor to track their progress.

1. Understanding the book (First class): First, roles should be assigned. Depending on the book, they will have more than one role to perform. The first activity they will do is the Directed Reading-Thinking activity (DR-TA) that Young and Rasinski (2009) propose, in which students have to ask themselves questions based on the title of the book and make predictions. Then, students will read the book by emphasizing phrasing, expressive

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reading, and punctuation so they will have opportunities to get feedback and negotiate its meaning (Tsou, 2011).

After assigning roles to them for their performance, the students will rehearse and perform their reading in front of the class. Then, they will start with a choral reading of the book. Meanwhile, they can write the words they do not understand and then help each other to recreate the story with the pieces they individually understood. Afterwards, they will summarize the book's main ideas through three main points (beginning, middle, and ending). Elements that facilitate the students' reading motivation, such as collaborative learning, praise and rewards, interesting texts, evaluation, and teacher involvement will be addressed through RT, motivating the students to read and work with books in Spanish (Guthrie, 2001).

2. Dramatized reading (Second class): Students have rehearsed the book copy at home so they will feel more prepared to reread it aloud in front of their peers. They will also bring questions to the instructor about the story or the characters in case there are some cultural references that the instructor needs to explain. Regarding this, Izadi (2012) suggests that teachers should identify the students who are anxious in language learning, offer positive reinforcement by creating a friendly environment to help them to build their self-esteem, and lower their anxiety feelings.

After receiving feedback and positive reinforcement from the instructor, they will read the text once normally and again in a more theatrical way: a) The students should try to read the scripts correctly, listening for cues and unison speaking; b) They will also

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rehearse focusing on vocal volume and expression that will help them to understand and retain the information better (Shepard, 1993).

3. Creative activities (Third class): The students can choose between drawing a picture or creating a song, poem, or a new ending for the story. Then, they will share their creations on Instagram/Snapchat and reply to other peers' posts. As Yilmaz (2018) indicated, the interactive platform was the major factor that increased the students' motivation as they could share their work and therefore build a network among each other. Also, the use of visuals and videos was another factor for their motivation increment as it helped to improve the quality of their projects.

4. Cultural input (Fourth class): The students will watch a video (i.e., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qQKtaSPxOY>) and find the accent of the country of the book they work with. Afterwards, they will try to perform the text with that accent, which can actually lead to a more authentic situation. Then, they will seek information about the places that appear in the book on Google Maps and do some research. In case there is not specific information about the places in the books, they will try to guess where those places are and explain why they think so. As Atterdo and Raskin (1991) suggested, there is a need to use semantic scripts so the students will apply the linguistic ability relating it to the real world, in this case connecting the book to the real locations they will find on Google Maps, or watching the different Spanish accents on Youtube will lead to a more authentic experience.

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5. Discussion (Fifth class): Students will share their thoughts on the main topic of the book (e.g., family/immigration/squatters/freedom/wishes for the future) via e-learning platforms, such as Schoology. There will be a debate during this day in which they have to bring an article to the discussion about the topic. As Chen and Lee (2011) found out that students' emotions changed depending on the topics they talked about and as the students felt more relaxed when they talked about family but more nervous when they had to talk about exams and the future, so these common issues may be appropriate to help them feel less anxious.

6. Performance (Sixth class): On the last day, students will perform their script with costumes and objects to make the scene more real. Performances will be recorded and posted afterwards on Social Media (Instagram and Snapchat group accounts that they will create for this project). Due to the components of repeated practice and performance, RT will also motivate students to participate in class, to read, and to increase their interest in reading texts as well as their self-confidence (Rinehart, 1999; Rizopoulos, 2004; Tsou, 2011; Young & Rasinski, 2009).

Here the four books included in the section *Common Issues* will be briefly presented. The books are diverse in their themes and nationalities; the first book is from México, the comic book from Argentina, and the third book is from Spain. The variety of the format (illustration books, a comic book, and a book that was meant especially for A2 Spanish learners) and topics such as immigration, family problems, freedom, or wishes

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for the future have been regarded as a way to motivate the students and help them think about other realities different from theirs.

1. La Frontera/The Border (El viaje con papá/My Journey with Papa)

A Mexican boy, Alfredo, and his father had to leave their hometown of La Ceja (México) where all his family and friends lived because they could not afford living with dignity. After a long and dangerous journey, Alfredo and his father finally arrived in the US (Texas) and started a new life, and, even though it was hard for Alfredo at the beginning, he finally learned the language and made new friends. Four years later, he was able to see his family again.

This text has been chosen because it talks about immigration, an important theme nowadays all over the world that may motivate the students. As Komiya and McMorris (2017) indicate, intrinsic motivation was related to curiosity. Therefore, the content of this reading could motivate them, and also discussing the readings with other classmates could lead to relatedness and empathy towards immigrants.

The following roles will be assigned:

- Story-teller
- Alfredo's Grandfather
- Alfredo's mother
- Alfredo's dad
- Alfredo

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2. 10 años de Mafalda/10 Years of Mafalda

These comic strips are about Mafalda, a six-years old Argentinian girl whose imagination and critical spirit are quite unusual for her age. Mafalda drove everyone crazy: her parents, little brother Guille, and her best friends: Libertad (Freedom), Felipe, Manolito, Susanita, and Miguelito. These comic strips were selected because Mafalda is a very popular character in the Hispanic world and it also shares some common topics with most cultures, such as freedom, nature, family, friendship, or the test of time.

Mafalda is a humorous comic book and meets all the four categories of humor such as 1) textual (jokes, stories); 2) pictorial (comics and cartoons); 3) action/games (video, contests, theatre, simulation, and role play); and 4) verbal (acronym, puns, and word games) recommended by Chee (2006). As Weaver and Cotrell (1987) claim, humor may help to break the gap between teachers and students, reducing fear and tension and revealing humanness.

Each of the four pages (scripts) that I have selected contain between one, two, and three different short stories so each person will have more than one role to perform. They will be explained shortly by page:

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First Script

On this page, there are two different stories. The first one is about Miguelito complaining about his parents and loving them a lot at the same time, and the second is about freedom and the impossibility for humans to fly.

The following roles will be assigned:

- Mafalda
- Miguelito: Mafalda's friend

Second Script

This page contains three different stories. The first one talks about how we judge people for their appearance, the second one is about how nature -and we- should be free, and the third describes how difficult it is to remember everybody's story and how we might prefer simple rather than complicated people.

The following roles will be assigned:

- Mafalda
- Libertad: Mafalda's friend
- Guille: Mafalda's little brother
- Mafalda's dad
- Felipe: Mafalda's friend

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Third Script

On this page, the first story is about how Mafalda always asks difficult questions to her father and how, even though she drives him crazy, he is always curious about them. The second story is about Mafalda's tendency of spending time with the boys instead of the girls, unruly as she is. The next story is about Mafalda's father explaining to her a plant's growing process and her being disappointed when knowing 'the end.' The last one is about Mafalda telling her father he looked better now than when he was younger and how his happiness annoyed the rest of the passengers in the bus.

The following roles will be assigned:

- Mafalda
- Mafalda's friends
- Mafalda's dad
- People inside the bus

Fourth Script

The story of this page is about Mafalda criticising freedom through a clumsy representation of the Statue of Liberty.

The following roles will be assigned:

- Mafalda
- Felipe
- Susanita: Mafalda's friend

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- Mafalda's dad
- Miguelito

3. ¿Dónde está Sonia?/Where is Sonia?

This book is about a sixteen-year-old girl named Sonia and how she left the family house with only a note. Her father Jaime asked his friend Llorenç to help him to find her. Llorenç's grandchildren Enrique and his girlfriend Monica, both journalists, found out that Sonia was actually living in a squat with her boyfriend Toni, who was her sister Angela's ex-boyfriend, and they ended up helping the squatters and writing about them in the newspaper for which they were working. At the end, Sonia decided to stay in the squat as she wanted to live her own life.

The story was selected because it is suitable for A2 Spanish learners and, as Martinez, Roser, and Strecker (1998-1999) suggest, it is better if the texts are not above readers' levels. Moreover, they need to contain straightforward plots with characters working through dilemmas requiring talk as it is the case of this book. Thus, this interesting text covering real world issues such as squatters, economic precariousness, love relationships, and problems between parents and children could motivate students to read.

The following roles will be assigned:

- Story-teller
- Llorenç Sarriol

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- Enrique Sarriol
- Mónica García
- Pedro Sancho
- Jaime Robles
- Ángela Robles
- Sonia Robles
- Toni Izquierdo

4. Los deseos de Carmela/Carmela's wishes

This is a story about a girl named Carmela. On her birthday, her mother told her to make a birthday wish. Her only wish was being old enough to go out with her brother so she was very happy when they went out together. However, her brother was very annoyed. On her way, she found a dandelion, and her brother told her to make a wish. Every time she made her bracelets sound, she thought about a wish. Her first wish was to have a candy machine. The second wish was to see her mum lying on one of the luxury beds of the hotels she used to clean for a living. Her third wish was to see her dad finally come to the US after fixing all his immigration papers. When she fell from her scooter, the dandelion broke, so she was very upset. However, her brother took her to a place with millions of dandelions for her to make all the wishes she wanted.

This book was selected because it talks about topics shared among most children around the world such as fighting with a sibling, the love for candy, the wish of having a better future (Carmela's mother), and again the immigration problem (Carmela's father)

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that students could discuss, engaging in collaborative work. Also, as Komiyama and McMorris (2017) suggested that the absence of L1 translation motivated the students through the role of competence, so it could be a positive thing that it is not translated as they will feel more motivated and need to make an extra effort until they reach the fluency.

The following roles will be assigned:

- Story-teller
- Carmela
- Carmela's mother
- Carmela's brother

B) Classic Fairy Tales

Activities

1. Understanding the book (First class): First, roles should be assigned. Depending on the book, students will have more than one role to perform. As it was mentioned before, their first activity is the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) that Young and Rasinski (2009) propose, in which students have to ask themselves questions based on the title of the book and make predictions about it. Then, students will read the book by emphasizing phrasing, expressive reading, and punctuation so they will have opportunities to get feedback and negotiate its meaning (Tsou, 2011).

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After assigning roles to them for their presentation, the students will rehearse and perform their reading in front of the class. Then, they will start with a choral reading of the book. Meanwhile, they can write the words they do not understand and then recreate the story with the pieces they individually understand, helping each other. Afterwards, they will summarise the book's main ideas through three main (beginning, middle, and ending) points. Elements that facilitate the students' reading motivation such as collaborative learning, praise and rewards, interesting texts, evaluation, and teacher involvement will be addressed through RT, motivating the students to read and work with books in Spanish (Guthrie, 2001).

2. Dramatized reading (Second class): Students have rehearsed the book copy at home so they will feel more prepared to reread it aloud in front of their peers. They will also bring questions to the teacher about the story or the characters in case there are some cultural references that she needs to explain to them. As previously mentioned, Izadi (2012) recommends that teachers should be aware of the students who experience anxiety when they learn a 2L, giving them constructive feedback and creating a friendly environment in which they can feel self-confident with lower anxiety levels.

After receiving the positive feedback from the instructor, the students will read the text normally and then again in a more expressive way. This second time, they will try to read the scripts correctly, listening for cues and unison speaking and focusing on volume and expression, which will eventually lead to a better understanding and retention of the information (Shepard, 1993).

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3. Creative activities (Third class): The students can choose between writing a picture, song, poem, or a new ending for the story. Then, they will share their pictures/songs/poems or endings on Instagram/Snapchat and reply to the other peer's creations. As Yilmaz (2018) found in his study, results indicate that there was an increase of motivation for L2 reading and writing skills after the use of computer technology, so it will also help the students develop their writing in Spanish.

4. Cultural differences and emotions (Fourth class): Students will try to perform the text using a different emotion each performance. This may lead to a fun and motivating situation in which they may feel less anxious about the text. According to the Humor Processing Theory (IHTP) defined by Wanzer, Frymier, and Irwin (2009), humorous messages should be able to increase motivation, raise attention levels, and create a positive effect in language students. Later, they will find the differences between the American fairy tales and the Spanish editions of the same books and discuss them.

5. Discussion (Fifth class): Students will talk about their thoughts on the main topic of the book (e.g., beauty stereotypes, gender roles, and violence, feigning to achieve success and lying). They will discuss the topic on Schoology, and there will be a debate during the two weeks about it. Also, they will have to bring a weekly article to discuss the topic. After this, as in Chou's (2013) study, students will see improvements in their diction and speaking ability, being able to understand more, and they will find the classes more interesting, feeling a sense of achievement because of the group work.

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6. Performance (Sixth class): The last day of the project, students will perform their book. They will perform it with costumes and objects to make the scene more real. Performances will be recorded and posted on Instagram and Snapchat and shared with the rest of the class. Chou (2013) suggests that the repetition of the text as well as the gestures along with the reading of 2L texts lead to a better retention of the content so this will help their fluency and improve their confidence towards the book.

These classic tales have been selected because they are well known all around the world, so students may know their content in advance to a certain degree and they will eventually feel less anxious about speaking Spanish. As an example, Young and Rasinski (2009) have a website <http://www.thebestclass.org/rtscripts.html> that contains many classic fairy tales that could be used for RT purposes. Also, the topics of the tales could be connected to different relevant universal topics of reality such as beauty stereotypes, gender roles, and violence against women, feigning to achieve success and lying.

1. Blancanieves/ Snow White

Snow White was a princess whose stepmother was jealous of her as she was more beautiful, so the stepmother hired a hunter to kill her. The hunter was unable to do it and told her not to come back to the palace anymore. She got lost in the forest and found a house with nobody inside but seven little plates and seven small beds. She ate from the plates and fell asleep on the beds. When the seven dwarfs came back, she explained her story and said she would take care of them if they let her stay. Next day, when the dwarves left the house, the stepmother dressed up like an old woman and offered her a

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poisoned apple. After Snow White ate it, she fell down to the floor. The dwarfs thought she was dead so they laid her down on a bed and cried for her. Suddenly, a prince passed by, and they told him the story. At the end, the prince kissed her, and she woke up. At the end, they got married and lived happily forever.

First, the following roles will be assigned:

- Story-teller
- The stepmother
- The hunter
- Snow White

2. Caperucita roja/Little Red Riding Hood

Red Riding Hood was a little girl who went to visit her sick grandma with her honey and pancakes. On her way, she found a wolf, and the wolf asked her where she was going. She told him her destination. While she was entertained, he ran to the grandmother's house. The grandma hid into the closet before he came as she knew him very well. The wolf dressed up like the grandma and got into her bed, waiting for Little Red Riding Hood to come. When she arrived, she found her grandma different and asked her about her ears, eyes, and mouth. He said they were meant to hear, see, and eat her better, so she ran from him, and the hunters killed the wolf.

First, the following roles will be assigned:

- Story-teller

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- Red Riding Hood's mother
- The wolf
- Red Riding Hood

3. El gato con botas/The Puss in boots

One miller died and left a cat with boots for his youngest son as inheritance. The cat, astute, hunted two partridges and went to the king saying that his lord, the marquis of Carabás, the miller's youngest son, wanted to offer him a present. One day, the cat asked her lord to go to the river naked so the cat started shouting that his lord, the Marquis of Carabás, was drowning while the king of the kingdom was passing by with his float. The king had a daughter, the princess, and, when she saw the Marquis, they immediately fell in love. The cat made the farmers say that the Marquis was the owner of the lands and went to the lands' real owner, a magician. Then, the cat went to the magician's house and asked him to become a mouse if he was that powerful, and, when he did, the cat ate him. Therefore, the marquis ended up being the owner of the magician's palace, so when the king went to see it, he thought he could be a good husband for his daughter, and they got married.

First, the following roles will be assigned:

- Story-teller
- The cat
- The king
- Farmers

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- The magician
- The Marquis of Carabás
- The princess

4. Pinocho/ Pinocchio

A carpenter named Gepeto made a wooden doll he called Pinocchio. He wanted Pinocchio to be his son, so the Blue Fairy made his wish come true, assigning Jiminy Cricket to Pinocchio as his conscience. Pinocchio went to school, and two tricksters convinced him of going to the circus. Once they arrived there, they sold Pinocchio to a puppeteer, who made him sing and dance. As he was sad, the puppeteer let him go, giving Pinocchio some coins. Coming back home, the tricksters stole his coins, and, when Jiminy Cricket asked him for the money, Pinocchio lied. Then, a group of children convinced him to go with them to ‘Pleasure Island,’ and, when they arrived, they turned into donkeys, so a circus owner caught them for his show. As Pinocchio broke his leg, the owner abandoned him so he left. Pinocchio’s classmates laughed at his donkey’s body when they saw him, and he asked for help from the Blue Fairy and, as he lied to her again, she made his nose grow. Finally, the tricksters came to Pinocchio, but he ignored them, and, because he was truly sorry, the Blue Fairy forgave him and turned him into a real boy.

First, the following roles will be assigned

- Story-teller
- Pinocchio

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- Gepeto
- Blue fairy
- Children
- Jiminy Cricket

The Books

The books will not be included in the final thesis, but you can request them to me sending an email to pruizsantamaria@carthage.edu