HOW LANGUAGE VARIETY AND MOTIVATION IMPACT LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN ADULT HERITAGE LEARNERS OF PORTUGUESE

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Abstract

Portuguese is a language rich in varieties. Some adult heritage learners of Portuguese acquire it quickly and easily, while others students display negative attitudes towards the instructor's dialect and withdraw from classes altogether, despite both groups receiving the same linguistic input. The dearth of research on this topic begged the research question, *How does linguistic variety affect motivation in adult heritage learners of Portuguese?* This study used semistructured interviews with 20 adult heritage learners to provide insight into the question, and aspects of adult learning, the L2 motivational self-system, and L2 acquisition theory as theoretical frameworks. Overlapping themes of identity, ideal selves, and language attitudes related to motivation towards Portuguese varieties, as well as their profound influence on a heritage learner's motivation and acquisition success, emerged. These results suggest placing greater importance on consideration of linguistic variety in the classroom when assessing adult heritage learners.

Keywords: heritage learners, L2 motivational self-system, motivation, acquisition theory, Portuguese

1. Introduction

As a Portuguese language instructor, I watched some students acquire language quickly and easily, while other students displayed negative attitudes towards the instructor's Portuguese language variety or withdrew from the class altogether. These observations led to the question underpinning this research: *How does linguistic variety affect motivation in adult heritage learners of Portuguese?* In many higher education language classes, all adult heritage learners receive the same linguistic input in similar classroom environments but they experience vastly different levels of language acquisition

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success. The aim of this research was to explore the importance of the connection between linguistic varieties of Portuguese and language identity and learner motivation, and to examine its effects on language acquisition for adult heritage speakers. The research was conducted at a university in Massachusetts, USA, and involved semistructured interviews with 20 adult heritage learners of Portuguese.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Heritage Learners

This research drew on work from multiple literatures specifically focused on the Portuguese language and on motivation, attitudes, language acquisition, and adult heritage learners. Here, the term *heritage learners* refers to adult learners who culturally and ethnically identify as Lusophone (i.e., culturally or linguistically relate to Portuguese) in some capacity due to a familial tie, but for a myriad of reasons have not learned Portuguese (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). Thus, heritage learners often enroll in language classes with strong notions of the Portuguese variety they desire to learn, even though they cannot yet speak it.

As a pluricentric language, Portuguese varieties differ considerably in phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. Unconfined to the binary of the Brazilian and the European standards (Baxter, 1992), the language includes several other nonstandard varieties (Ferreira, 2005). Portuguese has two standard forms of writing and numerous regional spoken variations with often significant phonological and lexical differences. Within this study, I designate the standard written form of Portuguese used in Brazil as Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and the form used in Portugal and the Azores as European Portuguese (EP). Mateus and d'Andrade (2000) emphasized various phonetic differences between the two varieties, including significant changes in vowel and consonant stresses. Similarly, Kato and Raposo (1994) juxtaposed BP and EP word order in their studies and found the two varieties more different than alike. These differences create challenges for learners who must reconcile both varieties simultaneously in a Portuguese language classroom.

A *heritage language* is the language an individual learns at home during childhood. It is not the dominant language of a society and therefore not assimilated as perfectly (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). Tse (1998) suggested that heritage learners must feel a connection to their ethnic culture to learn or maintain their heritage language. Similarly, Cummin's (1998) research demonstrated that heritage learners have higher levels of intrinsic motivation and integrated orientation than do their nonheritage learner counterparts. Specifically relating to Portuguese learners, Gontijo (2010) investigated the role of attitudes, motivation, and heritage in learning Portuguese. Her analysis linking these themes to the study of language learning is important research, particularly in light of the dearth of studies devoted to Portuguese language learning)

2.2. Attitudes

The study of attitudes is an important component of understanding motivation in language learning. Attitudes towards the second language (L2) contribute to increased or diminished motivation. Learners' attitudes come from collective values, beliefs, and even behaviors modeled in the communities in which the learners participate. Attitudes can function as intervening variables between a stimulus affecting a person and that person's response (Appel & Muysken, 1987; Fasold, 1984), particularly when learning a new language.

A key factor that influences attitudes is identity, especially as it relates to language and heritage. It is important to understand how language learners perceive their relationship to the world, in addition to how learners understand future possibilities (Norton, 2013). Language learners are considered active agents with unique personal histories, aspirations, and needs. These components contribute to structuring different investments at different times. Intertwined with L2 learners' investments are their affective and symbolic affiliations to communities of practice (Morita, 2004). Some are real, immediate communities in which learners strive for legitimate membership or acceptance. Others are imagined communities learners create based on their past memberships and life histories.

2.3. Motivation

Motivation closely relates to attitude. Motivation is important in the study of L2 acquisition because it provides the primary impetus to initiate learning and, later, the driving force to sustain the long and often-tedious learning process. Gardener and Lambert (1972) discussed correlations between attitudes and motivation in L2 acquisition, suggesting learning requires interplay among four essential components: motivation, perception, response, and reward or reinforcement. Their study resulted in the sociopsychological model, which posited that learners' ethnocentric tendencies and attitudes towards members of the "other group" can determine how successful they will be at learning the new language.

Gardener's (1985) sociopsychological research is considered pioneering in the field of language acquisition. He was one of the first researchers to connect instrumentality, integrativeness, and language-learning attitudes to motivation and, thus, to language achievement (Dörnyei, 2009). Gardener and Lambert (1972) posited that attitude and motivation relate to language achievement, independent of intelligence and aptitude.

Knowles (1984) suggested that adults are most interested in learning subjects immediately relevant to their jobs or personal lives. Pew (2007) examined issues of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, along with implications for constructing educational settings that facilitate motivation. Like Knowles, Pew highlighted the role of intrinsic motivation in adult learners and the relevance subject matter must have in an adult's life to be learned.

2.4. Related Models and Theories

The L2 motivational self-system model brought together the ideas of heritage learners, attitudes, and motivation (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). This motivational self-system has three components: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience (Dörnyei, 2009). The *ideal L2 self* is a person's imagined ideal future self as an L2 speaker (Ushioda, 2012). It promotes motivation by inspiring the present self to strive to become the ideal self, which in turn promotes integrative and internalized instrumental motivation in language learning (Dörnyei, 2009). The *ought-to self* refers to attributes one believes one ought to possess (i.e., representing someone else's sense of duty, responsibilities, or obligations). If proficiency in the target language is part of a person's ought-to or ideal self, then that self will motivate the person to learn the language because of the psychological desire to diminish the gap between current and possible future selves.

The distinction between acquisition and learning is the most important tenet of Krashen's (1982) theory of L2 acquisition. Krashen proposed that there exist two systems of language performance: that which is acquired and that which is learned. *Acquisition* occurs from a subconscious process, just as children require meaningful, natural communication to acquire their first language. The speaker does not focus on the form of the utterance but on the communicative act. By contrast, *learning* comes from formal instruction, entailing a conscious process with knowledge about the language, such as grammatical rules. According to Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1979), acquisition is more important than learning. Krashen et al. proposed that learners with high motivation and self-confidence, good self-images, and low anxiety acquire language more easily. Those with low motivation, low self-esteem, and high anxiety can raise an affective filter and create a barrier that prevents comprehensible input from reaching the language-acquisition device in the brain.

2.5. Summary

These theoretical concepts concerning language variety and adult heritage learners' language identities, attitudes, and perceptions relate to applied linguistics and foreign language pedagogy. An integral component of motivation is the variety Portuguese in which a learner is interested; those who instead study a variety that does not interest them are likely to be unmotivated to learn. Thus, a lack of motivation may raise their affective filters and ultimately prevent language acquisition from occurring

3. Material and Methods

The research population was students enrolled in introductory university-level Portuguese classes. The university where the research was undertaken is an urban commuter school with a diverse (race, ethnicity, social class, and age) student body and a small, emergent Portuguese program. In February 2016, I used referral sampling by

contacting a Portuguese language instructor there with the view to recruit adult heritage learners to participate in the research.

Ultimately, 20 students were selected as the sample. The participants, who ranged in age from 19 to 21 years, were heritage learners with parents or grandparents from a Portuguese-speaking country (Brazil or the Azores). The interviews I conducted with each included some set questions, but most questions were unstructured and could be adapted to the respondents' answers.

Directly after each interview, I jotted notes to capture unrecorded communication (e.g., body language, attentiveness) and enable a fuller communication record. I transcribed the interviews and began a coding process using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The IPA process aims to provide evidence of how participants made sense of the phenomena under investigation and to document the researcher's sense-making.)

4. Results

Five major themes emerged from the interview data through the IPA process: Motivation, reasons to study, interest in language variant, visionary experiences, and academic performance.

4.1. Theme 1: Motivation

The majority (18 of 20) of participants described feeling more motivated to learn, study, and participate in class when their instructor spoke in the variety of Portuguese closest to that of their families. Based on the research participant descriptions, impetus to participate within and outside the classroom appeared to significantly drop or increase depending on the Portuguese variety the instructor taught in the class. Participants expressed these motivational extremes in the following ways:

> *"Once people told me the professor was from Portugal, I knew I had to sign up for the class. I don't even come to campus those days, and with my commute, I didn't care. I'm committed. . . . When I first started studying here, I took Portuguese, but the instructor was from Brazil and was only teaching us Brazilian. Most teachers are from Brazil, so they're [EP instructors] hard to find. I didn't want to learn it [earlier BP course]. I know that's not how my father talked, so I dropped it early on. I'm glad I waited. . . . Now I'm doing all the work and talk a lot in class to get the most I can out of it."* (Robert)

> *"I kinda wish I hadn't taken the course [laughs]. I know that sounds terrible, but it's definitely not the Portuguese I want to learn. I mean, he's [the instructor] a really nice guy, but, like, my parents are Brazilian, and the Portuguese we're learning is way different. I mean, like, it sounds totally different and there are different words. I don't say anything because, like, there are lots of Portuguese people in the class, but I don't feel motivated at all to do the assignments or even talk in class. He talks mostly about*

Portugal, too, so. . . . It just seems useless to me, and I like practice this stuff at home and my parents don't even know some of the words, and they don't like the way I sound, and it's totally not how they talk." (Jenn)

Eighteen participants described experiencing extreme emotions relating to their family in connection to the variety taught in the course, and that these emotions affected their motivation to participate. Only two participants said they were relatively indifferent to learning the variety their family now or once spoke.

4.2. Theme 2: Reasons to Study

The majority (18 of 20) of participants explained that their reason for studying Portuguese was to learn the variety of their family in order to reclaim aspects of their lost identity. Many expressed fear of no longer possessing these aspects of their family. They stated they felt a self-imposed responsibility to learn a specific Portuguese variety to maintain a linguistic link to their family and ultimately pass it on to future generations. As one student described:

"What kind of Portuguese person would I be if I never learned the language [nervous laugh]? I don't want to end up like those people who never learned but still say they're Portuguese, or end up learning Brazilian and don't even know it [laughs]! I think it's sad and that's why I'm taking this class. I don't want it to die out with me." (Alex)

Three participants mentioned explicitly wanting to pass on the particular variety of Portuguese to their children one day. Grace explained:

"This is always what I wanted to do! I see myself speaking the Portuguese from Portugal to my kids and us doing lots of Portuguese traditions and stuff together, like going to the festas and even stuff at home, especially around the holidays with like food and stuff. At least if they hear it when they're young, they'll be able to pick it up easier than I can and can speak it with me."

Two participating students mentioned a deceased relative as being a strong emotional rationale for studying a particular variant of Portuguese:

"I think of my grandparents during class, and we're talking in Portuguese from Portugal at their table, something I could never do. Hearing it reminds me of them . . . . I can't help it. Learning is finally my way of doing it. I know it sounds weird, but I see it sort of as a way to for me to carry it on and to make them proud, but also to be Portuguese 'cause that's who I am too." (Adam)

4.3. Theme 3: Interest in Language

The majority (15 of 20) of participants expressed little to no interest in learning a variety of Portuguese different from that of their family and expressed overall negative attitudes towards other varieties. The general negative attitudes they described towards other Portuguese variants reflects Theme 1 (Motivation), feeling more motivated to learn when their instructor used the variety closest to that of their family. Jenn explicitly described her negativity towards Portuguese varieties she did not view as her own:

> *"I feel like I'm being forced to learn the Portuguese from Portugal in a way, even though the teacher lets me learn and speak Brazilian. I feel like that because the teacher is Portuguese and most people want to learn his Portuguese, so I end up learning it. Makes me not like it even more! It has a strange sound to it. Very harsh, and you use your nose a lot."*

In addition to expressing negative feelings towards the other Portuguese variety, five students described disinterest when encountering it in class. John stated, "*When we learn about Brazil or Cape Verde, or when the other students use those words, I just feel detached from the class. My mind wanders. It's boring. I'm not interested.*" Three participants reported attempting to disenroll from the course due to their lack of interest. In large part, students who wanted to learn BP expressed this disinterest because the instructor was from Portugal and predominately used and taught EP. Only four participants thought it would be useful to learn aspects of the "other" Portuguese variety (e.g., to learn EP when they wanted to learn BP) during class. These four participants explained that having knowledge of both could be advantageous within their communities and work environments.

4.4. Theme 4: Visionary Experiences

The majority (16 of 20) of participants described the variety the instructor used in class as reflective of how they saw themselves speaking in the future. Most students described the professor as instrumental to their own linguistic output, revealing that they tried to imitate his variety, whether or not they wanted to:

> *"I try to sound like him as much as possible. I want to one day sound like him or somewhere close to it. . . . Even though I can't speak it, I know how Portuguese from Portugal is supposed to sound, so I want to talk like that . . . like him."* (Carl)

> *"I'm trying to talk Brazilian, but I get confused because, like, I repeat him and when I have to talk to him, I end up sounding like him, like making the "s" sound at the end of words or using "tu" or the Portuguese word instead of the Brazilian word. . . . I don't want to talk like him."* (Jenn)

Interestingly, many participants stated that the moments in which they saw themselves speaking and using a particular variety of Portuguese caused them at times to lose concentration. Jason commented, "*Sometimes in class, I lose focus almost 'cause I'm so into it. I can see myself speaking the Portuguese from Portugal with family and reconnecting with them when I finally go to Portugal.*" Five participants reported that these episodes would occur during every class. Robert described:

"*At least every class, I have those moments where I see myself being fluent one day and teaching other people in my family how to speak Portuguese. I'm in the Azores with them and talking and getting in touch with relatives there. It's real. I find it gets me to connect more to the lesson.*"

4.5. Theme 5: Academic Performance

A majority (13 of 20) of participants perceived their performance in the course as, in part, a result of the variety the instructor used. These students seemed to be divided between adult heritage learners with deep convictions to learn either BP or EP. Students who only wanted to learn BP reported that the EP variety of the instructor negatively affected their performance. One explained:

"*I get confused a lot because I'm trying to speak Brazilian and I guess teach myself to use the pronunciation and the tones, but it's hard. I get tripped up a lot. I just don't want to speak that way [EP] because that's not how my family speaks.*" (Gabe)

5. Discussion

5.1. Identity Role in Adult Heritage Language Learning

This research sought to understand how linguistic variety affects motivation in adult heritage learners of Portuguese. Findings revealed that participants indicated feeling more motivated to learn, study, and participate in class when their instructor used and spoke the variety closest to that of their families. In addition, participants explained that their reason for studying Portuguese was to learn the variety of their families to reclaim aspects of their lost identity.

Attitudinal orientation can affect language acquisition when it controls the amount of interaction the learner has with members of the target language community. Krashen (1981) suggested that the probability of the student learning the language rises if the learner was exposed to more contact with native speakers. In this sense, attitudinal issues can be either bridges or barriers. Heritage language learners are thus unique in the classroom in that they must associate some intrinsic meaning to what is being taught, without which acquisition will not occur.

Similarly, Knowles (1984) highlighted the uniqueness of adult learners, describing that as individuals mature, their learning becomes more intrinsic. In addition, adult learners' readiness to learn progressively orients towards the

developmental tasks that comprise their social roles. Themes 1 (Motivation) and 2 (Reasons to Study) showed the learners' strong desire to acquire the language variety of their families to preserve their identity, and thus assign greater importance to their role within the family and community as communicators and Portuguese-speakers. Sogunro (2014) built on Knowles' theory and posited that the adult learner must sustain motivation in order to acquire a language—which requires instruction relevant to the student's life. The current study highlighted the significance of instruction relevance for adult heritage learners of Portuguese. Students of EP heritage felt they were excelling and highly motivated in the EP class, whereas students of BP heritage expressed feeling profoundly unmotivated in the same class and struggled to find the different Portuguese variety relevant to their lives.

5.2. Attitudes and Language Learning

The research revealed that most participants expressed little to no interest in learning a variety of Portuguese different from that of their families and described overall negative attitudes towards other varieties. Attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers contribute to amplified or reduced levels of motivation (Fasold, 1984). Appel and Muysken (1987) considered attitudes as a dominant component affecting learners and their responses. Attitudes towards the Portuguese variety used during instruction deeply affected the learners' motivation to study the language. Emotion can also influence motivation, particularly if the heritage learner's self-concept does not align with the material being taught (Denissen, Zarrett, & Eccles, 2007). As Pajares and Schunk (2005) revealed, self-concept is a powerful construct that serves as an affective dimension of how people believe they are and functions as a self-description entailing an evaluation of feelings of self-worth. Mercer (2011) posited that learners do not hold one global self-concept but multiple interrelated self-concepts across various domains. These self-concepts concern sociocultural contexts and interpersonal interactions (Neisser & Jopling, 1997).

In the context of my study, the self-concept of heritage learners of Portuguese ranged widely among those taking the class. These learners wanted to study the specific variety of Portuguese that aligned with how they perceived themselves. Without that variety being instructed, the learners were unable to locate any self-description in the class. However, when the learner's sociocultural contexts were reflected in instruction, then the opposite was true.

A sociopsychological element was also apparent in many participant responses. Gardener and Lambert (1972) believed that learners' ethnocentric tendencies and attitudes towards members of the "other" group determined how successful they would be in relation to learning the new language. In the current study, adult heritage learners expressed disinterest and lack of connection towards a language variety other than that of their families, and this ethnocentric tendency weakened their motivation to acquire the Portuguese variety being studied.

My interview findings from adult heritage learners of Portuguese demonstrated Gardener and Lambert's (1972) point that individuals can develop a bicultural identity and feel psychologically free to become fully bilingual if they are content and comfortable with their cultural and linguistic heritage. The interviews suggested that Gardener and Lambert's model also applied to heritage learners of Portuguese. These learners arrived to class with a bicultural identity of Americans and of a particular Portuguese-speaking country but may have felt uncomfortable when learning the linguistic variety of a different country or Lusophone region.

In my study, in line with Mowrer's (1950) model, participants did or did not identify with the instructor based on the Portuguese variety taught, which affected their motivation levels. Gardener and Lambert (1972) expressed the importance of motivation being self-generated. My findings echo those of Gardener and Lambert, demonstrating that students could encounter difficulty orientating favorably towards the cultural-linguistic group whose language they are supposed to learn, thereby affecting language acquisition.

Gardener and Lambert (1972) stated that attitudes and motivation are personal characteristics that influence and determine one's progress in learning a foreign language. They also posited that attitude and motivation relate to language achievement, independent of intelligence and aptitude. The authors believed that attitudes are developed in the home, given the strong relationship between parents and children, and this development was evident in the heritage learners interviewed in my study. Gardener and Lambert argued that learners differentially feel the language's audio-lingual features and perceive its pronunciation and accent forms if they are integratively motivated and have a friendly outlook towards the other group whose language they are learning. This would explain the participants' remarks about the effect of the Portuguese variety on their interest in studying the language. In addition, if learners' attitudes are ethnocentric and hostile, they are likely to progress little in the L2 acquisition process. This is also reflected in the current findings, with heritage learners particularly interested in ideas of their own ethnocentric views of the Portuguese with which they identify.

Gardener (1985) also suggested that a motivated individual would display a positive attitude towards the language-learning process. He believed that a goal was not a measurable element of motivation, but rather a factor that sparks motivation. This aligns with most participant interviews, in which heritage learners expressed clear goals for learning a particular Portuguese variety. These goals ranged from speaking with family members to teaching it to future generations, in addition to travel purposes and identity preservation. The goals appeared to have sparked motivation within the adult heritage learners interviewed in this study. Conversely, positive attitudes towards language learning diminished when participants' goals were hindered because a variety unrelated to the goal was taught—supporting Gardener's claim to the imperativeness of positive attitudes towards goals and language acquisition.

5.3. Ideal Speakers and Acquisition Success

Reflecting Findings 4 and 5, numerous participants described moments of powerful visionary episodes in which they saw themselves—and often, future family or community events—in the future. When positive, the episodes aligned with the variety of Portuguese being learned; when negative, the visions often entailed a Portuguese variety students did not want to learn, thus affecting concentration and language acquisition.

The research respondents' experiences reflect the literature on the psychology of language learning. Dörnyei (2005) drew upon the psychological theory of possible selves, which posited that possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming, thereby bridging concepts of motivation and self-concept (Markus & Nurius, 1987, p. 157). This was particularly clear when participants described trips to Lusophone countries not yet realized, future cultural and family events, or even unborn offspring to whom they planned to teach Portuguese. Markus and Nurius' (1987) theory of ideal selves considers how people conceptualize their as-yet unrealized potential, drawing on hopes, fantasies, and wishes.

Possible selves are a reality for the individual, who can see and hear a possible self, resembling what people experience when engaged in motivated or goal-orientated behavior. Conditions that can enhance or hinder the motivational impact of the ideal and ought-to selves include availability of an elaborate and vivid future self-image (offset by the feared self), possession of a perceived plausibility, harmony between the ideal and the ought-to selves, necessary activation, and accompanying procedural strategies. Almost all the participants' responses demonstrate that adult heritage learners are likely to come to a course with vivid future self-images, perceiving a plausibility with their own goals and high levels of motivation.

The study participants' responses also reflect the three components of Dörnyei's (2005) motivational self-system of L2 learning (ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience). Interviews with participants revealed personal hopes, aspirations, and wishes to learn a specific Portuguese variety. This ought-to self-reflected in many participants' answers when they expressed a responsibility to learn the language of their family and to teach it to their family and future generations. Most adult learners in this study expressed a keen duty, responsibility, and obligation to learn the Portuguese of their family. Thus, according to Dörnyei's framework, proficiency in the target language is part of a person's ought-to or ideal self will motivate a person to learn the language because of the psychological desire to diminish the gap between current and possible future selves. Individuals vary in how easily they create a successful possible self (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). This explains the lack of sufficient motivation in many people and includes negative reference points. The participants in my study possessed great vibrancy regarding the detail of their ideal selves, which proved sufficient motivation to aid their language acquisition. Those who display substantial individual differences in the vividness of their mental imagery and a possible self with insufficient

specific and detail may not be able to spark the necessary motivational response (Richardson, 1994).

Learners can fail to see any integral or external value to their actions. Students in these cases may express resentment at what feels like a waste of time and suffer demotivation and, thus, perform poorly. The most motivated learners developed high motivation from their aims to acquire the Portuguese variety they want to learn, resulting in a positive attitude towards the L2 speakers and culture, as well as general high interest in learning Portuguese. In my study, these motivated individuals developed and exhibited this pattern because of a well-developed ideal-self, including visions of speaking with family. Others, without a sense of integrativeness in reference to the L2 ideal self because the class was not conducted in the Portuguese of their family, expressed negative attitudes and lower motivation levels.

Theme 5 (Academic Performance) relates to Krashen's (1982) theory of language acquisition, particularly his affective filter hypothesis. The hypothesis underscores the importance of providing a convivial atmosphere in which learners can acquire language. Participant responses in Finding 5 illustrate this well. For EP-oriented students, it appears that teaching the desired variety (EP) lowered Krashen's affective filter, creating a pleasant, stress-free, and fun environment for the learner, which thereby facilitated input to reach the language acquisition device within the brain (Chomsky, 1965).

However, Krashen's (1982) hypothesis also posits that if a learner feels anxious in any way, then input acquisition will be far less likely. The affective filter hypothesis suggests that motivation plays an extremely significant role in the language acquisition process. Krashen proposed that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, good self-image, and low anxiety levels acquire language more easily, while those with low motivation, low self-esteem, and high anxiety can raise the affective filter and create a barrier that prevents comprehensible input from reaching the language acquisition device in the brain. Study participants Jason and Jenn demonstrated this principle. As adult heritage learners, both were highly motivated, yet Jason held a positive self-image because he was learning the variety of Portuguese (EP) in which he was interested, and Jenn carried a negative self-image from learning an undesired language variety. Desiring to learn BP instead, Jenn saw herself speaking in a way she found meaningless. The affective filter hypothesis states that during the language acquisition process, various emotional obstacles emerge. The lower the filter (or anxiety level), the better the individual will process the input.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore adult heritage language learners' perceptions of their motivations to study Portuguese in relation to the variety of languages used in the classroom. Participants described feeling more motivated to learn, study, and participate in class when their instructor used the variety of Portuguese closest to that

of their family. Adult heritage learners of Portuguese who enroll in Portuguese language courses are not indifferent to the variety of Portuguese they desire to learn. Most participants explained their reason for studying Portuguese was to learn the variety of their family and reclaim aspects of their lost identity. Adult heritage learners of Portuguese sought to study the variety with which they identify to affirm, preserve, and regenerate aspects of their Lusophone selfhood. Further, most participants not only expressed little to no interest in learning a variety of Portuguese different from that of their family, they also held overall negative attitudes towards other varieties. Therefore, adult heritage learners of Portuguese were likely to harbor reservations towards learning a variety with which they do not identify. In addition, the majority of participants described the variety the instructor used in class reflected how they saw themselves speaking in the future. This finding suggests that, unlike nonheritage learners, adult heritage learners may be far more susceptible to learning barriers solely based on the subtlety of the instructor's language variety. Finally, most participants perceived their performance in the course partly resulted from the variety the instructor used. For adult heritage learners of Portuguese, the primary variety used in instruction might dictate the level and degree of language acquisition success.

6.1. Limitations
Due to the subject matter, interview participants might have been guarded and less candid in their responses. Further, restricting the research sample to 20 adult heritage learners of Portuguese, all of whom studied under one instructor who taught EP, limited the potential to generalize the findings in other environments and populations.

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