Intro Speaker: So I'm here to introduce Raquel, the college of PhD student in the department of Spanish and Portuguese at Temple University in Philadelphia. Her area of interest lies in applying linguistics and second language accusations in classroom research. Her research interest for her doctoral dissertation is on heritage language learners and non-native language learners in contact, motivation, and the effects of pair and group work in the foreign language classroom. Raquel is a CSUC...CSUC alumna. She graduated in 2009 with a double major in Anthropology and Spanish. She is a PSI member and president of the Foreign Language Honors Society for one year while she was at student at Chico State. Please help me to welcome back Raquel.

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Okay thank you all for being here today. I wanted to give a special thanks to Phi Sigma Iota, the officers, the members, and the advisers. I also wanted to thank Dr. Patricia Black for her kind words and also for inviting me to come here from the Department of International Languages, Literatures and Cultures. And everyone else, thank you for coming. I see a lot of familiar faces, I see a lot of new faces. I've met some new people, so welcome! Thank you so much for coming.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Today what I'm going to talk about, as you see in the title, it has to do a lot with language learning and how we...how we learn a language. But also that process of learning the language, and it has to do with participation in learning that language and also attitude towards learning a language especially in the foreign language classroom.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: So what I'm going to talk about, I'm going to talk a little bit about how languages are learned or taught today, how collaborative learning is used in foreign languages, and then I'm going to mostly focus on motivation as...as a topic of this presentation. How is motivation observed in the classroom? Talk about how motivation is dynamic and some final thoughts and final questions. And if anybody is interested, I have my email here. If anybody would like me to send them the PowerPoint, you can just email me and I can send you the PowerPoint presentation.

So this talk really comes from my personal experience. I've taught...I started teaching English in Spain to Spanish children and Spanish teenagers, and then now I'm teaching at Temple University. I teach university level Spanish 1 all the way to...I've taught from Spanish 1 to intermediate level Spanish, so a wide range. And I've observed that there is a lot of diversity in the classroom, and what I've noticed to most is a lot of times the motivation in the class and how students actually engage with the language.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: So some questions to consider about the language learning experience. Think about your experiences as a language learner and what is or what is or was the language environment like when you were learning a language or if you are currently learning the language, what is or what was the overall experience like, and what are or what were your reasons for studying the language. Okay these are just some...some initial thoughts.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: So my first point is how are foreign languages taught today? We have a naturalistic setting or we have classroom setting for learning a language. A naturalistic setting can be anywhere from complete immersion, not knowing anything about the language and living in the culture. For example, if you want to learn Spanish in Spain or Ecuador or any Spanish speaking country versus learning in a classroom where you're learning Spanish or German or French in an artificial setting in a classroom, which is what most of...I think classroom learning is the most common way to learn a language.

We also know that today language is taught with a communicative goal in mind, meaning that how can the practices in the classroom be applied to a real life situation. So you have, rather than filling out verb chart, you have actual practical use of the language like using it to communicate. Not just understand the theory the grammar, but the communicative aspect. Then you have your instructor who serves as more of a guide to guide you along the way of learning the language. It's a more student oriented approach rather than a professor just talking to the class and the students taking note. It's more collaborative, you have a lot of group and pair work. And like I said before, there's practical implications. How...why is this...how can I apply these skills outside of the classroom?

And we find that...we learn...learning languages is also very social experience. It's not...it's something that's full of social and cultural meaning, so it's different from learning, for example, math or geography. That's what makes it interesting, learning a language because you're not only learning how to speak but you're learning about, basically, a way of life, a way of understanding another culture that isn't your own.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: So I want to talk a little bit about collaborative learning because where I teach at Temple it’s really the main...how do I say this...it’s really pushed. They really want you to collaborate in groups...they were...as instructors they tell us all the time that you have to put them in groups and they’ll help each other out that way. And I think there's a similar practice here at Chico State from what I remember taking Spanish here.

So my...the theory of collaborative learning, I'm basing it on the idea by Dornyei. He is into group dynamics. He also talks a lot about motivation. And he found while observing language learners that...well observing classrooms, he found that group have a life of their own meaning that they share some sort of fundamental common features and even within a group, a group can be a classroom, within the classroom group there are smaller groups that are formed.

Language learning has also been found that when you're collaborating or working in pairs, there's a lot more productivity going on and a lot more learning going on. And when I, when I studied this I think to myself "Is this really the case? Is group work really effective?" I think it is, but I think there’s a certain way to doing it. Also group work can tell you a lot about a group and it can tell you a lot about an individual as well.

Some benefits of collaborative learning you have, for example, you have interaction or communication in the target language. You have negotiation of meaning, so you're negotiating understanding between your peers. And then you also have a lot of corrective feedback which can help with learning correcting mistakes from errors. So those are some benefits of collaborative learning. So yes, I do think it is...it is effective.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Now my next point, and this is...what...I after looking at collaborative learning, I think, or group work, I think, okay...my students when they get into groups, how much are they really doing? How much...and that's why I ask is it effective? So I can see sometimes I observe personally that you know there's off task going on. Students are looking at their phones, there're doing other things. That is necessarily productive towards language learning, and that's where motivation comes in. And I think to myself "Okay now what causes motivation?" So I ask, why do people learn a language? Or we ask ourselves why do we learn a language to begin with? It can be a personal goal, it can be a professional goal, or it can be out of necessity for a lot of people that learn English as a second language in this country or the main language in another country.

We find that motivation or a lot of studies have been done on motivation, and it's been found that motivation is very important for learning a second language. If you don't have a student that's motivated they're not going to learn. However, motivation is really difficult to study because how do you in...in research a lot of research is quantitative meaning with numbers. How do you quantify motivation? So that's why it's really difficult, but it is still an emerging field in second language acquisition and applied linguistics. So it can be difficult to study, but it is possible.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: So some ways of observing motivation and perhaps even quantifying motivation, you can look at it through a macro perspective or a micro perspective meaning what are the relationships between different ethnolinguistic groups? For example when you have, in Canada, you have French speakers and you have English speakers. What are these types of relationships when they're put together in a classroom? That's one way through a macro perspective. Through a micro perspective you might be see within the case of, for example, heritage learners when they are in a classroom. How do heritage learners perceive the language? How do they...what do they think of Spanish versus what do...how is English viewed? So that's more of a micro perspective. For example, yeah, individual and social influences.

Another way of observing motivation is a person's willingness to communicate in that language or WTC as the acronym. How often does the person communicate or try and use the target...the target language or the second language, L2, in the classroom. We all use our L1 because that's the way we communicate, we use our first language. But, for example, not always do we use our L2 because it's not a necessity most of the time. Sometimes it is, but if it's not, so often times there's that in...unwillingness to communicate.

Finally we have task motivation. How often are students on task? How often students off task? So you can count, you know, the number of times students are checking their cell phones during a given class time or you can count the number of times, I don't know, they're talking about a party that happened last night. So that's another way of observing it. Quantifying those items. Dornyei, he says that test motivation can be observed by the learner’s engagement and progress towards an outcome, so how involved are they in...in that activity? However, when you’re working in groups, I feel for students to stay on task. To
be motivated to finish something, given...it has to be meaningful. It has to be applicable and it has to have what one of my professors calls a "so what." It has to have, basically, a meaning. Why am I doing this activity? Is it going to lead to something? Can it have practical implications of some sort? So those are some of the things which task motivation.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Dornyei, he says that test motivation can be observed by the learner’s engagement and progress towards an outcome, so how involved are they in...in that activity? However, when you're working in groups, I feel for students to stay on task. To be motivated to finish something, given...it has to be meaningful. It has to be applicable and it has to have what one of my professors calls a "so what." It has to have, basically, a meaning. Why am I doing this activity? Is it going to lead to something? Can it have practical implications of some sort? So those are some of the things which task motivation.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: A lot of studies have...like I said a lot of studies have been done on motivation and they found that motivation is dynamic, it’s ever-changing, and it’s not static. In a study...variation and motivation is observed, and it’s observed by this process oriented approach as Dornyei suggests. It shows different characteristics depending on what stage an individual has reached in pursuing a goal. So, for example, the initial stage would be wishes and desires to start to be motivated to do something, in this case learn a language. Setting some sort of goal. Operationalizing their intentions toward learning meaning what am I going to do to get to this...this goal that I have in mind? Then the intentions are enacted. I enroll in a Spanish class or I enroll in a French class. Finally, this is where it gets a little bit, you know, hazy because, you know, you have the motiv...you have the intentions, but here is where it gets a little tough. Can you accomplish the goal that you have in mind? And then finally you have the final evaluation, what was the experience like? What did I get from this experience? Will I keep pursuing it or am I done?

Basically, so they were found...a lot of studies have found that learners demonstrate a fluctuating level of motivation even within a single language lesson. For example, this study by Waninge, Dornyei and De Bot, they found that there were students that, even within short really short interval, that they were, you know, already feeling more motivated or less motivated during the lesson. And how did they...how did they observe this or how did they quantify this? It was through questionnaires, it was through class observations, videotapes, things like that. And the outcome, there are the result was found to be that motivation is inseparable from a learning context, so it motivation is always in the learning context.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: So how can we...what I like, I should say this...what I like about Dornyei is that he does have a lot of good theories about motivation and he does have a lot of information. But also I like that there are...there is a practical application to his theories. A lot of times there aren't many practical applications to theories. So some of them could be, for example, encouraging retrospective self-evaluation, giving feedback or asking for feedback, ensuring that there's some sort of satisfaction with the learner, and perhaps maybe that there will be some sort of reward or outcome in the end that can lead to something bigger.

Creating basic motivational conditions, so, for example, creating a supportive atmosphere by not, you know, telling as student "Okay you're failing, you're doing really poorly you should leave." That's not...that's not the intention.

Generating initial motivation to begin with, that's really important. For example, enhancing any sort of values related to the target language, the second language, you know, promoting the set of values, these attitudes, and creating realistic learner beliefs.

And finally maintaining and protecting that motivation. Making language learning an enjoyable experience overall. You wanna have...make it dynamic. It has to be some sort...there has to be a stimulus in order to maintain that motivation.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: So I have some...some final questions after seeing all these points that I’ve gone over. For example, we have:

- How does attitude or motivation, or interest in this case, affect learning a language?
- Do you agree that motivation is dynamic, meaning that it can change dramatically within a short time as Dornyei and others have observed.
- Are students more motivated if there is a meaningful end?
- And how does motivation influence collaborative or individual learning?

Is it...is it necessary or is it not necessary to be motivated? Can you still learn something if you're...if you're not collaborating...or if you're not motivated, sorry?
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: So thank you very much. If anybody has any questions, I would be happy to answer them or at least try to answer them.

Audience Member 1: This is coming from personal experience. It's my first year in a beginning level English class, and I just noticed not only in my class that, but a few of my good friends classes that there's so many different levels. There's kids who have taken it in high school, and, you know, they don't have enough knowledge to [Inaudible] a higher level, but in the class, you know, they may jump to the answers and it kind of discourages those who are just learning the language. What do you like recommend to [Inaudible] your motivation and not feel discouraged. Or even, I don't know, for professors [inaudible].

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Right, right. Yeah that's a tough question. I mean, what do I recommend? I mean, I guess it depends on how you...how you feel about the language? How do you feel about the atmosphere? You feel maybe intimidated. You feel that maybe there's something you can do to get better. I don't know, it it's...does anybody who's a teacher here maybe could help me out?

Audience Member 2: I don't know. I'm not linguistics, I'm literature. But my own experience, that...that's actually a really good questions because we have all these variety of people in our classes that Raquel mentioned before. The way I look at it, is the people who are a heritage learners who are Hispanic, for example, in Spanish they called heritage learner. You could learn from them, right, because they're the ones who know a little bit more, especially talking. And the way...instead of being intimidated by them, you could say "Oh well good, we can learn from them." But I don't know, maybe other people have better ideas for the other people who teaches...who teach linguistics. [Inaudible] has a question.
**Audience Member 3:** I actually agree with professor because, I mean, I-I-I don't think that someone or say if I didn't know Spanish and someone knew more than me, I feel like I shouldn't be intimidated. They're more like "Okay you can be another outlet or a sweet source for me to use." Like okay, I mean, the more they knew, why not be...why not let him be my motivator or like in other words...what’s that word...my mentor. There you go. You could mentor me how to get to his level, how he went through every stage to get where he's at...he or she is at. So I feel like intimidation shouldn't be something to bring you down, rather it should motivate you to step out of that circle and learn something from that.

**Raquel Mattson-Prieto:** A lot of times, also, I did...I did a study last semester in a class that I had, and I interviewed heritage speakers and non-heritage speakers. And I found that even the heritage speakers, when they knew that there were other learners in the classroom that had studied the language formally, they felt intimidated when it came to, you know, how do...how do I understand grammar because heritage learners they learn the language, but just by hearing. It's a different type learning. So, you know, there's also insecurities from both ends I think. It's not just, you know, it's not one sided. I think she had a question, or she had a...

**Audience Member 4:** [Inaudible] and if they're good, then why not...if you want to be like them, maybe ask them "What do you do to improve your language?" So there's nothing to worry about.

**Raquel Mattson-Prieto:** What are some techniques that you do or maybe you could meet with them and collaborate. I mean, yeah collaborative learning is...I do believe that it's very beneficial.

**Audience Member 5:** I have to remind the ones who are more just to wait two minutes before they answer or I [Inaudible]. It's so eager to respond and [Inaudible].

**Raquel Mattson-Prieto:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Audience Member 6:** I'm just really glad that you're looking at what we might call the affective domain. You're looking at attitudes, you're looking at motivation. I've hope I've got this right, I think Carol [Inaudible] flexible mindsets is really important. Students who, for example, felt “well either you're born a good writer or you're not, and there's nothing I can do to become a good writer if I'm not already one,” you compare how well somebody like that learns languages and learns how to right versus somebody who thinks I am a college student. I am capable of learning this. I am capable of mastering the material. I [Inaudible] because I know I'm a good writer. Just changing someone’s attitude from a fixed mindset to a flexible makes a huge difference on how well they do in terms of learning. So I'm glad you’re looking at things like motivation and attitudes because I think they do play a big importance in how well...what kind of language learning happens.
Audience Member 6: Whether it's English or a foreign language, and often times we don't like looking at the affective domain because, as you said, it's hard to measure. But just because it's hard to measure doesn't mean we shouldn't be looking at it or try to understand it better, so I'm so glad that you are actually focusing on that because I think that more and more research now is telling us that those things make a big difference in what people are capable of learning. And just changing how somebody feels about something can turn them in from...can turn them from a student who is not doing very well to somebody who is actually doing...can actually capable of doing quite well.

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Yeah and there's that...it's really...there's a lot of plasticity, you know. It's very flexible like you said and that's...that's important to take into consideration that something can change even within, you know, a short period of time. Even over a long period of time.

Audience Member 7: [Inaudible] and the way to answer that again [Inaudible]. What groups really do learn actively? Where are...do we see real motivation and real learning comparatively? [Inaudible]

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: I think in terms of real motivation, I think a lot of it comes from necessity. When you have...when you're in, you know, within a context that, you know, you have to survive to communicate in one language and maybe it's not your first. So therefore yes, you are more motivated. In regards to maybe in the US, because languages aren't seen very...as very prestigious, English as you know the main language. I think it's...it becomes more difficult because talking...listening from what my students have said, they said you know "Yeah I really want to learn lang...or I really want to learn a language, but, you know, it's just a lot of work or, you know, it's just...I'm not very good at it." And what I'm also seeing is that teaching the lower basic level classes, it is a requirement as part of the university's curriculum and I see it as a good incentive to get more people to learn languages, but at the same time it's still a requirement and that loses its motivational side to it because then students are just trying to get the, you know, the requirement out of the way. And that's problematic I think. So yeah, that's how I see it.

Audience Member: So study abroad is a good idea.

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Yeah, I do think study abroad is a good idea. It's...I think...and it's also very important to study abroad. Whether you're doing it with school or whether you're doing it on your own. I think that's a really genuine way to learn a language, not just, you know, as a GE requirement. That's a good way to get started, but it's not, you know, the...I don't think it, you know, very substantial. So I hope I answered your question.

Audience Member 8: What did you take away from your Chico State experience that's helped you significantly in grad school?
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Oh my Chico State experience? I liked at Chico State, I really liked my classes and I liked my professors a lot because they were really encouraging. I...I find it a little bit different at Temple because it's a graduate program. It's a lot...there's a lot more...it's just a different environment, but I did...I do appreciate from Chico, for example in my language classes that I've taken, I did appreciate that context speaking the language. And that's what initially really got me into going into Spanish was being able to practice Spanish, and in a meaningful way. So yeah, that's one thing.

Audience Member 9: This might be totally outside your research, but it comes from knowing a little bit about how you grew up. And about [Inaudible] for little kids, like toddlers. So I know you grew up with parents who spoke Spanish, that's why I have a three year old [Inaudible]. How do I motivate him to want to learn Spanish because right now he's like...when you try to talk to him in Spanish he says "No English." [Inaudible] because, you know, he goes to school, he talks in English. He's actually watching [Inaudible] talking in Spanish, and that's kinda motivated him to learn Spanish. And he said "Cool yeah!" [Inaudible] anything from your experience growing up in the United States with parents who spoke Spanish.

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: I think, I think with children it just, you know, I think resistance is normal and that's been shown a lot. I'm sure there's people that learned a language at home and then went to...here in this room I mean, and then went to school and then decided not to learn...speak that language anymore. I'm one of them. So I think resistance is normal, I think. And then eventually is, you know, your son gets older, I think as an adult or even as an adolescent, he'll choose whether or not he wants to, you know, like Spanish. But he'll have that knowledge at least, you know. Just because he doesn't speak Spanish, he still has that knowledge he can understand and that's that's also knowing a language. It's not just speaking that's knowing a language. It's actually understanding, so there's...it's more than just speaking.

Audience Member 10: [Inaudible] I'm actually also an Intro to Education and Anthropology major.

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Oh okay.

Audience Member 10: [Inaudible] So how do you find that Anthropology has helped your study or your...kind of your career and language? Or do you think...

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: No it has, it has definitely. I know...I mean I didn't decide to go into Anthropology for grad school, but I'm seeing now that I'm doing classroom research, I'm seeing how I can apply what I learned from my Anthropology major in the classroom just by observing human behavior.
Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Just how people interact with one another. How people interact alone, you know just observing that behavior. That is how, I think, you can apply, just observation.

Audience Member 11: [Inaudible] I think it was twenty years ago, I took this thing on cooperative learning and I saw that you had collaborative learning. Is that the same...is that a new word for cooperative learning?

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: I'm...I'm actually not quite sure what cooperative learning is, but...

Audience Member 11: So like if you...one student has something and the other student has something [Inaudible].

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Oh yeah!

Audience Member 11: [Inaudible]

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Right.

Audience Member 11: Not even like a project [Inaudible]. You have something that I need, and I have something that you need. [Inaudible]

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Exactly yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Audience Member 11: [Inaudible]

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Right. That is...those are information gap activities. So like you said one person has information that the other person does not. And those are really great activities for getting students to communicate in a second language because one has the information that the other doesn’t, so yeah.

Audience Member 11: [Inaudible] And then in high school they loved games. [Inaudible], you know fun and games in the classrooms. It's not really [Inaudible]. So my question would be what motivates students in the classrooms? [Inaudible]

Raquel Mattson-Prieto: Well what I found with games and songs, I think it's what I talked about how groups are very very different and, you know, even within a group you have many groups and how they're very dynamic. And with games and songs like they do in high school, sometimes it just depends on the group, you know. You have a really great group that is really into it and other groups that, you know, they just...they just want grammar, you know, they want grammar paradigms, so yeah. Well thank you so much for coming. I really appreciate it, thank you.