

## **AULA HISPÁNICA NEEDS ANALYSIS**

### **JACA - SPAIN**

#### **Survey's aims:**

This survey represents the first product of the European project ESEDI (European Scenario of Languages). With this tool we identified the needs of the school to perform a bilingual play, in our case it will be in French and Spanish. The survey was taken by teachers and students during the months of April, May and June 2011 in the Aula Hispánica center. Because part of the project's outcomes will be a bilingual theater play, in our case in French and Spanish, we decided to conduct this survey with Spanish and French teachers as well as students studying these two foreign languages.

With this survey we detected the students' motivation when learning a foreign language, whether Spanish or French, and the main difficulties they encountered at the different language levels of teaching and learning.

Before analyzing the results of this survey, we consider it appropriate to give a brief description of the center as well as our city.

#### **Background:**

Aula Hispánica is the only center in the Aragon region specialized in teaching Spanish as a foreign language and accredited by the Cervantes Institute. After over ten years of teaching practice and due to permanent change in the implementation of new methodologies in foreign language learning, the center has identified the need to develop, improve and expand teaching foreign languages practices. With this, the center hopes to increase its teaching quality, by training their teachers with new techniques, focusing mainly on theater as a didactic tool.

Aula Hispánica is located in the city of Jaca (13,000 inhabitants). The main economy comes from tourism and it has become the hub of the central Pyrenees. By being only

25km from the French border, the main foreign tourists are French, therefore there is a motivation for local people to learn that language.

On the other hand, because of the incipient world financial crisis which has impacted all sectors of Spain, Aula Hispánica considers it appropriate to contribute to the development and promotion of the local economy by bringing foreign students for short, medium and long term stays. Thus it has an influence on different sectors in the city and both the center, and the locality will enhance its European dimension.

Performing the first act of ESEDI in Jaca (Spain) will help to increase the motivation and interest of participants and the audience, to learn foreign languages on the one hand and to be aware of the cultural and language diversity in Europe.

## **RESULTS OF THE SURVEY**

### **Teachers:**

The survey was taken by four teachers, two French and two Spanish teachers who give adult courses of all levels. We want to note that one of the teachers who took the survey works in a public school.

We emphasize in the following summary the most significant responses.

The main objectives for enrolling a language course is for travelling or holidays, to improve their CV and because of work purposes. Only one teacher who teaches in a public institution says because it was a compulsory course. The data shows the different motivation among students from school where they go voluntarily to learn languages or when the subject is part of a mandatory curriculum. In this section, the less interested answer was to improve self-assurance by speaking another language. .

When analyzing the aspects of student's motivation in the classroom teachers emphasize that students need to have a sense of progress or improvement in their own competency; the learning environment is easy and relaxed and that the student feels comfortable and accepted by the group.

In this case, there is also a difference in the responses of the public school since the student there needs to understand the use and purpose of the activities as well to get involved in the activity.

Among other motivating aspects the teachers stand out: *"The pedagogy of the teacher (voice, attention, smiles, humor, quality of class preparation ...);" "I think the games are a very motivating tool and can be an interesting challenge. In Chomsky's words: the truth of the matter is that approximately 99% of teaching is getting students interested in the material";* *"When the language you learn is an essential tool for learning other things, there is a need that it is mixed with the motivation";* *"the teacher has to get on well with his or her students. The teacher can know a lot about a subject but if he or she doesn't connect well with his or her "audience," the demotivation is assured."*

Linking in this way with the following question, some of the most common factors which can lead to the demotivation of students are the following reasons: to belong to a large group, the absence of progress or improvement in their learning, to be in a wrong level course.

With regard to teaching techniques the most frequently used include the following: structure and vocabulary exercises, listening exercises and reading short texts about current issues and culture. However, it rarely works to make stories together. All the teachers responded that teaching tools and techniques are not the same at all levels. Here are some of techniques used exclusively in one level:

*"Using role play with the beginners because I think they are more helpful for gaining confidence; the techniques involving greater complexity (such as oral presentations or debates) are appropriate at level B1";* *"No problem with exercises of structures, vocabulary, listening or adapted reading texts. However, doing a speech or reading a comic book or a newspaper does not make much sense when you are at low levels, ""* *For the most basic levels I prefer to work with pictures and cards using controlled exercises by the teacher. However, from B1 levels, that control is lost proportionately to the freedom and autonomy that the student is acquiring."*

According to their experiences there are always specific problems to each level.

#### LEVEL A1:

- We receive "debutant" students and "false beginners" mixed in the same class. For some of them nothing is new and therefore it's unattractive mean-

while for others we are go too fast.

- Limitations with skills and competencies cause frequently doubts.
- Fear of speaking a new language. They are frightened by the grammar. They have difficulty in pronouncing some vowels.
- The fear of making mistakes, the lack of vocabulary and insecurity for the first time tspeaking a foreign language make it very difficult to develop their oral skills. Also, when talking with native speakers listening comprehension is difficult.

#### LEVEL A2:

- We detect a mismatch between what they want to tell and what they can tell. The impression of not improving enough.
- The need to deepen the lexical competence involves significant expansion of vocabulary. There are difficulties in listening comprehension.
- We have little time to make progress in all four language skills.
- Pronunciation and intonation of the language. Inconsistencies (singular and plural masculine and feminine ...)

#### LEVEL B1:

- The grammatical competence becomes important and sometimes the volume of grammatical structures can seem overwhelming.
- They find it difficult to make progress in speaking.
- Difficulty in getting rid of "mistakes" that they start with from the beginning of learning.
- Fundamental grammatical errors.

#### LEVEL B2:

- At this level, the main difficulty is speaking, and you have to demand a high level of writing wich is not always achieved.
- Improving the skills to improve all aspects of general language competence. It is important to avoid any stagnation.
- There is a huge imbalance between grammatical knowledge and competence in speaking which can create a big frustration.

- They are not aware of their mistakes as they have reached an acceptable understanding of speech and communication with the others.

#### LEVEL C1:

- Improve on fluency and spontaneity, increase flexibility and efficiency using the language.
- Certain gap between speaking and writing. Some uncertainties using some slangs and shades of the language.

#### LEVEL C2:

- Understanding and using of proverbs and colloquial expressions, idioms and sayings.
- Using of some colloquial dialogue terms.

Half of the respondents had an experience in theater, in plays in college as Spanish practices and applying roleplaying exercises in their classes. Another teacher says that recently students in her school have been participating in theater workshops.

Among the aspects of role-playing games that help increase the students' motivation are the following: *"The theater itself is highly motivational , it's an experience everyone wants. They always expect a lot from it and never are disappointed "; " There are didactics that help students to be uninhibited and to express themselves in a natural way losing their fear of making mistakes, enhancing self-confidence and motivation. They are a first test of the interactive communication in the foreign language "; "Speaking the language they studying is not so difficult."; " Becoming the center of attention and playing a role, though it's imaginary, they have to interpret. It's much more motivating than working on a story of characters which are far from them."*

The main barriers or handicaps for teachers in carrying out these techniques are:

- The timidity of some the students and the feeling of being observed by the others.
- If the language level of participants in a role play does not match to the language of the theater it can cause a feeling of frustration.
- Pronunciation
- Poor preparation of teachers. Many times there is a significant lack of training by teach-

ers to work with drama techniques in their classrooms.

Experienced teachers who applied the theater as a didactic technique in their classes say that "it had a positive impact on lexical and phonetic skills of students," "More than positive and not just from the point of view of learning the language. In any case, nothing can motivate more than trying to pronounce understandably so, especially in the pronunciation aspect, they made progress which they would have never reached otherwise. "

In the Annex we attach the all the surveys' answers

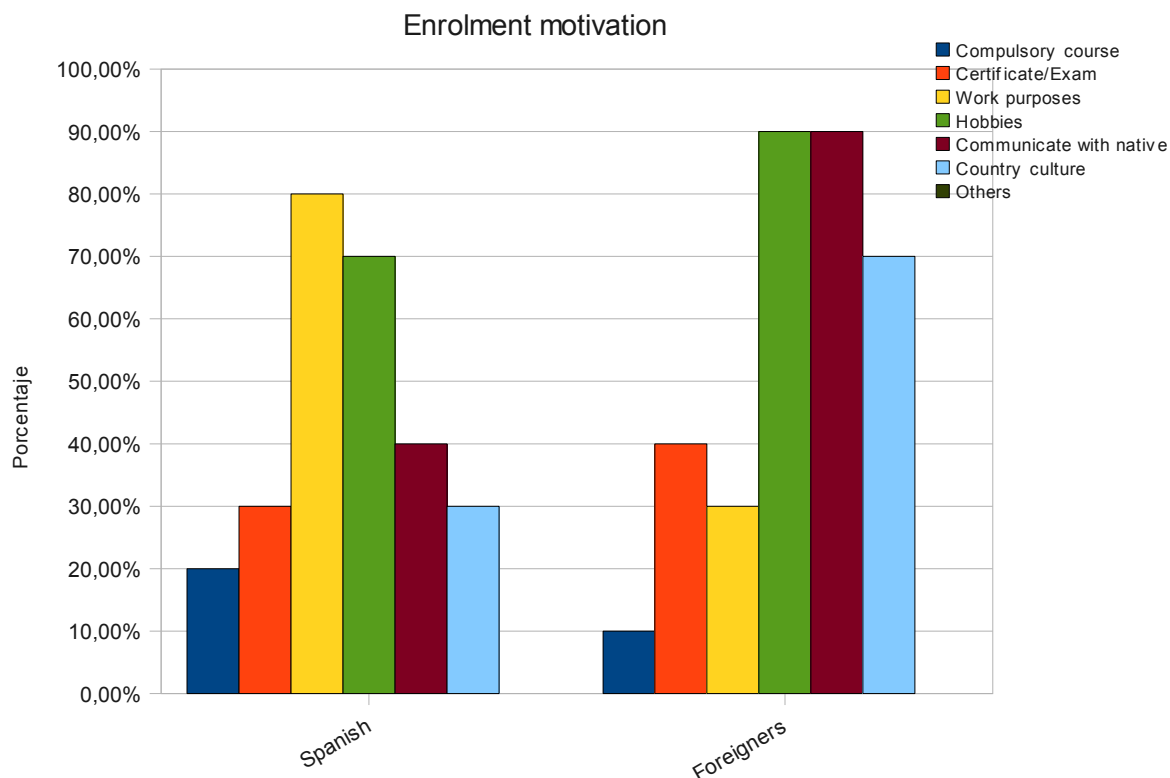
## **STUDENTS:**

The type of students surveyed were adults, with academic degrees and language levels from A2 to C1 in both languages (French/Spanish). We consider it important in this case to show the results of students on a comparative basis since they were 10 foreign students studying Spanish as a foreign language and 10 students studying French as a foreign language. The main reason for this analytical comparison is because the motivation and interest of a foreign student who is in the country which speaks the language they are studying, in our case Spanish, is very different to the motivation and interest shown a student from Spain learning a language not used in their daily environment, in our case French. On the graphics, when we say "Foreigners" we consider the first case and "Spanish" for the second case.

However, in some questions we made the comparison between language levels since there was not much difference between languages.

Moreover, in some questions we added the results of the 20 respondents regardless of the level and language because they were not the determining factors for the response.

## 1.- Why did you enrol in the course in Spanish?



After the results we can check that the motivation to enrol in a language course is very different if the student is living in the country where the language is spoken or not. Thus for a foreign student who is learning Spanish in Spain it is more motivating to communicate with native speakers; because of a new hobby and because they want to know more about the culture of the country. However for a Spanish student who is learning French in Spain the motivation is based mostly on work purposes and with less importance of hobbies or for communicating with native speakers.

## 2.- What supplementary materials do you or does your teacher use as complimentary to your course book?

Songs, Internet, newspapers, native speakers, radio programmes

## 3.- What is the duration of each class?

#### Spanish students

90 minutes, twice or three times a week

4h, five days a week (intensive courses)

#### French students

60 minutes twice a week

90 minutes twice a week

### **4.- What is the total duration of the course you are involved?**

#### Spanish students

1 week, 4 weeks, 2 weeks, three months, six months

#### French students

One academic year, from three to six months

### **5.- Is this your first time when you are engaged in a training course of Spanish/French?**

40% YES

60% NO

\* Results from the combination of both languages

### **Reasons for drop-out from courses in Spanish/French**

-Because of change of place of living

-There isn't any group of my level in the school

-I changed my language school

-Less free time because of change of work

-I didn't have money for continuing paying the course and I change the school.

### **6.- Does the teacher always use Spanish/French during your classes?**

YES 70%

NO 30%

\* Results from the combination of both languages

He uses my mother tongue in order so that I am able to understand the exercise

When it was an abstract concept difficult to explain with other synonyms she used English for making it easier the understanding

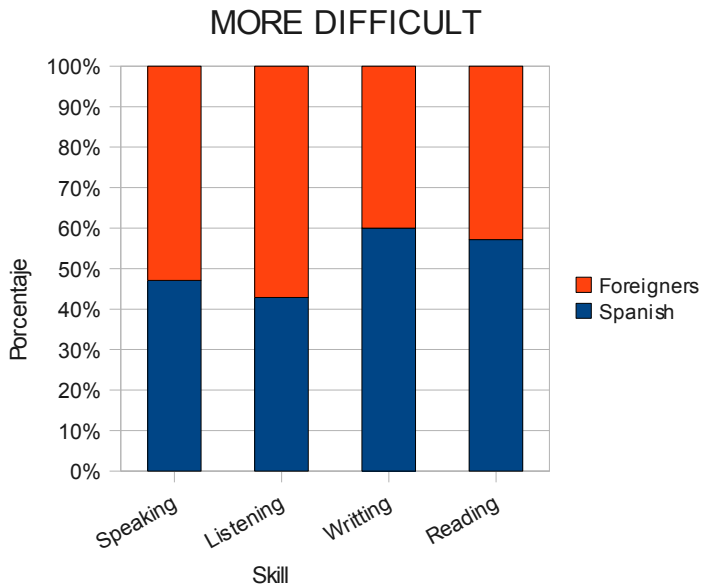


## 7.- Do these aspects influence your motivation in class?



In this case, we detected by the results obtained from this survey that the main differences were on the different language levels rather than from the language learned, French or Spanish. Thus, we can see that for the three language level groups the most important elements for the motivation is to be in a course level appropriate for them and to feel comfortable and accepted by the group. For beginners (A1-A2) most important is to have a feeling of progress or improvement in their own competency and together with intermediate levels (B1-B2) also both emphasize to have an easy and relaxed atmosphere and the interaction with the other students. On the other hand for advanced levels (C1-C2) they consider it significant to be involved in the activities.

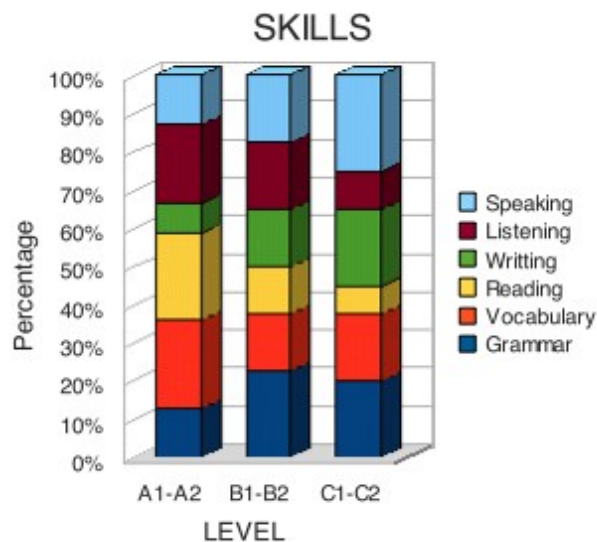
## 8.- In the process of learning Spanish/French, the acquisition of which of the basic language skills is the most difficult for you?



Independent of the language level, this graphic shows a big difference in the difficulty for learning a foreign language. For Spanish people their biggest difficulty in French is writing and reading whereas for the foreigners it is most difficult to speak and understand Spanish.

**9.- During the lessons the teacher attaches the greatest importance to:**

You can see in this graphic that the skills most important for the teachers change not so much because of the language but because of the level of language. Speaking, grammar, and writing skills are more important for intermediate (B1-B2) and advanced (C1-C2) levels, whereas in beginner levels (A1-A2) it is more the vocabulary, reading and listening.



**10.- Do you feel unproductive during Spanish/French classes?**

YES 0%                      SOMETIMES 30%                      RARELY 50%                      NO 20%

\* Results from the combination of both languages

**11.-Do you feel bored during Spanish/French classes? Please, explain why?**

YES 0%                      SOMETIMES 20%                      RARELY 20%                      NO 60%

\* Results from the combination of both languages

- *The activities can sometimes be too "dry". The book is difficult and boring-*

- *I felt that we didn't speak enough. The reason of the course was a training course for the exam DELE and it was really boring. The teacher did good work trying to make it more enjoyable.*

- *Sometimes I feel bored because the exercise is too easy and I am waiting for the other to finish.*

- *The grammar in general is boring thus when we study grammar I feel always bored.*

**12.-What kind of exercises do you prefer for developing desired skills?**

dialogues, role plays, speaking about chosen themes, listening to songs

**13.- Is there enough information within the Spanish/French course about the culture and customs in the Spanish/French-speaking countries?**

YES 90%                      NO 10%

\* Results from the combination of both languages

Everyday in class we read a text about the Spanish culture. The grammar activities and the understanding of the texts used to have cultural elements as well.

We worked biographies of important figures in Spain

The teacher brings newspapers from France sometimes and we can speak about the current problems that there are in the country.

With typical Spanish recipes like, for exemple, how to cook a Spanish omelet

**14.- Are you interested in joining a course in Spanish/French, using theater for the purposes of language learning?**

YES 80%

NO 20%

\* Results from the combination of both languages