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# Influences of willingness to communicate and foreign language enjoyment on second language learners' motivation

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#### Abstract

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) motivate university students who learn a second language (L2). Previous research suggests that WTC drives students to use an L2 with a specific group of people (Mac-Intyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998) while FLE motivates students to carry on their L2 learning process (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). This study focuses on the influence of WTC and FLE on university beginner students of French, German, Italian, and Spanish in Australia. Responses to five five-point Likert scale items and four open-ended questions of a questionnaire and interview narratives are analyzed to understand if and to what extent WTC and FLE shape students' decisions to: (a) start to learn an L2 (b) continue learning an L2, and (c) discontinue learning an L2 drawing on Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) process-oriented approach. Results show that not only psychological reactions to the learning process are involved in students' motivation, but also contextual elements shape L2 learning dynamics and WTC (Yashima, 2002). The Australian multicultural but, at the same time, monolingual environment shared by English-speaking countries (Ushioda, 2017) plays an important role in increasing and/or hampering students' desire to communicate in the studied L2. Lack of communicative opportunities may be detrimental to students' enjoyment within and outside of the formal learning environment at Australian universities.

*Keywords:* willingness to communicate; enjoyment; L2 learning motivation; L2 learning demotivation; Australian universities

#### 1. Introduction

This article examines the influence of two motivational variables on the study of four European languages – French, German, Italian, and Spanish, in Australian universities. It specifically focuses on the impact of two variables previously identified as being important in second language (L2) learning motivation: (a) willingness to communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre et al., 1998); and (b) foreign language enjoyment (FLE) (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; 2016). This article explores the extent and manner in which these two phenomena are related and the reasons why Australian students choose to start to learn an L2 – "preactional phase," and to continue or discontinue learning it at tertiary level – "actional phase" (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998).

MacIntyre et al. (1998) provide a pyramid model which promotes a holistic understanding of WTC when learning an L2. In particular, WTC is linked to "the desire to establish or maintain a rapport with a member of another group precisely because of different group memberships" (p. 551). This desire can arouse thanks to learner-internal but also learner-external variables which influence students' attitudes towards an L2 and speakers of that L2 (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018).

Another motivational component is FLE. This is an emotion which has largely been under investigation since Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) study on learners of different L2s. In a later study, they define FLE "as a complex emotion, capturing interacting dimensions of challenge and perceived ability that reflect the human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks" (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, p. 216). The analysis of psychological/internal and sociocontextual/external variables involved in L2 learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) has shown that multiple factors are at play in L2 learning motivation and that they are dynamically interconnected. The learning environment (Dörnyei, 1994) and society as a whole (Norton, 2013) influence students' motivation in L2 learning within an English-speaking country (Ushioda, 2017).

Australia, similarly other first language English-speaking nations, is known to be a challenging environment for learning languages other than English (cf. Mason & Hajek, 2018; Nettelbeck et al., 2007). Despite Australia's highly multicultural and multilingual population, in practice the country is largely monolingual (cf. Hajek and Slaughter, 2014). Language education in this country has suffered for decades from inconsistent and inadequately supported policy initiatives (Lo Bianco, 2016). Relatively few Australian students undertake language study at upper secondary level, with an even more restricted uptake at tertiary level, where attrition, after initial enrolment, is also known to be high (cf. Nettelbeck et al., 2007).

While many different factors are known to be at play in language learning in Australia, previous studies have tended to focus on individual languages, e.g., Palmieri (2019) on adult learners of Italian in non-university settings and Schmidt

(2011) on university students of German. Here, the focus is specifically on the university sector. Data is considered for four European languages (French, German, Italian, and Spanish) which are the most widely taught European languages in Australia (Baldauf & White, 2010). The motivation, specifically the role of WTC and FLE, of learners of these four languages is expected to differ from results obtained about the motivation of learners of English as a second language (ESL) as in previous studies (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). Nevertheless, this study does not focus on the comparison of the results obtained for each of the four L2s with previous studies of ESL.

At Australian universities, only one study has been published specifically on WTC among students of French (de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009) while another study focuses on FLE in learning French (Doucet & Kuuse, 2017). FLE is also one of the motivational patterns identified in a study on university students' motivation in learning Chinese in Australia (Campbell & Storch, 2011). Therefore, WTC and FLE are two aspects which might still drive students to choose an L2 subject at university and keep their motivation high when learning L2s in Australia. This study will help to expand and extend previous research outcomes which are presented in the following section.

It is hoped that an improved understanding of students' WTC and FLE in L2 learning could be helpful in improving the uptake and continuation of language learning at university level, not just in Australia. Language teachers could, for instance, adapt their teaching approaches and techniques to better accommodate the motivational needs of students.

For the purposes of this study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected through a self-reported online survey completed by 728 beginner students mainly at the so-called Group of Eight Australian universities (Go8)<sup>1</sup> – Australian National University, University of Adelaide,<sup>2</sup> University of Melbourne, Monash University, University of New South Wales, University of Queensland,<sup>3</sup> University of Sydney, and University of Western Australia – in April and May 2018. While the questionnaire was designed to capture a broad range of information about motivational factors that influence language learning, the focus here is specifically on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Go8 universities represent the traditionally most prestigious universities in Australia, include about 20% of the sector.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Students enrolled into Italian courses at the University of Adelaide attended classes with students from Flinders University. As a result, the two cohorts were invited to complete the online questionnaire.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Students enrolled into Italian courses at the University of Queensland attended classes with students from Griffith University and Queensland University of Technology. For this reason, the three cohorts received the online questionnaire link.

WTC and FLE. Thirty seven students were subsequently interviewed at the University of Melbourne to comment on the survey data analysis outcomes.

#### 2. Literature review

Previous research suggests that WTC is an important motivational factor in L2 learning in Australia (Palmieri, 2019; de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; Schmidt, 2014). In addition to this, FLE is an emotion which often leads students to continue learning an L2 in Australia (Campbell & Storch, 2011; Doucet & Kuuse, 2017) and elsewhere (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). The two constructs are described in more detail below.

# 2.1. Willingness to communicate (WTC)

MacIntyre et al. (1998) explore the concept of WTC from different points of view and at different levels. Students are influenced by internal and external factors which are not always under their control. As opposed to the formal learning environment at university, the informal setting where students live may contribute to increasing students' motivation and a desire to communicate in that L2. Such a connection between individual characteristics and the context in which an L2 learner develops WTC has also been researched by Yahima, MacIntyre and Ikeda (2018). MacIntyre et al. (1998) demonstrate that WTC is strongly related to a specific group of people who speak a target language. Indeed, WTC is "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). Thus, WTC appears only after a learner has started an L2 learning process. The "readiness to enter into discourse" appears to be identified after a learning process begins. The initial motivation is found to be linked to an integrative orientation (Gardner, 1985) more than a concrete and clear WTC.

More recently, Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) list relevant studies which focus on WTC, e.g., Yashima et al. (2018), Hye-Kyoung, Hiver and Al-Hoorie (2017), Teimouri (2017), Khajayi, MacIntyre, and Barabadi (2017), Munezane (2015), Denis, Yashima, and Janssen (2015), MacIntyre and Doucette (2010), and Cao (2011). Their research participants learnt different L2s at different proficiency levels. These studies were undertaken in several countries and did not utilize the same research tools. The results of all these studies are quite similar. WTC is grounded not only in internal variables belonging to the learner's psychology, but also in external variables embedded in the sociocultural environment where the learner lives.

# 2.2. Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE)

FLE entails the challenge in learning an L2 and the ability of the learner to achieve their goals. Due to the fact that FLE can be triggered by numerous factors internal and external to the L2 learner, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014, 2016) distinguish two types of FLE, that is, private and social. FLE-private "appears to capture the personal reactions to learning that reflect relatively inner thoughts and feelings" of an L2 learner (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, p. 223). FLE-social "appears to reflect characteristics of the social setting or the presence of other people" (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, pp. 221-222). In other words, FLE-private is closely related to the internal reward felt by the L2 learner while FLE-social in triggered by external inputs. Being an emotion, FLE is one of the emotions which "emerge in response to a specific event or environmental cue and synergize to form a coherent experience" (Boudreau, MacIntyre, & Dewaele, 2018, p. 150). Hence, teachers and classmates play a crucial role in triggering L2 students' enjoyment drawing on Li, Jiang, and Dewaele's (2018) definition of FLE-teacher and FLE-atmosphere. Boudreau and colleagues' (2018) study confirms that FLE reflects contextual variables which change over time and space depending not exclusively on students' internal-psychological dynamics but also on the influence of other stakeholders in the L2 learning process.

Students are constantly influenced by the sociocultural environment where they live, work and study. The Australian context is different from others due to its historical and geographical position (Lo Bianco, 2016). Therefore, attention to the Australian case is here offered where less opportunities to use the L2 were highlighted by research participants. According to Lo Bianco (2014), opportunity refers to "availability of domains<sup>4</sup> and occasions for use of the language" (p. 60). This definition of opportunity is considered throughout the analysis of the data collected.

#### 2.3. The Australian context

University students in Australia have been found to be intimately driven by a WTC in the L2 (cf. Hajek & Warren, 1996; Palmieri, 2019; de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; Schmidt, 2011; 2014). At the same time, FLE has been discovered to represent a strong motivator linked to happiness for L2 learning itself and to a functional and concrete outcome of an L2 learning achievement in learning French (Doucet & Kuuse, 2017) and Chinese Mandarin (Campbell & Storch, 2011).

Hajek and Warren (1996) analyse the motivation of students who were learning French and Italian at an Australian university in Melbourne. Amongst the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "Domains are naturally occurring settings in the social and economic life of a community in which it might be predicted that a 'safe' language would be unproblematically used as the medium of exchange" (Lo Bianco, 2014, p. 60).

multiple motivators who kept students' interest in learning these two L2s, students shared a "desire to communicate with French- and Italian-speaking family and friends" (Hajek & Warren, 1996, p. 13). In particular, family and friends were the two groups of people which fostered students' motivation. Palmieri (2019) focused on Italian learners of different levels of proficiency at two private language schools in Sydney. In total, 124 students completed her questionnaire while 83 students were interviewed in different phases. Students were found to be motivated by four main factors: Italian as a second identity, Italian as a challenge, Italian as a cultural beacon, and attraction towards Italian people. The last factor appeared to be connected to a desire to enter into contact with Italian speakers and communicate with them. Students were animated by a positive attitude towards Italians mainly fostered by exposure to Italian communities in the Sydney area. Such a positive attitude was closely related to students' identity construction of new Italian speaking selves as widely discussed in Palmieri (2017).

De Saint Léger and Storch (2009) utilize questionnaires completed by French learners in two rounds of a semester at an Australian university and conducted focus groups. As far as WTC is concerned, their research participants were strongly motivated by a sense of affiliation which "was to establish a rapport with the French speaking community (intergroup affiliation), [while] interacting in the L2 with their English speaking peers is likely to be deemed as artificial and contrived" (de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009, p. 280). As a result, data suggest that French students were eager to speaking with French native speakers instead of making "artificial and contrived" conversations with English peers mainly in the formal learning environment.

Very similarly, a sense of affiliation and integrativeness boosted Schmidt's (2011; 2014) research participants' motivation in learning German at different universities in Australia. Three main factors were discovered with quantitative and qualitative data analysis: "a general interest in the German language and culture paired with a joy and an appreciation of learning languages, the wish to communicate in a German-speaking country while working, studying or travelling, and German being considered as an important (business) language that could bring professional advantages" (Schmidt, 2011, p. 110). The second factor was strongly related to WTC. Students at ten Australian universities were particularly interested in talking to German speakers in specific contexts such as German-speaking countries in different working, studying and travelling settings. Schmidt (2011, 2014) also highlights that students were enjoying their German learning process – first factor.

FLE also animated the fifty survey participants and twenty interviewees who participated in Doucet and Kuuse's (2017) research at two universities in Western Australia. Learning French was mainly "for leisure and fun, as an intellectual challenge [and] for the love of France and its language" (Doucet & Kuuse, 2017, p. 232). As a result, French students experienced FLE which stemmed from

the pure interest in the French language but also from the dynamics experienced during the formal learning process. Such results mirrored the perceptions shared by six teachers of French who were invited to share their impressions about their students' motivation in learning French.

Furthermore, FLE was a very powerful component of the motivation of the eight students of Chinese Mandarin who were interviewed in weeks three, seven and ten at an Australian university by Campbell and Storch (2011). What they define as "language related enjoyment" changed over time based on students experiences within and outside of the formal learning environment and despite a general decrease of motivation in the final stages of the semester when the learning process was becoming challenging and overwhelming.

# 3. Research questions

This article aims to answer two research questions, which are designed to determine if WTC and FLE play a role in students' motivation and demotivation with respect to beginner level language learning, specifically French, German, Italian, and Spanish, at Australian universities:

- 1. What is the extent to which WTC and FLE motivate students to start and continue learning an L2 during their first year of L2 studies at university?
- 2. Does the lack of FLE and communication opportunities demotivate students and consequently influence their decision to discontinue learning an L2?

#### 4. Material and methods

For the purposes of this study, a mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) approach was taken. Seven hundred and twenty eight university students at a select group of Australian universities were asked to complete an online questionnaire in the middle of the first semester (12 weeks per semester) of 2018. The questionnaire explored a wide range of motivational factors thought to impact, based on the existing literature (Busse & Williams, 2010; Oakes, 2013; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009), on language study of beginner level students of French, German, Italian, and Spanish in their first semester at several Australian universities. The rationale behind this choice lies in the fact that these four languages are the most widely taught European languages at tertiary level in Australia (Baldauf & White, 2010).

For the Italian language, more universities were to be involved and not only the Go8 Australian universities. Flinders University was included because students of this university attended Italian lessons with students of the University of Adelaide. Griffith University and Queensland University of Technology

participated in the research because their students attended classes with Italian students of the University of Queensland.

The questionnaire administered to students consists of 25 biographical multiple-choice questions, 51 five-point Likert scale items, and four open-ended questions. While questions remained the same, a language-specific version of the questionnaire was sent to each language cohort. Subject coordinators in each of the university involved were contacted in order to ask them to send the online link of the questionnaire to their students. Only the Spanish department at the university of Adelaide did not agree to forward the online questionnaire to their students.

Questionnaire multiple-choice questions and selected Likert scale items responses are analyzed here with quantitative methods through the statistical program SPSS. In order to answer the two research questions (RQs), five five-point Likert scale items specifically related to WTC and FLE were selected out of 51 items which focus on multiple aspects of L2 learning motivation (Figure 1).

# **WTC**

- •I learn French/German/Italian/Spanish because I want to communicate with my family members (Communication with family);
- I find it exciting to be able to communicate in French/German/Italian/Spanish (Excitement in communicating);
- •I often have the opportunity to communicate in French/German/Italian/Spanish in class (Communication in class);
- •I often have opportunities to practice French/German/Italian/Spanish with native speakers outside university (Communication with natives).

# FIF

•I really enjoy learning French/German/Italian/Spanish (FLE in learning).

Figure 1 Likert scale items selected for this study with their relative abbreviations

The five items mentioned above were chosen for the purpose of this article to explore WTC and FLE. Means of average responses to these items are utilized to understand to what extent WTC and FLE motivated and/or demotivated student participants. Correlations and cross tabulations were conducted to clarify if students with a strong WTC or FLE were more likely to continue or discontinue learning an L2 at university.

For the same reasons as those listed before, four open-ended survey questions were also selected:

- Please list the three main reasons why you first chose to learn French/ German/Italian/Spanish at university;
- 2. My goals in learning French/German/Italian/Spanish are;
- 3. Please list the three main reasons why you wish to continue learning French/German/Italian/Spanish at university in the future;
- 4. Please list the three main negative aspects of learning French/German/Italian/Spanish at university.

Only the first main responses provided by survey participants were analyzed in this study with the support of NVivo12. Themes related to WTC and FLE were grouped together and quantified to provide frequencies and percentages of their occurrences. This process allowed the researcher to understand if WTC drove students to start to learn an L2 – the preactional phase, and if WTC and FLE motivated and/or demotivated students when learning L2s – the actional phase. Frequencies of recurrent words related to WTC and FLE were counted in order to obtain an overview of students' general interest in communicating in the L2 and if they were enjoying the L2 learning process.

The outcomes of the survey have been commented upon by a small group of survey participants from the University of Melbourne who were subsequently interviewed at the end of the first semester of 2018. This method was adopted to have a better understanding of the quantitative data (cf. Dörnyei, 2007). Edwards (2010) also agrees that mixed-methods approaches enrich the quality of data analysis and provide an improved awareness of the dynamics which characterize the studied phenomenon/a. Semi-structured interviews were useful by helping to clarify results, but also to give students space and time to express their own thoughts and ideas autonomously when providing retrospective comments on survey responses (Mackey & Gass, 2005). As a result, a "double attention" technique was applied to semi-structured interviews, "listening attentively to what is being said while simultaneously managing the time to ensure it doesn't run out and that the direction of the talk are appropriate to get the interview material" (Wengraf, 2001, p. 194).

A thematic content analysis was undertaken to identify WTC and FLE in students' interview narratives. Both motivated and demotivated students were interviewed to clarify the role of these two motivators in their L2 learning process motivation and demotivation. In this regard, interviewees contributed to expanding on the survey data outcomes in order to highlight if the presence or the lack of WTC and/or FLE influenced students' attrition or retention after a semester of L2 studies at university.

#### 5. Results

The majority of questionnaires were received from students enrolled at the University of Melbourne while the least participation was registered at the University of Adelaide<sup>5</sup> (Figure 2).

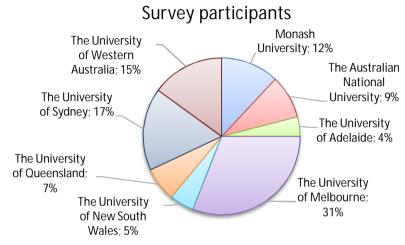


Figure 2 Research participants for each university<sup>6</sup>

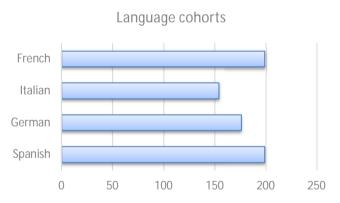


Figure 3 Research participants across the four language cohorts

The languages which are more largely represented are French and Spanish with 199 students each (Figure 3). Italian was the language with fewer participants

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The Spanish department at the University of Adelaide did not accept to participate in this research data collection.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Four students of Italian were enrolled at Flinders University; four students of Italian were enrolled at Griffith University and one at Queensland University of Technology.

involved in this research project. Individual interviews were administered only at the University of Melbourne.

Overall, 37 students were interviewed at the end of their first semester learning one of the four languages. The most numerous interviewee cohorts were French and Italian (ten students for each cohort). Nine interviewees were studying German and eight were studying Spanish. Most of the participants were female (72.1%), younger than 25 years old (92.9%) and domestic students (79%). It is also very interesting to observe that 79.8% of the survey population spoke English as their first language (L1). Table one shows that 56 students (7.8%) had cultural heritage from a country where the L2 that they were studying is spoken, while more than half of the sample was Australian without a cultural background from a country where French, German, Italian and Spanish are spoken (Table 1).

Table 1 Participants' cultural background with relative proportions for each category

Cultural background	Frequency	%
Australian, without L2-speaking country heritage	410	56.4%
Other	259	35.6%
Australian, with L2-speaking country heritage	59	8.1%
Total	728	100%

For the purpose of this study, it is relevant to acknowledge how L2s were part of students' degree structure. Data show that almost 64% of survey participants chose to study an L2 as their optional/elective subject (see Table 2). Fewer students had an L2 as their major or minor; therefore, an L2 enjoyed different grades of priority in students' study plans compared to their core subjects.

Table 2 Integration of the L2 in students' degree structure

Subject within degree	Frequency	%
Optional/elective subject in a degree <sup>7</sup>	464	63.7%
Core (major/minor) subject in a degree	233	32%
Other	31	4.3%
Total	728	100%

# 5.1. Quantitative data analysis

The five five-point Likert scale items chosen for this article show contrasting results as highlighted in Table 3. For the quantitative analysis, a scale from one to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Optional/elective subjects include 'breadth subjects' for students enrolled at the University of Melbourne and 'broadening units' for students enrolled at the University of Western Australia. The two systems encourage students to choose subjects related to areas different to their degree core subjects areas.

five was applied to the levels of agreements of students where one stands for "strongly agree," two for "agree," three for "neither agree nor disagree," four for "disagree," and five for "strongly disagree." The means for the average responses to the five items help to understand to what extent students agreed or disagreed to the five statements considered for this study. Students generally disagreed that they were motivated to learn an L2 because they wanted to communicate with their family members (M = 3.95).

Table 3 Means of the variables under study including standard deviation values

Variables	Ν	М	SD
1. Communication with family	728	3.95	1.29
2. Excitement in communicating	728	1.48	0.65
3. Communication in class	728	1.98	0.81
4. Communication with natives	728	3.69	1.14
5. FLE in learning	728	1.64	0.72

Students agreed, some even strongly agreed, that they found it exciting to be able to communicate in French, German, Italian, or Spanish. Consequently, the very low mean recorded for variable two shows that student participants wanted to communicate in these languages (M = 1.48). Moreover, this variable drew more agreement among participants than any other variable selected for this analysis. The desire to communicate in the L2 was closely related to the opportunities to communicate in class during L2 lessons. The very low mean for average responses to variable three confirms that students benefited from an L2 formal learning environment where they were able to practice their oral skills (M = 1.98). Conversely, data suggest that students were not motivated by the opportunities to communicate with native speakers outside of the formal learning environment. A relatively high mean, close to the response "disagree" (M = 3.69), shows that students were demotivated by the lack of opportunities to speak their L2 within their social environment.

The 728 students taking part in this study extensively enjoyed learning French, German, Italian, or Spanish given the very low mean value for the average responses given for variable five (M = 1.64). This was the second strongest motivating element behind an L2 learning process out of the five variables considered in this article. Correlations between the items "FLE in learning," "excitement in communicating" and "communication in class" and attrition and retention rates of student participants after a semester of L2 studies were statistically significant (Table 4). Correlations between "communication with natives" and "communication with family" and attrition and retention rates appear not to be statistically significant. Hence, data suggest that the last two variables did not particularly influence students' decision to continue or discontinue learning an L2.

Table 4 Correlations between the five variables under study and attrition and retention of survey participants

Variables correlated with attrition/retention	Pearson correlation	<i>p</i> value
1. Communication with family	.025	.508
2. Excitement in communicating	.137	<.001
3. Communication in class	.145	<.001
4. Communication with natives	.032	.388
5. FLE in learning	.268	<.001

Cross tabulations allow to more precisely understand how many students experienced FLE and WTC and continued or discontinued learning an L2. Figure 5 confirms that communication with family was not a relevant variable in terms of attrition and retention rates. 74.80% of continuing students disagreed that they were learning an L2 because of their WTC with family. As a result, even continuing students were not particularly motivated by WTC with their family members.

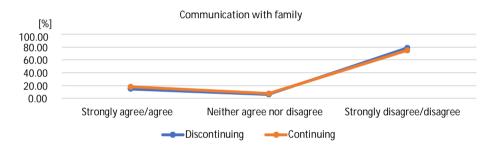


Figure 5 Cross tabulations of students who learnt an L2 or did not learn an L2 to communicate with their family and continued or discontinued learning an L2

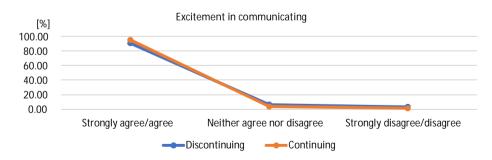


Figure 6 Cross tabulations of students who were excited or were not excited learning an L2 and continued or discontinued learning an L2

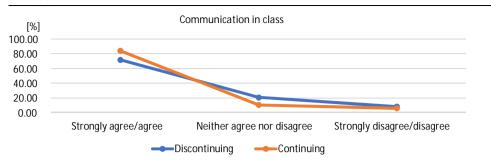


Figure 7 Cross tabulations of students who had or did not have opportunities to communicate in class in the L2 and continued or discontinued learning an L2

Similar proportions are shown for students who found communicating in an L2 exciting and those students who had opportunities to communicate in class (Figures 6 and 7). These two variables did not particularly influence students' decision to discontinue as most of the discontinuing students agreed or even strongly agreed that they liked to communicate in the L2 and they communicated in the L2 in class. Only very few students discontinued learning an L2 and disagreed with these two variables. Very similar outcomes were shown for continuing students.

Similar percentages are also shared by continuing and discontinuing students in terms of opportunities to communicate in the L2 with native speakers (Figure 8). A sizeable portion of continuing and discontinuing student participants were demotivated by the lack of opportunities to practice their oral skills with native speakers of their L2. 67.70% of continuing students and 68.50% of discontinuing students did not benefit from opportunities to communicate in their L2 outside of the university formal learning environment. However, continuing students decided to continue learning French, German, Italian, or Spanish although this demotivator was affecting their interest in learning an L2. "FLE in learning" seems to be differently experienced by continuing and discontinuing students (Figure 9).

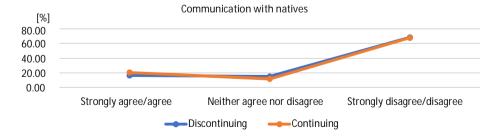


Figure 8 Cross tabulations of students who have or do not have opportunities to communicate with natives in the L2 and continue or discontinue learning an L2

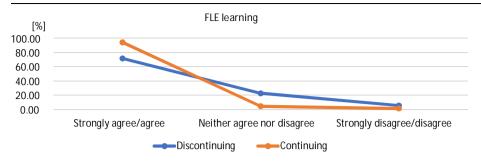


Figure 9 Cross tabulations of students who did or did not enjoy learning an L2 and continued or discontinued learning an L2

Only 7 students out of 127 who discontinued did not enjoy their language process. At the same level, only 8 students who continued did not enjoy their L2 learning. Nonetheless, 94.20% of continuing students enjoyed the L2 learning process while much fewer discontinuing students enjoyed it (71.60%). In contrast to this, more discontinuing students than continuing students neither agreed nor disagreed that they were enjoying the L2 learning process. As a result, FLE appears to be a crucial motivator to continue learning an L2.

#### 5.2. Qualitative data analysis

A thematic content analysis was run for the first main responses provided to the four open-ended survey questions considered in this article. Answers to the first question confirm that WTC is not necessarily the only main reason why students start to learn an L2. Intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985) is the major component as students declared to love the sound of the language or the way native speakers use it. A second most frequently reoccurring motivational component is instrumental orientation (Gardner, 1985). Students shared the intention of becoming fluent in the L2 and using it as a means to achieve practical results, e.g., a better job, a better salary. Contextual components also triggered students' interest in learning an L2. The latter motivational patterns are related to the image that these four L2s have in the world and more specifically in their community and/or families.

Overall, a strong and widely spread desire to use the L2 as a tool to communicate is confirmed by a semantic analysis of students' first reason to start to learn an L2. The verb "to speak" is the most recurring word related to the semantic area of communication. With a smaller frequency, the verb "to communicate" appears in students' responses 46 times (Figure 9).

# speak communicate fluent fluently 9 communication 6 talk 3 proficient 2 communicating 2

Open-ended survey question 1

Figure 9 Recurring words related to the semantic area of "communication" in responses to open-ended survey question one

100

150

200

250

50

n

Research participants emphasized their desire to communicate with a specific group of people. WTC with native speakers was shared by a large number of survey participants whose desire to acquire oral skills was very vivid. They also wanted to start to learn an L2 to better and more deeply enjoy foreign countries cultures:

To be able to read, write and speak in a conversational manner, so if I come across French-speaking people I can communicate.

I want to communicate with people who speak Italian just for a self-satisfaction.

To be able to communicate a bit to Italian people or when I travel to Italy, to learn about the culture.

To be able to effectively communicate in Spanish and be able to communicate with Spanish speaking scientists in their native language.

Very few students started to learn an L2 because they wanted to speak with their family members given the very low percentage of students with a cultural background from a country where their L2 is spoken:

To be able to communicate with my family as I do not currently understand them.

To better understand the language and improve communication with German relatives.

Conversely, much more WTC with friends and peers was shown by students who could enjoy more exposure to people who speak their L2:

To speak French fluently so I can communicate with other people who can't speak English but can speak French, including the family of my fiancé.

Further analysis on the goals set by students reveals that the verb "to speak" and "to communicate" occur very often. While the adjective "fluent" and the adverb "fluently" appear less often in participants' answers (Figure 10).

#### Open-ended survey question 2

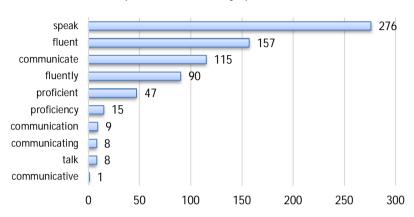


Figure 10 Recurring words related to the semantic area of "communicate" in responses to open-ended survey question two

For instance, Chloe and Nicole respectively declared in their interviews that their goal was to do an exchange program overseas to talk in the L2 with native speakers:

Chloe: I would be able to talk to people more comfortably if I were on an ex-

change.

Nicole: I had to have at least four semesters of Spanish to go to a Spanish-speaking

country on an exchange.

The analysis of the main first responses provided to the third open-ended survey question aims to discover if FLE boosted students' motivation in continuing learning an L2. Item number five (Table 3 above) highlights that a very large number of students experienced FLE when they learnt an L2.

Qualitative data confirms that intrinsic motivation is the main motivational pattern when it comes to continuing learning an L2. Within intrinsic motivation, FLE-private is very strong as students would like to continue an L2 course because they experienced internal satisfaction when they produced the first sentences in the L2. In addition to this, students expressed FLE-social. The learning environment provided them with fun, amusement, and a psychological break from very much content-based lectures.

WTC and instrumental orientation motivated students to continue learning an L2. Furthermore, they were aware that an L2 would support their search for a job. Figure 11 shows that the words related to the semantic area of "enjoyment" occurred very often. Thus, participants emphasized the importance of having an enjoyable and interesting L2 learning environment in order to continue learning an L2.

# Open-ended survey question 3

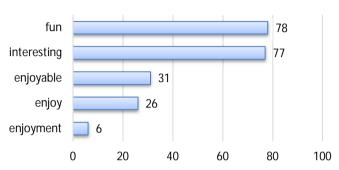


Figure 11 Recurring words related to the semantic area of "enjoyment" in the answers to open-ended survey question three

Interviewees confirmed that learning an L2 was a very amusing activity. They found the challenge very rewarding and they realized that their L2 learning process was a good break from very theoretical subjects as here reported:

Renee: I just feel it is very cool. (...) I find it challenging but it's fun.

Francesca: Learning a language is a really nice break, because I'm science major and learning Italian as an optional subject is really nice.

FLE was not only attributed to the L2 learning process itself. However, dynamics experienced in the L2 class triggered FLE-teacher and FLE-atmosphere. Motivated students valued the work delivered by their teachers and they believed that L2 courses were well designed. In particular, motivated students enjoyed interactive activities and cultural topics:

Grace: It's just very fun activating that area of your brain. I liked the variety in learn-

ing so it's just about putting that effort in, but I am really enjoying it. (...) I really enjoyed the way my teacher kind of laid up the classes, because we were talking about the culture at the end. We often had interactive activities.

Anna: I have really enjoyed the studying time this semester. I didn't find the

coursework too difficult.

A thematic content analysis of responses provided to open-ended survey question four shed light on the importance of the sociocultural environment to support students in their desire to practice the L2. Research participants appeared to be soundly demotivated by the lack of opportunities to speak their L2. Although they could not communicate in an L2 after their L2 classes, some students did not give up studying an L2 as demonstrated by the quantitative data analysis outcomes – see previous section. As a result, WTC was hampered by the scarce availability of speaking occasions which demotivated students, but it did not necessarily lead them to discontinue learning an L2 as stated by interviewees and survey participants:

Chloe: That's a bit hard because there are no many French-speaking people and

I know only one. That's one year ago and that's all.

Eike: I don't have exposure to German-speaking people. I tried to make friends

with German people at the German club but apparently they didn't speak

German there.

Lilly: My mum has been trying to find people who can speak Italian, but we ha-

ven't found anybody yet.

Mario: Unfortunately, I don't know anyone here who is native speaker of Spanish.

I'm a very social person, so I would enjoy extra activities where I can prac-

tice the language and I could also meet new friends.

Grace: No one really communicate in French outside of class.

In line with the quantitative data analysis results, lack of FLE was not a very common demotivator for L2 learners. Demotivated students were experiencing FLE despite their demotivation caused by psychological as well as contextual factors. In particular, discontinuing students were demotivated by the lack of time and space in their study plan which would allow them to continue learning an L2 as mentioned during the data collection process:

Laurie: I wanted to focus on other things and maybe I'll choose French later-on. I

enjoyed it a lot. (...) Sadly, French is the one at the bottom when it comes

to effort, just because French is my breadth.

Mya: I'm still very motivated but I think I have to drop because I don't have the

time which is very sad.

#### 6. Discussion

This section will discuss the main findings of this study. The data analyzed in the previous section support the discussion of the points raised by the two research questions.

6.1. RQ 1: What is the extent to which WTC and FLE motivate students to start and continue learning an L2 during their first year of L2 studies at university??

In line with MacIntyre et al. (1998), students develop self-confidence after they start to learn an L2. Together with L2 knowledge, self-confidence plays a crucial role to be able to communicate in the target language. More specifically, students "must develop sufficient self-confidence with the language in general" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 548). Students are driven by intrinsic motivation, instrumental orientation and contextual components when they decide to start to learn French, German, Italian and Spanish. However, words such as "speak," "communicate" and "fluent" quite often recurred in students' responses to open-ended survey question one. Hence, students' ambition and intention to communicate in the L2 was also a motivator for students to start to learn an L2.

WTC is mainly deemed as a goal that students set when they want to learn these languages. When participants wrote about their goals, 276 of them mentioned the word "speak," 157 inserted the word "fluent" and 115 expressed the desire to "communicate." The reoccurrence of words belonging to the semantic area of "communication" demonstrates that students possess a strong intention to communicate in an L2 when starting an L2 learning process. Their experiences validate seminal studies on WTC where learners aspire to enter into contact with a specific group of people (Macintyre et al., 1998). De Saint Léger and Storch (2009) define this WTC within an L2-speaking community in Australia as "intergroup affiliation" as also expressed by student participants in this study.

Interviewees confirmed the results of the questionnaire. Moreover, data suggest that students in Australia have a WTC in the society where they aim to go rather than only within the L2 course as distinguished by Denies, Yashima, and Janssen (2015). A strong integrative orientation boosted students' WTC who want to immerse themselves in new cultures as previously noticed in Australia (cf. Hajek & Warren, 1996; Schmidt, 2011, 2014).

Only few participants were Australian with a cultural background from countries where the L2s are spoken: 5 for French, 14 for German, 33 for Italian, and 7 for Spanish (Table 1 above). The demographic data already intuitively demonstrate that very few students started to learn an L2 because they would like to talk to their family members. Due to recent new immigration waves, people from different countries live in Australian cities. This phenomenon creates more interest in foreign cultures and people amongst L2 university students. In particular, students with major exposure to cultural products and people from foreign countries set an initial goal to communicate with their partners'/friends' families right during the "preactional phase." Quantitative data confirm that students are

very excited to communicate in the L2 and they often have opportunities to talk in the L2 in class. The latter motivated students in class and increased their WTC.

Likewise, FLE is a prominent factor when students decide to continue learning French, German, Italian and Spanish at Australian universities. A mean of 1.64 for the item on FLE in learning indicates that most of the 728 survey participants felt FLE when they learnt an L2. More than 90% of continuing students strongly agreed and agreed that they enjoyed their L2 learning process (Figure 9 above). This is confirmed by the answers given to open-ended survey question three, where the most frequently recurring words were linked to the semantic area of "enjoyment," e.g., "fun" and "interesting," when it comes to decide to continue learning an L2 (Figure 5 above).

The correlation between "FLE in learning" and decision to continue or discontinue after one semester, is also statistically significant with the highest Pearson r value amongst the five five-point Likert scale items selected for this study (Table 5 above). Consequently, data suggest that FLE is a strong and highly relevant variable, which drives students to continue learning an L2 as in Campbell and Storch (2011) and Doucet and Kuuse (2017). Therefore, teachers need to boost positive emotions in order to avoid the development of negative emotions (Mac-Intyre, 2017) such as anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), hesitation, preoccupation and volatility (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010), or shame and guilt (Teimouri, 2018). Positive emotions would also contribute to preventing the appearance of an "anxious self" (Simsek & Dörnyei, 2017) which can inhibit students' cognitive capabilities to acquire L2 knowledge. Qualitative data confirm the presence of FLE, both private and social as in previous studies at tertiary level in Australia. Doucet and Kuuse (2017, p. 237) link FLE to "private choices that make learners happy." Nettelbeck et al. (2007, p. 14) also discovered that retention rates in Australia are purely influenced by students' "enjoyment of language learning." Students' FLE is also due to the learning environment: FLE-social, FLEteacher, and FLE-atmosphere (Li et al., 2018). Data analysis validates what discovered by Campbell and Storch (2011) who argue that FLE is "usually linked to the teachers and the lessons, as well as to interactions with peers" (p. 176).

6.2. RQ 2: Does the lack of FLE and communication opportunities demotivate students and consequently influence their decision to discontinue learning an L2?

Out of 728 survey participants, 601 students (82.6%) responded that they did not intend to continue learning an L2 and 127 students (17.4%) declared to discontinue. Cross tabulations confirm that the lack of FLE does not directly demotivate students. Ninety one students (out of 127) who discontinued learning an

L2 strongly agreed or agreed that they enjoyed their L2 learning experiences. As a result, the lack of FLE appears not to be a relevant component of L2 students' attrition rate as it does not directly affect students' decision to discontinue learning an L2. In this regard, the interviewees who did not continue learning an L2 from semester one to semester two did not make this decision because they did not enjoy their L2 learning experience.

Students do not often discontinue learning an L2 because they do not enjoy the learning process. Contrarily, they still enjoy learning an L2. In contrast to this, external factors obstruct their action space to continue learning an L2. The lack of available credit points for their study plan and the priority given to more relevant core subjects to students' degrees demoralize students when putting effort in learning an L2 which is often their optional/elective subject.

As previously mentioned, the cause of attrition is to be looked for among the reasons why 127 students (17.5% of the total participants), discontinued learning an L2 after a semester. In total, 63.7% of the participants integrated an L2 in their degree structure as an optional/elective subject. As a result, L2 subjects rarely appear to be a core subjects for students. Hence, less attention is given to L2s when it comes to prioritize energy and effort when studying for university subjects. For this reason, students expect to have a wide range of activities which could potentially trigger and maintain their FLE both in class and outside class.

Very differently, WTC is often affected by the scarce opportunities to practice L2 oral skills outside of the class environment. Drawing on Lo Bianco's (2014) definition of "opportunity" (see the introduction). Data confirm that students would like to use the L2 in daily-life situations. Items two and three (Table 3 above) demonstrate that students find communicating in the L2 very exciting. Besides, they have plenty of opportunities to use the L2 in class. Both items collected very high levels of students' agreement. Their correlation to the decision to continue or discontinue learning an L2 is also statistically significant which indicates a direct influence on students' attrition and retention rates (Table 4 above). Cross tabulations were analyzed to understand if those students who do not find opportunities to communicate in the L2 in class, drop their L2 subject. Data confirm that only very few students who do not have opportunities to communicate in class, discontinue learning an L2. Nevertheless, 91 students out of 127 research participants for this study had opportunities to talk in class but they did not carry on learning an L2.

Although students have opportunities to talk in the L2 in class, they do not generally have opportunities to talk in the L2 outside the formal learning environment in the Australian context. The very high mean of the variable "opportunities to talk to natives" (variable 4 in Table 3) suggests that students are not exposed to native speakers in Australia, which could be either friends/acquaintances, family members, or random people that they can meet during their

daily life. Most of the student participants disagreed or even strongly disagreed that they had any contact with native speakers of the language that they were studying at university. This aspect is extremely evident in English speaking countries where people speak the current world lingua franca (Ushioda, 2017). Australia is deemed part of the English monolingual context. This idea has been challenged by Hajek and Slaughter (2014) but it appears to affect students who are less exposed to multilingual and multicultural context within the Australian society. Nonetheless, the correlation between "opportunities to talk to natives" and students' attrition/retention rates is not statistically significant (Table 4 above). The same aspect is highlighted in cross tabulations where even those students who discontinued learning an L2 disagreed that they benefited from opportunities to communicate with natives (Figure 8 above). It is interesting to note that even those students who continued learning an L2 strongly disagreed that they had opportunities to talk to native speakers. Despite some rare cases, most of the interviewed students complained that they did not have exposure to native speakers which demotivated them given their strong and deep WTC.

The lack of opportunities to communicate with natives is also attributed to the large majority of students who do not have a cultural background from a country where French, German, Italian, and Spanish are spoken. The latter is further confirmed by the demographic composition of research participants as only 59 out of 728 had a background from countries where French, German, Italian or Spanish are spoken (Table 1 above). All in all, students very rarely experience lack of FLE and a sizeable proportion of students are demotivated by the lack of opportunities to communicate in the studied L2. This aspect was found not to directly influence their choice to quit their L2 subject. However, the scarce opportunities to practice L2 oral skills affect students' WTC.

#### 7. Conclusions

WTC is the number one goal for students who want to learn an L2. It is not always the reason why students decide to start to learn an L2, but nevertheless students would like to communicate in the L2 with native speakers. Students chose the L2 because of internal and psychological reasons, which are linked to their interest in the L2 and culture(s) related to it as well as more utilitarian purposes, e.g., job opportunities and university credit points. Data show research participants' strong interest in travelling to the countries where the four languages under analysis are spoken and they can meet native speakers and immerse themselves in a new social environment.

During the "actional phase," students enjoy learning L2s. They find lessons fun and interesting. Qualitative data demonstrate that students really like teachers who

plan very enjoyable and interactive lessons. Therefore, they feel that L2 subjects are different from other university subjects. They have the impression that they are having a break from the rest of their university commitments. Both FLE-private and social (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016) including FLE-teacher and FLE-atmosphere (Li et al., 2018) motivate students to continue learning an L2. Indirectly, FLE boosts students' own image of future proficient L2 speaking-selves (Dörnyei, 2009).

Lack of FLE and opportunities to communicate do not directly and/or significantly affect attrition rates. Although students drop their L2 subjects, they still enjoy the L2 learning process. Lack of FLE is not widely observed, while lack of communication with native speakers is an issue for the large majority of beginner L2 learners in Australia. Nonetheless, lack of communication with native speakers does not lead students to quit the language class despite representing a demotivating factor during the "actional phase." Students recognize the necessity to develop communicative abilities as L2 learning involves "the adoption of new social and cultural behaviors and way of being" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 115).

All these variables are closely related to student's sociocultural context and learning environment. In particular, "language and communication interact with and reflect wider social arrangements" (Lo Bianco, 2010, p. 38). In the Australian context, students are demotivated by the lack of opportunities to communicate in an L2 given the distance from countries where the L2 is spoken despite being a very multicultural society. In this respect, the analysis of more data - instead of focusing on five Likert scale items and four open-ended survey guestions, would clarify how student participants found their own strategies to cope with the scarce availability of domains. Students sought opportunities to talk in their L2 over time. A longitudinal research would expand on the data analysis outcomes presented for this study. Furthermore, teachers could also contribute to expanding the analysis of students' motivators and demotivators especially within the formal learning environment. The implementation of additional statistical tools, i.e. multiple regressions, would improve the understanding of the influence of biographical variables on students' WTC and FLE. In addition to this, independent samples T-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) would shed light on major differences amongst the four L2 cohorts.

Further research is suggested to explore WTC and FLE in learning most widely taught Asian languages in Australia – Chinese (Mandarin), Korean and Japanese (Baldauf & White, 2010). Hence, a further study would highlight main striking differences arising from the comparison of WTC and FLE in learning most widely taught Asian languages and most widely taught European languages at tertiary level in Australia. Such study would be beneficial at the policy making level given the strong financial and political emphasis on the learning and teaching of Asian languages in Australia in the last decades as reported by Baldwin

(2019). Besides, further research is suggested to investigate more the reasons why students discontinue learning an L2, that is, absence of credit points and further reasons which are not always under students' and teachers' control.

## 8. Pedagogical implications

This article leaves two main pedagogical implications. L2 teachers need to design enjoyable lessons where they can boost the intrinsic motivation of their students. "Classroom environmental conditions" are to contribute to students' comfortable and relaxed approach to L2 lessons (Cao, 2011, p. 468). Given that students are quite attracted by foreign cultures, L2 teachers should include more cultural topics. Lessons should be enriched by authentic material which would imaginatively take students to different countries and create "links between concrete aspects of actual student engagement and concrete aspects of future student aspirations" (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 27). "Special classroom activities (need to be) designed both to provide useful language work and to increase personal meaning, motivate, reduce anxiety and give students confidence in their ability to learn and speak the target language" (Arnold, 2009, pp. 147-148).

A second pedagogical implication is related to lack of exposure to native speakers. Teacher should inspire their students with strategies to meet native speakers and create "domains" (Lo Banco, 2014) where they can find communicative opportunities. The use of technology can be integrated in the course where students can communicate with people from different countries and to promote the ideal L2 self (Adolphs et al., 2018). In line with Ushioda (2017), the English monolingual context in Australia influences students' motivation. Students do not have opportunities to communicate in the studied L2 because of the lack of a multilingual environment (Clyne, 1991; Hajek, 2001; Scarino, 2014) despite Australia being a multicultural society. On the other hand, the formal learning environment allows them to practice the language in class. More communicative teaching strategies might consequently reduce demotivation and attrition rates as a whole.

FLE and WTC are important motivating factors which influence students' interest in learning an L2 in Australia. This study might inspire L2 teachers to plan their lessons based on students' needs. Enjoyable lessons are certainly appreciated by students who would like to see the practical outcomes of their L2 learning – communicative competence (Canale, 1983; Hymes, 1972). Hence, positive emotions would be triggered amongst L2 learner (Dewaele, 2011). The absence of real communicative situations with native speakers in Australia might be overcome by situational or communicative L2 teaching strategies (Celce-Murcia, 1991). De Saint Léger and Storch (2009, p. 280) confirm that "small group discussions are often seen as a means of reducing learners' performance

anxiety and providing greater opportunities for communicative interactions." In this way, students would be encouraged to talk in class as this variable is statistically significant in terms of its impact on attrition and retention rates. Indeed, the course content needs to be tailored to facilitate real-world communication, especially in a context such as Australia where students generally struggle to find opportunities to practice French, German, Italian or Spanish. Therefore, MacIntyre et al. (1998) suggest that "language instruction may achieve its social and political goal of bringing cultures into contact and nations together" (p. 558). Jane Arnold (2018) invites teachers to empathize with their students so that they feel more comfortable and supported. Indeed, affect is an essential element in L2 learning experience (Arnold 1999). Positive emotions, such as enjoyment, might outweigh students' anxiety as discovered by Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018).

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