

**The motivation of adult foreign language learners  
on an Italian beginners' course:  
An exploratory, longitudinal study**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis reports on a qualitative, longitudinal investigation into what shaped and sustained the motivation of two cohorts of L1-English learners of Italian during a beginners' course. *Motivation* was not limited here to L2 learning, but extended to what the participants perceived as the dynamic interplay of personal and contextual influences, responsible for their sustained participation and engagement with the learning environment.

The distinctiveness of the study firstly lies in its methodological approach which, unusually for L2 motivation research, is entirely qualitative on epistemological grounds, in an attempt to give learners a true voice and position them firmly at the centre of the enquiry. Innovative aspects are also the choice of L1-English adult learners of a foreign language as participants, and that of Adult Education as a setting, given that L2 motivation studies have traditionally involved learners of English as a foreign or second language in schools or universities.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken at the beginning, middle and end of a 30-week Italian beginners' course, using the Dörnyei-Ottó (1998) Process Model of L2 motivation as a loose conceptual framework. Summative focus groups were also conducted in the final stage. The data was analysed using an interpretive approach to explore salient themes and issues from the participants' perspectives. The findings suggest that, whilst the learners' initial goals and reasons for joining the course appear to have fuelled initial motivation, the positive learning experience and interpersonal dynamics developed in the classroom were largely responsible for sustaining it. The study also reveals novel insights into L2 motivation from adult learning perspectives, which take into account social participation and leisure participation motives. Finally, the thesis proposes a new conceptual model, which may prove useful in order to flexibly represent the dynamic, situated and complex nature of adult FL motivation – and arguably L2 learning motivation in general.

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## **Author's declaration**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have not previously presented any of the material contained herein.

# Introduction

## *Background and rationale*

Since the early 1990s, the study of second language (L2) motivation has undergone radical developments and paradigmatic shifts. These started with the emergence of education-friendly and cognitive-based approaches aimed at complementing the social psychological paradigms, which had dominated the L2 motivation field for three decades. In recent years, the pace of change has gained further momentum to the point that “the research landscape of language learning motivation has changed almost beyond recognition” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. xi) since the start of the millennium.

Calls by Dörnyei (2005; 2009) to reconceptualise L2 motivation in favour of contemporary notions of self and identity have led to a growing body of empirical studies, which appear to have partially validated these new frameworks. Meanwhile, the novel opportunities presented by Complex Dynamic Systems theories (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) in Second Language Acquisition have spilt over into the L2 motivation field (Dörnyei, 2011), generating yet another promising theoretical perspective and leading to a new “socio-dynamic phase” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Against a backdrop of flux and change in this research area, the present longitudinal study seeks to reposition L2 motivation where foreign language (FL) learning often starts: in the context of a language course. The study seeks to go back to basics and place those who are engaged in FL learning firmly at the centre of the enquiry.

There are a number of elements at the core of this study, all of which also serve to dictate the aim of the research as a whole. Firstly, given the now recognised pivotal role played by context in L2 motivation, the experience of L1-English adults learning a FL provides a novel research setting. In fact, most L2 motivation studies to-date have focused on learners of English in secondary or tertiary education, whereas L1-English adult FL learners have been almost absent from L2 motivation research, with few exceptions (e.g.,

Berardi-Wiltshire, 2009; Pickett, 2009). Secondly, whilst there has been a considerable increase in the adoption of mixed methods in L2 motivation research, qualitative-only studies in this field remain rare. Thus, viewing L2 motivation through a qualitative lens may offer both an alternative and a complementary perspective to that provided by the numerous quantitative and increasingly mixed-method studies published in the field. Thirdly, this research originated also from my keen personal and professional interest in L1-English adult FL learners and ‘what makes them tick’, particularly as it is a recognised fact that persistence and course retention are so variable and unpredictable in the early stages of adult FL learning.

### ***Main aim of the study and research questions***

The key aim of this research was therefore to explore the motivation of adult learners during an Italian beginners’ course. More specifically, the study set out to investigate the dynamics of factors which the participants perceived as important in shaping and sustaining their motivation during a nine-month period.

The above mentioned rationale for conducting the study and its aim have been translated into the following research questions:

- How do adult L1-English learners view their motivation during a beginner’s FL course?
- What factors do they perceive to be motivationally significant at different stages of the course and overall?
- In their view, how do the above factors account for their completion of the course and for their wish to carry on learning the language?

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the questions are deliberately broad. Even the term ‘motivation’ is not defined exclusively as L2 or FL motivation *per se*, for it is recognised that the motivation sustained through a beginners language course may not all originate in the appeal of becoming an L2 user.

The formulation of a working definition of ‘motivation’ for the purpose of this research is useful at this stage.

***Definitions of some key concepts***

‘Motivation’ derives from the Latin *motus ad ationem*, which literally means ‘movement towards action’. The combination of ‘movement’ and ‘action’ immediately implies a dynamic concept, which goes beyond simple intentions or reasons for acting in a certain way. Due to its use in so many different contexts, ‘motivation’ is difficult to define precisely.

The perspective which is most relevant to this study is one which considers motivation in function of its temporal dimension, as opposed to simply the reasons and/or goals in an attempt to rationalise why action has been initiated. In fact, one important and sometimes overlooked aspect of motivation concerns the full range of possible factors responsible for sustaining it for a certain period of time. In short, motivation is seen as an evolving interplay of dynamic factors which energise and sustain action in a particular context. From an educational angle, I would agree with Rogers and Horrocks (2010) that “motivation in learning is that compulsion which keeps a person within the learning situation and encourages them to learn” (p.105).

As already mentioned, this study is concerned with FL learning, that is, learning conducted in a country where the language is not normally spoken, such as Italian in the UK. This is quite different from L2 learning, which usually takes place in the country of residence. In ‘L2 motivation’ research, however, ‘L2’ usually stands for either second or foreign language. For clarity’s sake, this thesis uses the standard term ‘L2 motivation’ in relation to research – unless the research in question is specific to FL – and FL in relation to the current study.

It is also worth bearing in mind that an implied differentiation is made, depending on whether the FL to be learnt is English or another language; thus, whereas on a macro-level the motivation to learn English can be largely justified by its position as lingua franca, the same cannot be said for less widely spoken foreign languages, such as Italian. The position of L1-English learners of FLs is also interesting in that it is natural to ask oneself what an

individual's motivation to learn another language may be, given the widely spoken nature of English (Pickett, 2009).

### ***Research strategy and techniques***

The methodology of this study is qualitative on ontological grounds, valuing L2 language learners not simply as participants, but as 'knowers' of their experience. Part of the novelty of this study is, in fact, that it explicitly raises epistemological issues as to what 'knowledge' is with regard to L2 motivation and where it lies. The study is therefore informed by an interpretive/social constructivist paradigm which considers the reality (or realities) of the research participants as socially constructed and shaped by context.

In terms of methods, the study features three waves of semi-structured interviews with L1-English adult learners of Italian as a FL conducted over a period of nine months. 26 participants were interviewed at the beginning, 22 in the middle and 20 at the end of the course to explore the factors which they perceived to be motivationally salient at various stages of the programme. Focus groups were also conducted at the end of the course to give the participants an opportunity to share and exchange views on their motivational experiences. Subsidiary methods included class observations, which were carried out in order to better contextualise and understand the experiences described by the participants. The interview and focus group data was transcribed and categories were formed with the help of Atlas-di; an interpretive approach was used to present the findings and to assist the reader in making better sense of these.

The study drew on the Dörnyei & Ottó (1998) Process Model of L2 Motivation, which emphasises the role of time in defining motivational influences to account for the changing nature of L2 motivation during the learning process. However, it must be stressed that the conceptual framework was primarily adopted as a starting point and was designed to lend structure to the interview study. It was interesting to discover that other frameworks later emerged as more useful in providing a meaningful interpretation of the data.

***Distinctiveness of the study***

The uniqueness of this study lies firstly in the choice of the subjects under scrutiny, namely L1-English adults engaged in learning a FL as a leisure activity, rather than as part of a formal course of study. Secondly, the study has attempted to address two gaps in L2 motivation research: the need for more qualitative, empirical investigations, and the need for research which considers L2 motivation over time through a longitudinal perspective. Another original and novel aspect of this study is that it has combined perspectives of L2 motivation with notions of adult learning motivation and participation.

***Overview of constituent chapters***

The thesis comprises nine chapters, in addition to the present introduction. Chapter 1 explores the broader background for the study, with particular reference to Adult Education (AE) and adult FL learning in the UK context. The focus is then narrowed in order to further examine the position of Italian as a FL.

Chapter 2 is the first of two literature review chapters. It situates the study in the context of previous research in the field of adult learning, focusing in particular on adult learning motivation and participation. Chapter 3 engages with current L2 motivation debates, first providing a brief overview of the key theories in the field, with special attention paid to the process-oriented approach adopted as an initial framework for the study.

Chapter 4 deals with methodology and methods. The chapter revisits the aim and rationale for the study, also discussing the research questions and the ways in which these are addressed. The section also features a justification for the qualitative methodology adopted in the study, followed by an account of the methods and procedures adopted for sampling and data collection. The chapter includes ethical considerations in conducting the study and an illustration of the processes employed by the researcher to apply the data collected to the findings presented.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 analyse the data in terms of the salient themes and issues that emerged from the study. Based on the first round of data collection, Chapter 5 reports on the initial orientations and reasons given by the participants for joining an Italian language course. It also investigates the participants' initial expectations, goals and aspirations at this early stage.

Chapter 6 analyses the interview data collected during the second wave of interviews which occurred approximately halfway through the course. It considers the factors which are perceived by the participants as contributing to their sustained motivation following the initial stage.

Chapter 7 considers the final round interviews in addition to the focus groups, in an attempt to summarise the participants' perceptions of their motivation throughout the nine month period.

Chapter 8 discusses the key themes and issues that emerged in the prior three chapters, providing an interpretation and synthesis of the main findings and presenting a new conceptual model for a holistic understanding of adult FL motivation.

Chapter 9 summarises the main findings of the study, providing a critique of the study and its methods, indicating possibilities for further research, and identifying implications for practice. It also restates the contribution to knowledge and understanding offered by the study.

# 1. Adult foreign language learning in the UK

## **1.1. Introduction**

The current study explored the motivation of two groups of L1-English adults at the early stages of learning a FL (Italian) in a particular English institutional setting (AE) and at a specific moment in time (September 2006-June 2007). Given the importance of context in a qualitative investigation of this kind, Chapter 1 provides some background to adult FL learning in the UK, and in England more specifically.

Firstly, there is an introduction to adult FL learners, exploring who they are, why they participate in language learning, which languages they are more likely to learn and how they go about doing this. The role played by AE as a key provider of learning opportunities for adults in general and in FL education is also explored. The latter section is devoted to reviewing Italian as a FL in order to better contextualise the interview data provided in later chapters which often expressly refers to Italian as the main source of the interviewees' motivation.

## **1.2. L1-English adults learning languages**

Already in decline since the late 1990s, the study of FLs in English schools entered a new critical phase in 2004, when languages became optional for pupils above the age of 14. This change in policy is often held responsible for the further decrease in FL entries at GCSE and A-level and the consequent contraction of FL degree level applications (cf. Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007), though the problem is sometimes viewed as less recent and more deeply rooted in language teaching methodology in schools and the ways in which languages are taught in the curriculum (cf. Macaro, 2008). Whichever the case, it appears that the majority of English students leave full-time education



with a much more limited competence in FLs when compared with students studying in other European countries, and the consequences of this are also evident in adults (European Commission, 2006).

Some arguably misguided but common perceptions, such as ‘the British are not good at languages’ and ‘everybody speaks English anyway’, appear to have strengthened the widespread belief that L1-English speakers do not need to learn other languages. These commonly held beliefs make it even more interesting to gain a better understanding of those L1-English adults who nevertheless engage in FL learning.

Several pointers can be found in the latest large scale national survey on adult participation in language learning, published by NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Dutton & Myer, 2007). It emerged that three per cent (n = 170) of the almost 5000 adults interviewed in this survey were involved in some form of FL learning in the UK at the beginning of 2007 – this, incidentally, is also when the current study’s data collection was carried out. However, 27% of the participants declared that they had been exposed to some form of language learning as an adult<sup>1</sup>. The survey also found that those more likely to be learning western European languages, such as French, German, Spanish and Italian, were white adults, statistically more likely to be female than male, from medium to high socioeconomic backgrounds, in full-time employment and below 45 years of age. This is not surprising, as other studies indicate that the majority of adult learners tend to fall into this category (e.g., Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007)

As for the reasons for learning FLs, Table 1.1 shows that, according to the survey mentioned above, 35% of the participants learning FLs did so for travel/holiday reasons, 26% for personal development and 22% as a leisure pursuit or simply for enjoyment

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<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that the 2007 NIACE survey involved adults aged 17 and over, thereby including a small number of participants still in full-time education, such as university students. The current working definition of an adult language learner in this study, however, is that of someone whose main occupation is not education. (See Section 2.2).

**Table 1.1: Reasons why adults learn languages (Dutton & Meyer, 2007, p.35)**

	%		%
To use on holiday/travel	35	To gain employment	6
For personal development	26	To take part in community life	5
As a leisure interest/for enjoyment	22	To support my children's learning	3
For my current work	15	I didn't have an opportunity at school	4
To communicate with family/partner's family	14	I wasn't good at school and wanted another go	3
I intend to work/live abroad	9	It's part of another course	1
To enhance my CV	9	Other	6

*Data based on multiple responses by 170 L1-English adults*

A quarter of the participants also said that they were learning languages for career or professional reasons, although this appeared more relevant to those in the under-45 age bracket.

A survey conducted by Pickett (2009) with 284 L1-English adult FL learners based in the UK broadly confirmed the above findings and uncovered that, even more so than in the NIACE study, the intrinsic and social motives for pursuing language learning far exceeded the work-related ones. In short, both surveys suggest that:

- L1-English adults can be motivated to learn a language in more than one way, as evidenced by the multiple reasons given by most participants.
- The L1-English adults who engage in FL learning do not subscribe to the view that 'English is enough' and find compelling arguments for the 'added value' of learning another language, whether this is leisure, travel, personal interest or other;
- Only a minority are driven by utilitarian or extrinsic motives, for example with reference to employment, buying a house abroad, etc.; in other words, it appears that the greater majority of adults learning FLs do so because they want to, rather than because they have to.

Moreover, the study of some languages are more likely to be tackled for certain purposes; for instance, the NIACE survey found that 67% of those learning

Spanish used the language for holiday and travel but only 28% of learners of German did so. Although there is no hard evidence to demonstrate this, it could be argued that the increasing popularity of low-cost flights since the mid-1990s, resulting in more frequent travel to southern European holiday destinations, may have contributed to the increasing appeal of certain languages.

The latest adult language learning survey carried out by the National Centre for Languages (CILT, 2007) provides some useful data about the FLs learnt in Adult and Further Education (FE) in England in the mid-2000s.

As illustrated in Table 1.2, the most popular languages learnt by adults in institutional settings were Spanish, French, Italian, British Sign Language (BSL) and German, with the three Romance languages accounting for almost 74% of the overall share.

**Table 1.2: Adult language learner numbers in 2005-6 based on recruitment on language courses at 41 AE and 98 FE colleges (CILT, 2007)**

Total learners surveyed	Spanish	French	Italian	BSL	German	Other (excl. EFL)
68,575 (n.)	25,023	16,252	8,547	5,489	3,071	10,193
100%	36.5%	23.7%	12.5%	8%	4.5%	14.8%

It is interesting to note that the most popular languages amongst adult learners are not necessarily those most widely taught in schools. It can be argued that the FL provision in AE and FE is more demand-driven, since adults are likely to enrol only on courses offering their chosen language(s), whilst younger learners are more likely to study the FLs which are taught in the school they attend.

### 1.3. How adults learn languages after school and university

#### 1.3.1. Independent foreign language learning routes

One of the most common ways for an adult to first approach the learning of a FL is probably the teach-yourself approach, which may simply start with the use of a phrase book on holiday. A plethora of language learning books accompanied by CDs or CD-only courses are available on the market, as well as more comprehensive multi-media packs. In the UK, for several decades the BBC has been the main provider of adult language learning audio-visual materials, both for class use and for self-study. Although the combination of book + audio remains popular, the beginning of the millennium saw a shift towards online learning resources, ranging from professionally produced materials by the BBC and the Open University, to home-made videos, short courses and podcasts offered by language teaching enthusiasts, and, more recently, to language learning applications for tablets and smart phones. Unfortunately, there is virtually no data concerning the popularity, or indeed the motivational pull, of such language learning approaches. Table 1.3 is an attempt to sketch in very broad strokes the chronological development of teach-yourself resources available to adult language learners.

**Table 1.3: Teach yourself FL learning approaches**

1 <sup>st</sup> generation	Phrase and grammar books	Up to the 1960s
2 <sup>nd</sup> generation	Books with tapes/CDs, in some cases accompanied by TV programmes (e.g., BBC)	1960s-1990s
3 <sup>rd</sup> generation	Audio only courses (e.g., Michel Thomas) Books with CDs, accompanying websites and multimedia courses (e.g., Rosetta Stone)	1990s-2000s
4 <sup>th</sup> generation	Expansion of online courses, language podcasts, apps for phones and mobile devices	mid-2000 onwards

In spite of the abundance of FL self-study options available today, many independent learners simultaneously pursue other language learning methods, such as private tuition. These learners must be able or willing to financially invest in their language learning; often they prefer to learn individually than in a group and they may not have time to attend classes or be able to find suitable classes available in their area.

Short, intensive, residential courses also prove popular amongst those who are prepared to periodically travel to the country in which the target language is spoken, allowing learners the opportunity to enrol on a language programme lasting one or more weeks. It is likely that hybrid approaches combining self-studying with a variety of other methods and frequent periods abroad may be adopted by the most proactive individuals, whose focus is to make FL learning a long-term pursuit.

Particularly in the early stages of learning a FL, many adults still opt to enrol on courses which can provide them with teacher guidance and contact with fellow learners. This is particularly due to the social setting that this provides; in other words the direct contact with teacher and peers, an element which is not possible through distance learning or self-study. The next section considers types of FL courses available to adults and AE in particular.

### **1.3.2. FL opportunities for adults and the role of Adult Education**

FL courses have traditionally been offered by local authorities as part of their AE provision, carried out by FE colleges and universities via Institution-Wide Language Programmes open to the general public. Whereas the latter tend to run more academic programmes in which external participants are taught alongside full-time students, AE offer a range of courses, including non-assessed, leisure language classes, as well as courses subject to ‘softer’ assessment methods. Given that the current study is set in an AE context, it is important to shed some light on this lesser known educational sector, which has been key in providing FL learning language opportunities to British adults for many years.

### ***Adult Education in the UK***

The UK has a strong adult learning tradition dating back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Workers' Educational Association was set up by trade unions to provide the working population with learning opportunities beyond compulsory education. After the First World War, local authorities were put in charge of offering adult education courses and in 1921 the British Institute of Adult education (to be renamed as NIACE in 1983) was established. As Tuckett (as cited in Jones, 2011) explains, "the 20s and 30s saw a big expansion of local government provision, often designed to help women manage tight budgets and keep men off the streets with activities like boxing and car repairs" (Jones, 2011).

After the Second World War, adult education gained fresh momentum with a focus on the vocational training of young people and the up-skilling of older workers. During the 1960s and 1970s participation in education by adults also increased substantially as a result of the establishment of polytechnics, new universities – including the Open University - and a more general wide provision of part-time learning programmes for adults.

In the 1990s adult education became a divisive issue within the context of shrinking budgets and new economic priorities. For years, the dilemma had focussed on the tension between the well-known, long-term benefits of adult learning for individual well-being and personal growth, and the short- to medium-term necessities for retraining the long-term unemployed and providing basic skills for young people leaving schools without qualifications.

The *Learning Age* green paper (DfEE, 1998) promoted widening participation and emphasised the importance of lifelong learning, but eight years on from this another report (Leitch, 2006) highlighted the urgency of addressing the skills shortages, especially amongst young people, in order to make the UK a competitive economic force; hence, priority was given to the *Train to Gain* skills programme for 16-19 year olds. As a result of this shift in policy more than 1.4m places in AE and FE were cut between 2006 and 2010,

affecting those courses widely regarded as low priority, including FL classes (Shepherd, 2010).

In 2009 the *Learning Revolution* white paper aimed at promoting informal lifelong learning, but in early 2010 the budgets for colleges in England were cut by £200m, leading to a further contraction of between 10% and 25% of AE funding for adults aged 19 or above.

In 2010, John Hayes, the new coalition skills minister suggested that the benefits of adult education go beyond the acquisition of vocational skills. Particularly at a time of economic difficulties Hayes (as cited in Shepherd, 2010) commented:

People who are satisfied and whose potential is met through learning are more joyful as a result. Adult education is arguably all the more important in the current economic climate. .... [The classes] aren't just about utility in its narrowest sense. There are a lot of studies that show the beneficial effect adult education has on health and social interactions.

In 2011 the Coalition government launched the 'National Review of Informal Adult Continuing Learning' as part of a strategy to support lifelong learning.

The above overview of adult education in the UK is useful because the majority of FL classes available to adults are offered by this sector. The changes in government policies in relation to adult learning, however, have led to a shrink in the provision of FL classes over the years, particularly as languages have not been considered priority subjects and have therefore suffered severe budget cuts. It can also be argued that FLs have been victims of an identity crisis: on the one hand they are often considered as informal (hence non-essential) leisure activities, on a par with flower arranging or yoga for instance, whilst on the other they are sometimes regarded as key to lifelong learning (DfES, 2002).

#### **1.4. The situation of Italian as a foreign language**

Italian is spoken by a relatively small number of people internationally compared to world languages such as Mandarin, English or Spanish. At the turn of the millennium, Italian ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in terms of number of L1 speakers

and it rated similarly in relation to the quantity of both L1 and L2 competent language speakers (Baker & Eversley, 2000). However, around the same time Italian held a significantly higher place in terms of most widely learnt languages, ranking 4<sup>th</sup> in the US for instance (Lebano as cited in Vedovelli 2001, p.15). As a little spoken, but widely admired language, Italian seems to hold a certain mystique. Macaro (2010) has questioned the perceived beauty of Italian and what may make it so attractive, and has argued in favour of more research into this elusive ‘beauty’ which many adult learners seem to attribute to the Italian language.

In considering the teaching and learning of Italian, a clear distinction must be made between Italian as a second language (L2) and Italian as a FL. In the last forty years, Italy has changed from a country of emigration to one of immigration, resulting in an increase of L2 Italian learners. At the same time, growth in the number of FL adult learners of Italian - in other words, those who do not permanently live and work in Italy – could be partly due to an increase in the number of retirees in Western Europe (Vedovelli, 2001) who might wish to learn Italian for the reasons explored earlier in this chapter. To these it is also prudent to add ‘heritage learners’, a term used to describe second or third generation Italians with a desire to get closer to their roots.

As far as the UK is concerned, Italian is not widely taught in schools and is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in terms of GCSE and A-Level entries (CILT, 2011). In HE, Italian has been negatively affected by the closure of certain language departments across the country, and the number of specialist degree courses in Italian has decreased accordingly since 2000 (Cunico 2005, Tinsley 2008). Nevertheless, Italian is offered at many UK universities as a subsidiary, elective or extra-curricular subject within Institution-Wide Language Programmes.

As seen on Table 1.2, Italian ranked third as the most widely learnt language in FE and AE institutions in 2005-6, having overtaken German. There is, therefore, an apparent contradiction between the low number of learners of Italian in compulsory education - which directly feeds into main subject



choices at university - and the healthy demand for studying Italian by choice, part-time by adults and undergraduates.

Going beyond the stereotype of British people's 'love affair with Italy', it is likely that UK-based individuals who pursue the study of Italian in their adult years have either visited the country and developed an interest and/or they are drawn to certain aspects of the culture, such as the cuisine, art or music. In other words, there appears to be something appealing about Italy as a country and travel and cultural destination which appeals sufficiently to certain visitors to drive them to develop a closer bond through the language. However, given the lack of research in this area, it is impossible to say if other countries, such as France, Spain or Greece for instance, exert a similar appeal on learners of their respective languages, or whether Italian constitutes a special case.

### **1.5. Summary**

This chapter has provided some context to the situation of adult language learning in the UK and Italian more specifically. It started with a broad overview of the identities of the adults learning FLs in the UK the most common reasons given for doing so. There was also an outline of how adults pursue FL education, ranging from self-study methods, residential courses abroad and private tuition. The focus then moved onto taught courses attended by adults with special attention paid to the AE sector as a whole, taking into account its many ebbs and flows in recent decades.

The chapter concluded with a short assessment of the situation of Italian as a FL internationally and in the UK, where Italian seems to compensate for not being widely taught in schools and as a main university subject, by being a clear favourite amongst adult learners.

## 2. Research on adult learning motivation and participation

### 2.1. Introduction

It is interesting to note that adult learning theories have been largely absent from mainstream research into L2 motivation, despite a great proportion of L2 learners being adults. While the key theoretical models and frameworks in L2 motivation research are not age-specific, they have been chiefly validated by studies conducted with learners in schools and universities. This literature review argues that adult motivation to learn and participate in learning presents characteristics worth investigating and bringing into the broader scholarly debate on L2 motivation. This chapter therefore seeks to redress the balance by considering perspectives from the adult learning literature which may help to better explain L2 motivation from the adult learner's perspective, as well as to contribute to the theoretical framework of this study.

### 2.2. Adult education, adult learning and what is meant by 'adult'

Admittedly a marginal field of enquiry within educational literature, adult education research has struggled to assert itself, perhaps as a result of its wide remit:

Adult education is a large and amorphous field of practice, with no neat boundaries such as age, as in the case of elementary and secondary education, or mission, as higher education. Adult education with its myriad of content areas, delivery systems, goals, and learners defies simple categorization. (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p.53)

The first challenge in trying to make sense of such a complex and diverse field is to define the concept of 'adult' for the reader, given that anyone above 18 years of age is considered an adult by law in most societies. 'Adulthood' can also be defined in biological, psychological or sociological terms. A proportion of the education literature, however, refers to adult learners as

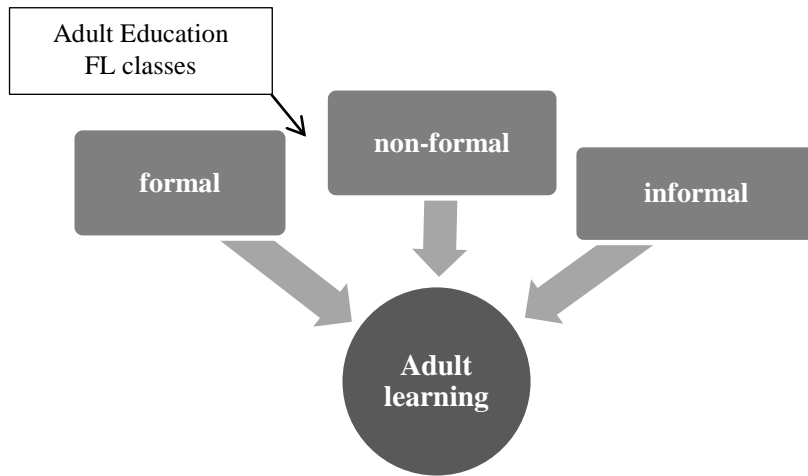
individuals “whose main life task is not related to education” (Gravett, 2005, p.7) and who “typically add the role of learner to their other full-time roles and responsibilities” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p.428). This working definition is also appropriate in the context of the present study.

There is also a need for some clarity in relation to concepts such as adult education, adult learning, formal, non-formal and informal learning. These terms are, in fact, not always used consistently and can acquire different meanings in different institutional and cultural settings, as well as in the educational literature. The European Commission (2000) provides a helpful distinction between “three basic categories of purposeful learning activity” (p.8). These are based on an earlier framework (Coombs, 1985) which classifies lifelong learning according to the type of setting in which it is most likely to occur:

- *Formal learning* usually takes place in educational and training institutions. It is structured and is subject to formal assessment as, for instance, would be the case for a mature student working towards an academic or a professional qualification.
- *Non-formal learning* is not aimed at passing exams or achieving a qualification, although it is usually organised and has a facilitator. It may take place in an educational establishment, a voluntary organisation or in the workplace (e.g., health & safety training or professional development courses). Examples of non-formal learning also include adult education programmes such as cookery, yoga or holiday language classes.
- *Informal learning* refers to any other type of learning which occurs in everyday life, whether intentional or unintentional, carried out individually or with others.

As illustrated in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**, the boundaries between the three realms are not always well defined. As explained in Chapter 1, adult FL classes may run formally but be subject to informal assessment or ‘soft assessment’ for funding requirements.

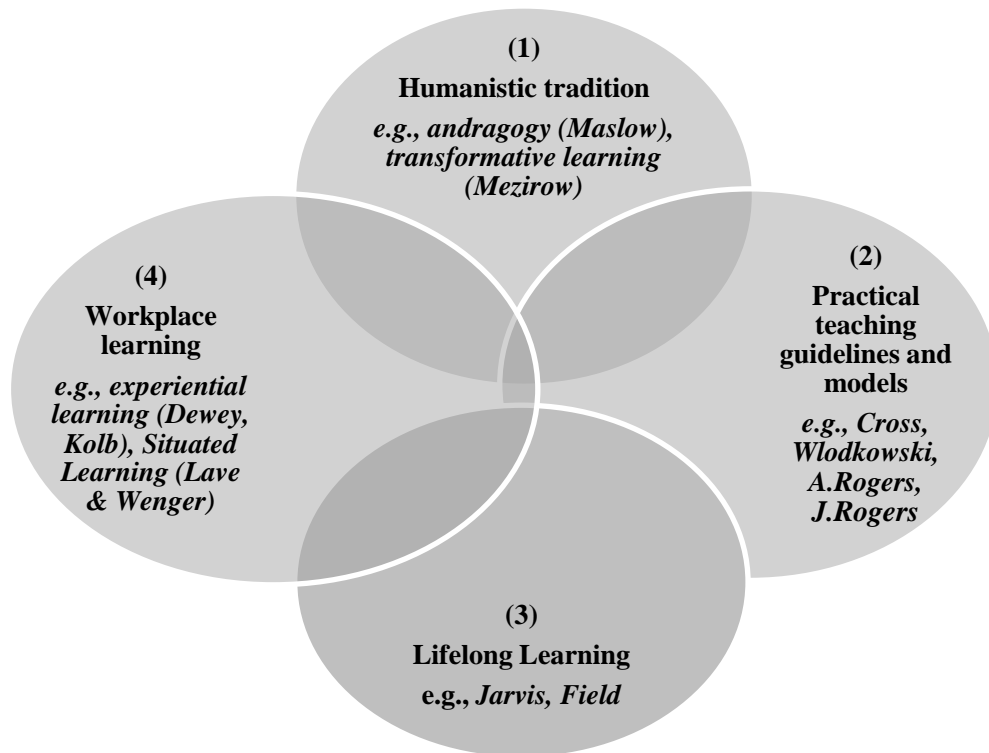
**Figure 2.1: Types of adult learning**



Nonetheless, Rubenson (2011) warns that whilst the above distinctions have been accepted by institutions and are reflected in policy documents, the scholarly literature conceptualises adult learning in more complex ways.

For simplification purposes and in order to gain a clearer picture of the field, Figure 2.2 subdivides the adult learning literature into four broad areas. Firstly, the humanistic tradition has generated certain influential theories and philosophies of adult learning, including Andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1984) and Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 1991). Secondly, there is a wide range of practical guides and models for adult teaching and learning, primarily aimed at teachers and trainers of adults (e.g., Cross, 2009; Rogers & Horrocks, 2010; Rogers, 2007; Wlodkowski, 2008). Thirdly, there is an abundance of Lifelong Learning literature (e.g., Field, 2006; Jarvis, 2010) which is partly ideological in nature and focuses on theories and policies for “the development of coherent strategies to provide education and training opportunities for all individuals during their entire life” (Jallade & Mora, 2001, p.362).

**Figure 2.2: Four suggested areas of adult learning literature**



Finally, adult learning is often linked to learning and training in the workplace and within this area certain theories and approaches have been especially popular with educators, such as experiential learning (e.g., Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984) and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Whilst the humanistic tradition has largely focussed on how adults learn rather than what motivates them to do so, andragogy offers particularly interesting insights into adult learning motivation. The second area of the literature has been generated by educators concerned with the most appropriate ways to teach adults, and these approaches tend to address motivation directly or indirectly. This is especially relevant to the current study, as it can be easily transferred to the learning situation of the adult FL language classroom.

Given that this thesis focuses on voluntary FL learning taking place in a classroom, the present review excludes the Lifelong Learning literature and its

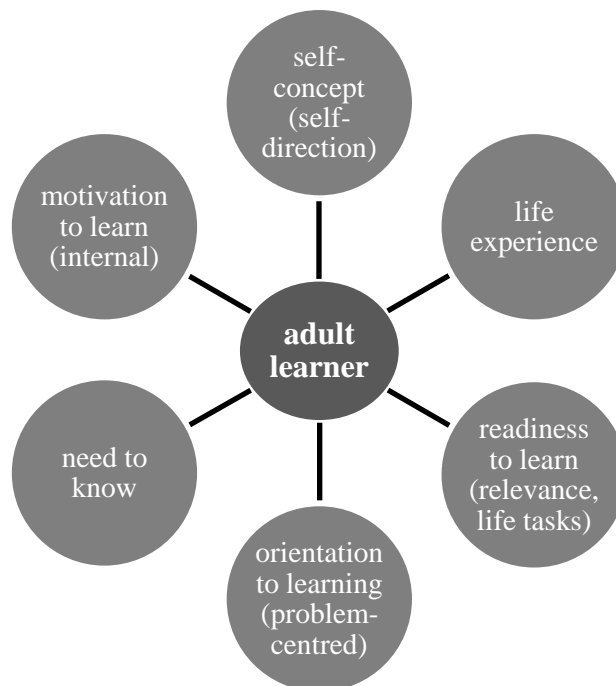
socio-economic implications, and does not explore learning and training that is specific to the workplace. It is recognised, however, that models of adult learning often overlap and all four domains may be referred to where relevant.

### 2.3. The andragogical perspective

It is of particular interest to this review how the motivation to learn and participate in learning activities may be different in adults, when compared to younger people in mainstream compulsory, full-time education.

The first step is to establish whether adults and younger learners approach learning in substantially different ways. This has been a hotly debated issue in the educational field since Knowles (1970, 1984, 1990) introduced *andragogy*, an educational theory essentially based on six assumptions about adults' approaches to learning (see Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.3: Andragogy's six assumptions about the adult learner**



Firstly, according to andragogy, as individuals mature their *self-concept* usually develops to display a greater degree of self-direction in learning, as in other life domains. Secondly, their expanding *life experience* becomes a growing basis and resource for learning. Adults tend therefore to make sense of new material and information in the light of their growing repertoire of life experiences. Thirdly, adults' propensity or *readiness to learn* tends to favour tasks which are more relevant to their lives, interests and social roles. Fourthly, they tend to display a *problem-centred* rather than content-centred orientation to learning. In later versions of the original model (Knowles, 1984; 1990) two further assumptions were added, one stating that adult learners have a *need to know* why they are engaging in learning and what they are set to gain from this, the other suggesting that "adults respond better to internal versus external motivators" (Knowles, 1990, p. 56). In other words, even though extrinsic motives, such as the prospect of getting a better job or a promotion, may be effective in motivating adult learners, intrinsic motives, such as fulfilling a personal ambition or following a personal interest, are likely to be more powerful.

Andragogy has also been widely criticised by scholars, mainly for lacking the empirical support needed to substantiate its claims (for a comprehensive review, see Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). This has led some educationalists to describe it as being closer to an ideology (Day & Baskett, 1982) or philosophy than a theory of learning. Its undeniable merit, however, has been that of bringing the adult learner into focus, by fostering debate on adult learning amongst educational theorists and practitioners alike.

From a motivational perspective, only the last of the six assumptions makes clear reference to motivation. However, I would argue that the other five can also be viewed as highly revealing, not only in terms of how adults' learn, but also in terms of what motivates them to engage and remain engaged in learning. For this reason, it is worth considering all six andragogical assumptions and the possible motivational implications of these.

The first assumption concerns the learner's *self-concept* and *self-direction*; adult learning is by and large voluntary and therefore requires individuals to take deliberate actions to enrol on a programme of study. Admittedly, adults might not be self-directed and autonomous in all the learning they undertake, but they will be self-directed and proactive in finding out how to go about pursuing their learning, for instance, by choosing to enrol on a particular course. This does not happen in school where younger learners join a programme of study by default.

*Life experience* can also be a strong source of motivation in adults. In the case of FL learning for instance, adults' motivation is often fuelled by foreign travel or contact with speakers of the target language, simply because adults are more likely to have been exposed to this sort of experiences, compared to younger learners, many of whom start learning a FL just like any other school subject.

This leads us onto the next two assumptions, *readiness to learn* and a *problem-centred orientation* to learning, both of which can also be seen through a motivational lens. Again, taking FL learning as an example, adults often pursue FL learning because they perceive it to be relevant to what they want to achieve, being it the purchase of a holiday home, communication with the non-English speaking family of a foreign partner or in business situations. Because of this purportedly pragmatic approach to learning, the fifth assumption, *need to know*, seems quite plausible: adults are likely to be more motivated if they know why they are learning something and the reasons for the learning activities which they are undertaking. This does not mean that younger students have no need to know why they are learning, but in adults, who mostly engage in learning voluntarily, motivation to learn is more likely to weaken when they stop seeing the point in what they are doing or if they do not understand why they are being taught in a certain way.

The more explicitly motivation-related assumption of andragogy, namely that the most powerful motivations for adults to learn are internal rather than external (Knowles, 1984, p.12) resonates clearly with the intrinsic element of



Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to this theory, intrinsic motives lead an individual to initiate and sustain an activity for one's own self-satisfaction and interest, rather than to achieve an external goal or reward.

Interpreting andragogy as a motivational framework, instead of just an adult learning model or philosophy, can be helpful in understanding what may spur adults into wanting to learn, but it presents a number of tensions derived from the original andragogical tenets. Firstly, some have maintained (e.g., Rogers, 2003) that there is no real evidence that adult learning is quite so distinctive; hence it could be argued that the six assumptions also ought to apply to younger learners. The question is, how young? If not applicable to young children, would some or all of the six assumptions also not apply to college or university students, for example?

The second tension relates to the fact that the tenets of andragogy are, by Knowles's admission, *assumptions* and, as such, they assume that adults display certain characteristics which many adults arguably may not. For instance, the fourth assumption stating that adult learning orientation is mainly problem-centred and requires immediate application, would not seem to be particularly relevant to adults who pursue learning in the areas of art, music or literature, for instance. Admittedly, in the mid-1980s the model became more complete with the introduction of the assumption that, "the most potent motivators are internal rather than external" (Knowles, 1984, p.12). This, however, appears to contradict the more pragmatic approaches to learning in assumptions three and four: are intrinsic motives more powerful after all? Can all these different assumptions coexist? Or are some orientations more dominant in certain adults than in others? There is admittedly a lack of clarity as to what extent the assumptions are meant to at least partially coexist in the typical adult learner and to what degree they selectively apply. The major flaw that I would argue emerges from this system, however, is the attempt to define a 'typical adult learner' in the first instance. As mentioned earlier, focussing on adult learner characteristics, whether real or purported, has indeed brought

adult learning to attention. However, it has also placed the emphasis firmly on the individual, and in a sense isolated her/him from her/his social context and multiple identities. Indeed, it appears limiting to resort to the adult learner as an abstract, monolithic figure.

In spite of the above critique and possible limitations of the model, I would maintain that andragogy nevertheless offers some very interesting pointers which have informed student-centred and motivational approaches to adult teaching and learning practice (e.g., Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Hence, rather than dwell on whether andragogy is a proven theory or a philosophy, or whether its principles apply only to adults and not children, a more helpful approach may be to sensibly cherry pick the elements which may inform our understanding of better motivational learning and teaching practices for adults, as has indeed been the case in research by many adult educators.

## **2.4. Other theories of adult learning and their relevance to motivation**

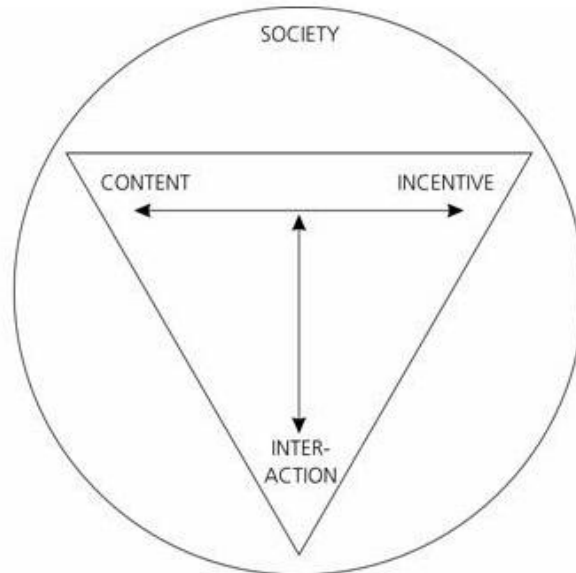
If Knowles started to sketch an image of the adult learner, others have added further brush strokes, creating an ever richer and more complex picture. What follows is an overview of two models which I have selected not as a result of their merits as complete theories of adult learning, but because of what they may reveal in terms of adult learner motivation.

### **2.4.1. Illeris's Three Dimensions of Learning**

Illeris's model (2002, 2007) combines cognitive, emotional and social dimensions in an apparently simple framework, presenting a bold attempt to provide a coherent and comprehensive theory of learning. Figure 2.4 shows the model in its elemental form.

To put it concisely, the *content* dimension of the model relates to the cognitive aspect of learning, namely how learners develop knowledge, understanding and skills to construct meaning.

**Figure 2.4: Three Dimensions of Learning Model (Illeris, 2007, p.26)**



The *incentive* dimension “is fundamentally aimed at helping the learner to control and direct emotions, feelings, motivation and volition” (Illeris, 2011a). It refers, therefore, to the affective aspect of learning which motivation is considered to be a part of. The *interaction* dimension refers more specifically to the socially situated context in which the learning takes place, including communication, cooperation and interaction between learners and their learning, as well as their wider social environment.

Although Illeris was not the first to introduce the concept of social learning (Bandura, 1977), I would argue that one of the main strengths and original features of this model is that it puts the cognitive aspect of learning on an equal par with the incentive and interactional dimensions.

Illeris (2002; 2007; 2011a) has repeatedly emphasised that the model is most primarily relevant to adults. Whilst he concedes that the cognitive processes may not be radically dissimilar in adult and younger learners, he claims that there is a noticeable difference in the other two domains. He points out that most adults are absorbed by big “life projects” (Illeris, 2011a, p.48), such as family and work, in a way that children and young people in full-time

education are not usually. While it is accepted that younger learners may also have a lot going on in their lives besides education, their investment and involvement in other ‘projects’ tends to be much more limited. Also, learning in youth generally has a preparatory feel about it and tends to be more open and receptive; young learners expect to find themselves in classrooms and learning situations as part of their educational path. Adults, on the other hand, are inclined to be more selective and consequently “not very inclined to learn something they are not interested in, or in which they cannot see the meaning or importance” (Illeris, 2011a, p.51). Put simply, adults tend to be more selective, not simply about what they learn, but also about where and with whom they do this. They are likely to have stronger social preferences and a lower degree of tolerance if they find themselves in a learning environment in which they do not feel comfortable.

If andragogy alone fails to make a compelling enough case for adult learning being ‘different’, Illeris’s theory appears to strengthen the argument that adult learning experiences need to be observed through a different lens. In particular, it cannot be ignored how affective and interactional factors interplay with cognitive elements in a way that is quite distinct from younger learners.

#### **2.4.2. Situated Learning and Communities of Practice**

Illeris (2011b) draws attention to the fact that the social and situated dimensions of learning only started to become fully appreciated in the 1990s when the concepts of *situated learning* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and *communities of practice* (CofP) (Wenger, 1999) were introduced. Their basic tenet is that learning is fundamentally a social activity defined by the situation in which it takes place.

Originally inspired by research on learning in the workplace, Lave and Wenger discovered that individuals often start from a position of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ in a community of learners or practitioners and gradually become more engaged and competent through interaction with other members within a shared domain of interest. According to Wenger (2006)

“communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (para.4). Although the concept of CofPs is essentially a theory of learning, rather than a theory of learning motivation or participation, I would contend that it is potentially relevant to adult learning motivation, particularly in the FL learning context. Firstly, although a ‘shared domain of interest’, such as learning a FL, is not sufficient to define a CofP, the adult FL classroom can easily become one if, for instance, participants positively engage in joint activities, form relationships, learn from each other and interact on a regular basis.

Secondly, it could be argued that a vibrant CofP is, by definition, self-motivating; in other words, one would assume that an unmotivated CofP would quickly cease to exist. It is also unlikely that CofPs are bound purely by a shared interest or practice. It would seem odd if the social aspect of the experience, in this case the relationships built amongst the participants through communication and collaboration, did not play some kind of role. Consequently, it may be suggested that strategies to facilitate the transition from simple adult classes into CofPs might contribute to generating and sustaining motivation.

Thirdly, as suggested by Lamb (2009), language learners in a CofP are also likely to construct new identities as members of that community. In a longitudinal study researching the motivation of high school pupils in Indonesia to learn English, he found that participants considered not only their English classroom and school as CofPs, but were also motivated by the prospect of belonging to the wider community of English users in Indonesia and beyond.

Within L2 motivation research, there is a paucity of studies incorporating Lave and Wenger’s perspectives; those which do (e.g., Lamb, 2009; Murray, 2011; Norton, 2000; Sade, 2011) have mainly focussed on contemporary notions of self and identity, and the motivating effects of L2 learners wanting to belong to real or imagined communities of L2 users. They have not looked

at CofPs as a potential catalyst of motivation and persistence in engagement from a socially-situated perspective.

Finally, it is also interesting to notice that the concepts of situated learning and CofPs are very popular in the context of workplace learning and organisational development, but have not made a substantial impact in the adult education literature in relation to either motivation or participation, although further research in this direction could provide interesting insights.

### 2.4.3. Wlodkowski’s strategies to enhance adult learner motivation

Wlodkowski and Ginsberg’s (1995) Motivational Framework for Cultural Responsive Teaching is based on the premise that adult learners’ intrinsic motivation to learn can be enhanced like “stoking a fire” (Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 308) by instructors whose practice meets the four main conditions listed below.

**Table 2.1: Four conditions of the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching**

<p><i>ESTABLISHING INCLUSION.</i> Creating a learning atmosphere in which learners and instructors feel respected by and connected to one another. Key criteria: <i>respect and connectedness</i></p> <p><i>DEVELOPING ATTITUDE.</i> Creating a favourable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and choice. Key criteria: <i>personal relevance and choice.</i></p> <p><i>ENHANCING MEANING.</i> Creating challenging, thoughtful learning experiences that include learners’ perspectives and values. Key criteria: <i>engagement and challenge.</i></p> <p><i>ENGENDERING COMPETENCE.</i> Creating an understanding that learners are effective in learning something they value. Key criteria: <i>effectiveness and authenticity.</i></p>
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*Wlodkowski and Ginsberg’s (1995, p. 29)*

From the above framework, Wlodkowski (2008) sets apart five related teacher qualities, or “five pillars” of adult motivational teaching, namely *expertise, empathy, enthusiasm, clarity and cultural responsiveness.*

For teachers, the attractive aspect of the above framework is that it provides a simple but comprehensive list of principles, which can be applicable to a wide range of situations. The underlying philosophy appears to be andragogical but the responsibility for motivating learners is very much with teachers and their skills in understanding and nurturing learners.

## **2.5. Research on what motivates adults to participate in learning**

Although it could be argued that participating in learning is not the same as being motivated to learn, this thesis maintains that adults who take part in learning voluntarily – and not because their work requires them to, for instance – must be motivated at least at some level. This section examines the adult learning participation literature from the point of view of motivation to participate in organised learning, when this is not induced by socio-economic needs or expectations.

### **2.5.1. Houle’s typology of adult learning orientations and Boshier’s Adult Participation Scale**

Houle’s (1961) seminal research was the first to draw attention to the fact that not all adults who voluntarily participate in learning are actually motivated by learning. In a ground-breaking interview study, he explored the motivation of 22 adult learners for participating in adult education courses in the US. He found that the participants’ orientations could be broadly classified as follows:

- *Goal-oriented* learners participated in learning with one or more specific aims in mind, such as improving their employability or developing skills which they could put to practical use. For them, taking part in a course was a clear means to an end.
- *Learning-oriented* participants showed real interest in the subject they were studying and generally sought knowledge for its own sake; in other words they were not particularly motivated by how they might be able to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

- *Activity-oriented* learners did not appear to be involved in learning because they were especially interested in the subject of their course or because they could see a practical outcome. Instead, they participated in learning for reasons unrelated to the content or purpose of the activity, such as meeting new people or escaping from boredom or the family environment.

In the first two types of learners, it is easy to recognise extrinsic and intrinsic motives as defined by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The intentions behind the activity-type orientations clearly reveal that participation in learning might be related to personal or social growth needs.

Several quantitative follow-up studies put Houle's research to the test in the thirty years following its publication. Boshier and Collins (1985), for instance, surveyed the motivation to participate in organised learning of 13,442 adults from as far afield as Africa, New Zealand and Canada. They found that goal and learning type orientations, as highlighted by Houle, were broadly in line with two clusters of motivational orientations found in their research. Activity orientation, however, turned out to be much more complex than Houle had proposed and was broken down in further categories. Their typology became known as the Educational Participation Scale (EPS) and was later refined further by Boshier (1991) featuring a total of 42 items grouped under seven factors, as detailed in Table 2.2

Support for Boshier's seven-factor typology was found in a later survey involving adult students attending non-credit bearing courses at a US university (Fujita-Starck, 1996) and in another study investigating motivations for learning amongst older adults in a US Learning in Retirement institute (Kim & Merriam, 2004). In this latter study, *cognitive interest* appeared to be the most influential motivator for learning, closely followed by *social contact*.



**Table 2.2: Adult Education Participation Scale (overlap with Houle’s typology)**

Variables / Categories	Items derived from Educational Participation Scale	Parallels with Houle’s typology
Professional advancement	Professional advancement; occupational goal, job preparation, job status, better job, job competence	Goal orientation
Communication improvement	Language improvement; speak better; language; write better, say and write; customs	Goal / learning / orientation
Cognitive interest	Meaningful life; general knowledge; joy of learning; enquiring mind; seek knowledge; expand mind	Learning orientation
Educational preparation	Supplement education; earlier education; acquire knowledge; further education; another school; entrance	Goal / Learning orientation
Social contact	Friendly people; good time; different people; make friends; new friends; new people	Activity orientation
Social stimulation	Overcome frustration; loneliness; relief from boredom; break routine, do something; escape relationship	Activity orientation
Family togetherness	Family change; common interest; others in family; keep up with children; children in questions; talk with children	Activity orientation

*Adapted from Boshier’s (1991: p.154)*

For the purpose of this literature review, the most noteworthy aspect of Houle’s and Boshier’s typologies is the key role played by factors which are effectively unrelated to either the subject of learning or the practical benefits which the learning could be expected to bring. Research into adult motivation to participate in learning clearly recognises the need for social contact, social stimulation, need to escape and boredom avoidance as powerful motivators, as indicated in Table 2.2. Remarkably, this perspective is lacking from mainstream L2 motivation research, perhaps because the above mentioned factors have never seemed particularly relevant to the type of populations normally investigated, namely pupils and students in full-time education, or adults engaged in L2 rather than FL learning. A further explanation could be related to methodology; it is interesting to observe that, unlike L2 motivation research which has firm roots in survey-based, quantitative studies, the first and arguably most influential study in adult motivation to participate in

learning adopted a grounded approach (Houle, 1961). I would suggest that the clear emergence of an *activity orientation* standing on an equal level with the more predictable goal and learning orientations might have something to do with the naturalistic approach of Houle's research. Yet, despite the small sample of his pioneering study, the findings related to *activity orientation* were by no means isolated or anecdotal by nature. The extensive quantitative research (e.g., Boshier, 1971; Boshier & Collins, 1985; Boshier, 1991), which subsequently put Houle's typology under scrutiny, confirmed and further problematised the existence of activity-type orientations in adult learning participation.

### **2.5.2. Life transition theories**

Life-span sociological models of adult development (Erikson, 1982; Gould, 1978; Levinson, 1986) break down human life cycles in broad phases based on the demands, challenges and opportunities which most individuals encounter in different life phases. Several authors (Aldridge, 2009; Aslanian, 2001; Aslanian & Bricknell, 1980; Cross, 1981) have highlighted how many adults who decide to participate in learning are undergoing transitions in their life situations, including retirement, divorce, bereavement, unemployment, career changes or, in the case of women, having more time available after bringing up a family.

In an attempt to discover whether adults were motivated by life transitions to participate in learning, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) surveyed approximately 1500 American over 25 years of age and found that nearly half of them had been exposed to some kind of learning in the year previous to the survey; 83% of them could identify their motivation to participate in learning - to a larger or lesser extent - with changes which had occurred or which they would like to bring about in their lives, such as career development.

In a qualitative longitudinal study on the wider benefits of adult and community learning in the UK, Aldridge (2009) interviewed over 20 adult learners three times over a period of 18 months and it emerged that for most of

them participation in learning appeared to support and stimulate transitions, which were mainly related to health, employment and changing location. For instance, some of the interviewees had recently moved to a new area and stated that attending adult classes was helping them settle, meet local people and make new friends. Another learner was learning Greek because she was planning to relocate to Greece.

The idea of a life transition or a change in life circumstances as a catalyst for adult participation in learning is an attractive one, in that it seems to imply a straight forward cause and effect. As Courtney (1992) points out, however, “despite its obviousness, too often the idea that adults learn because they have entered a transition or are responding to developmental tasks is easier to assume than to prove” (p.73). In other words, it is difficult to correlate life transition theories with motivation to participate in learning unequivocally, due to the dearth of empirical studies in this area. Even so, the relevance of life transitions in adult motivation to participate in learning cannot be dismissed a priori, as it may well be one corollary factor, if not the primary corollary factor, which might contribute to explaining why adults participate in learning.

### **2.5.3. Social participation**

Based on a comprehensive review of the North American literature of participation in adult education (PAE) from its origins until the 1980s, Courtney (1992) challenges traditional psychological models which seek to explain adults’ engagement with organised learning in terms of motives and goals.

The tendency to view PAE as a rational means-end relationship obscures the important point, rarely observed, that people might undertake formal programs of learning due to lack of clear goals, and not because of them, or a desire to obtain goals within the environment and not because they already have them. (p.153)

Courtney therefore argues that, by concentrating primarily on motives or goals residing in the individual as catalysts for PAE, it cannot be explained why these so often fail to translate into action or, in other words, why so many

learners who initially appear to be driven by strong motives or goals give up, whereas others with possibly weaker reasons for participating persist. In his critique of traditional survey studies on PAE, he points out that by focussing on reasons for starting participation, “the important phenomenon of goal haziness or goal change” (Courtney, 1992, p.87) throughout the learning experience is often overlooked. He suggests instead that what differentiates so-called ‘motivated’ and ‘unmotivated’ participants in AE is more likely to be down to an individual’s propensity to action and involvement in social activities, than deep seated goals and motives. Hence, Courtney proposes an alternative view of PAE as social participation and social action, motivated by a drive to relate to others, as well as to integrate with a social unit and the social context in which the activity takes place.

Courtney (1992) also defines adult learning “as a form of discretionary, leisure-oriented behaviour” (p.119), drawing attention to the fact that when adult education is voluntary, it must contend with many competing activities people’s busy lives. Other authors have further explored the notion of leisure participation as an alternative way to explain PAE, as outlined in the next section.

#### **2.5.4. Leisure participation**

To appreciate the potential contribution of leisure research to our understanding of PAE, it is useful to refer to Stebbins’s (1997, 2007) well-known distinction between *casual leisure* and *serious leisure*. The former covers voluntary, free-time activities which individuals perceive as enjoyable, immediately rewarding, requiring little or no training, and no sense of commitment, whereas the latter has been defined by Stebbins (1997) as:

the systematic pursuit of an amateur, a hobbyist, or a volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience”. (p.18)

It is recognised that *casual leisure* and *serious leisure* may well overlap and also that *casual leisure* can become *serious leisure*. The interesting question

here is to what extent PAE can be interpreted as a form of serious, or indeed casual, leisure and to share its motivational characteristics.

In a recent mixed-method study, Dattilo, Ewart and Dattilo (2012) explored the motivation of just over three hundred people involved in adult education leisure-oriented activities in non-formal settings, followed by interviews with 22 of the participants. The learners undertook a variety of short and long courses in subjects such as fine arts, dance, cooking, language and music. Using a modified version of Boshier's Education Participation Scale, the survey element of the study found that learners were mainly motivated by *social contact*, *cognitive interest* and *social stimulation*. Similar themes emerged from the interviews; the categories were *interpersonal* (i.e., making social contact), *intrapersonal* (participating for intrinsic motives, i.e., to pursue personal interests and for personal enjoyment) and *personal well-being*. Dattilo, Ewart and Dattilo's study (2012) uses Stebbins' model of leisure participation to explain that:

Participation in adult education courses that extends over a period of time typically involves some level of commitment and skill building found in serious leisure expression, whereas programs that contain one or a few sessions and require limited participation skills are often pursued as casual leisure. (p. 3)

An interesting view of English conversation classes as *leisure and consumption* is put forward by Kubota (2011). In a qualitative study of Japanese adults involved in *eikaiwa* (Japanese for English conversation classes), Kubota found that the motivation of the participants to develop their English speaking skills was fuelled by enjoyment of the experience, largely due to the opportunity to socialise with teachers and peers. This vision of FL learning as a product which learners 'buy into' for the sheer purposes of leisure and consumption is quite innovative and uncovers a promising and arguably uncharted territory in the area of L2 motivation.

## **2.6. Summary**

This chapter has selectively reviewed the adult learning literature with reference to motivation and participation. It started with the definitions of some key terms and concepts, and then it provided an introduction and critique of andragogy as a useful, if somewhat static, starting point for explaining why adult learning is distinctive. Next, two theories of adult learning, Illeris's (2002) Three Dimensions of Learning and Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice, were explored in terms of their relevance to motivation.

The last section was dedicated to the literature concerned with adult motivation to participate in learning, starting with Houle's (1961) seminal work on adult learning orientations. Courtney's (1992) perspective on social participation and Stebbins' notion of leisure participation seemed particularly relevant to the current study.

## 3. Theoretical perspectives in L2 motivation

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of the L2 motivation and related empirical research which has informed this study. It begins with an overview of the key themes in L2 motivation research until the mid-1990s, covering the so-called ‘social psychological’ and ‘cognitive-oriented’ periods referred to by Dörnyei (2005). The purpose of this is to contextualise more recent debates and theories.

There is then a section devoted to process-oriented perspectives and studies which emphasise the dynamic nature of L2 motivation with its temporal variations. Next, the chapter investigates more recent developments in the L2 motivation field, namely those related to self and identity models and complex dynamic systems theories. There is also a review of the limited FL motivation literature concerning adult learners.

The final part outlines the conceptual framework of the current study.

### 3.2. Social psychological perspectives and Gardner’s legacy

Considering the rapidly evolving L2 motivation landscape during the last two decades, it would be easy to agree with Dörnyei and Ushioda’s (2011) view that, “while the field as a whole still recognises Robert Gardner’s huge beneficial role (...), in the 21<sup>st</sup> century talking about integrative or instrumental orientations has a rather historical feel about it” (p. xi). Yet, a review of L2 motivation research cannot begin without reference to the socio-psychological model, not least because, as I will argue later in this chapter, its tenets are still relevant today.

Gardner’s work on L2 motivation started in the late 1950s, but only became widely known in the early 1970s with the publication of *Attitudes and*

*Motivation in Second Language Learning* (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Gardner was interested in the role played by L2 motivation in the relationship between French and English speaking communities in his native Canada. His research was based on quantitative survey studies, mostly using the highly reliable Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) developed by Gardner and colleagues. A clear link between L2 motivation and the attitudes of individuals towards integration and affiliation with the L2 community was established. Gardner also highlighted how language learning differed from other academic subjects, in that it could be influenced by learners' attitudes towards another ethnolinguistic group. The concept of *integrativeness* became the cornerstone of the social psychological model. Studies by Gardner and his associates found significant correlations between integrativeness and achievement in L2 language learning.

In Gardner's (2001) words, "the variable *Integrativeness* reflects a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to become closer to the other language community" (p.5, italics in original). Thus, the socio-psychological model appears to accommodate different degrees of *integrativeness*, ranging from the desire to fully integrate with an ethnolinguistic community by mastering its language (strong version) to a genuine openness and interest in another culture and linguistic group (weak version). Interestingly, the *weak* dimension of *integrativeness* has been mainly emphasised by Gardner in his more recent writings (e.g., 2001, 2005, 2006, 2010) and in response to criticism of integrativeness as a concept with limited applicability in the world of global English, where the target language is not necessarily identifiable with a specific ethnolinguistic community.

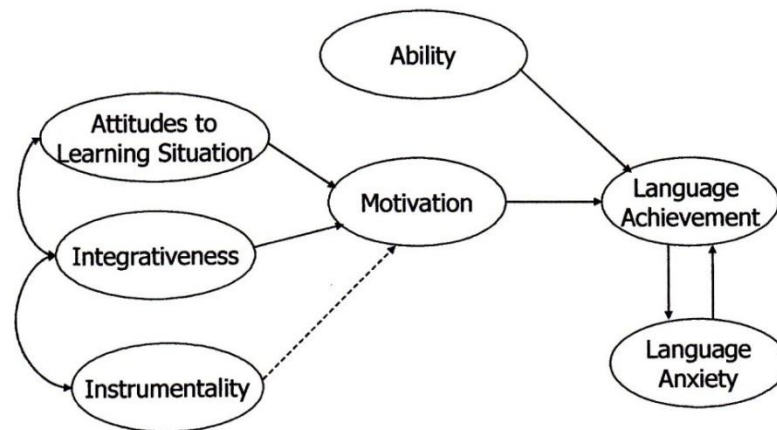
The concept of *instrumental orientation* or *instrumentality* indicates utilitarian motives in learning another language, for example the prospect of getting a better job or achieving higher status.

The original socio-psychological model underwent slight modifications in the 1980s and 1990s. Figure 3.1 is one of Gardner's later schematic



representations, showing how the main elements of the model are interconnected.

Figure 3.1: Gardner’s socio-educational Model (2005: p.6)



*Attitudes to learning situation* relate to the language learning context – taking into account the curriculum, teacher and class atmosphere – and to the informal learning context, such as the opportunities to practise the target language outside the classroom.

The model features *integrativeness* and *attitudes to learning situation* as variables which are expected to directly influence motivation, whilst *instrumentality* shows a weaker link due to the lower degree of correlation generally found with motivation. It is interesting to notice that the variable *language anxiety* is in a two-way relationship with *language achievement* but not with motivation, even though anxiety, particularly as experienced in the language classroom, has been correlated to L2 motivation (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). In Gardner’s model, individual affective variables do not appear to play a major role, which is understandable in a sense, given that his conceptualisations were more focused on L2 motivation of whole communities of learners, rather individual L2 learning experiences. It is therefore important to bear in mind that, in spite of Gardner’s framework being called *socio* or

*social-psychological*, it never made significant comment upon the micro social context in which instructed language learning occurs, or the relationships between learners, teachers and peers. These elements have in fact always been implicitly included in the *learning situation* variable which, despite its prominent position in the model was never explored by Gardner in any depth – certainly not to the extent of *integrativeness*.

After a long period during which the socio-psychological paradigm dominated L2 motivation research, other theoretical perspectives started to emerge to take into account the significant advances in cognitive educational psychology which were not reflected in Gardner's model. Moreover, it soon became apparent that Gardner's macro perspective of L2 motivation needed to be complemented by studies and theoretical models which were closer to the day-to-day reality of L2 teachers and learners. This led to considerable developments in the field in the 1990s, as outlined in the next section.

### **3.3. Cognitive and educational psychological models**

#### **3.3.1. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) and the cognitive-situated period**

The origin of what became known as the 'educational shift' in L2 motivation research is ascribed to a seminal paper by Crookes and Schmidt (1991) which called for alternatives to the predominant socio-psychological model, namely new approaches to L2 motivation which would prove more relevant to L2 educational settings. It was pointed out that the way L2 motivation had been theorised until then – concentrating essentially on learners' attitudes towards another ethnolinguistic community – had limited relevance to teachers' and students' experiences of motivation during the learning process. Another frequent criticism of Gardner's theories was that it failed to take into account that, in the real world of L2 classrooms, motivation was a dynamic concept which could vary considerably according to the learners' experiences, the learning context and other factors which went beyond their integrative or instrumental orientations. I would argue that an important, albeit less

commonly mentioned merit of this article, was its call for a diversification of L2 motivation research methodology:

We hope to see developments away from exclusive reliance on self-report questionnaires and correlation studies toward a research programme that uses survey instruments along with observation measures, ethnographic work together with action research and introspective measures, as well as true experimental studies. (p.502)

Crookes and Schmidt's paper led to a broadening of the L2 motivation research agenda in a more teaching-relevant direction and was also the catalyst for a number of articles mostly published in *The Modern Language Journal* (e.g., Oxford, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Dörnyei, 1994).

Oxford and Shearin (1994) were amongst the first to draw attention to the difference between L2 and FL learning motivation, highlighting the fact that the socio-psychological model was based on the L2 learning situation of Canada, a dual-language country; hence, they called for more research into L2 motivation in a FL learning context, with relevance to the language classroom. Another important contribution by these two authors was that of drawing on a range of educational psychology theories and their relevance in the L2 motivation field, for instance expectancy-value theories (Atkinson, 1964; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), attribution processes (Weiner 1985, 1986), goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and goal-orientation theory (Ames, 1992; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). In the 1990s, a number of Gardner's associates and former pupils were also exploring new research avenues along cognitive educational lines. It seems appropriate at this point to briefly illustrate some of these theories which are also relevant to the current study.

### **3.3.2. Relevant motivation theories from the field of psychology**

#### ***Self-determination theory***

An influential paradigm in mainstream motivation psychology, *self-determination theory* (SDT) is essentially based around the concepts of *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The former is

“motivation to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do” (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 39). *Intrinsic* motivation is considered an essential ingredient for individuals to display self-determined behaviour. *Extrinsic* motivation, on the other hand, implies a utilitarian motive, a means to an end or the avoidance of negative consequences. Far from being a two-dimensional construct, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be simultaneously present in varying degrees and guises in the same individual although one of the two is usually prevalent. Kim Noels and her Canadian associates (e.g., Noels, 2001; Noels, Clément & Pelletier, 2001; Noels, Clément, Pelletier & Vallerand, 2000) conducted extensive empirical studies to investigate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in relation to L2 learning and in particular in relation to *integrativeness* and *instrumentality*. Noels et al. (2000) confirmed that *instrumental orientation* – as conceptualised by the socio-psychological model – appeared to be closely linked to extrinsic motivation, but a correlation between integrativeness and intrinsic motivation was never convincingly established.

### ***Attribution theory***

According to *attribution theory* (Weiner, 1985, 1986), individuals tend to attribute successes and failures in their lives to a range of factors which generally fall into one or more of three categories. *Locus* indicates whether an individual attributes success or failure to internal or external causes. *Stability* refers to whether the cause of an outcome is considered permanent or changeable over time. *Control* is the perceived degree of influence which individuals believe they have over an outcome. For instance, it could be hypothesised that those who attribute a poor L2 learning history to lack of personal effort (internal cause) might be motivated to try again if they are prepared to work harder (changeable situation) and if they believe that this is within their power. However, if they attributed past failures to a total lack of aptitude for languages (internal, stable cause) which they perceive as being outside of their control, then their motivation probably would suffer.

Whilst attribution theories may seem useful at anticipating how the prior learning experiences of individuals can affect their L2 motivation, studies such as Ushioda (2001) and Williams and Burden (1999) suggest that attribution perspectives may be better suited at describing motivated and unmotivated behaviour *a posteriori*, rather than at predicting how L2 motivation is hindered or fostered by specific attribution processes.

### ***Goal theories***

Alongside SDT, *goal theories* have played a key role in the modern conceptualisations of human motivation. As part of *goal-setting theory*, Locke & Latham (1990) argue that the higher the specificity and challenge of goals, the more effort individuals are going to put into achieving them. In other words, the vaguer and easier the goals are, the least effort and motivation is likely to go into pursuing those goals.

Ames (1992) differentiates between two types of *goal orientations* which are often displayed by students. *Performance* goals are pursued in order to demonstrate personal ability, achieve good grades or impress others. *Mastery* goals on the other hand, are task- and learning-orientated. They reflect an individual's desire to learn and they tend to be driven by intrinsic interest and motivation.

What goal theories seem to have in common is a propensity for achievement.

### **3.3.3. Dörnyei's framework of L2 motivation**

Dörnyei's key contribution to the debate sparked by Crookes and Schmidt (1991) was a new framework for conceptualising L2 motivation. He considered L2 motivation at three levels: language level, learner level and learning situation level (see Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Dörnyei’s framework of L2 motivation (1994, p. 280)**

LANGUAGE LEVEL	Integrative motivational subsystem Instrumental motivational subsystem
LEARNER LEVEL	Need for achievement Self-confidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language use anxiety</li> <li>• Perceived L2 competence</li> <li>• Causal attributions</li> <li>• Self-efficacy</li> </ul>
LEARNING SITUATION LEVEL	
<i>Course-specific motivational</i>	Interest (in the course) components Relevance (of the course to one’s needs) Expectancy (of success) Satisfaction (one has in the outcome)
<i>Teacher-specific motivational components</i>	Affiliative motive (to please the teacher) Authority type (controlling vs. autonomy-supporting) Direct socialisation of motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modelling</li> <li>• Task Presentation</li> <li>• Feedback</li> </ul>
<i>Group-specific motivational components</i>	Goal-orientedness Norm and reward system Group cohesiveness Classroom goal structure (cooperative, competitive or individualistic)

The language level mirrors Gardner’s key orientations, integrative and instrumental, whereas the learner level addresses individual psychological and cognitive differences. An innovative element is the learning situation level because it is specific to the language classroom, namely the experience of learners on a day-to-day, lesson-by-lesson basis. Particular importance is given to teacher-specific and group-specific motivational components, which had not been previously particularised to this extent. Elements ‘outside’ the learner (such as course-, teacher- and group-specific factors) are therefore emphasised and seen as influential on L2 motivation. In short, this education-friendly model is intuitively appealing and relevant to L2 learners and teachers, not just researchers, particularly if considered alongside other work on group dynamics

in the classroom (e.g., Dörnyei & Malderez, 1998; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003) and the practical advice provided by the ‘Ten commandments for motivating language learners’ (Dörnyei & Csisér, 1998). One shortcoming of Dörnyei’s (1994) framework, however, is that it lacks a temporal dimension and fails therefore to take into account possible changes of motivation over time; this chapter continues with the introduction of some theoretical perspectives which contributed to expanding the L2 motivation research agenda in this direction.

### **3.3.4. Williams and Burden’s social constructivist approach**

Williams and Burden’s (1997) perspective on L2 motivation was mainly aimed at informing language teachers and help them better understand language learners, in the light of significant developments in the area of educational psychology. The first important aspect of this model is that it presents a taxonomy of factors which are motivationally noteworthy for the L2 learner (Table 3.1).

In this model motivation is seen here as influenced by a number of elements or motivational influences, which the authors classify as internal or external to the learner. The internal factors seem to represent an extension of the Learner Level motivational components in Dörnyei’s (1994) framework of L2 motivation (Table 3.1), whilst Williams and Burden’s external factors share common ground with Dörnyei’s Learning Situation Level. What is striking about Williams and Burden’s model is that it puts the language learner firmly at the centre of the L2 learning experience. Learners’ *affective states*, such as confidence, anxiety and fear, are recognised as important, as are age and gender, two factors that had been virtually ignored by L2 motivation research until then.

This approach to L2 motivation is, by its authors’ definition, *social constructivist*, because it is based on the fundamental principle that “learners make their own sense of the world, but they do so within a *social context*, and through *social interactions*” (Williams & Burden, 1997, p.28).

**Table 3.2: Williams and Burden’s model of motivation (1997, pp. 138-140)**

INTERNAL FACTORS	EXTERNAL FACTORS
<p>Intrinsic interest of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arousal of curiosity</li> <li>• optimal degree of challenge</li> </ul> <p>Perceived value of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal relevance</li> <li>• anticipated value of outcomes</li> <li>• intrinsic value attributed to the activity</li> </ul> <p>Sense of agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• locus of causality</li> <li>• locus of control RE process and outcomes</li> <li>• ability to set appropriate goals</li> </ul> <p>Mastery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feelings of competence</li> <li>• awareness of developing skills and mastery in the chosen area</li> <li>• self-efficacy</li> </ul> <p>Self-concept:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• realistic awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses in skills required</li> <li>• personal definitions and judgements of success and failure</li> <li>• self-worth concern</li> <li>• learned helplessness</li> </ul> <p>Attitudes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to language learning in general</li> <li>• to the target language</li> <li>• to the target language community and culture</li> </ul> <p>Other affective states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confidence</li> <li>• anxiety, fear</li> </ul> <p>Developmental age and stage</p> <p>Gender</p>	<p>Significant others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents</li> <li>• teachers</li> <li>• peers</li> </ul> <p>The nature of interaction with significant others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mediated learning experiences</li> <li>• the nature and amount of feedback</li> <li>• rewards</li> <li>• the nature and amount of appropriate praise</li> <li>• punishments, sanctions</li> </ul> <p>The learning environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comfort</li> <li>• resources</li> <li>• time of day, week, year</li> <li>• size of class and school</li> <li>• class and school ethos</li> </ul> <p>The broader context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wider family networks</li> <li>• the local education system</li> <li>• conflicting interests</li> <li>• cultural norms</li> <li>• societal expectations and attitudes</li> </ul>



The authors argue that L2 motivation is different in each learner depending on how social and contextual influences shape his or her reality. They conclude that “what motivates one person to learn a FL and keeps that person going until he or she has achieved a level of proficiency with which he or she is satisfied, will differ from individual to individual” (p.120).

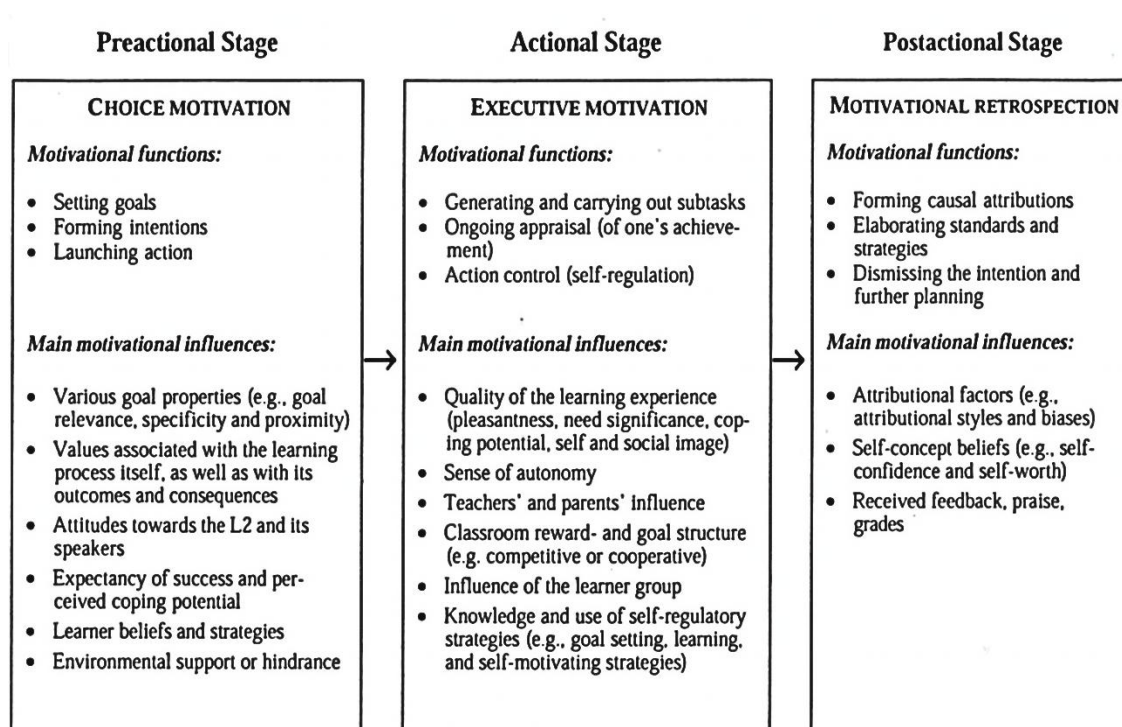
In recognising that what instigates L2 motivation in individuals is as important as what keeps them going, Williams and Burden (1997, p.121) define L2 motivation as a three-stage temporal process. The first stage (“reasons for doing something”) is associated with motivational arousal, the second (“deciding to do something”) with the making of a conscious decision to act, and the third (“sustaining the effort, or persisting”) with sustaining the effort required to achieve a goal or a set of goals. By recognising the dynamic, multifaceted nature of L2 motivation and the large number of possible factors which can affect it, Williams & Burden’s model is clearly one that lends itself well to qualitative, exploratory studies.

Berardi-Wiltshire (2009), for instance, used a social constructivist perspective to explore the individual constructions of Italian identity (*Italianità*) in five Italian heritage learners in New Zealand. In a longitudinal interview study, she found that the learners’ construction of their *Italianità* was crucial to their initial motivation but, as time progressed, it was influenced in different ways by a multitude of internal and external factors leading to fluctuations and shifts in individual motivation.

### **3.3.5. Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 motivation**

Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) proposed a three-stage motivational framework in order to bring language motivation research closer to the learning and teaching situation, so that it would acquire more pedagogical relevance, while considering temporal implications and changes of motivation over time. The model is based on Action Control Theory (Heckhausen & Kuhl, 1985), which conceptualises motivation as a sequential self-regulatory process, made up of three stages, as illustrated in Figure 3.2

Figure 3.2: Process Model of L2 motivation (based on Dörnyei 2001a; p. 22)<sup>2</sup>



- The *preactional* stage refers to goals and intentions prior to starting learning and is ruled by *choice* motivation.
- The *actional* stage is driven by *executive* motivation and is largely influenced by the actual learning experience.
- The *postactional* stage is linked to motivational *retrospection* because it is the phase when the learner takes stock of the experience.

The model features three comprehensive sets of *motivational influences* which are related to each stage. Unlike the models described earlier, where all potential motivational factors are classified by ‘type’ – e.g., language level, learner level and learning situation level in Dörnyei’s (1994); external factors and internal ones in Williams and Burden’s (1997) – the Process Model allocates these to different temporal phases in the belief that certain influences

<sup>2</sup>Dörnyei’s (2001a) version of the model is slightly simplified compared to the original one (Dörnyei-Ottó, 1998), but arguably clearer.

are likely to take effect at certain times in the L2 learning process. One of the model's strengths is therefore its focus on the temporal dimension of motivation and the way this can be mapped across a finite learning journey, for instance an individual language course, whereas the socio-psychological model is more relevant to the long-term L2 motivation required to become fluent in another language. The Process Model also puts a strong emphasis on the education context where the learning occurs, making the model useful for researching motivation in FL learning contexts. For this reasons, the Process Model was adopted as a loose conceptual framework for the present study.

The *actional stage* in particular is fuelled by executive motivation and points at the *situated nature* of L2 motivation. As well as by Dörnyei (2005), the importance of this has been highlighted by Ellis (2004) who goes even further by maintaining that “one of the most promising recent advances in the study of motivation from an applied perspective is the attention being paid to how teachers can motivate their students” (p. 539).

The Dörnyei-Ottó's Process Model, however, also has some shortcomings which Dörnyei himself has highlighted (2005; 2009). The first challenge refers to the difficulty in defining the beginning and end of a particular action and to the fact the three stages outlined above might overlap rather than develop in a sequential manner. The model also fails to take into account that different motivational behaviours may take place simultaneously, rather than during well-defined phases, and motivational influences are difficult to confine to a specific stage. I would also argue that the ideal self-determined, goal-oriented learner and rational language learner may not be the norm. Hence, whilst this model is a good starting point for research into process-oriented L2 motivation – as in the case of the current study – the reality of an individual, and even more significantly, of groups of individuals engaged in L2 learning is much more complex and dynamic than this model implies.

### **3.4. Ushioda's qualitative perspective**

As highlighted in Section 3.3.1, Crookes and Schmidt (1991) called for the adoption of a wider range of research methodologies in L2 motivation to complement the traditional quantitative instruments, such as test batteries and questionnaires, which were used extensively during the socio-psychological period. Others (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005) have since expressed support for the use of qualitative and mixed-method approaches with the purpose of exploring, through a different lens, motivated learning behaviours and the factors shaping them. For some time, Ushioda has arguably been the leading voice in support of qualitative methodologies in L2 motivation research. This section evaluates her contribution to the L2 motivation debate since the mid-1990s.

Ushioda's best known empirical study (1996, 2001) was a small-scale, longitudinal investigation conducted among L1-English undergraduate students of French at an Irish university. While traditional L2 motivation research designs had tended to focus on causal relationships between motivational variables and L2 achievement, this study was concerned with exploring the learners' own working conceptions of their L2 motivation and its evolution over time. Open-ended, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 20 students, 14 of whom were reinterviewed 14-15 months later. Different and evolving patterns of effective motivational thinking emerged from the data elicited. Most learners seemed to derive their motivation from positive L2-learning experiences and found learning French generally enjoyable and rewarding in itself. In other words, attribution turned out to be a powerful motivator for this group of learners. Students who had had less successful L2 learning histories, on the other hand, tended to direct their motivation towards future goals and incentives, placing less importance on past experience. In essence, both groups of students appeared to have developed L2 motivated mind sets, albeit in different ways. The follow-up interviews, however, revealed that the motivational thinking of the first group of students was also starting to become more goal oriented, indicating that goal dimensions are not necessarily at the root of L2 motivation for many learners, but can develop and

crystallize over time. This echoes the concept of “goal haziness” (Courtney, 1992) mentioned in Section 2.5.3 to highlight how participation in learning is often not fuelled by clear vision and purpose. One of the main contributions of this study is that it provided a fresh and novel perspective of L2 motivation, based on empirical findings derived from qualitative data and research perspective.

Ushioda (2003; 2007) has also argued that sociocultural perspectives have much to offer to L2 motivation research, maintaining that, despite being fundamentally an educational paradigm, sociocultural theory provides a possible framework to explain concepts of L2 motivation as socially mediated and shaped by the sociocultural learning environment. A brief parenthesis on the sociocultural debate in SLA is appropriate at this point.

Sociocultural theories came to the fore in SLA when a position paper by Firth & Wagner (1997) sparked an intense debate in the *Modern Language Journal* (for a summary, see Firth & Wagner, 2007). The paper called for a reconceptualisation of SLA to incorporate sociocultural perspectives and warned against the limitations of focussing research on cognitive processes in SLA. The debate contributed to the 'social turn' (Block, 2003) in SLA, advocating for a more socially informed and interdisciplinary approach to the study of second language acquisition.

Rooted in the work of the Russian educational psychologist Vygotsky (1978), sociocultural theories are concerned with the key role played by social interaction in enhancing cognitive skills. Very simply, the original theories maintained that children learn through playing and interacting with older siblings or adults. The concept of Zone of Proximal Development, in other words, learning from nearby peers, has been put forward as a possible element supporting SLA (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995) and an argument can be made for its relevance in the learning of individuals beyond childhood. Rueda and Moll (1994) applied sociocultural perspectives to the construction of learning motivation and challenged what they viewed as “a strong bias towards an individualistic orientation, with little attention to context or culturally based

influences” (p.119) in mainstream educational psychological approaches. According to this perspective, learning motivation is not simply inherent to each individual, but it is socially negotiated, socially distributed and context specific (p.131), in other words it is shaped by the sociocultural reality in which it occurs.

In terms of the role played by sociocultural theory on L2 motivation Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011) state:

(...) individual motivation is not simply ‘influenced by’ sociocultural factors in the surrounding context, but the sociocultural context becomes attuned to the goals, standards and values of the collective participants who define the context and shape its practices. Sociocultural theory thus takes the view that people are not just products but also active producers of their own social and cultural environments. (p.34)

The same authors stress, however, that sociocultural perspectives should not be confused with the social context of the L2 learning environment. In this regard, one could recall as examples the *learning situation level* in Dörnyei’s (1994) framework and the *external factors* in Williams and Burden’s (1997) social constructivist model of L2 motivation (cf. Sections 3.3.3. and 3.3.4 respectively). Pintrich (2003) describes these as ‘weak’ versions of situated motivational influences in psychological terms. I would argue that the two perspectives – social/situational in relation to the learning context and sociocultural in the Vygotskian sense – are not poles apart but are interdependent to some extent, in that the former, on a micro level, can feed into the latter in a more holistic sociocultural perspective.

Ushioda’s recent motivational thinking (2009) has led to a novel way of conceptualising the L2 learner. In her words:

Let me summarise then what I mean by a person-in-context relational view of motivation. I mean a focus on real persons, rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; a focus on the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives and intention; a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and is inherently part of. My argument is that we need to take a relational (rather than linear)

view of these multiple contextual elements, and view motivation as an organic process that emerges through the complex system of interrelations. (p.220)

What is immediately striking about this perspective is its resonance with the reality of adult learners, their multiple role, identities and “life projects” (Illeris, 2011a, p.48).

### 3.5. Identity models

A recent conceptualisation of L2 motivation based on contemporary notions of self and identity has been developed in recent years by Dörnyei’s (2005, 2009). The L2 Motivational Self System is a tripartite construct made of three components:

- The *Ideal L2 self* implies that language learners generally have some sort of vision of what it would be like to become a proficient L2 user and this should be a motivating drive to do what is necessary to achieve that goal, with the aim of filling the gap between our present and our desired, L2 self.
- The *Ought-to self* concerns the qualities and required actions which an individual believes s/he ‘ought to’ possess or develop to achieve the L2-Self status.
- The *L2 Learning experience* is very similar to the situation or context where the learning is taking place. It can include teacher, peers, course curriculum or any element which contributes to L2 learning.

The *Ideal L2 self* construct is closely connected to Gardner’s concept of *integrativeness*, which, Dörnyei argues, is now outdated. In his view, while appropriate to a Canadian bilingual context, *integrativeness* is considerably less relevant in FL learning contexts in which learners do not live in the country where the language is spoken, and more importantly, it is almost completely loses relevance as far as ‘world English’ is concerned, where the target language is not associated with a particular culture or country.

Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) became particularly aware of this issue when conducting a large scale study involving over 13,000 secondary school L2 learners of various languages. Their motivation was highly correlated with a

variable which had originally been identified as *integrativeness* but, in actual fact, this appeared to be more in line with the learner's *ideal L2-self*. In the case of these learners, *integrativeness* did not seem to fit completely because the target culture of the languages they were learning appeared as quite remote to these learners.

Dörnyei (2005) goes as far as saying: "I would suggest that we can get an even more coherent picture if we leave the term 'integrative' completely behind and focus more on the identification aspects and on the learner's self-concept" (p. 98). In other words, he proposes that *integrativeness* should be dismissed and replaced by the *Ideal L2 self*.

This attempt to produce a paradigm shift in favour of the *Ideal L2 self* leaves a number of unanswered questions. The first question concerns how valid the system actually is in its entirety. Within a few years since its launch, a number of studies on the L2 Self-system, mostly conducted by Dörnyei's associates (e.g., Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009) have been published, leaving its author in no doubt as to the validity of the L2 Motivational Self System: "The emerging picture is – luckily – straightforward: all findings reported in the literature to date provide confirmation for Dörnyei's theory" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Yet, one of its three key components, the *L2 Learning Experience*, has so far not been subject to empirical research like the other two dimensions. Dörnyei (2009) does not discuss the *L2 Learning Experience* on the grounds that the motivation techniques associated with it "have been described well in past discussions of traditional motivational strategies" (p.32). The reader is then simply referred to an earlier monograph on this topic (Dörnyei, 2001).

The general applicability of the system to different contexts has also been challenged by Busse (2009) in her review of Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2009) volume, *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*:

It is fair to say that attention has focused mainly on the ideal self component of the tripartite self system. This is to say, while the importance of the L2 ideal self for learners of English as a FL has convincingly been demonstrated, the system itself has yet to be validated. (p.742)



Interestingly, neither Dörnyei (2009) nor Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) make any reference to an empirical study by Kormos and Csizér (2008) which finds some corroboration for *the L2 Ideal self* whereas “the dimension of *Ought-to-self* could not be identified” (p.349). Concerns about the seemingly hasty validation of the L2 Motivational Self System comes also from MacIntyre, Mackinnon and Clément (2009) who warn against “throwing the baby out with the baby water” with reference to the suggested demise of *integrativeness* in favour of the L2 Self. In particular, the authors point out possible problems with measuring the L2 self empirically due to its complexity.

A further question I would raise regards the applicability of the system to certain contexts, for instance the early stages of FL learning in adult learners, as in the current study. Given the more consolidated sense of self by adults and their busy lives, requiring them to juggle a number of other identities, such as, employee, boss, parent, etc., it seems unlikely that a strong sense of L2 Ideal self would find the space to develop. This might clearly be different in an adults who have moved to the country where the language is spoken as they would be fully immersed and have the possibility to integrate in the guest community. In such case, why not retain the notion of *integrativeness* alongside the L2 self?

Furthermore, in a situation where one is learning several languages, would we be talking about an Ideal L2, L3 or a multilingual self? How many possible L2 selves can coexist in this theory is unclear.

### **3.6. Complex dynamic systems**

Dynamic or complex system theories have been studied in the field of pure sciences for years but have only recently been addressed by SLA (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron , 2008). Complex systems initiate from chaos and a non-linear development of factors and causes. They do not follow a sequential, rational and measurable progression, but do eventually self-organise and follow patterns. It seems that SLA is compatible with a complex dynamic system

theorisation and consequently there are indications that L2 motivation could also benefit from this new paradigm (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

One of the most interesting implications of dynamic systems theories in SLA is the call for more extensive use of qualitative methodologies which are able to focus on context and change, rather than fixed variables. Interestingly, dynamic systems theory also puts great emphasis on learning context and groups. In Larsen-Freeman and Cameron's (2008) words:

So to understand language learning processes, we need to collect data about individuals (as well as groups), and about individuals as members of groups as well as working alone. When researching groups, we need to see them as interconnecting systems of individuals. (p. 26)

This seems to have particular relevance for pedagogical research.

### **3.7. Research into adult foreign language learning motivation**

Empirical studies looking at adult FL motivation amongst L1-English learners are very scarce. This section focusses on two studies which were conducted in a very similar vein to the current research and present many parallels.

Arthur and Beaton (2000) investigated attitudes and motivation of adult learners of modern languages taking part in weekly evening and day classes at Goldsmiths College, London. They compared questionnaire responses provided by 410 adult language learners in 1990 and 280 learners in 1997 with the aim of firstly finding out why they had joined a FL class, secondly their attitudes towards studying the language, and finally what kept them motivated. Both sets of questionnaires showed similar results. The findings suggested that most of the learners had joined adult classes before and were well-educated, confirming that positive learning experiences earlier in life contribute to participation in lifelong learning. The study also found that most participants were motivated to learn a FL by the prospects of travel and a third of them by having friends or family speaking that language. In terms of why participants had joined the course, more than half stated that they enjoyed the social dimension of learning with other people. In terms of what had kept the

learners motivated, the four main factors appeared to be a sense of achievement, visits to the countries concerned and the tutor in this order. Travel to the country was reported to be more important than the tutor in 1997 than in 1990. It is interesting to observe that extrinsic motives, such as learning a language for work appeared fairly low in the list, confirming that adult FL learning tends to be considered more of a leisure pursuit than a vocational one. Because of the general nature of the questionnaires used in this study, as stressed by the authors, their results cannot be considered statistically significant. Nevertheless, it provides a picture of adult L2 learning in the UK which is fairly typical and recognizable in similar contexts.

Some validation for the conclusion of the above study can be found in a research carried out in a very similar setting which was however concerned with the other side of the coin, namely the reasons for non-completion of FL courses by adults at FE colleges (Gibson & Shutt, 2002). This was a small-scale, interview study involving 22 adult learners who had dropped out from a range of FL courses. Besides some issues concerning lack of clarity of pre-course information about course levels and assessment procedures, the other reasons why learners had left were largely to do with the tutor, the group and the needs of the learner. It emerged that “issues such as the management of group dynamics, the nurturing of confidence, the ability to generate positive learning ethos, were all important and interrelated factors that had a strong bearing upon non-completion” (p.62). Learners who had stopped attending, mentioned feeling uncomfortable in the presence of other learners in the class who would show off or be clearly at a different level. They also felt excluded if the tutor appeared to favour certain learners or not give everyone the opportunity to participate or feel valued within the group. The study suggested that the reasons given by several learners for dropping out was linked to a loss of confidence, particularly when their needs were not taken into account or the tutors failed to be sensitive to them. Drop in confidence were also linked to feeling out of their depth when unable to understanding grammar terms, which

was often put down to the perception of not having the same grammatical background as other students in the class.

The data indicated, however, that learners had different and sometimes conflicting requirements. For instance, one learner had struggled to cope with the use of the target language by the teacher whereas others felt that there was not enough FL spoken. In essence, Gibson and Shutt (2002) highlighted the fragile nature of L2 motivation in adult learners which is very much linked to their self-confidence in the context of the class situation and especially in relation to group and teacher. This study did not ask the learners why they had decided to learn the language in the first place but it is interesting to observe that none of the participants seemed to point out a change of mind or decreased interest in learning the language as one of the demotivating factor. All the data pointed to a decrease in motivation due to their expectations not being met (for instance realising that language learning would require more than they thought it would) and in particular not feeling at ease in the classroom context.

### **3.8. Summary**

This chapter has presented a concise overview of key theoretical perspectives in the L2 motivation. There was a summary and discussion of the main debates over the past 40 years of research in the field. Particular attention was paid to the process-oriented period of the 1990s and the Dörnyei-Ottó (1998) Process Model of L2 motivation which was adopted as a loose conceptual framework for the present study. The chapter also discussed Ushioda's contribution to the debate and also some quite recent developments in the areas of L2 identity theory and complex dynamic systems theories. The final section provided an insight into two empirical studies conducted with L1-English adult learners, in a similar vein as the present research.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes and discusses the methodological approach and techniques employed in the present study. It begins by setting out the key research aim, questions and their rationale. A case is then made for the use of a qualitative, interpretive paradigm, and for the adoption of a longitudinal research design. The following sections outline the research methods and data collection procedures adopted, including a justification for their choice. The chapter also details how the data was analysed. Issues of trustworthiness and the ethical considerations which guided the study are also discussed. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

### 4.2. Study aim and research questions

As anticipated in the Introduction, the aim of this research was to explore the motivation of adult learners during an Italian beginners' course and, more specifically, to uncover the factors which the participants perceived as key in shaping and sustaining their motivation during a nine-month period.

Although a study of this kind was never designed to identify correlations between motivational variables and retention rates, it was believed that it might help to shed light on the factors contributing to the completion of a beginner FL course by adult learners when others fail to do so. Following on from the research aim, the study set out to address three main questions:

- How do adult L1-English learners view their motivation during a beginner's FL course?
- What factors do they perceive to be motivationally significant at different stages of the course and overall?
- In their view, how do the above account for their completion of the course and for their wish to carry on learning the language?

The above research questions encapsulate what Mason (2002) describes as “the intellectual puzzle” (p.19) which, in my case, developed during a ten year period of teaching Italian in adult and higher education. The puzzle began to emerge as a series of simple questions, which many reflexive teachers of adults are likely to ask themselves at some point: What makes adult language learners tick? What is it that drives some to return week after week when so many drop out, particularly in the early stages of learning a language?

Seeking clarity in the L2 motivation research literature led, instead, to further questions and problematizing. For instance, could existing L2 motivation theories explain the dynamics of FL learning motivation in adults? How did *foreign language* motivation differ from *second language* motivation? In terms of a comprehensive theory, would Gardner’s concept of *integrativeness* be relevant to my students or would Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self-system be more widely applicable? Should the answer be found in the cognitive, in the affective domain or elsewhere altogether? It soon became apparent that it would be beyond the scope of this research to explore a large number of issues in any depth. Nevertheless, the fundamental question of what generates and, above all, sustains the motivation of adults on a FL beginners’ course from their perspective, has remained the central focus of this study.

In formulating aims and questions, care was taken to avoid variable and causative relationships, which research of this type cannot attempt to make. Instead, the study set out to describe, explore and ultimately interpret and understand the participants’ stories and experiences. The next sections discuss the choices of research paradigm, research type and tradition employed by the study.

### **4.3. Methodological considerations and justifications**

#### **4.3.1. Epistemological and ontological position**

Epistemology and ontology are fundamental concepts for the understanding of research practices, even though they belong more to the domain of philosophy

than to empirical research. Epistemology is also known as the theory of knowledge. It is an explanation of how to acquire knowledge of a certain reality, in terms of who can be a knower and how knowledge claims acquire legitimacy. When we talk about *epistemologies* or *epistemological positions*, we are in other words referring to the conceptualisation of knowledge. Ontology refers to what can be known; it concerns the object of knowledge or the nature of the reality which we are seeking to investigate, and it is therefore closely linked to epistemology.

In the field of L2 motivation research, epistemology and ontology are rarely discussed. If methodological choices are informed by epistemological and ontological positions (Mason, 2002), then the prevailing quantitative methodologies adopted in L2 motivation research appear mainly to have followed positivist lines. Although according to Silverman (1997, p.12) “‘positivism’ is a very slippery and emotive term”, it is not intended in a pejorative way here, but simply as one of the key research paradigms or “worldviews” (Creswell, 1994, p.8). Positivist epistemology and ontology maintain that there are real and observable truths out there, in other words empirically verifiable, objective knowledge, which can only be uncovered using scientific methods.

On the other hand, motivation is by definition - or by its many definitions – an elusive and multifaceted concept. Hence, there are a number of legitimate *what ifs*. What if that which there is to know cannot be fully explored by carefully designed surveys? What if, given the chance, the participants moved into uncharted territories beyond the parameters of the most valid and reliable questionnaire design? What if, given the opportunity to speak about their unfolding experience on several occasions, they revealed more than during a one-off interview? What if, instead of filling in a questionnaire quickly and perhaps thoughtlessly in some cases, they were able to ‘tell their story’ with a degree of freedom? In this case, our ontological and epistemological perspectives would be quite different. This does not imply that certain epistemological positions are mistaken or invalid, but that other research

paradigms should be taken into account, if we are to trust the learners as *the knowers* and their words, to a great extent, as *what is known* of their experience.

This choice of epistemological and ontological stance has therefore informed the research approach of the current study. More specifically, the study is framed by an interpretive paradigm in the social constructionist vein (Creswell, 2007; Schwandt, 2000), adopting the view that reality is socially and culturally constructed and situated.

#### **4.3.2. Rationale for a qualitative approach**

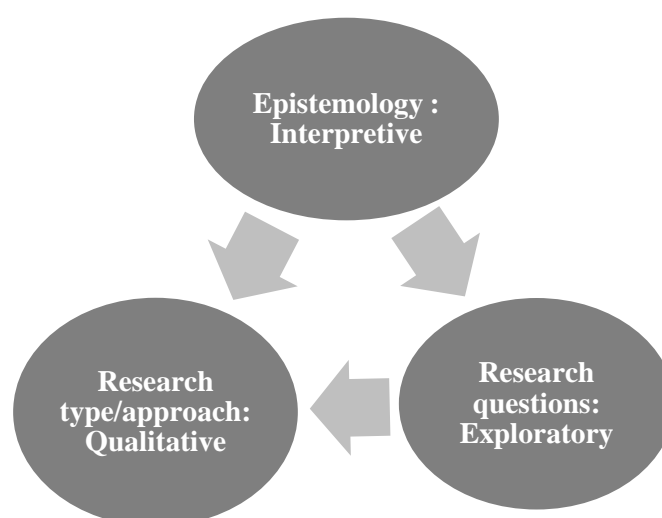
One may question what makes qualitative research so different and why it may be beneficial to the L2 motivation debate. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) point out:

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

From the very beginning, the aim of this study was to understand the experiences of the participants as explained by them. Thus, a qualitative approach was deemed to be well-suited for this type of research and its aim.

It is often emphasised that methodological choices should fit the research question and not the other way round (e.g., Silverman, 2006, pp.8-9). However, it could be argued that a researcher's epistemological and ontological stance with regard to a certain 'problem' or issue to be investigated can legitimately influence the kind of research questions which are asked and consequently the choice of methodology, as suggested in Figure 4.1. In this study, research questions were derived from the epistemological and ontological perspectives described above; these, alongside the research questions, informed the decision to take a qualitative approach.



**Figure 4.1: Nature of research paradigm, questions and approach**

A further reason for choosing to conduct a qualitative study came upon noticing a clear methodological gap in the L2 motivation literature. As highlighted in Chapter 3, for a long time L2 motivation research was largely concerned with the causative relationship between motivation and success in learning a foreign or second language. The widening of the L2 motivation research agenda in the 1990s and beyond (see Section 3.3) led to a substantial increase in publications in the field, but limited innovation in terms of methodology. At a time when qualitative research designs were being more widely adopted in the social sciences, this did not happen in L2 motivation research, with Ushioda (1996; 2001; 2003) emerging as one of the solitary, qualitative voices in the field.

It is worth noting, however, that L2 motivation research has seen a flourishing of mixed-method studies in recent years (e.g., Lamb, 2004; Kormos, Csizér, Menyhárt, & Török, 2008; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Kyriacou & Zhu, 2008; Ryan, 2009; Chang, 2010; Busse & Williams, 2010), bringing some change to the L2 motivation methodological landscape. Many argue that mixed-method approaches get the best of both worlds: quantitative reliability and validity, alongside richness of naturalistic data. Mixing methods

can also be helpful for triangulation purposes and to break down the old qualitative vs. quantitative dichotomy in the social sciences. Others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Howe, 2004) contend that mixed-methods designs usually imply a superiority of quantitative over qualitative methods, with the latter generally playing a lesser role. While the contribution of mixed-method studies to L2 motivation research is indisputable, the current study adopts a purely qualitative approach rather than a mixed approach for two key reasons; firstly, due to the paucity of qualitative studies in the field of L2 motivation research, as already mentioned; and secondly, due to the epistemological and ontological premises of the study, which are firmly grounded in the interpretivist paradigm.

The next section addresses some issues concerning the researcher's position in qualitative research and in the present study.

#### **4.3.3. Considerations about the researcher's role**

Adopting an interpretive paradigm poses a number of challenges for the researcher. In the first instance, "interpretive researchers recognise that they are part of, rather than separate from, the research topics they investigate" (Morrison, 2012, p.20) and cannot therefore remain completely objective to the phenomena they are researching. Yet, they have to describe reality and meanings as perceived by the research participants and without bias. Thirdly, they have to interpret the participants' accounts in a trustworthy way, avoiding distortion and misrepresentations (Morrison, 2012, p.20). Moreover, as Bryman (2001) explains:

There is a double interpretation going on: the researcher is providing an interpretation of others' interpretations. Indeed, there is a third level of interpretation going on, because the researcher's interpretations have to be further interpreted in terms of the concepts, theories, and literature of a discipline. (p. 15)

With regard to the present study, a further factor to carefully consider was my position as a teacher of Italian and the possible influence which this may have on data collection, analysis and interpretation. There are qualitative research

traditions which require the researchers to become part of research together with their subjects. Researchers in these cases reflect constantly on their own position and experience whilst conducting the research. Although I could not and did not wish to make myself invisible, I tried to step back as much as possible from becoming an object of study, firmly believing that the key actors should be the participants and that the focus should be on how they constructed meaning in relation to their own experiences as adult learners of a FL, but also as individuals, social beings and ultimately “persons in context” (Ushioda, 2009).

Stronach and MacLure (1997) however, question whether qualitative researchers can really “let the subject ‘speak for himself’” and warn that “authorial ‘absence’ should, in any case, be treated with scepticism” (p.35). Indeed, a researcher who adopts an interpretive, constructivist approach cannot be a complete outsider. In defining my role as a researcher in the present study, I adopted a dual approach, firstly as a ‘recorder’ of the participants’ accounts, and secondly, as an ‘interpreter’ of those accounts in an attempt to understand how participants viewed their motivation during an Italian adult language course.

#### **4.3.4. Longitudinal perspective**

One of the key features of the current study is its longitudinal design. Given that the research aimed at exploring the motivation of adult learners during an Italian beginners’ course, using the Dörnyei-Ottó (1998) Process Model as the initial conceptual framework, it was deemed essential that the study design should be apt to “describing patterns of change and stability” (De Vaus 2001, p. 114), in line with the dynamic nature of L2 motivation. The choice was also justified by the current dearth of empirical studies adopting a longitudinal perspective in adult learning motivation, L2 motivation – and SLA by and large (Ortega & Iberri-Shea, 2005).

Longitudinal research involves the repeated collection of data over a period of time. Saldaña (2003, p.1-5) notes that the three key elements of qualitative,

longitudinal research are: length of the study, time and change, and he suggests that the data collection should stretch to a period of at least nine months. He points out, however, that even studies involving multiple data collection stages cannot be considered longitudinal, unless the implications of change over time are discussed and explained by the researcher. As well as displaying the above characteristics, the present research can be defined as what is known as a *panel study*, in that data from the same group of participants was elicited on more than one occasions.

One of the advantages of longitudinal, panel studies over more conventional cross-sectional studies in which data are collected on a one off basis is that changes and constants in views and perceptions for the same participants can be viewed over time. Secondly, by interviewing individuals more than once, the researcher is able to revisit themes which emerged in previous data collections, as well as to establish a relationship of trust with the participants who may 'open up' more than in a one-off interview. Moreover, the researcher is able to question participants again on certain issues and check for consistency, if anything which was said in one of the early interviews was unclear. Even these apparent advantages of longitudinal interviewing though, have some pitfalls which are discussed in more detail in Section 4.6.1.

Menard (2002) warns about possible challenges involving panel research. First, it is time consuming, as data collection can stretch over a considerable period of time. Secondly, participant attrition can be an issue, with the consequence of the initial sample being substantially reduced. Thirdly, retrospective recall by the participants may be poor or distorted if several months elapse between data collection phases.

In the very early stages of the present study, it was anticipated that attrition might indeed be an issue, particularly due to the often unpredictable nature of student retention on AE courses. In actual fact, student drop-out numbers were relatively contained (20%) and it was possible to gain access to the great majority of the learners three times over the nine month period. It is true, however, that it became more difficult to make contact with participants who

dropped out of the course once they had stopped going to classes. Fortunately, this did not turn out to be too problematic, since the key aim of the study was to explore motivation in participants who completed the course, rather than focussing on reasons for non-completion.

As will be explained later in the chapter, the willingness and cooperation of those involved was crucial to the viability of the research design.

#### **4.4. Research setting**

The two Italian courses attended by the participants in this study were both part of an adult and community education service run by the council of a city located in the north of England. The two sites where the classes in question took place were a community centre (Group A) and a secondary school (Group B), both located on the outskirts of the city. Consequently, the atmosphere of the two places was rather different, as the community centre had a more relaxed and leisurely atmosphere. The Italian class was the only course which took place in the building on Tuesday mornings, and a member of catering staff would bring coffee, tea and biscuits to the classroom during break time. The room where the teaching took place held a maximum of 14-16 learners and the tables were arranged in a rectangular horse-shoe format, as illustrated on page 78.

The setting in which the evening class (Group B) took place, on the other hand, was a working school during the day which hosted AE classes in the evening. As a result, the atmosphere was more formal and several other night classes took place in the same building as the Italian one. The school canteen would be open for the evening class students to take advantage of light refreshments at break time. The teaching took place in a regular classroom. The normal layout was retained for the first five weeks of the course but after this point, Teacher B decided to create clusters of tables (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.2: Group A classroom layout

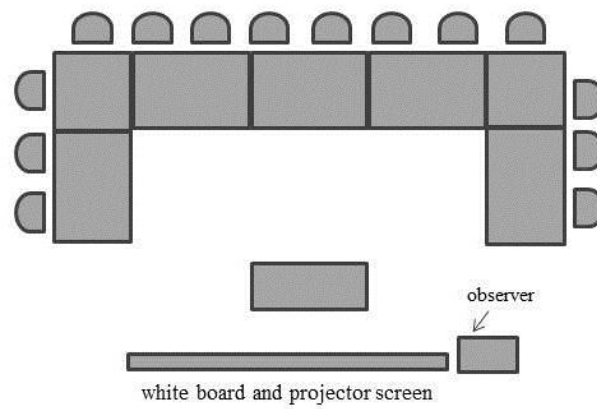


Figure 4.3: Group layout B classroom layout in the first six weeks

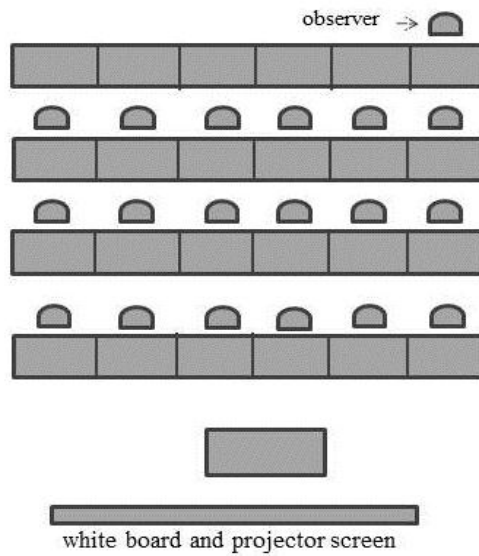
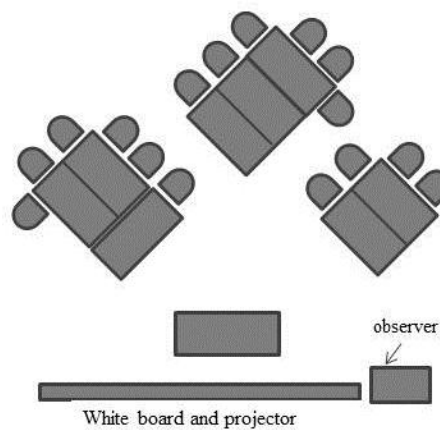


Figure 4.4: Group B classroom layout from week seven onwards



From an observer's perspective, the second type of layout seemed to be better for interaction. Two participants also remarked on this during FGb:

MARY: I think what was quite good was when we put the table together we face each other and rather than behind each other. For the first week or so we didn't.

IR: Do you think that made a difference?

MARY: Oh yeah, yes.

(...)

CAROL: (...) in sets of tables, you do interact with everybody.

The main reason why these two settings were chosen was, firstly, because the learners who attended those classes represented a fit-for-purpose research sample in terms of the aim of the study. Ease of access was another more pragmatic reason behind the choice. Also, it was fortunate that the two classes were scheduled at convenient times and the researcher was able to observe them on alternate weeks for the first two semesters, as detailed in Section 4.6.3.

As for the research interviews, participants could choose whether to be interviewed in their homes, in a neutral place such as a café, or in the adult education centre directly prior to or following the class. The majority chose to be interviewed in their homes. Two participants from Group A preferred to meet in a café, which presented some challenges in terms of the quality of the recording due to background noise. On a couple of occasions two Group B participants chose to meet before class, another was interviewed in a pub after class and two met with the researcher at work during their lunch break.

Participants seemed more at ease and open when interviewed in their own home and this may also be reflected in the length of the interviews conducted in other places, which were generally shorter<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Interviews conducted in places other than the participants' home are marked with a superscript sign in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6.

#### 4.5. Participants

Creswell (1994) maintains that “the idea of qualitative research is to **purposefully** select informants (or documents or visual material) that will best answer the research question” (p.148, bold in original). In *purposive* sampling, therefore, the researcher selects a sample for which the characteristics satisfy the requirements of the investigation. The participants of the current study were recruited in this way; it was deemed important that they were adult learners on a beginners’ FL course in AE, in other words “information-rich cases for in-depth study” (Patton, 1990, p.169).

From a logistical point of view, this was made possible by the cooperation of two colleagues, Teacher A and Teacher B, who were scheduled to teach parallel Italian beginners’ classes in that academic year (more about the teachers to follow later in this section).

In the planning stages of the study and prior to the start of the two courses, the aim was to interview 15-20 students in total. It was anticipated that a sample of this size would be small enough to manage, but sufficiently large to provide rich and varied data, even taking a degree of attrition into account. However, given the possibility that some learners might not be willing to be interviewed or may drop out of the course in the very early stages, and with the two teachers’ consent, I decided to cast the net as wide as possible initially and to invite all students to participate.

The day-time class, Group A, recruited 12 students and the evening class, Group B, 18 students in total. The teachers agreed that in the first session they would ask the learners if they would be happy for a researcher to come into the class every other week to observe them. At the same time the teacher would also invite them to participate in the interview study.

In short, there were several question marks concerning the successful recruitment of participants in the planning stages. Firstly, with the courses due to start in mid-September, it was not certain whether the day-time class would run due to low numbers. Secondly, it was impossible to predict how many participants would be interested in being interviewed, or if anyone would



object to having an observer in the classroom until each teacher had the chance to speak to her group and introduce the study. Therefore, a contingency plan had to be put in place: if, in the worst case scenario, only a few participants could be recruited, more data would be gathered the following academic year by surveying another Italian beginners' class.

Fortunately, all the learners accepted the invitation and the sample remained healthy throughout the year. Only two students from Group B were politely excluded from the interview sample on the grounds that they were not L1-English speakers, but rather Spanish and Dutch. Although they fulfilled the criteria of being adult learners of Italian as a FL, it was felt that their virtually bilingual status and the fact that they had been educated outside the UK, might make them substantially 'different' from the other participants. In reality, however, the sample of L1-English participants was by no means homogeneous in terms of language learning experience as seen in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2, which report some key information about the participants.

For instance, Group A included a retired secondary school teacher of French and German who had more language teaching and learning experience than the others. It was decided that he, in addition to some other fairly seasoned language learners, would be included to provide a range of cases and on the grounds that any AE class would comprise learners with varying degrees of FL skills and experience.

Two participants, one from each group, started the course and participated in the first round of interviews, but in November they both moved from the area for work reasons. As the move was apparently dictated by events beyond their control, they were excluded from the sample. This brought the total to 26 starting participants: 11 in Group A and 15 in Group B. Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 list the participants' pseudonyms and provide information about their age at the start of the study, their work status and level of education.

**Table 4.1: Participants' demographic and background data – Group A**

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Occupation	Languages	
1	Amy	29	F	college	part-time worker & mum	French & German GCSE
2	Chiara	28	F	nursing	student nurse	French GCSE, Italian 5-week beg. course
3	Elaine	62	F	teacher training	retired French teacher	French A-level, German O-level, beginners Spanish
4	Esther	66	F	Cert.Ed.	retired civil servant	Latin O-level, German GCSE, school French
5	Kate	51	F	n/a	family business	French O-level
6	Maggie	50	F	degree	self-employed former FE lecturer	Beginners Spanish
7	Pam	50	F	Cert.Ed.	former FE lecturer	French O-level
8	Rowena	58	F	degree	semi-retired science teacher	German night classes, school French (no qual.)
9	Rosanne	63	F	degree	retired civil servant	French A-level
10	Tim	60	M	degree, M.Ed.	newly retired MFL teacher	French & German degree
11	Valerie	69	F	degree	retired science teacher	French, German & Latin O-level

**Table 4.2: Participants' demographic and background data – Group B**

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Occupation	Languages	
1	Calum	28	M	degree	lecturer in sport science	French GCSE
2	Carol	59	F	degree	retired lecturer and trainer	German AS Dutch three years
3	Diana	n/a	F	n/a	n/a	French GCSE, basic Italian
4	Daniel	42	M	degree	GP	French & Latin O-level, beginners Hindi
5	Fiona	25	F	degree	admin assistant	French & German GCSE
6	Gill	38	F	degree	marketing manager	French & Spanish degree, German O-level
7	Kay	44	F	OND bus. studies	Secretary	school French (no qualification)
8	Linda	n/a	F	n/a	n/a	basic French & Italian
9	Mary	57	F	teacher training	inclusion support officer	French O-level
10	Maureen	42	F	degree	secretary	French & Spanish O-level., semi-fluent Greek
11	Matt	38	M	n/a	n/a	Spanish night classes
12	Rita	34	F	HND	catering manager	French GCSE, Italian night classes
13	Ruth	40	F	degree	deputy head teacher	French & Latin O-level
14	Sally	27	F	degree	business development manager	French GCSE, Italian night classes (briefly)
15	Stuart	28	M	degree	web developer	German GCSE, school French (no qualifications)

There was a predominance of women (81%) and a majority of graduates (54%). Current and former teachers were also well represented (35%). The sample was not homogeneous in demographic terms, but the aim was never to generalise or compare variables. Theoretically, the sample was deemed to be appropriate given the fact that all participants were adult L1-English speakers learning Italian in an AE setting.

The teachers' co-operation was pivotal to the recruitment of the sample and, although the teachers were not interviewed, it is useful to provide some information about them.

Teacher A also managed the MFL provision for the adult and community education service, as well as being one of the Italian tutors. When the present study began, she was in her early fifties and had 15 years' experience teaching Italian and French in AE. Although British with English as her L1, Teacher A had a virtually perfect command of Italian. She conducted her lessons fully in the target language from the beginning, spent a lot of time going over and consolidating language skills, and used a variety of visual tools, games, role plays and other activities.

Teacher B was an Italian graduate in her early thirties. When the study started, she had lived in the UK for seven years working full-time outside the education field. She had 4 years of experience teaching Italian, mainly in the evenings, alongside her main occupation and this was the first year that she was employed by the AE service in question, having recently moved to the area. She conducted her classes primarily in English, with a view to introducing more Italian gradually as learners' understanding of the language increased.

When I started to plan the study, I had known Teacher A for a couple of years, as we had both taught Italian in the same city. It is worth noting that, although at the time I taught Italian in HE. I had worked for the same AE provider in 1998-2000 and for another AE organisation, the Workers' Education Association (WEA) in 2003-2005. This means that I was fairly familiar with the setting and the experience of FL teaching and learning in AE.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, this was also at the root of my interest in this particular research setting.

Before the study began, I did not know Teacher B, but Teacher A had mentioned the study to her and she was happy to be involved. At this point one may question why the two teachers did not play a more significant role as participants in the study, for example through interviews and for the purpose of triangulation. I decided that, as the focus of the study should be as much as possible upon the participants and their voices, the teachers should remain 'silent' in this instance. It was thought that their views on the participants' motivation might provide yet another layer of interpretation, on top of that of the researcher. More information on the choice of methods is provided in the next section.

## **4.6. Data collection methods**

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were the primary data elicitation techniques employed in this study. My class observations and course evaluation forms, which were completed by the learners for the AE provider, were also sources of secondary data aimed at contextualising and providing further support to the self-report data. The next subsections will consider these in turn.

### **4.6.1. Semi-structured interviews for insight**

Interviews are regarded as one of the most common methods of collecting qualitative data. Widely used in social research, research interviews are normally categorised in three main types: *structured*, *unstructured* and *semi-structured*.

*Structured* interviews usually involve a number of detailed, often closed, questions which the interviewer must strictly adhere to. Due to lack of flexibility and scope for exploring the participant's views in great depth, these are probably the least employed in qualitative research.

*Unstructured* interviews are particularly appropriate when the aim is to elicit spontaneous and open-ended self-report data from participants. With questions and prompts kept to a minimum, the person interviewed is able and often encouraged to speak freely and without strict boundaries. In the planning stages of the present study, I considered employing unstructured interviews, but it was felt that participants would provide a fuller picture of their experience with some prompting and guidance, and also that it would be easier to cover the issues raised by the conceptual model by asking some open, but also some fairly specific, questions.

*Semi-structured* interviews are somewhere in between the structured and unstructured types. The researcher uses an interview guide with questions and often supporting questions and prompts. I therefore decided that semi-structured interviews would be more appropriate. As the three data collection stages of the present study were informed by the three phases of the Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 motivation, it was helpful to draft interview guides to reflect this. At the same time – as is often the case in semi-structured interviews – it was possible to use the guides flexibly, altering the question order when required or probing further when the participant touched on an issue of particular interest, for instance. In short, one of the main advantages of using semi-structured interviews was that they allowed a degree of control over the interview process, whilst enabling the participants to express their views and describe their experiences. In fact, as Kvale (2006) points out:

A semi-structured life-world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspective. This interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. (p. 10)

However, interviews – not just semi-structured ones – also present a series of challenges and questions have been raised about their validity. Much of the criticism reflects two main types of concerns.

Firstly, self-reporting is sometimes considered unreliable, as interviewees may not reveal what they really think or they may try to please by saying what they think the interviewer wants to hear. Also, as Creswell (1994) notes, not

all participants are necessarily articulate and perceptive enough to provide the rich data valued by qualitative interviewers. It should be pointed out, however, that far from it just being the ‘participant’s fault’, it is largely the responsibility of the interviewer to elicit rich and meaningful data through skilful questioning and listening.

Secondly, certain authors, such as Silverman (2006), maintain that it is naïve to believe that interviews can give participants a true voice or “catch ‘authentic’ experience” (p.381). He also warns against “treating the actor’s point of view as an explanation” (p.381) and falling into the trap of journalistic, anecdotal style reporting.

Mindful of the two caveats outlined above, I nonetheless decided to adopt semi-structured interviews as my main method, though exercised with a degree of caution. Participants’ voices were always deemed key to this study, as a way to explore motivation during a beginners’ Italian course from the learners’ perspective. In the literal sense, ‘listening to the participants’ voices’ meant speaking to them face-to-face and listening to what they had to say. Some may well view this as naïve, but it could be equally argued that every method raises the fundamental question as to whether it is able to fully convey ‘the truth’. As explained earlier in this chapter, this research adopts a social constructivist/ interpretive approach, whereby interviews are the product of the spoken interaction between participants and researcher, in which the participants are in a position to express their views ‘as best they can’ and the researcher attempts to interpret and understand this data in a trustworthy way. One could also argue that some of the critiques questioning the role of the participant as ‘knower’ may, at best, take a different epistemological perspective and at worst be patronising, as they almost imply that participants do not really know or are unable to explain what goes on in their lives or in their heads.

In sum, semi-structured interviews were adopted as the principal data elicitation method for this study because of their potential to generate rich and insightful data which would be suited to the exploratory aim of the study and to

address the research questions. To partially address the interviews' limitations and provide some triangulation, I also chose to employ other methods, as explained in the following section.

#### **4.6.2. Focus-groups to sum up**

Focus groups are interviews involving several people at once, normally featuring the researcher as the moderator and 6-10 participants (Morgan, 1998). As Litosselti (2003) states, "they are set up in order to explore specific topics, and individual views and experiences, through group interaction" (p. 1) and they were therefore deemed as another useful data collection method for the present study.

Wilkinson (2004, p.180-181) argues that focus groups possess advantages over individual interviews, as they can potentially elicit a significant deal of rich data fairly quickly. Moreover, it is often the case that, far from being inhibited in a group situation, participants feed off one another through interaction and offer insights which would not otherwise emerge in one-to-one interviews. Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2006, p.41-42), however, point out that focus groups also have limitations. For instance, they require the researcher to be quite skilled at moderating the event to avoid certain participants dominating the conversation whilst others say very little. Also, only a limited number of issues can be discussed during the one to two hours, the duration of a standard focus group. These challenges and how they were met will be discussed in Section 4.7.3.

In the case of the present study, their main purpose was to give the participants the opportunity to share views about their experience and generate more data which would act to confirm, contradict or simply complement that collected via semi-structured interviews. Focus groups had, therefore, a summative purpose, and it was intended that they would encourage participants to look back upon their whole experience in a similar way to the third wave of interviews but this time in interaction with their peers.



In short, it was hoped that the focus groups would also contribute to triangulation (more on this in Section 4.10.1) and consequently to the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Section 4.7.3 provides details of how the focus groups were carried out.

#### **4.6.3. Observations to contextualise**

One weakness of using participants' self-reports as the only sources of data is that the researcher has no first-hand experience of the situations and realities described by the participants. Even if these are accurate in the view of the participants, if the researcher has no familiarity at all with the context or the people mentioned during interviews, it will be challenging to 'tune into' what the participant is attempting to convey. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) put it, "[T]he distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations" (p.260). It was therefore felt this method would be well suited to complement the self-reported data.

In the present study, several observations were carried out, as outlined by the schedule on Table 4.3. This was primarily for the purpose of contextualising the participants' accounts and, secondly, to contribute to building a better rapport and to empathise with the participants during the interviews and focus groups. Also, it was believed that it would be useful to acquire the perspective of an Italian AE class from an outsider's viewpoint, rather than the teacher's perspective, which was familiar to me.

According to Bryman (2008) "the researcher's prolonged immersion in a social setting would seem to make him or her better equipped to see as others see" (p. 465). It was therefore felt that relatively frequent observations, would offer a better chance of "seeing through the eyes of the people being studied" (Bryman, 2008, p. 385).

**Table 4.3: Observations schedule**

week	date	class observed	week	date	class observed
1	12-Sept		16	23-Jan	A
2	19-Sept	A	17	30-Jan	B
3	26-Sept	B	18	06-Feb	A
4	03-Oct	A	<i>Half term</i>		
5	10-Oct	B	19	20-Feb	B
6	17-Oct	A	20	27-Feb	A
<i>Half term</i>			21	06-Mar	B
7	31-Oct	B	22	13-Mar	A
8	07-Nov	A	23	20-Mar	B
9	14-Nov	B	24	27-Mar	
10	21-Nov	A	<i>Easter break</i>		
11	28-Nov	B	25	17-Apr	B
12	04-Dec	A	26	24-Apr	A
13	11-Dec		27	01-May	B
<i>Christmas break</i>			28	08-May	
14	09-Jan	A	29	15-May	A
15	16-Jan	B	30	22-May	FGb

In an attempt to minimise *reactivity* (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 189) or Hawthorne Effect, whereby learners and teachers might behave differently when a researcher is present the classroom, I chose also to carry out non-participant, unstructured observations on a regular basis by joining Group A from 10am-12pm every other Tuesday morning and Group B from 7pm-9pm every other Tuesday evening. This amounted to 25 observations, of approximately 1h 45mins each (excluding breaks) for a total of almost 44 hours. Based on feedback from participants and teachers, this appeared to obtain the desired effect of me becoming almost ‘part of the furniture’. Section 4.7 on the procedures of data collection provides further insights into observations.

#### 4.6.4. Course documents

At the end of the course, Teacher A provided some programme documentation and copies of evaluation forms completed by the learners of both classes. These included:

1. Attendance registers.
2. Forms completed by each learner in the first lesson, in which they had to briefly explain why they had chosen the course and what they hoped to have achieved by the end of it.
3. *First Impressions* questionnaire results, including both numerical data and qualitative comments (see Appendix C and Appendix D). The forms were completed by the learners seven or eight weeks into the course, at the beginning of November.
4. End-of-course evaluation forms completed in the last lesson. These asked learners to what extent they thought they had met the learning outcomes advertised by the programme, what other benefits, if any, they felt they had derived from attending the course and whether they would enrol on a further course.

However, it was felt that these documents could not be used as primary data for three main reasons. Firstly, I had no input into the content, the design of the forms or their administration. Secondly, the information which the AE provider asked the learners was quite limited – most likely to avoid burdening them with excessive forms – and it was designed to fulfil funding requirements rather than provide research data. Thirdly, I received all the documentation after the end of the course, including the forms completed by the participants in the early stages. This meant that the content of some of these documents could not be taken into account to inform questions asked during interviews or focus groups.

Nevertheless, the above proved quite useful as supporting data and in broadly confirming some of the general findings. It was also helpful to be able to refer to the registers and look at patterns of attendance, and note, for instance, when learners who dropped out actually stopped attending.

#### 4.7. Data collection procedures

The main data collection was articulated in three phases during the academic year 2006/7: the early stages, the middle and at the end of the course. Table 4.4 offers an overview of the data collection timeline, whereas Table 4.5 and Table 4.6 provide details of when the interviews were conducted, how long they lasted and the participants involved.

The possibility of carrying out more interviews with each participant was excluded on several grounds. Firstly, due to the higher than expected number of participants, it would have been quite challenging logistically. Also, it might have felt onerous for some participants, many of whom were in full-time employment and led busy lives. Secondly, leaving a few months between each interview was deemed necessary, so that the participants would have more to say and with a greater sense of perspective. Thirdly, data elicitation in this study did not rely exclusively on semi-structured interviews, as two focus groups were planned for Phase 3 and contextualising observations took place during the course. The rest of this section discusses the data collection procedures phase by phase. It should be noted that the findings from each phase are reported in Chapters 5-7.

**Table 4.4: Overview of the data collection phases of the study**

<b>Phases</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Methods (primary)</b>	<b>Methods (secondary)</b>
1 Autumn	Sept-Oct 2006	Semi-structured interviews (26)	Observations
2 Winter	Jan-Feb 2007	Semi-structured interviews (23)	Observations
3 Spring/Summer	June 2007	Semi-structured interviews (23) Focus groups (2)	Observations Forms completed by the learners for the AE provider, including course evaluations

**Table 4.5: Group A participants in interviews and focus group**

	Interview 1 Autumn 2006		Interview 2 Winter 2007		Interview 3 Spring-Summer 2007		Focus Group 12 June 07
	date	length	date	length	date	length	
Amy	19 Sept	20:21	17 Jan	23:53	19 June	23:43	present
Chiara	17 Oct	15:19	13 Jan	30:29	26 June	21:03	
Elaine	6 Oct	*16:43	20 Jan	*22:12	19 June	*17:16	present
Esther	21 Sept	*26:46	6 Feb	*23:38	26 June	*23:00	present
Kate <sup>!!</sup>	21 Sept	29:00	19 Jan	31:50	<i>mid-March stopped attending <sup>!!</sup></i>		
Maggie	20 Sept	31:31	23 Jan	28:29	19 June	24:46	present
Pam	25 Sept	19:26	23 Jan	23:37	21 June	19:14	present
Rosanne	19 Sept	28:24	13 Jan	33:19	21 June	30:29	present
Rowena	22 Sept	26:41	31 Jan	31:36	21 June	27:45	present
Tim	22 Sept	15:21	12 Jan	25:17	26 June	25:20	
Valerie	21 Sept	32:40	19 Jan	31:26	21 June	24:00	present
<i>Tot. recording length</i>		<i>4:22:12</i>		<i>5:05:46</i>		<i>3:47:36</i>	<i>1:17:24</i>
<i>Average interv.length</i>		<i>23:50</i>		<i>27:48</i>		<i>22:45</i>	
<b><i>No. interviews</i></b>		<b><i>11</i></b>		<b><i>11</i></b>		<b><i>10</i></b>	

\* Interviews conducted in a café. All others conducted in the participants' home.

<sup>!!</sup> Kate did not take part in the regular third interview, as she did not complete the course, but was available for a short informal interview (see Table 7.4 for further information).

**Table 4.6: Group B participants in interviews and focus group**

	Interview 1 Autumn 2006		Interview 2 Winter 2007		Interview 3 Spring-Summer 2007		Focus group 23 May 07
	date	length	date	length	date	length	
Calum	3 Oct	^16:10	23 Jan	^21:26	25 June	24:14	present
Carol	28 Sept	17:40	3 Feb	25:20	19 June	25:00	present
Diana	4 Oct	17:00	mid-November – stopped attending <sup>!!</sup>				
Daniel	29 Sept	23:47	19 Jan	32:31	19 June	28:41	present
Fiona	3 Oct	*16:31	30 Jan	*24:12	28 June	*19:08	present
Gill	2 Oct	~15:30	1 Feb	~20:48	mid-February – stopped attending		
Kay	3 Oct	20:00	23 Jan	30:12	28 June	27:00	present
Linda	4 Oct	17:47	mid-November – stopped attending <sup>!!</sup>				
Mary	28 Sept	28:00	8 Feb	38:30	26 June	29:33	present
Matt	30 Sept	12:15	1 Feb	27:52	not available for interview, nor FG (but completed course)		
Maureen	2 Oct	~25:30	1 Feb	~30:45	mid-February – stopped attending <sup>!!</sup>		
Rita	30 Sept	33:00	6 Feb	22:28	26 June	28:45	present
Ruth	29 Sept	20:15	19 Jan	35:30	19 June	35:33	present
Sally	10 Oct	^12:45	30 Jan	20:55	20 June	19:28	present
Stuart	3 Oct	13:41	early January – stopped attending <sup>!!</sup>				
<i>Tot. recording length</i>		<i>4:49:51</i>		<i>5:30:29</i>		<i>3:57:22</i>	<i>1:15:28</i>
<i>Average interv.length</i>		<i>19:19</i>		<i>27:32</i>		<i>26:22</i>	
<i>No. interviews</i>		<i>15</i>		<i>12</i>		<i>9</i>	

\*Interview conducted in a pub after the class.

^ Interviews conducted in the school just before the class.

~ Interviews conducted at the participant's workplace during her lunch hour.

All other interviews were conducted in the participants' home.

<sup>!!</sup> These participants did not take part in the normal third interview, as they did not complete the course, but were available for a short informal interview either on the phone (Linda and Maureen) or in their home (Stuart). See Table 7.4 on p. 204 for further information.

#### **4.7.1. Phase 1**

Before the courses started, I met Teachers A and B to outline the proposed research design and to discuss the best way to introduce the study to the learners. They both felt that in the first session there would be a lot of information given out and it would be too much for the class to learn about my study as well. Thus, we agreed that they would introduce the study to the participants in the second week of teaching.

I provided the teachers with a briefing sheet (see Appendix A) to help them present the research to the learners in broad terms so that they could provisionally consent to participate. At the time, it seemed inappropriate to introduce the study in great detail or emphasise that its focus was on motivation, in case the participants felt that they had to show a high degree of commitment to the course or to language learning. This clearly raised the ethical question, “How ‘informed’ should the consent be?” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 69). It was felt that, even though the ‘M word’ was not spelled out in Phase 1, participants would be free to ask me further details about the study at any point. Moreover, given the elusiveness of the term, it seemed that presenting the study as being on ‘motivation’ might not have been that clear to everyone in any case. The teachers therefore introduced the research as a doctoral study into adult learners’ views about learning a FL at beginner level in an AE setting.

As already mentioned in Section 4.5, all learners from both groups agreed to take part, which meant that I was able to start attending classes as an observer, as well as to make appointments with the participants to conduct the first round of interviews. Table 4.7 features the first interview guide. Three drafts were produced and the final version was agreed with my supervisor. The piloting stage consisted of adopting the approved interview guide with the first two participants and to make small alterations, if necessary, for the following interviews. This is an acceptable practice in qualitative interviewing where extensive piloting is not always essential (R.Webb, Thesis Advisory Group, 14 June 2006).

**Table 4.7: First interview guide**

MAIN QUESTIONS	FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS
1. Have you learnt a language before?	<i>If the answer is 'no':</i> What has made you choose to do it now? <i>If the answer is 'yes':</i> Which language(s)? Up to what level? When was the last time you learnt a language in a classroom situation? And independently?
2. Can you tell me about that experience/those experiences of learning a foreign language?	<i>(if more than one language, ask about each one)</i> What do you remember that was positive / not so positive about it? What did you enjoy /dislike the most? What do you remember that was not so positive? Why did you carry on/stop studying that language? <i>Further prompts: teacher, the way he/she taught, things learnt, time spent abroad</i>
3. Now let's think about the Italian course you have just started. How did you find out about it? What were your main reasons for enrolling on it?	What are your reasons for choosing Italian? What are the reasons for doing a language course now? What made you choose a daytime/evening/adult education class?
4. What do you hope to get out of this course?	Besides learning the language, is there anything else that you would like to learn? Is there anything else you'd like to get out of attending the classes?
5. Have you had any concerns or reservations about starting the course?	If so, can you tell me about them.
6. How are things going for you so far?	Any surprises? <i>(about course, people, teacher, teaching method, pace, etc)</i>
7. If we look six or eight months down the line, what do you think will make you enjoy the course and stick with it?	Clearly, it's early days, but have you thought whether you might continue next year? Is learning Italian a short- or long-term plan for you at the moment?
8. What do you think might get in the way of you completing the course?	What would make the course less enjoyable for you? What might get in the way of you continuing? What would put you off or prevent you from enrolling again next year?
9. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you and you'd like to add?	



As previously highlighted, the content of the three interviews was loosely based on the three phases of the Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 Motivation, discussed in Section 3.3.5. This provided a framework for the interview guides, but at the same time the questions were open enough to allow the participants to follow their line of reasoning. The autumn interview guide in Table 4.7 focused mainly on the language background of the participants, their prior language learning experience, reasons for enrolling on the course, initial goals, aspirations, concerns and early impressions about the course. The schedule roughly mirrored the *Preactional stage* of the Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 motivation.

At the start of their first interview, participants were assured that their comments would be confidential and that their thoughts would not be shared with other participants or their teacher. They were promised anonymity and that a pseudonym, rather than their real name, would be used in the study. They also signed a participant consent form, a copy of which has been included as Appendix B. At the end of each meeting, I thanked the participants and gave them a packet of Italian biscuits as a sign of gratitude and good will.

Each interview was digitally audio recorded. The average length of the first interview was approximately 24 minutes for Group A and 19 minutes for Group B participants, for a total of 26 interviews conducted over a period of about four weeks (see Table 4.5 and Table 4.6). Interviews with the participants of Group B were shorter, most likely given that the majority took place in the evening, after work or just before the class, whereas Group A participants could be interviewed during the day and had a little more time. After each interview, I reflected on it and made some notes sketching a brief profile of the person I had talked to. The purpose was not so much to start identifying themes or analysing data, but to begin to get to know my participants and in order to crystallise first impressions. Table 4.8 shows examples of brief notes I made after interviewing four participants from Group A.

**Table 4.8: Examples of sketch notes on participants after first interview**

<p>NOTES ON ROSANNE (Sept-06)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widow, mid-60s, retired through ill health since 2002, ex-civil servant, dept. work &amp; pension, various roles, including supervisory. Lives on her own, children are far away.</li> <li>• Jolly and confident, likes to talk!</li> <li>• AE class goer, linguist (French), reasonably confident her language learning abilities, but not so much about her memory.</li> <li>• Likes the sound of Italian and has always wanted to go to Rome.</li> </ul>	<p>NOTES ON MAGGIE (Sept-06)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She was asked to join the course by friend Pam, both in their early 50s.</li> <li>• Main motivation: has visited Italy many times, interested in everything Italian, like Pam (same background as art/design FE lecturer, but now self-employed). Might buy a house there.</li> <li>• Not a grammarian, she likes practical use of language and talking. What she learns has to be relevant (one reason why she stopped Spanish GCSE).</li> <li>• Sociable: has already mentioned going on a trip to Italy with the class.</li> <li>• Mentioned the word 'confidence' a lot. Feels embarrassed speaking in a FL, doesn't like making mistakes.</li> </ul>
<p>NOTES ON CHIARA (Oct-06)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-twenties, student nurse. Has Italian-born father and relatives in Italy, but never spoke Italian at home. Did some French at school and a holiday Italian class recently.</li> <li>• Main motivation to enrol on the course: to communicate with family in Italy when she visits and get closer to her Italian heritage.</li> <li>• Came across as a little timid but friendly.</li> </ul>	<p>NOTES ON ESTHER (Sept-06)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-60s, single, a few years ago she lost sister she was closed to.</li> <li>• Main motivation: doing something to get out of the house and meet people or she could just easily stay in an not talk to anyone for weeks.</li> <li>• Chose a language course because it would make her talk to others.</li> <li>• Italian happened to be convenient, could have been Spanish.</li> <li>• Very lively, funny lady!</li> </ul>

In terms of the interview schedule, it was felt that there was no particular need to change the original questions, but after conducting the first couple of interviews it became clear that some had to be adapted to the flow of the conversation. Through the process I was guided by Kvale's (1996) ten criteria for interviewer qualifications, listed in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9: Kvale's ten qualification criteria for the interviewer**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Knowledgeable</i>: is thoroughly familiar with the focus of the interview.</li> <li>2. <i>Structuring</i>: gives purpose for interview; rounds it off; asks whether interviewee has questions.</li> <li>3. <i>Clear</i>: asks simple, easy, short questions; no jargon.</li> <li>4. <i>Gentle</i>: lets people finish; gives them time to think; tolerates pauses.</li> <li>5. <i>Sensitive</i>: listens attentively to what is said and how it is said; is empathetic in dealing with the interviewee.</li> <li>6. <i>Open</i>: responds to what is important to interviewee and is flexible.</li> <li>7. <i>Steering</i>: knows what he or she wants to find out.</li> <li>8. <i>Critical</i>: is prepared to challenge what is said – for example, dealing with inconsistencies in interviewees' replies.</li> <li>9. <i>Remembering</i>: relates what is said to what has previously been said.</li> <li>10. <i>Interpreting</i>: clarifies and extends meanings of interviewees' statements, but without imposing meaning on them.</li> </ol> |
|---|

Kvale (1996, pp. 148-149), adapted from Bryan (2008, p.445)

In particular, it soon emerged that using simple language (*clear*), demonstrating a genuine interest in the participants' accounts and in building rapport with them (*gentle, sensitive*) were effective strategies to elicit rich and insightful data. However, there were some challenges in the first round of interviews, particularly with one participant from Group B who was less forthcoming. His interview lasted only 12 minutes and I realised afterwards that in future interviews I should be more *steering*, i.e., be a little more assertive in pursuing certain questions, and more *interpreting*, i.e., rephrasing and clarifying what was said, whilst asking for further explanations.

Constantly reviewing and working on improving what Kvale (1996) calls the “craftsmanship” (p. 105) of the qualitative interviewer resulted in the process of interviewing becoming gradually easier and it was quite pleasing that the following interview with the above mentioned participant was more than twice the length and was conducted with a lot less effort.

In terms of observations, I attended the second class of Group A, the third of Group B and then on alternate weeks, as outlined in Table 4.3. Both groups were very welcoming and did not seem to mind my presence. However, I was careful to act as an unobtrusive observer, as far as possible. Occasionally, when one of the teachers or a learner would ask me what I thought about an Italian word, for instance, I would reply, but overall I chose not to get involved in role-plays or assist in the teaching, in order to avoid becoming part of the learning experience. As the purpose of the observations was mainly to contextualise and be at most illustrative evidence, I did not use an observation schedule but during every session I made field notes based on what I saw happening in the class. Figure 4.5 illustrates an example of the kind of notes I made in a slightly condensed format. They refer to the very first class which I observed for Group A. After a couple of observations for each class, it became apparent that it would not be necessary to describe every explanation by the teacher or class exercise, but that I would focus more on interaction between learners and the teacher, behaviours, comments and the general atmosphere.

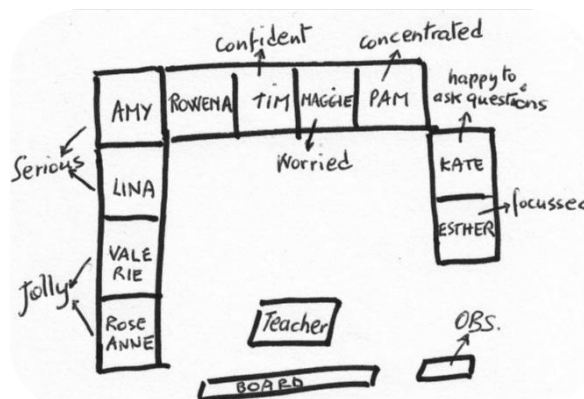
Figure 4.5: Example of notes made during observations

19/09/06 (Week 2) - Observation notes (Group A)

9.50am - One std initially, more come in. T speaks to them in Italian (*Buongiorno!*) and tells them where to seat - they have to seat in a different place each time.

T. calls stds with an Italian name similar to their own. They seem happy and smile. New person, Maggie, is a bit puzzled. Stds chat in English while tutor sets up.

First activity: ice-breaker in pairs. Each std gets 2-3 pictures with a name behind. They have to pretend to be the person on the picture. (Maggie a little nervous, sat next to her friend Pam, they talk).



In pairs they practice, *Come si chiama? Mi chiamo...* Teacher corrects them by repeating what they say, but without making a big deal. Corrections are almost casual. Tim shows influence of Spanish, e.g., *Como... Buenasera*.

Last two students arrive and get involved. Others carry on in pairs. T. counts stds 1-10 in Italian. Showing PowerPoint listing the objectives of today. T. asks stds to spell their name. Tim does, one std declines, Pam volunteers. T. asks stds to spell their surname to their partner who has to write it down. More exercises follow.

T. gesticulates while speaking, friendly, lively. Kate asks 'What does *sto* mean?' T. replies it is to do with a person's state of health. T. takes the opportunity to ask people how they are and present some vocab related to health. T. mentions parts of the body in Italian pointing to them.

T. gives a handout with a practice exercises. I hear Kate saying: "I need to see it written down to understand". Then she and Esther discuss spelling.

T. goes round the group. Valerie: "It's a wonderful language! As I was driving here, I repeated the alphabet. It sounded so nice!"

COFFEE BREAK - drinks and biscuits are brought to the room by a lady. Stds and T. mingle and chat merrily for 10-15 mins.

After break, alphabet practice in pairs with cards. T. goes round all the pairs. She praises them: *Brava! Ottimo*. Esther: "I am amused, I did it! I was lost trying to do that", pointing to sheet, "it is difficult to hear the pronunciation". Kate: "I found it helpful that we went over thr again what we did last week". Kate and Esther to each other: "We've done it all!" Tim asks "Can *è* be a verb?"

T. introduces the pronunciation of C and G with a handout listing Italian cities. More practice with pronunciation.

T. explains homework in Italian. Rosanne and Tim seem to have understood, Kate asks for instructions to be translated. Amy stretches out. Class ends at 12.08pm

### 4.7.2. Phase 2

The second wave of data collection consisted of 23 interviews conducted over a period of four weeks between 12 January and 10 February. Three participants from Group B had abandoned the course by January, but it was felt that a 12% attrition rate was acceptable at this stage. Although the focus of the study was always on the motivation of those who completed the course, it seemed worthwhile to re-interview those who had left. However, I decided that, rather than pursuing the students who dropped out at this stage, I would concentrate on the existing participants and wait until the end of the course to see if others stopped attending in order that I could approach them all at the same time. (For further details, see Section 7.5).

The second interview guide is presented as Table 4.10. Broadly based on the the *actional stage* of the Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 motivation Process Model, the participants were first asked general questions on how things were going, the quality of the learning experience, their self-regulatory strategies, and possible changes since the first interview.

The average interview length for participants of both groups was approximately 27 minutes, considerably higher than the first interviews with Group B. This may be due to a number of reasons. Firstly, participants seemed generally more relaxed than the first time we had spoken. As I had become a regular presence in the classroom, I was probably less of a stranger to them than in the first interview, and maybe they felt that they could be more open because of my familiarity with their FL learning context. Thirdly, it is likely that my own “interviewer craftsmanship” (Kvale, 1996) had gradually developed and also, having a better knowledge of each individual, this made it easier to ask supporting questions which were related to the previous interview or to behaviours which I had observed in class. The second interviews were therefore slightly more personalised than the first, even though the main interview schedule still served very much as a guide.

**Table 4.10: Second interview guide**

MAIN QUESTIONS	FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS
1. Overall, how are things going with your Italian so far?	
2. I would like to ask you about some aspects of your experience. Specifically, how have you felt about: 2a. the pace of the course? 2b. the use of Italian vs. English in class by the tutor 2c. balance of grammar, speaking, listening, reading, writing 2d. the type of activities? 2e. the teacher's way of dealing with the learners? 2f. how important is the teacher?	Examples of when you felt either way, i.e., out of your depth, or wanting to move faster.  Which ones are working best/worse for you? Examples? E.g., feedback, her relationship with the group, correction of mistakes, etc. e.g., on a scale 1,2,3,4,5 (1= very important)
3. Moving on to yourself, how do you feel about how you are doing in different areas?	What are you happy or not so happy about? What has given you the most satisfaction? How do you feel about speaking when the focus is on you?
4. How do you feel about the other learners and the group in general?	How is it affecting the way you are enjoying the class? What difference, if any, does it make who you are sitting next to in class?
5. Outside the classroom, how do you: 5a. make time for Italian? 5b. approach the learning? 5c. go about motivating yourself?	E.g., getting to class, homework, etc. E.g., revising, learning independently. Ex.? Examples?
6. Since you started the course, has anything changed in terms of: 6a. your initial reasons for learning Italian 6b. what you hope to get out of the course 6c. any initial concerns or reservations 6d. your enthusiasm and motivation to continue 6e. how motivated would you say that you are now, half way through the course? 6f. willingness to continue 6e. to what extent has it met your expectations	(i.e. to do with the course, external factors, a trip to Italy, work & family pressures, etc). 1- much more; 2 – slightly more; 3 – just as motivated, 4 – a little less; 5 – a lot less
7. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you and you'd like to add?	

### 4.7.3. Phase 3

The final phase of data collection involved two focus groups, a third round of semi-structured interviews, several additional observations and some documents and course evaluation forms which were made available by the AE provider. These will now be considered in turn.

#### *Focus groups*

Two summative focus groups were planned for the end of the course, so that participants could share and compare their experiences and views in a group setting. To make it more convenient for the participants and to maximise the number taking part, it was felt that they should take place as soon as possible following the end of the course.

On the final observation day, I briefly spoke to the two classes about the ‘discussion group’ to which they were all invited. The daytime group agreed to come back for an extra week after the end of the course (Teacher A would not be present). In the case of the evening class, it just so happened that Teacher B was unavailable for the last lesson, so I volunteered to take it and it was agreed with the participants that that two thirds of the class would be dedicated to the focus group and the rest to an Italian learning activity. The aim was to make these quite informal, social situations in which everyone would feel happy to talk and share experiences. The daytime focus group (FGa) was preceded by coffee and cakes, whereas the evening session (FGb) was preceded by an aperitif and pizza nibbles, which I provided. Everyone was invited to the session, including the L1-Dutch and L1-Spanish learners who had been excluded from the sample at the very beginning. However, they were asked to act as observers rather than participants. With permission, the sessions were audio recorded digitally. As indicated in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6, eight participants attended FGa and nine FGb. Each session lasted just over one hour and 15 minutes.



**Table 4.11: Focus group guide**

1. What made you decide to enrol on this course?
2. What do you think has made people come back every week and complete the course?
3. What difference has the teacher made?
4. What difference has the course content made?
5. What difference have class tasks and activities made?
6. What difference have the people made?
7. To what extent has your initial goal/resolution to learn Italian kept you going?
8. To what extent have you been motivated by a sense of progress and achievement?
9. To what extent has your own sheer personal interest in Italian culture and FL learning sustained your motivation?
10. To what extent have you been motivated by an increased confidence in your language learning abilities?
11. To what extent has your motivation been sustained by the prospect of a trip to Italy where you'll need to use the language?
12. Why do you think people may not complete a course like this? (If someone suggests a possible reason, ask if they, or anyone else in the group, has ever felt that way throughout the course.)
13. How stable has your level of enthusiasm/commitment to the course and learning Italian been since September? (If it has fluctuated, when was this and what was responsible for these changes?)
14. Are you thinking of carrying on with Italian next year? If so, what makes you want to carry on?

At the start of each focus group, I introduced the aim of the discussion, ensured confidentiality and set some “ground rules” (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 180), such as the need to avoid talking all at once and to respect others’ viewpoints.

Although the questions put to the groups followed a guide (see Table 4.12), they were formulated openly to enable the participants to voice their views in a

non-directive manner. Mindful of the challenges of conducting focus groups highlighted in Section 4.6.2, it was very helpful, a couple of months before the focus group events, to participate in a research seminar on focus groups which also provided some training and hands-on practice on how to conduct them.

As anticipated, some participants did speak more than others, but overall, the voices of most participants were heard and revealing exchanges took place, some of which are reported in Chapter 7.

### ***Third interview***

The third round of interviews was carried out in the month of June after the participants had completed the course. Initially, there was a slight concern that holding the focus groups at this stage might influence individual participants' contributions during the interviews, but given that most of these took place at least a couple of weeks after, this did not appear to be a problem.

As indicated in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6, 19 of the original 26 participants took part in the third, regular wave of interviews. One Group B participant (Matt) left for a holiday after the last taught lesson and could not be contacted afterwards. I was able to speak again, either face-to-face or on the telephone, to four participants who had not completed the course, i.e., Kate from Group A, and Linda, Maureen and Stuart from Group B). As they had not taken part in the 'full experience' I decided to conduct a more informal, unstructured interview examining the reasons they had stopped attending the course (see Section 7.5).

The spring/summer interview drew on the *postactional stage* of the Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 motivation during which learners normally take stock of the experience, by assessing *causal attribution* and conducting *retrospective evaluation* and reassessing *self-concept beliefs* in relation to language learning. When it came to designing the third interview guide (Table 4.12), however, it soon became apparent that referring only to the *postactional stage* of the model might be limiting. As one of the motivational influences of this stage of the Process Model includes *self-concept beliefs* in relation to L2

**Table 4.12: Third interview guide**

MAIN QUESTIONS	FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS
1. What do you think has made you go back every week and complete this course?	
2. Overall, has it been a successful and positive experience for you?	What has made it so?
3. Have you ever started to learn Italian in the past and not continued?	What has been the difference between this year and previous attempts?
4. Overall, how well do you think you have done this year, in terms of your own progress? Rate it 1 to 10.	Depending on your perception of how you have been doing, to what in particular do you attribute your progress/lack of progress this?
5. Is there anything that you think you personally should have done more differently to get more out of this course?	How happy are you with your contribution?
6. How stable has your level of motivation been throughout the year?	What factors have contributed to this? Can you talk me through your highs and lows? Has there been any point in the course when you thought of giving up? What made you feel this way?
7. Are there any aspects of language learning that make you anxious?	If so, can you explain what happens? Has my presence affected you or the class, do you think? How about me interviewing you periodically?
8. Have you had to do anything to keep yourself motivated?	If so, what have you had to do?
9. Had you not joined this class, would you have pursued learning Italian in other ways this year?	If so, how? If not, why not?
10. Has your opinion / perception of yourself as a language learner changed during this course?	If so, how?
11. What is now your end goal as far as Italian is concerned?	Do you have a vision of what it will be like once you have achieved your goal? If so can you describe it to me? Have you got a timeframe in mind? What steps do you think still need to be taken to achieve that ideal?
12. Have you got any role models which you aspire to in terms of knowing and using Italian?	
13. Are you planning to carry on with Italian next year?	If so, how are you planning to continue? If not, why are you not planning to continue?
14. How far ahead are you thinking?	
15. Lastly, what is spurring you on to continue?	

learning, I thought that this area could be explored a little further by including a few exploratory questions related to the *Ideal L2 Self* (Dörnyei, 2005) which was a new concept in L2 motivation at the time. This clearly meant departing slightly from the original conceptual model, though it should be stated that this was always intended for use as a flexible guide rather than a rigid framework. It should, in fact, be pointed out that sufficient flexibility was adopted to enable the participants' full-spectrum of views to unfold and to allow them to discuss issues which they felt were important.

## **4.8. Data analysis**

Qualitative researchers are often advised that data collection, data analysis and report writing ought to be carried out at the same time, on the basis that they form several parts of the same process rather than distinctive individual phases (Bryman & Burgess, 2002; Creswell, 1994, 2012; Merriam, 2009). This section outlines the steps taken to manage, reduce and analyse the data elicited for the present study, starting with a rationale for adopting a thematic approach.

### **4.8.1. Rationale for thematic analysis**

Although some maintain that “thematic analysis should be considered a method in its own right” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78), it is often regarded as a generic approach, which is compatible with most qualitative research traditions and fields (Boyatzis, 1998). At a fundamental level, thematic analysis has been defined as “a process for encoding qualitative information” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.vi). ‘Themes’ are clearly at its core and, in the above author’s words, “a theme is a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.vii).

Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight several advantages of thematic analysis, including: flexibility, relative ease of implementation, possibility of effectively reducing large data sets and generating “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), accessibility of results to non-specialised audiences and the fact that it allows

for a range of interpretations, both psychological and social. According to the same authors, the pitfalls of thematic analysis are, as with most methodological approaches, to do with the rigour of implementation or poor research design. Caelli, Ray and Mill (2003) also criticise how it is often employed as an all-purpose approach to describe themes at a superficial level, but without thoroughly attempting to interpret those themes or to seek meaning.

In the present study, I chose first to analyse data and to present findings thematically as the approach seemed compatible with my overall methodology, paradigmatic stance and study aim. Followed by this is an explanation of how the data was coded and analysed and the process which led to the presentation of the findings.

#### **4.8.2. Stages of data analysis**

Qualitative researchers are often advised to conduct data collection, analysis and report writing concurrently, on the basis that they all form part of the same process (Creswell, 1994, 2012; Merriam, 2009). The degree to which portions of data can be fully analysed before data collection is completed is less clear, as it depends on the type of study conducted. There is, however, widespread agreement that qualitative research is not a linear, but an iterative, recursive process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. xxi), whereby data collection and analysis can overlap, and the steps involved in data analysis in particular require flexibility in handling on-going, emerging meaning from data.

Table 4.13 summarises the steps taken to move from data collection to the presentation of findings. These steps are also explained herewith.

##### ***Stage 1: Initial and on-going familiarisation with data during collection***

As a result of the process of collecting primary data by conducting interviews and class observations in person, I had the opportunity to immediately familiarise myself with the data as it was being elicited. After each event, I listened again to the recordings or re-read my observation field notes, reflecting

in particular on the actors, and trying to get a sense for their identities as “persons-in-context” (Ushioda, 2009) rather than anonymous FL learners.

Becoming familiar with my data as I worked was also useful to inform my subsequent interview rounds and to enter better-prepared into subsequent meetings with participants. Also, as Stake (1995) notes, “giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations” (as cited in Dörnyei, 2007, p.250) is important in preparing the grounds for the coding proper.

### ***Stage 2: Transcription and data immersion***

The total recording time for interviews and focus groups was in the region of 31 hours, which resulted in a corpus of approximately 260,000 words. Although the main interest for the current study was on content, it had to be acknowledged that transcription is a form of representation and that “*all* types of transcription constitute a form of translation of the spoken word into something else. An interview transcript can never be the mirror image of the interview” (Willig, 2001, p.25, italics in original).

As it was crucial for this research to reflect participants’ voices, I transcribed all the recordings verbatim and reviewed them twice to ensure that there were no substantial misunderstandings or misrepresentations. However, I decided that it was unnecessary to indicate pause lengths, fillers or non-verbal forms of communication, but that an “unfocussed transcription” (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p.113) – as opposed to a very detailed one – would be fit for purpose. Also, while I initially included incomplete sentences, false starts, laughter and repetition of words, when it came to including direct quotes in my report, I carried out a minimal degree of tidying up to improve readability, all whilst ensuring that meanings were not distorted. Although it was very time-consuming, transcribing audio data and reviewing it meant that I was fully immersed in the data set for several months and I was able to recall the transcribed content with ease. One important element of the transcription stage was the process of making all scripts anonymous. I changed the names of the participants to real names rather than numerical codes, in the belief that this

would enhance the readability of the final report, which, after all, was meant to reflect the views of real people with real names.

**Table 4.13: Stages of data analysis for the current study**

<p><b>STAGE 1: On-going familiarisation with data during collection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen recordings, re-reading field notes</li> <li>• Reflect on interviews and observations</li> <li>• Sketch participants' profiles</li> <li>• Start making sense of first impressions (Stake, 1995)</li> </ul> <p><b>STAGE 2: Transcription and data immersion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transcribe recordings verbatim</li> <li>• Review transcription and anonymise transcripts</li> <li>• First holistic view of data set</li> <li>• Provisionally identify 'big ideas'" (Bloomberg &amp; Volpe, 2012, p.140) and how these relate to the conceptual framework</li> </ul> <p><b>STAGE 3: Coding and data reduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enter transcripts into ATLAS-ti5</li> <li>• Identify potential theory-driven codes</li> <li>• Start coding accordingly (deductively)</li> <li>• At the same time, code inductively from data when other interesting issues or views emerge</li> <li>• Revise coding schemes, discontinue or combine codes as required</li> </ul> <p><b>STAGE 4: Examine 'reduced' data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get ATLAS-ti5 to print out coded interviews and reports of data by code</li> <li>• Examine sets of quotes under the same or similar codes. Highlight most meaningful quotes.</li> <li>• See patterns behind the anecdotal</li> <li>• Identify the threads of a story and sketch themes for findings chapters</li> <li>• Move from descriptive to a deeper understanding</li> </ul> <p><b>STAGE 5: Reconstruct data and reporting of findings (see Chapters 5-7)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate themes for each of the three phases into chapter headings and sub-headings</li> <li>• Cut and paste relevant participants' quotes under headings or themes</li> <li>• Build narrative around the participants' quotes to develop a coherent story</li> <li>• Narrow down quotes to be used in support of narrative – limit to most meaningful ones</li> <li>• Turn the above into "thick description" (Geertz, 1973)</li> <li>• Review the report, looking for repetitions, inconsistencies and ensuring readability</li> </ul> <p><b>STAGE 6: Interpret and discuss findings (see Chapter 8)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesise findings and attempt to answer the 'so what' question</li> <li>• Consider higher level of abstraction, theory making, in relation to the literature</li> </ul>
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At this point, it was possible for the first time to step back and gain a sense of the complete data set, to identify “big ideas” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p.140) and to make broad connections with the conceptual framework.

### ***Stage 3: Coding and data reduction***

It is useful at this point to define some key terms related to qualitative data analysis. Firstly, there is *coding*, which can be described as “a process of organising data and obtaining data reduction. In essence, it is the process by which qualitative researchers ‘see what they have in the data’ ” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p.238). *Codes* are labels which quotes are attached to in order to break up, categorise and sort data. They can be “theory-driven” or “data-driven” (Braun & Clarke, p. 88), depending on whether they are *deductive* and derive from existing concepts, or *inductive* and simply emerge from the data. I also use the word *categories* to indicate the elements of the conceptual framework to which theory-driven codes are related to. In this study, the threads, which appear in Chapters 5-7 as headings and under which the findings are organised, are referred to as *themes*.

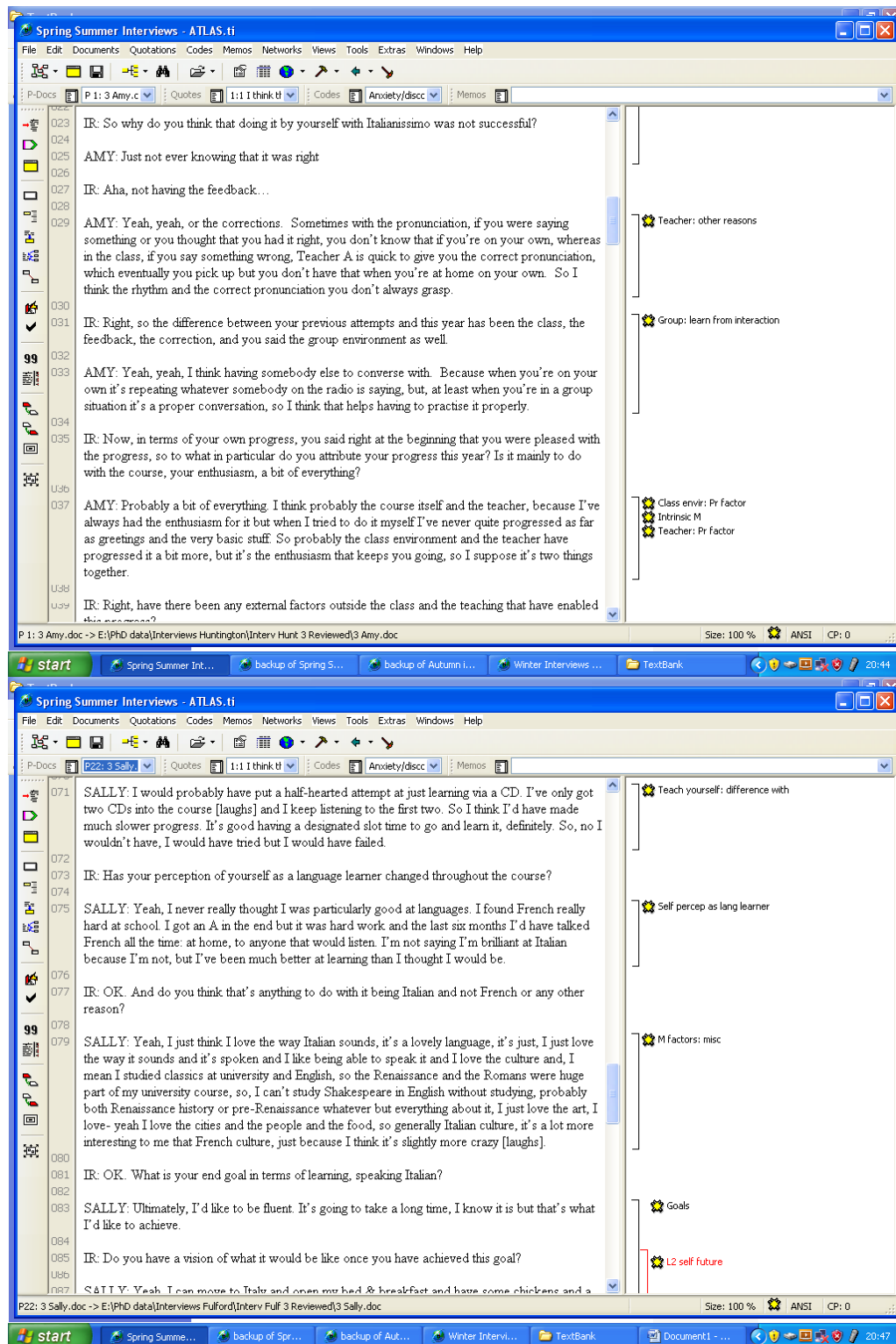
The Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), ATLAS-ti5, was employed to assist with coding. I entered the interview and focus group transcripts into the software and grouped them under three Hermeneutic Units (HU) corresponding to the three data collection phases. In ATLAS-ti5, HUs are organising folders for data documents.

Before starting the coding process using the software, I identified a number of theory-driven codes based on the categories of the conceptual framework. However, the coding scheme for the first HU expanded rapidly once I started adding data-driven codes, and breaking down existing theory-driven codes into sub-codes. The result was a proliferation of codes for the first data set. This process was useful to familiarise myself with the ATLAS-ti5 coding process, which also made it possible to attach the same quote to multiple codes. Figure 4.6 includes two screen shots showing how the two Phase 3 interview



transcripts appeared on the screen with line numbers on the left and code labels on the right.

Figure 4.6: Atlas-Ti5. Sample screen shots of coded interviews



Coding required constant refinement and rationalising, involving discontinuing certain codes and combining others as required. Even so, the coding scheme for Phase 1 remained quite large. This appears as Appendix G. In terms of the additional two sets of data, I coded more efficiently and selectively. As a result, the coding scheme for the data collected in the last phase reported in Appendix I was considerably ‘tighter’ than the first.

Throughout this process, I was mindful to allow codes to emerge inductively as well as deductively. In fact, one of the potential pitfalls of theory-driven coding is being influenced by pre-existing conceptual frameworks or interview questions, while missing out on unexpected data.

#### ***Stage 4: Reviewing ‘reduced’ data and searching for themes***

One of the most useful applications of ATLAS-ti5 was being able to retrieve and print out quotes by code across data sets. Appendix J shows an output of all quotes coded for Phase 3 data under ‘enjoyment’. This meant that, instead of just looking at individual coded interviews, as in Figure 4.6, it was possible to compare and contrast participants’ quotes revolving around the same code or sets of codes and to create a provisional outline of themes from the more extensive coding scheme. Appendix H is an example of how themes were derived from the autumn interview data. However, the often mentioned drawback of this action is that quotes are taken out of context and may not be as meaningful in isolation as in their natural place within an interview (Bryman, 2008, p.239; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p.147). A strong sense of familiarity with the data helped a great deal in this case, as I was generally able to recall the interview and context of the quotations.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that ATLAS-ti5 was employed at a fairly basic but fundamental level, i.e., for coding, recoding, developing coding schemes, retrieving coded data and generating output reports (Lewins & Silver, 2007, p.9). While CAQDAS could have been used for much more sophisticated tasks, including analytical operations, it was felt that for the purpose of this study, a functional use of the software would be sufficient,

particularly as the data set was not particularly large. A further reason for employing ATLAS-ti in a limited way is that, as Gibson and Brown (2009) point out: “when thinking about the role of computer in research: computers and computer programs do not analyse data, researchers do. The computer and qualitative analysis packages are merely tools that assist researchers in their data work” (p.176). In short, I felt that it was essential to extend the “craftsmanship” (Kvale, 1996) developed during data collection to the analysis stage and to take ownership of this process.

#### ***Stage 5: Reconstruct data, meaning making and reporting of findings***

The beginning of this stage consisted mainly in translating the key themes identified for each phase into tentative headings and subheadings encapsulating the essence of those themes. I then copied and pasted the quotes which had been carefully selected in the previous stage under the relevant headings and starting to build a narrative around them to tell a coherent story over three chapters. I felt it was important to let the participants’ voices and words lead the narrative, rather than finding quotes which would ‘fit’ into the story.

Some may argue that extensive paraphrasing is better than extensive quoting, but I would agree with Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) that “by using the participants’ own words, the researcher aims to build the readers’ confidence that the reality of the participants and the situation studied is accurately represented” (p.148).

The challenge was then to turn this into “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). The subsequent reviewing process included looking for redundant or repetitive quotes to remove, inconsistencies and ensuring the ‘flow of the story’.

#### ***Stage 6: Interpret and discuss findings***

This stage aimed at interpreting the findings, leading to a synthesis and integration of the themes, in an attempt to answer the classic ‘so what?’ question in research. It was time to explore the underlying meanings of what had emerged, seeking also to achieve higher levels of abstraction in light of existing theories and previous research.

The outcome of this final stage of the journey is reported in Chapter 8.

#### **4.9. Ethical considerations**

The present study followed the British Educational Research Association Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2004) to ensure that the participants' rights would be safeguarded and that the research as a whole would be ethically sound.

First, *voluntary informed consent* was required from the participants. As already explained, during the first class the teachers spoke to the learners about the study, referring to the information sheet which I supplied them with (see Appendix A). They were all invited to participate and they all said they would be happy to. When I met them individually for the first interview I outlined what their involvement would entail, how the data would be used and stored and how it would be used. They were also informed about their *right to withdraw* from the research at any time. They also signed the consent form which appears as Appendix B.

The teachers did not sign a consent form, as they would not be interviewed, although they formed part of the observations. We had a verbal agreement, supported by the fact that they allowed me to observe their lessons every other week. I did, however, point out that if my presence in class became uncomfortable or any of the participants voiced any concern about it at any point, they should inform me of this and I would stop attending. Moreover, Teacher A obtained consent from the AE provider by checking with her line manager that she and Teacher B were permitted to support the study.

Care was also taken to assure the participants' *privacy*, by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. As explained in Section 4.8.2, real first names were replaced by pseudonyms. The teachers, identified as Teacher A and Teacher B, also remained anonymous. The settings and AE provider in question were described in general terms but not named, to prevent them from being identified by readers. The participants' personal data, e.g., surname,

address, telephone number and email address, were not stored electronically and were held separate from the interview data.

Ethical issues in research arise not only in the collection and handling of data, but in the reporting and interpretation of findings. At all points, care was taken to report honestly and truthfully what emerged from the data. More on this issue is addressed in the following section.

#### **4.10. Trustworthiness issues**

Validity and reliability are widely acknowledged as key quality criteria in research. However, it is often argued that these two concepts belong to the positivist tradition and are more suited to quantitative than qualitative research. The main alternative to validity and reliability in evaluating the quality of qualitative research is *trustworthiness* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In general terms, this can be described as “the extent to which one can have trust or confidence in a study and its findings” (Robson, 2011, p.534). More specifically, these translate into the four following criteria, which have parallels in quantitative research, namely *credibility* (internal validity), *transferability* (external validity), *dependability* (reliability) and *confirmability* (objectivity). These are considered in turn in relation to the present study.

##### **4.10.1. Credibility**

*Credibility* refers to the extent that a study and its findings are credible and convincing. One of the ways of enhancing methodological validity is to use triangulation of methods and data sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this purpose, the present study adopted two main methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews and summative focus groups. Although used mainly to contextualise, observations also helped making better sense of the self-reported data. Finally, the learner course evaluation data provided by the participants represented a third, subsidiary data source. Thus, the participants’ ‘voices’ were heard in more than one way and all contributed to the final interpretation of the findings. This seems to be in line with Patton’s (1999) view:

As with triangulation of methods, triangulation of data sources within qualitative methods will seldom lead to a single, totally consistent picture. The point is to study and understand when and why there are differences. (...) Consistency in overall patterns of data from different sources, and reasonable explanations for differences in data from divergent sources, contribute significantly to the overall credibility of findings. (p.119)

Moreover, it can be argued that the longitudinal aspect of the current study also contributes to its *credibility*. Dörnyei (2007) notes in fact that, in qualitative research, longitudinal research designs, as well as “*prolonged engagement and persistent observation*” (p.61, italics in original) have a greater potential for validity.

#### **4.10.2. Transferability**

*Transferability* denotes the degree to which a particular study can apply or ‘transfer’ to other research settings and populations. Qualitative research cannot be subject to wide generalisation, because it is inherently context-bound. Thus, Marshall and Rossman (2001) argue that it is not the responsibility of the author of the study to demonstrate ‘generalisability’, but it is the responsibility of researchers and readers to evaluate a particular study to decide whether its findings have wider implications. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend that researchers should use *thick description* to provide readers with enough information to identify possible similarities with other contexts.

As for the present research, it can be argued that the fact that two cohorts of adult FL learners were involved in the study and that the same findings applied to both groups acts as an indication of potential *transferability* to other adult FL settings. Also, both the current chapter and the finding chapters of this thesis have attempted to provide *thick description* to help readers assess whether the findings of this study resonate with other contexts familiar to them.

#### **4.10.3. Dependability**

This criterion essentially “refers to whether one can track the processes and procedures used to collect and interpret the data” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012,

p. 113). An approach frequently advocated for ensuring dependability in qualitative research is that of providing a so-called “audit trail” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this purpose, the present chapter has attempted to offer a fairly detailed account and thorough explanations of how the study was designed, how data was collected and analysed, in other words documenting the choices and decisions made during the research process, with supporting evidence.

The fairly simple research design of the present study could theoretically be replicated in other settings – for instance, by following the steps outlined in

Table 4.13 – and some may also find that the new model of adult FL motivation presented in Chapter 8 could illustrate other L2 motivation contexts.

#### **4.10.4. Confirmability**

The criterion of *confirmability* is met when the findings of a study could be broadly ‘confirmed’ by other researchers if they had carried out the study. Thus, researchers are expected to collect and analyse data and report findings, in a neutral way, rather than allowing personal bias to influence them. In this study, I sought to adopt “reflexive objectivity” which essentially means “striving for objectivity about subjectivity” (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p.242). In other words, while recognising my own unique position as researcher – and also as a FL teacher, a native Italian, a part-time doctoral student, etc. – I attempted to approach the study as objectively as possible, mainly to allow the voices and perspectives of the participants to emerge above my own, as explained earlier in this chapter. As Toma (2011) points out “it is not the researcher who is objective; rather, it is the findings themselves” (p.274). In support of the *confirmability* of this study there is also the explicit description of methods or audit trail, highlighted in the previous section.

### 4.11. Limitations

From the point of view of trustworthiness, a technique which is often mentioned as a means to enhance *credibility* is *respondent validation*, such as asking participants to check whether their views are correctly reflected in the research. This, however, was not implemented in the current research for two reasons. First, the data analysis was completed a period of time after the initial data collection and it would therefore have been difficult to make contact again with more than just a few of the participants. By that stage, their life would have moved on – as learners of Italian or not – and therefore the likely hazy memories of just a few participants in the original study would arguably have added little to the study in terms of credibility. Second, it is reasonable to assume that one of the reasons that the study retained a healthy number of participants was due to the general lack of paperwork or form filling involved – an aspect of AE which several participants appeared to resent. To be absolutely ethical, I would have had to make it clear from the start – as part of their informed consent – that they would be asked to read through pages of transcripts or to meet for further interviews to discuss my findings or to check that they had been represented truthfully. On pragmatic grounds I chose not to do this, as it might have driven several participants to resist becoming involved and therefore to have subsequently reduced the study sample considerably. Instead, a great deal of time and effort went into ensuring that the interview transcriptions were carried out accurately and that the participants' views were represented as truthfully as possible.

The fact that I did not discuss my findings with the teachers or involve them in the data collection could also be viewed as a missed opportunity but, as already mentioned, the study aim was to explore the participants' perspectives and by including the teachers' views there may have been a danger that they would have influenced interpretations, or detracted attention from the participants' views.



#### 4.12. Summary

This chapter presented a detailed overview of the methodology employed by this study which set out to explore the motivation of adult learners during an Italian beginners' course. It started by stating the epistemological and ontological premises of the research which were linked to the choice of a qualitative approach on interpretivist/social constructivist lines. The study adopted a longitudinal study design consisting of three main phases of data collection over the course of a nine month Italian FL programme. 26 participants were purposefully selected as L1-English adult learners of Italian enrolled on an AE weekly course. The main methods were semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the course. Two summative focus groups were also part of the final data collection phase. Subsidiary, contextualising methods and data included frequent class observations and supporting documentation supplied by the AE provider.

All interview and focus group data was audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim, before being coded with the help of the CAQDAS, ATLAS-di5. Both theory-driven and data-driven coding was first carried out, eventually leading to the development of key themes which later formed scaffolding for the analysis and reporting of the findings.

Measures were taken to comply with research ethical guidelines (BERA, 2004), by obtaining voluntary informed consent from the participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity and conducting the study ethically throughout. Trustworthiness was evaluated in this chapter with reference to the criteria of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* and how these were addressed by the current study. Finally, the chapter considered some possible methodological limitations of the study.

## 5. Findings from Phase 1: Motivation at the start of the course

### 5.1. Introduction

The findings presented here are based on the analysis of the first data set, which was collected by means of semi-structured interviews with 26 participants in the very early stages of their Italian course. The chapter reports on the participants' motivation for wishing to learn Italian and for enrolling on the course. It also illustrates possible motivators and demotivators which, in the participants' view, may affect completion. Another aim is to shed light on the participants' starting points and provide some background on their prior language learning experience, as well as their attitudes and beliefs in relation to L2 learning. As anticipated in section 0, this chapter touches on a number of areas covered by the *preactional stage* of the Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 motivation<sup>4</sup> (see Section 3.3.5), which was adopted as a flexible conceptual framework for the present study.

### 5.2. Reasons for learning Italian

This section is concerned with the participants' explanations as to why they had initially decided to start learning Italian. Within the *preactional stage* of the Process Model, this falls broadly within the category 'Attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers', listed under *choice motivation* (see Figure 3.2).

#### 5.2.1. A love affair with Italy, its culture and language

In the early part of the interview (see first interview guide, Table 4.7) for schedule) participants were asked about their reasons for enrolling on the course and specifically for opting to study Italian. Half of the 26 participants

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<sup>4</sup> From this point onwards the Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 Motivation (1998) will be simply referred to as 'Process Model'.

said that their decision to learn the language was down to a keen interest in various aspects of Italian culture and heritage, as listed in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Reasons given for choosing Italian**

Culture	7
Art, architecture, history	7
Attractiveness of Italian	7
Cookery and food	6
Italian geographical areas	2
Music and opera	2
Weather	2
Fashion	1
Literature	1
Cycling	1

*Note: some of the 26 participants offered more than one reason.*

The word *culture*, which was mentioned by the majority of participants, appeared to be used mostly as a broad term to indicate a combination of Italian attractions, as illustrated below:

I'm just interested in the country, the culture, the cuisine (...) fashion, so I'd just like to see different parts of Italy and be able to use the language when I go. [Gill 1b]<sup>5</sup>

I love Italy and everything Italian, more than any other country I've ever been to, everything: the culture, the Italian style, the climate, the food, the language is beautiful, I think. [Pam 1a]

Therefore, some participants made reference to cultural subjects, such as art and history; others declared areas of interest which had strong connections with Italy, such as fashion, cookery and cycling; to some, *culture* seemed to represent a wider concept, including customs and lifestyle.

For most of the participants, however, an interest in Italy and aspects of its culture did not appear to be the only reason that the participants wished to learn

<sup>5</sup> The number after each participant's name refers to the stage of data collection (interview 1 in this case). 'a' and 'b' indicate Group A and B respectively.

the language. Table 5.2 shows that only four of those interviewed had yet to visit Italy, whilst others had been regular visitors for some time or planned to buy a property in the country. Others had enjoyed one or more holidays in Italy and were planning future trips. As a result of these factors, many of the participants' appreciation for Italian culture and language was inextricably linked to their first-hand experience of the country.

**Table 5.2: Experience of visiting Italy**

Regular visitors (had been to Italy several times and visit at least once a year)	7
Occasional visitors (had been on a few holidays)	10
Once only visitors	5
Never visited	<u>4</u>
Tot:	26

The earlier quotes by Gill and Pam convey a sense of how *going to* or *being in* Italy was keeping their interest alive. Hence, the prospect of visiting Italy, coming into contact with Italians and experiencing Italian culture directly appeared to be at the root of many participants' motivation to start learning the language. Those who had never been to Italy or had only visited once briefly many years earlier, generally relished the prospect of going there one day and it was this prospect that was often quoted as one of the reasons for taking up the language.

A further purely aesthetic reason for wanting to study Italian was its perceived beauty and sound. Views similar to that outlined below were expressed by a third of the participants:

It's a beautiful sounding language (...) I love the sound of it and I like speaking it, it feels nice to say those words. [Valerie 1a]

Three participants contrasted this with the seemingly harsh sounds of German and Chinese, which were considered unattractive in comparison. Often, this

notion of the *beauty* of the language appeared to be linked to the perceived attractiveness of the culture, which emerged once again as a holistic concept:

It's a very attractive language to speak, it's a very attractive culture in lots of ways. [Daniel 1b]

### **5.2.2. Feeling embarrassed about not speaking the language**

Almost a third of those interviewed reported feeling ignorant or embarrassed about not being able to speak Italian when in Italy.

We go to Italy quite a lot and I'm sick of feeling ignorant. We're getting to know people there as well, they are not going to learn English, so it's nice to learn a language and be able to communicate with people and talk to them beyond hello, goodbye, nice to see you. [Sally 1b]

I feel very ashamed of this country and our laziness in speaking other languages. Every time I go somewhere I can't speak the language, I feel embarrassed about it. [Pam 1a]

Sally and Pam represented two slightly different examples of participants' feelings of inadequacy for not speaking Italian. In Sally's case, her reasons for learning Italian were not simply to avoid embarrassment, but to better integrate with the locals of the Italian village that she frequently visited. Hence, there appeared to be an *integrative motive*, in the Gardnerian sense, for learning Italian. On the other hand, Pam's feelings of embarrassment, a feature shared by several other participants, represented a more general sense that one should make an effort to speak another language, as a matter of respect towards its people, as well as for one's own self-respect.

### **5.2.3. Going back to one's roots: Italian heritage participants**

There were six participants who had recent or distant Italian heritage (see Table 5.3). The participants with first-generation Italian parents living in the UK but born in Italy were mainly interested in communicating with their relatives abroad, getting in touch with their roots:

Whenever I go over [to Italy], all my aunts speak English so I'd like to be able to go over and speak Italian ... and just because I feel it is part of my heritage, really, I feel I should speak it. [Chiara 1a]

Like Chiara (above), Rita also had an Italian father who moved to the UK when he was quite young. She said that before her grandmother passed away in Italy she would have liked to be able to communicate with her in Italian, as she did not speak any English. Mother and daughter, Linda and Diana, said that they were keen to be able to communicate with their mother-in-law and grandmother respectively when they visited her in Italy.

**Table 5.3: Participants with Italian heritage**

First-generation Italian parent or husband (in contact with relatives in Italy)	>	Chiara	Rita	Diana	Linda
Second-generation Italian parent (no contact with relatives in Italy)	>	Amy			
Italian descent on one side of the family (no known relatives in Italy)	>	Daniel			

Amy's situation was different in that her mother was born in the UK to Italian parents so her contacts were mainly with UK-based family members. She said that she had never been to Italy and had never met her relatives living in Italy, so learning to communicate with them was not a priority. However, Amy was strongly drawn to Italy and, once again, to its culture. Rather than art and history, she referred to the food, the laidback lifestyle, family values and the kind of snapshots of Italy seen on TV property programmes. When asked why she was learning Italian, her first answer was "I'd wanted to do it for years", followed by "my mother's side, they're Italian". Her heritage, therefore, appeared to be at the root of her interest in Italy and the Italian language, with a view to visiting the country one day.

Despite having an Italian surname, Daniel's connections dated back a few generations and, by his own admission, he had never considered himself to be even remotely Italian. However, as his father had started to research their family history, Daniel was aware of an Italian ancestor who moved to the north of England in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although he mentioned his Italian-sounding surname and his distant roots as reasons for learning Italian, his sense of Italian identity was significantly weaker in comparison with the other heritage learners, and his and his wife Ruth's main reasons for learning Italian appeared more similar to those participants with no Italian connections.

#### **5.2.4. Other reasons: keeping the mind active, enjoying learning, life transitions and coincidences**

Three participants commented that learning Italian was a way to keep their brain active. Valerie, a retired school teacher, mentioned a generic need for brain stimulation: "I need to use my mind for something!" [1a]. Others thought that learning Italian would present itself as a new challenge: "I think it's good to stretch your brain in a way that's different from what I do during the day" [Daniel 1b].

Not all participants were able to explain precisely why they had chosen Italian above other languages and a couple even felt that a series of circumstances had conspired, including friends who had talked enthusiastically about learning the language or simply having looked at the adult education brochure and feeling drawn to Italian above other courses. Below are two examples:

I chose Italian because it was coming at me from all sides: this friend last year, and she said it again, and then several people around here, and it really seems to be part of our culture in this area, in my little circle. [Valerie 1a]

I did actually look through the brochure to see what took my fancy, and the thing really that stuck out to me was Italian. I just wanted to do something different, something that I hadn't had time to do before. [Rowena 1a]

Some participants added that starting to learn Italian marked a turning point in their life, having just overcome bereavement (Valerie and Esther), an illness

(Rosanne), having just retired (Tim and Rowena) or having celebrated a significant birthday (Kate). In different ways, picking up a language contributed to embarking upon a new chapter in their lives, a meaningful activity which they considered to be worth pursuing. This suggests that, as further explored in the following section, learning Italian was not the main reason for enrolling on the course for a number of the participants.

### **5.3. Reasons for enrolling on an Italian adult education course**

This section outlines the reasons the participants gave for opting to specifically enrol on a course in order to learn Italian. It illustrates why self-teaching had not worked for those who had tried to teach themselves the language or had intended to try, and why the social aspect provided by the course experience proved so important for others.

#### **5.3.1. The failure of the teach-yourself approach**

The teach-yourself approach to learning Italian had been tried out by several of the participants, but had proved unsuccessful. Four participants said that they had purchased books and tapes, but never really used them due to other priorities taking over. They admitted that joining a class was a way to ‘make themselves do it’, a kind of strategy to move from intention to action.

... we’d shown ourselves that we couldn’t do it on our own, not at the moment, so the course was some structure and some motivation ... we need to do a course to make us do it. [Daniel 1b]

One exception was Amy, who explained how she seriously tried to teach herself Italian, though this simply had not worked:

With the tape you can repeat what they are saying, but they don’t speak back to you the way you would in a normal conversation, so you can’t progress really any further than what you hear. [Amy 1a]

Rita’s words indicate a position combining Daniel’s and Amy’s explanations:



... that was my main reason for joining a class: to have a definite structure to learning the language. I guess I hadn't thought of the class in any other terms really. [Rita 1b]

### **5.3.2. Meeting people: the social aspect of language learning**

Approximately one third of the participants mentioned the social aspect as one of the reasons for enrolling on the course. For four of the retired participants, the social side appeared to be quite important; for those living on their own, attending a class would enable them to mix with people. For one of them, socialising was clearly a key aim:

If you learn a language, you have to speak to people and so, really, I always knew that during these winter months I would do a language. It was purely and simply down to which one it was going to be. [Esther 1a]

Five other participants mentioned the social aspect as just one of the reasons for enrolling on the course. Some spoke generally about the benefit of meeting people outside the house, whilst others were more specific about what they meant by this. For instance, when asked whether there were other reasons for joining the course besides learning the language, Kay replied:

Well perhaps just a little more social as well, the chance to meet people who've got similar interests as well, because I don't know anyone else who speaks Italian, so I don't have anyone to practise on and I thought then, if you go to the class and you meet people and maybe get together and help each other along, you build up friendships through it as well. [Kay 1b]

Kay seemed keen to establish relationships with others on the course from the beginning and felt that working with and supporting one another would be one of the benefits of taking the course.

It is worth pointing out that participants were not asked explicitly whether they had enrolled on the course to meet people; hence, those who mentioned this did so spontaneously.

### **5.3.3. Other reasons: teacher's reputation and course availability**

Several other explanations were given for enrolling on the course; although these appeared to be more contributing factors than key motives, they

nevertheless played a role in *launching action*, one of the motivational functions in the *preactional stage* of the Process Model.

Teacher A had been teaching Italian for the local Adult Education service for a number of years and some of the learners in her class explained how, upon hearing of her reputation from friends, this factor had played a part in encouraging them to join that particular course.

A lady who used to live here recommended Teacher A very strongly because she had learnt with her and she said she was absolutely wonderful. So I thought ‘OK, I’ll go for Teacher A’. [Valerie 1a]

As will become apparent in section 5.5.2, feeling comfortable with the teacher and having trust in her was deemed by many as very important. Therefore, even before enrolling on the course some participants found it reassuring to be given some guarantees concerning their future Italian teacher. Below are the words of a participant for whom ‘liking the teacher’ was clearly paramount:

I remember saying when I enrolled ‘Look, what if I don’t like the teacher? Because if I don’t like the teacher, I’m not going to learn.’ The person said ‘Well I can assure you you will like the teacher’, and I said ‘I might not!’ She said ‘But I’m sure you will’. I said ‘Look! What if I didn’t?’ She said ‘Well, you can put a complaint in and you can get your money back’ and I said ‘Well, that’s fine then, that’s fair enough’. [Kate 1b]

Others mentioned how the convenience of the classes’ location and time had contributed to their choice of course.

Esther and Elaine [1a] admitted to joining an Italian class almost by chance, due to Spanish not being available as a day-time course. As already quoted in section 5.3.2, Esther made it clear that she had joined a language class purely to encourage herself to socialise and talk to people. On the other hand, Elaine, a former French teacher, said that she was learning a new language for personal interest, and when the Spanish class which she had enrolled on had folded after two weeks, she considered Italian to be the next best option. It therefore seems that Italian *per se* was not the only attractor for some participants. When prompted further, however, both Esther and Elaine mentioned other reasons that they felt they would commit to a year or more of learning Italian. In

Esther's case, it was the memories of a train journey through Italy several years earlier, combined with an interest in cookery. Elaine also mentioned a memorable trip to Rome with her father as a child and her desire to visit Italy again, combined with the fact that generally she did not like to visit a country without possessing the ability to communicate in the local language. This suggests that, even though Italian was their second choice, both participants could provide motivating factors that would enable them to commit to the course.

#### **5.4. Goals, intentions and aspirations**

The Process Model lists *setting goals* as one of the key motivational functions in the *preactional stage*. The model also states that various *goal properties* (e.g., *goal relevance, specificity and proximity*) represent important motivational influence. The first interview data set, however, did not always identify consistency across the participants between the reasons given for learning Italian and their ultimate goals. Hence, reasons and goals have been analysed separately in this chapter, in spite of obvious overlaps.

Some participants had chosen to learn Italian for different reasons (e.g., family or travel related) but had similar goals (e.g., get by using the language by the end of the year), whereas others had enrolled for similar reasons (e.g., love of the culture) but with different goals (e.g., be an independent traveller or buy a house in Italy). Also, at this early stage, participants seemed clear about their reasons for enrolling on the course though, less so about their goals, which appeared rather vague in many cases.

Section 5.4 outlines the most frequently mentioned goals, both short and long-term, which include 'getting by' in Italian, becoming a proficient user, using Italian on holiday, buying a property, communicating with family and friends and attending the course to socialise.

#### 5.4.1. From just ‘getting by’ to having a conversation in Italian

In the early part of the interview, participants were asked what they hoped to gain from participating in the course. Towards the end of the interview, they were asked whether learning Italian was a short- or long-term plan for them at that stage. From the point of view of acquiring language competence, most participants agreed that a realistic goal or expectation for the year would be:

to get to be able to travel around [Carol 1b]

to feel confident in handling basic communication [Daniel 1b]

to communicate a bit when I am over there, even if it’s just to make an effort [Pam 1a]

to go on holiday and to have a bit of an understanding of the language and not feel completely at odds and not know a word [Rowena 1a]

Heritage learners, Diana and Linda, and also Sally, who travelled to Italy regularly because her partner’s parents had a house there, mentioned goals which went beyond simple holiday transactions:

It’s just so that I can hopefully be able to speak a bit more fluently (...) for me to use the language on an everyday basis is the main thing for me, just to be able to get by. [Diana 1b]

It’s just to be able to communicate simply. (...) It’s just to be able to speak. (...) I think if I get to the end of it and I could chatter away, just simply, I’d be more than pleased with that. [Linda 1b]

Yes, just to improve my basic Italian, really. Be able to conduct a conversation, or at least understand better when people talk to me. [Sally 1b]

This reveals more ambitious goals from the start than those stated by the other participants. It also suggests that, in these participants’ view, one should be able to “chatter away” or “conduct a conversation” after one or two years of learning Italian. It is especially interesting that, for the majority of participants, communicating, i.e., speaking and aural understanding, were the key skills which they wished to develop, whilst reading and writing were hardly mentioned.

When asked, at the end of the interview, whether learning Italian was a short- or long-term plan, half of the participants said that they were keen to take it further and “get really good at it” [Sally 1b]. This long-term ambition was voiced in different ways; some expressed the intention of taking their learning experience further, beyond a beginners’ course [Calum 1b] but were cautious in their expectations, as in Daniel’s case: “I’d like to take it as far as I can, but part of me suspects I might bail out after a year” [1b]. Others openly stated that they wanted to take Italian as far as they could, which for some meant carrying on with the course for four years or more [Pam 1a; Carol 1b], whereas others said that they would hopefully pursue learning Italian for life [Amy 1a; Kate 1a]. Thus, in terms of goals related to becoming proficient in the language, it emerged that several participants who had joined the Italian class for different reasons shared the long-term goal or aspiration to take Italian as far as possible.

One interesting prospect was put forward by Tim, a retired French and German language teacher who wanted to go beyond holiday talk from the start:

What I really want to do is perhaps in two or three years’ get to the level where I can have a real conversation, rather than just transactional language (...). I think you’re only really competent in a language when you can have a conversation about what you want to talk about rather than what the teacher wants you to talk about. [Tim 1a]

This view was shared by Valerie:

I’d like to be able to speak reasonably fluently and say what I want to say, not what the book says or what other people tell me to say. I want to say what I want to say, in my way, grammatically correct, obviously, idiomatically correct. But I would like to have a good working knowledge of the language and go to the country and speak with the people. [Valerie 1a]

From the start, Tim and Valerie’s aim was to acquire autonomy in using the language and “have a conversation about what you want to talk about rather than what the teacher wants you to talk about” [Tim 1a]. Perhaps coincidentally, but interestingly nevertheless, both were amongst those feeling strongly that grammar was essential to language learning. They also expressed the wish to do more than what was covered in class and, in later interviews,

both voiced a degree of frustration at the slow pace of the course and limited grammar content.

#### **5.4.2. From speaking Italian on holiday to buying a house in Italy**

As seen in section 5.2.1, for most participants there seemed to be a clear relationship between visiting Italy and learning to speak Italian. At this stage, it would be legitimate to wonder why speaking Italian on holiday should be such a priority when most holidaymakers do not. As seen earlier, some participants viewed speaking only English abroad as a source of embarrassment, in the belief that one should at least make an effort to speak Italian in Italy. For the more experienced language learners in the groups, that is, those already fluent in one or two foreign languages, this feeling came across more as frustration at the fact that they could not make themselves understood in Italy, in the same way as they did in other countries:

Last year we went to Milan which I loved, but I couldn't make myself understood and I hate it, I hate going abroad and not being able to even speak a sentence or ask about something. [Gill 1b]

Practical concerns about using the language as a means to better cope as independent travellers were also apparent for some of the participants:

I think we're likely to go to Italy a lot more when we are a bit more competent with the language, because we like to organise our holidays ourselves. So we like to go visiting, go travelling and you really need to have a pretty good knowledge of basic Italian to be able to get around. So the course is good because Teacher B said that we would learn directions and restaurants and meals, I think it was, and something else, which is basic stuff that will get us started anyway. [Carol 1b]

According to other participants, some knowledge of the language would be a way of tapping into a more authentic type of interaction with the Italian environment, in particular with Italian people:

I'd like to get to a reasonable standard, just read menus and speak a little with the locals. I'd like to talk to them: to have them understand me and me understand them. [Matt 1b]

A couple of participants had more or less concrete plans to move to Italy or buy a house there one day. An interesting view was expressed by Kay, a serious prospect buyer:

My husband and I plan to hopefully buy a property in Italy and spend some time there. We've been on quite a few holidays and we can't speak any Italian, you just get the odd word, so I'm quite determined that I want to learn to speak it and I want to speak it and understand it properly, not just tourist Italian, I'd like to know (...) so if we do go and live there eventually or spend half of the year there, I'm fully conversant in it (...) This idea of actually biting the bullet and buying a property spurred me on. [Kay 1b]

For others, the idea of owning a property in Italy was remote in time, yet sufficiently strong to motivate them to start learning Italian:

I'd like a holiday home there and I always think it would be a lot easier to have that if I could speak the language. So you have to try and aspire at things and this is my little bottom of the ladder to get in perhaps. It's my ambition. [Fiona 1b]

The above examples suggest that the great majority associated learning Italian with visiting Italy either on holiday or for longer periods and felt that their ability to speak the language would enhance their travel experience.

### **5.4.3. Communicating with family and friends in Italy**

As already outlined in section 5.2.3, the main goal of the four heritage learners with close links with Italy was not so much to 'get by' in Italian on holiday, but to actually speak it with family and relatives.

The bulk of the people- my family is over in Italy, and it would be nice to be able to go and have a bit more of a conversation with them and be able to talk a bit more about just day-to-day things in general and 'how's work going?' and 'do you have a boyfriend?' and 'where are you living?'. [Rita 1b]

Rita, Chiara and Diana all had first generation Italian fathers and wished that they had acquired Italian at an early age. There was a sense of frustration at not being able to communicate in Italian with their Italian-based relatives, in spite of the fact that most of them could speak English. Notably, these three participants, together with Linda, Diana's mother, did not mention Italian

culture (as described in section 5.2.1) as one of the reasons for learning Italian. On the other hand, Amy, a third-generation Italian who had no contact with Italian-speaking relatives, had great interest in everything Italian and her ambition to communicate in the language was closer to that of non-heritage learners:

I think I'd like to be able to speak it and understand it, to be able to get by if I ever go over there, which I hope to at some point. Just to be able to speak to people and understand what they are saying, and they understand what I am saying, just not to sound ignorant really when you go to these places. [Amy 1a]

The heritage learners commented that they felt speaking Italian might make it easier for them to move and find a job in Italy one day. None of them said that they were learning Italian specifically to work in Italy, but admitted that this was a possibility or a vague aspiration:

I think maybe in the future, maybe working over there (...) if I could speak Italian, then I probably would have gone over there before now to work over for a bit. It has put me off, the fact that I couldn't speak it. [Chiara 1a]

I think it's nice to actually go and live somewhere, spend some time in the country and I think it does help you to pick up more of the language. I don't know it might be something that I might do at some point in the future, it might be something that I can do with my job perhaps. [Rita 1b]

Mother and daughter, Linda and Diana, who had strong Italian connections, went as far as saying that they would move to Italy immediately if the opportunity arose, though their immediate goal was to be able to “chatter away in Italian” with relatives.

#### **5.4.4. Making friends on the course and socialising**

Chapter 4 described how the two groups under scrutiny comprised different type of adult learners: the morning group mainly included pensioners and part-time workers, whilst those attending the evening class tended to be in full-time employment. It would have been reasonable to expect that the participants of the day-time class might have been especially interested in socialising on the course. This was true to some extent, in that all six retired participants from that group said that they were interested in meeting new people, including one



(Esther) who said that she had enrolled on the course specifically to mix with people. However, several of the participants from the evening class also said that, although this was not their prime goal, socialising was one of the reasons they had joined the class as indicated below:

[It is] obviously a night out, a bit of company and everything like that and talking, mingling in a group. [Matt 1b]

I like learning really and I like meeting people and I'm hoping that the social side will come out of doing the class as well. Maybe, maybe not but I just thought it would be really interesting to do, meet people, pick up basics of what I've done previously and see an end result from it as well. [Gill 1b]

## **5.5. Anticipated motivating and demotivating factors**

At the end of the interview, participants were asked what they thought would make them enjoy the course and carry on with it, and what, on the other hand, they thought might get in the way of completing the programme (see autumn interview guide, Table 4.7). It is worth noting that the word *motivation* was avoided in the interview questions, the emphasis being on 'continuing' and 'completing the course' rather than 'being motivated' in an abstract sense.

This section addresses significant factors which participants reported might help or hinder their course participation and completion. Individual, class-dependent and external factors will be considered.

### **5.5.1. Learner factors: sense of progress, confidence and keeping up**

*Expectancy of success and perceived coping potential*, which is one of the main motivational influences in the *preactional stage* of the Process Model, has clear resonance with the answers given by the participants when asked about the factors they thought would be more likely to contribute to their course completion. The idea of *progress* was repeatedly mentioned, as illustrated below:

You've got to feel like you're progressing and not sticking and getting to a certain level and not going any further, you've got to keep pushing. I've got to be pushing myself to go that extra bit and keep taking it in and gaining the knowledge as we go along. [Kay 1b]

If I feel I'm making progress and I'm taking it in, taking it all in, and that I am improving all the time, I think I'd carry on. [Matt 1b]

For some participants *expectancy of success* was clearly defined by a sense of progress, of moving forward and carrying on improving. In other words, success was often identified with a constantly moving goal post, as opposed to a fixed end goal. In line with Dörnyei-Ottó's concept of language learning motivation as a process, participants seemed keen to develop and see their skills advance on a regular basis. Both Kay and Matt equated progress in language learning with "taking it in". Other participants mentioned that if the course went too fast and they felt unable to cope, they might consider giving up.

Another important contributor to the participants' sense of progress seemed to be feedback:

If I get some feedback myself that I am going somewhere with it, making steps, then that will be a help in keeping going. [Daniel 1b]

I guess it's just positive feedback. If I can see improvement, that's going snowball with motivation (...) as long as I feel I am progressing and can see that the amount I'm putting into it, I'm getting the equal amount of progression, then that's fine. [Calum 1b]

It would be reasonable to assume that the participant is referring to teacher feedback, though this is not clear from the extract above and other answers. Feedback could be understood in a much broader sense, to include feedback from fellow language participants, partners, native speaker friends, family or Italians in Italy.

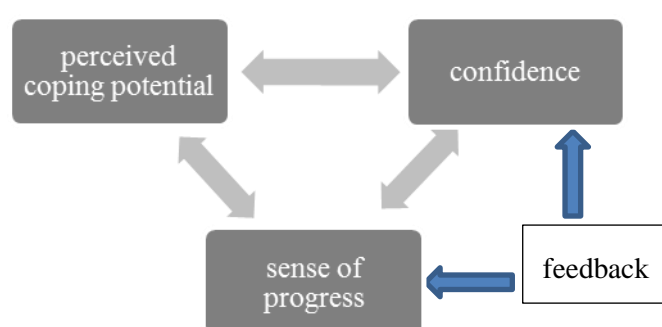
Positive feedback and perceived coping potential are crucial to build confidence in the view of many participants.

I feel committed to learning the thing, so I think it's just whether I can do that and the feedback would give me the confidence for me to go. [Daniel 1b]

I suppose if I feel that I am learning new words, if I get more confident, than that will encourage me to continue ... confidence, really, just being able to communicate and feeling like I have achieved something will probably encourage me to carry on. [Chiara 1a]

As illustrated in Figure 5.1, positive feedback, perceived coping potential, confidence and sense of progress appear to be connected, even though causal relationships cannot be claimed.

**Figure 5.1: Possible relationships between feedback, confidence, coping potential and sense of progress**



The data indicates that, from a very early stage, these factors seemed to influence the participants' commitment and motivation. This may suggest that positivity in any of these factors has the effect of boosting the others, whereas negative feedback, for instance, or negatively perceived coping potential, could have the opposite effect.

Interestingly, the notions of self-confidence, self-worth and feedback feature as *main motivational influences* only in the third and last stage of the Process Model; this is called *postactional stage* and focuses on the phase of *motivational retrospection*, when participants look back and evaluate their language learning experience. However, the present data shows that many participants perceive these factors to be crucial even in the very early stages of language learning.

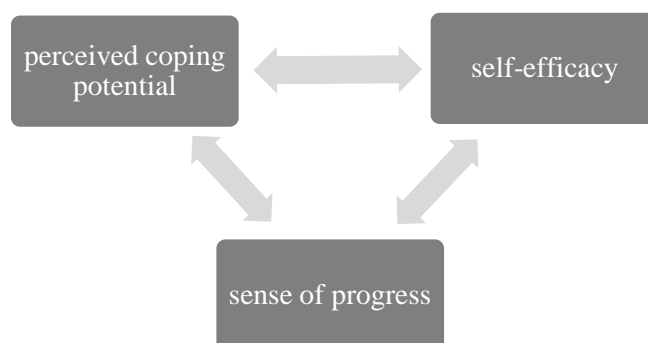
Only a small number of participants felt that their progress was largely dependent on their commitment to completing work at home. Elaine, for

instance, never mentioned the word *confidence*, stating instead that progress would result from sheer hard work.

I suppose it depends on how much work you put in yourself as to how much progress you are going to make, so, a commitment to doing work at home and keep going with it (...) otherwise it's just a waste of time. I find that a little bit and often is far better than three hours once a week. [Elaine 1a]

A former language teacher, Elaine revealed a degree of self-assurance which was observed also in other experienced language participants, such as Tim. She viewed progress as an important motivator, closely linked to her own *self-efficacy*<sup>6</sup>, and Elaine and Tim did not seem worried about the difficulty of the course, placing a lot more importance on their own input (see Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2: Possible relationship between self-efficacy, perceived coping potential and sense of progress in more experienced FL learners**



Another interesting perspective was that put forward by Calum.

I think what will help me complete it is my motivation, you know, motivation coming from within. I am not learning for anyone else, I'm learning for me. So if I don't complete it, I'll feel kind of inadequate, I'd feel like (...) you know, it is something I want to achieve. [Calum 1a]

Calum is the only participant who used the word 'motivation' in the first interview, possibly due to the fact that, as a lecturer in sport studies and a

<sup>6</sup> As explained in section 3.3.1, *self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1997) is the belief in one's own ability to succeed in certain situations. Therefore self-efficacy is context specific, whereas *confidence* tends to be more general.

competitive cyclist, he was familiar with motivational theories in sport psychology. He spoke about “motivation coming from within” as a kind of sustained desire and commitment to fulfil what he had set out to achieve. As with Elaine, he considered his input and commitment as key to completing the course. Yet, as revealed in an earlier quote, feedback was important to Calum [1b] as a way to measure progress (“as long as I feel I am progressing and can see that the amount I’m putting into it, I’m getting the equal amount of progression, then that’s fine”). His stance, therefore, places him somewhere between Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2, suggesting also that there is a dynamic interplay of motivating factors in different individuals.

### **5.5.2. Class dependent factors: teacher, group, fun and interest**

*Quality of the learning experience* and *teachers influence* feature in the *actional stage* of the Process Model. The data, however, suggests that participants anticipated these factors to be motivationally important from the initial stages. As explained in the methodology chapter, the first set of interviews were carried out in the first few weeks of the course; yet it is likely that, had participants been interviewed a few weeks earlier, these factors would have emerged to a similar degree.

Section 5.3.3 highlighted how some participants had been partly drawn to the course by the teacher’s reputation and one had specifically asked for reassurance that she could receive a refund, had she not liked the teacher. The quotes below illustrate how first impressions seem to have reassured the participants and put them in a positive frame of mind with regard to their teacher and the class in general.

It seems to be a nice group (...) and Teacher B seems to be quite nice so that’s making it all quite enjoyable, something to look forward to do on a Tuesday evening. [Rita 1b]

At least I know if I was struggling or whatever, I know I could approach Teacher B and she would help, she’s not going to make any fuss about it ... With it being more relaxed, it helps a lot more as well because you’re not sitting there all nervous and tense, thinking that you’re going to be picked on by the tutor or made to look silly, because we’re not. [Kay 1b]

I suppose her teaching style [Teacher A's], her whole demeanour makes me feel quite relaxed really. She's very informal and the whole class is quite informal, that makes me feel more relaxed. I don't feel anybody is really put on the spot very much at all. She doesn't really pick on people to do things and get them to do things. It's quite interactive so that's sort of reassuring as well. [Pam 1a]

After a couple of sessions, the above participants felt that thanks to the teacher, the course was already proving to be an enjoyable and relaxed experience. Kay and Pam were particularly comforted by the fact that the teacher did not “pick on people” or make them “look silly”. As confirmed in later interviews, this was a very important issue, particularly for the less confident language learners in the two groups. The teacher's approachability and willingness to help learners in difficulty was also praised.

Whereas a positive attitude towards the teacher emerged as an important factor for several participants from the beginning, the issue of liking the group and getting on with other class members did not come across as crucial in the first interview, except for those who had joined the class largely or partly to meet people (Section 5.3.2).

I guess once you get to know people that go, it's fun to go and meet your friends, isn't it? That would make you enjoy more I guess (...) and because everyone is there to learn (...) not like at school (...). I like that everybody is eager, so that's good. [Fiona 1b]

It's a nice group and I think it's important that everybody gets on because you're not going to go if there's somebody there that you really don't like and they are interrupting all the time. [Rowena 1a]

Two other participants beside Rowena above said that they were pleased about the other people in the group, because of previous bad experiences, when they had been on courses which included disrupting or attention-seeking participants.

Other participants, like Fiona, said that being in a class with other eager learners, would make them more motivated, whereas finding themselves amongst lazy or uninterested people, would turn them off. Fiona also pointed out in more than one interview, that everyone, including themselves, seemed a lot more serious about language learning than at school.

It is also noteworthy that, of the evening group, ten participants (more than half the people in that class) had come in pairs, that is with a friend, partner or family member. Two of these couples, specifically, commented in the first interview that attending together was a motivating factor. Remarkably, five of these ten participants did not complete the course, suggesting that coming as a pair played a bigger role in the *preactional stage* than during the course. Issue of group cohesion will be explored in greater depth in later chapters.

From the very start, several participants also stressed how important it was for them to find the course enjoyable.

I do it as it's meant to be fun, if it stops being fun, I shan't go. [Esther 1a]

I think it's got to be enjoyable for you to keep going and I think if you're enjoying something then you're going to learn. [Diana 1b]

I think as long as we keep up this momentum of it being interesting and fun. I think from now on it's going to get a little bit more difficult, from what I can gather, doing more grammar and so on. But to me that will hold my interest, because I'll have to think, I'll have to work at it. [Kay 1b]

Although several participants said that if the course were 'fun', they would be more likely to stick with it, they also thought it should continue being interesting. In Kay's view, having to think and 'work at it' would not be a disincentive but would keep her interest alive.

So far this section has focussed mainly on positive factors which, in the view of the participants, would motivate them throughout the course. The participants were also asked to consider the opposite side of the coin, namely factors which would have a negative impact on their attendance and participation. Predictably, these were largely the opposite of the positive, both in terms of learner-dependent and class-dependent factors. The next section deals with a third set of influences mentioned by the participants.

### **5.5.3. External factors: possible interferences**

When asked what might get in the way of completing the course, several participants particularly from the evening group mentioned factors beyond their control, such as working away, family duties, having to move away or

unpredictable changes in circumstances. However, when the first interviews took place, most of the participants appeared quite confident that such problems would be unlikely to arise.

Other external factors which, according to some participants, would maintain a high level of commitment were forthcoming trips to Italy and the fact that they had paid for the course. As will become apparent in later interviews, looking forward to a visit to Italy seemed to be an incentive to continue learning Italian and use it abroad. There was a sense that participants cherished the opportunity to put their newly acquired language skills to use, seeing their forthcoming trip as a short to medium term goal for their language learning journey.

## **5.6. Attitudes and beliefs towards language learning**

The first set of interviews did not only intend to uncover possible motivating and demotivating influences in the early stages of the course; another important aim was to get a sense for the participants' backgrounds, as well as their attitudes and beliefs towards language learning at the beginning of the course. This choice was also justified by the perceived relevance of *attribution theory* (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Weiner, 1996) discussed in Section 3.3.1

This section considers firstly the participants' previous FL experience, followed by some of their attitudes and beliefs towards speaking a FL. This is broadly in line with one of the main motivational influences in the *preactional stage* of the Process Model (*learner beliefs and strategy*).

### **5.6.1. Prior language learning experience: school memories, living abroad, adult classes and self-teaching**

The participants in this study presented a variety of language learning backgrounds. The majority had GCSE or O-level in at least one FL, but the sample also included two retired language teachers, those who had previously taken up adult language classes or tried to teach themselves, and others who had lived abroad.



Due to the participants' broad age range, the interviews generated accounts of school language learning from the 1950s until the 1990s. In spite of the differences in language teaching practices over that period, the majority had negative memories of learning languages at school. One participant, for instance, recalled learning French in school as a rather unpleasant experience.

(...) in the 1960s it was all about conjugating verbs, grammar, no or very little conversational French. What I do remember is that there was very little about pronunciation as well. It all seemed to be just about writing correctly, and it was very uninspiring. (...) I suppose it was the whole formality of it, it was very intimidating, 'cause you'd be asked to read something or translate something in the class, which is, I think, quite frightening, for me because I wasn't very good at it. And I just don't think you learn when you're tense. [Pam 1a].

Maureen and Ruth learnt French at school in the 1970s and, despite being exposed to more modern methods, they were equally uneasy in the school FL classroom. Maureen described how she felt sitting in a language laboratory wearing earphones:

Well, I hated it because you never knew when they were listening in, then they'd suddenly say 'Repeat' or 'That was wrong' or something like that, really intimidating, because you didn't know when you were being listened to. [Maureen 1b]

When asked what kind of memories she had about learning French, Ruth replied:

Waiting for someone to throw a ball at me, you know, for all those kinds of practising colours and those kinds of nerve-racking activities, waiting to be picked, and the speaking I felt quite nervous about. [Ruth 1b]

Amy and Chiara, two of the youngest participants, had similar memories of unease when doing languages at school in the 1990s.

I remember just learning lists of vocabulary and... it was taught very badly, very different from these classes. I just remember lists of vocab and verbs, but I wasn't able to speak it very well. [Chiara 1a]

I think it was mainly... when you get tested, the exams and things, because everyone learns at different rates, if you weren't quite up to speaking as you were with your reading or your writing, then you were kind of showed up and it tended to be in front of everybody else. [Amy 1a]

It could be argued that many adults have similar memories about their least favourite school subjects. The above accounts, however, resonate clearly with the concept of *language learning anxiety*, one of the main affective factors present in language learning (Horwitz et al 1986).

When asked about his school memories, Daniel did not mention methods, but his own feeling of inadequacy at language learning:

All my language learning memories are fairly negative really, I feel very inhibited about learning languages, I kind of feel there is a block for me to learn a language. I can learn it as an academic subject (...) I got a good grade in French but I didn't feel competent in it. I felt competent at passing the exam. (...) it wasn't an unpleasant experience but in terms of equipping me to feel confident and competent speaking the language, it didn't do that really. And actually possibly put me off languages really, made me feel that I- that's not something that I could do, really. [Daniel 1b]

Although the thoughts of only four participants are reported above, about half of the total expressed similar feelings regarding language learning in school.

Part of the reason why some participants did not enjoy languages at school was that they found them neither relevant, nor useful. Calum, Matthew and Stuart simply admitted that at school they could not see the point of carrying on with a language or what use it would be to them in the future.

Amy, Chiara, Diana and Rita, who all had one first or second generation Italian parent, said that they dropped French at 16 because they did not think they would use it, but that might have been different had they had the opportunity to learn Italian.

I think because my roots were from Italy, I would have have stuck- if I could have done Italian, then I would have probably gone on and, you know, have done exchange programmes and worked there a bit to pursue that side, but I wasn't particularly enthusiastic about French, I had no ambition to go to France, to visit France or anything, so it's just something that I just dropped really. [Amy 1a]

Another reason mentioned for not taking to languages at school was a dislike of a specific language, which happened to be German in the case of four participants. Whereas Sally found it too structured and did not continue because she wasn't particularly good at it, Amy did not seem “to get to grips

with it” [1a], whilst Rita simply “hated it” [1b]. The experience of Fiona, one of the youngest participants, is a little different; although she found German too complicated and did not want to continue with it, she remembers the classes being enjoyable and entertaining.

Interestingly, at the root of everyone’s positive language class experience there seems to have been a good teacher. Below are some examples:

(...) I liked the teacher, she was great, a lot of my friends were in the class and we were all at a similar level or similar abilities with French and we seemed to be able to pick it up fairly well. [Rita 1b]

One of the first teachers that I had was actually a French woman and she was absolutely charming (...) and I think it captivated me hearing a French woman speak her native tongue. It was very appealing. [Rosanne 1a]

We had one Latin teacher for the whole time and I liked the way she taught us, and the kind of vision she had for us, she loved the language really and she loved learning and she gave us that and the expectations that we would use it. She used to say ‘When you go to Italy girls’ not ‘if you go’, ‘when you go’. She would always kind of expect us to do things really. Yeah, so I think she made a big difference. [Ruth 1b]

While Rita and Ruth’s teachers seemed to be able to inspire confidence in their pupils, a native speaker clearly captured Rosanne’s imagination, showing that a teacher can inspire pupils in different ways.

A factor which appears to have been instrumental for Elaine, Rosanne and Gill, was a parent who was either a language teacher or who was a gifted linguist. Incidentally, these three participants also came across as having a fair degree of self-efficacy in relation to their language learning abilities, having mastered at least one other FL already.

This takes us to the six participants who, for different reasons, appeared to be a relatively confident language learners. Gill was a languages graduate, Tim and Elaine retired language teachers, Maureen had spent a few years in Greece in her teens, Rosanne had pursued learning French after A-level and Valerie remembered being good at languages in her school days. Although none of the above came across as supremely confident about mastering Italian, a higher

perception of self-efficacy transpired from their interviews, possibly due to attributional processes.

The participants who had spent some time abroad, during which they had studied a language, all agreed that experience was more enjoyable than learning a language at school because it felt more relevant to their situation at the time.

Half of the participants had attempted to learn a FL in the UK after leaving full-time education. This was mainly in the form of adult education courses in various languages and came with varying degrees of success. Adult language learning experiences had generally proved more positive than school ones.

Nearly a third of the participants had tried to teach themselves Italian without success, as already explained in section 5.3.1. For these participants, self-instructed learning did not constitute a prior experience, but rather a prior intention which never transpired into action.

So far, this section has highlighted how experiences of FL learning in school, at evening classes, abroad and through self-teaching might have contributed to shaping participants' attitudes towards language learning and their own coping potential. During the first set of interviews, however, and to some extent in later interviews as well, other significant factors emerged which illustrate how many participants entered the course with beliefs and ideas about how language learning should be approached. The most important of these will be considered in the next sections.

### **5.6.2. Divided opinions on grammar**

The interview data suggest that participants were split with regards to grammar. Amongst those who admitted being fazed by grammar, were the younger participants, Chiara and Sally.

I think I get a bit scared when I start looking through the verbs and the grammar, when I start thinking about that, I think "It's too much hard work!" I don't know if I've really got... if I'm motivated enough to work that hard.  
[Chiara 1a]

The things I find difficult are when it's plain grammar. I think most English people struggle with learning grammar, because I didn't get taught it at school so it's stupid really, we should have learnt it, so I get a bit overfaced by that. [Sally 1b]

Grammar was seen as daunting, not just by younger participants, but also by a few others who revealed that it was part of the reason why they had given up language learning before. Matt, for instance, said that he gave up Spanish after a few years of evening classes because of difficulties with verbs (“I don't think I could ever understand them”). Linda also admitted that when “things got too complicated” in the past, she and her daughter had given up learning Italian. For her, too, verbs presented the most significant challenge. She added that her priority was speaking, a view shared by Maggie:

This is going to sound awful: I don't want to be bogged down in grammar and all that. I want to get talking, I want to get doing it rather than actually studying. [Maggie 1a]

Other participants, such as Kay, also found the prospect of learning grammar rather intimidating, but felt it was necessary to progress with the language.

A very different set of views was expressed by the older generation, namely those participants who had been successful at learning languages in traditional ways. They agreed grammar to be essential because that was how they had successfully learnt languages in the past. An interesting view is that put forward by Carol, who, since the very first class, had felt uneasy about the lack of grammar:

So far we've been having to learn it parrot fashion and if I get a grasp on the grammar that will make me feel more comfortable because that's how I learn a language, from a grammar point of view. So if she starts doing the verbs (...) so that you can put it together, a subject and a verb. That for me is easier to put my pegs on, so that I can catch on to that a little bit better, but learning parrot fashion is not good for me. [Carol 1b]

It is apparent from the above views that language teachers for adults face a particular challenge, trying to cater for participants with very different attitudes towards grammar and the role it should play in language learning. This theme will be revisited and expanded upon in later chapters.

## 5.7. Summary

This chapter explored the motivation of 26 adult learners of Italian at the beginning of an adult education FL course. The findings suggest that the main reasons that the participants had started learning Italian were a keen interest in the country, culture and language, connections with Italian family and friends and a wish to overcome a feeling of inadequacy about not being able to speak Italian in Italy. Several participants reported having enrolled on an adult education course following unsuccessful attempts to teach themselves the language, hence with the intention of making a stronger commitment to learning and follow a structured approach. For most participants, albeit to different degrees, attending the course was a way of meeting people and socialising. Other non-Italian specific reasons for joining the included learning a language to keep the mind active, enjoying learning for learning's own sake and as a consequence of particular life events.

The reasons for deciding to learn Italian and enrolling on a course were articulated more clearly than the actual goals which the participants were pursuing. Goals ranged from quite modest, such as 'getting by' in the language, to very ambitious, e.g., becoming fluent and conversing easily with Italians. Rather than concrete goals, these came across more as aspirations or intentions and were often non-language related, for instance making friends on the course or doing something different in the evening.

In terms of anticipated motivating and demotivating factors, most participants felt that experiencing a sense of progress and enjoying the course, including feeling at ease with the teacher, would be important in sustaining motivation. The opposite to what has just been mentioned was generally deemed as having a possible negative impact on motivation, as well as external factors, such as family and work commitments outside the individuals' control.

Finally, prior FL learning experiences seemed to affect in various degrees the way participants viewed language learning, their perceived coping potential and level of self-efficacy.

The next chapter will report on the findings emerged from the second wave of interviews and will provide an overview of the participants' motivation at the half-way point.

## 6. Findings from Phase 2: Motivation at the half-way point

### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the data collected during the second round of interviews, which took place approximately in the middle of the academic year and involved 23 out of the original 26 participants. The interviews were broadly informed by the motivational functions of the *actional stage* of the Process Model (see Figure 3.2), namely the generation and carrying out of subtasks and the continuous appraisal of one's achievements and self-regulation mechanisms. According to the Process Model, the learners are exposed to a number of motivational influences during the *actional stage* and the findings in the present chapter address some of these key influences.

The first section deals with the *quality of the learning experience*, including the role played by teacher, peer group and class activities. The second section describes the participants' interim appraisal of their progress and coping potential. The following set of findings concerns the participants' perceptions of their self-regulatory strategies and, finally, there is an overview of their perceived changes since the first interview.

### 6.2. Quality of the learning experience

As one of the main motivational influences in the *actional stage* of the Process Model of L2 motivation, the *quality of the learning experience* includes situation-specific factors such as novelty, pleasantness, need significance, coping potential, self and social image. Similarly (see section 3.5), a key component of Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system (2005) is the *L2 Learning Experience*, "which concerns situated motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g., the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success)" (Dörnyei, 2010, p.80).



The *quality of the learning experience* addressed in the current chapter is closer to the definition of the L2 motivational self-system, in that it features teacher and peer group alongside other situation specific factors. It must be noted that this choice was made on the basis of the data generated by the second interview, rather than to mirror any specific model.

### **6.2.1. Perceived impact of the teachers**

It is important to remember that the two groups of participants were taught by two quite different teachers, whose characteristics and backgrounds were described in Section 4.4. The data clearly indicate that both proved extremely popular. Here are some illustrations of the ways in which they were perceived, comparing and contrasting some of their qualities and their impact on the participants' experience.

#### ***Friendly and approachable, but also competent and in control***

All participants from both groups found their respective teacher very pleasant and accessible. Some stressed how they felt that they could easily ask questions and communicate with them on an equal level.

She (Teacher A) is friendly and she's got a sense of humour. It comes over in the class and I don't feel she's unapproachable, I can ask her things, so I think she's brilliant. [Pam 2a]

She (Teacher B) is quite light-hearted and you can easily approach her if you want to ask something. Sometimes with teachers you think 'Um, they're a bit strict' or like from school (...) but she's not like that, she's really nice and quite outgoing and has got a lot of knowledge and obviously, but good with the actual getting the point across. [Rita 2b]

As much as she's a teacher she's not like on a pedestal 'Oh my God, she's a teacher!' kind of thing. You can relate and chat to her. [Fiona 2b]

According to Rita, Teacher B was friendly and approachable but also had "a lot of knowledge" and was good at "getting the point across", revealing how she had faith in her professional skills and expertise. Group A showed trust in Teacher A's judgement and her ability to manage the learning situation, as well as the learner group.

She's organised, she's got different activities... she sticks to it, she doesn't go off on a tangent talking about something else. If a member of the group asks something that is not directly related to what we're doing, she just answers very quickly and then back to what she's there for. I think she's excellent. [Maggie 2a]

When asked if they were happy with the class activities or whether they felt anything should change, Amy and Pam reiterated this point:

Presumably Teacher A knows what we're going to be tested on, so she knows what we need to know, so I am quite happy to take her guidance. [Amy 2a]

I've got quite a lot of trust in Teacher A actually, and I just feel that she gives the impression that she knows what she's doing, or she knows where she's going with things. So I do feel quite happy, yeah. [Pam 2a]

Participants from both groups said that they felt reassured by the fact that the teacher appeared to be in control.

She (Teacher B) is quite challenging as a teacher, I think she does push us but she does reassure us as well and so she kind of gives confidence. I know it is a structured course but she seems to move from topic to topic, exercise to exercise very clearly and seems to be in control, so that gives confidence as well, so I really like her approach. [Daniel 2b]

### ***Non-judgemental, encouraging and inclusive***

Participants from both classes mentioned that, feeling relaxed in the presence of teacher and peers meant that they were not embarrassed about making mistakes. This was well expressed by Carol, who gave Teacher B credit for having created this kind of atmosphere:

She (Teacher B) brings everybody in because it's a beginner's class, everybody learns at different rates and everybody in the group gets on well and that's partly because of the way she's set it up. People don't chat all that much but she's got it going so that everybody's got to know each other and feels comfortable with each other. When you do, then you don't feel an idiot when you make mistakes. It's good and that's really her that's set that up. Her group teaching is very good. [Carol 2b]

Other participants from Group B were very appreciative of Teacher B's words of praise and encouragement:

She seems to say 'Oh, it'll all come' she's not so worried, it'll all come. She seems to have faith that we will learn something and I think that we have learnt

something. So that's really, really good, I think it always depends upon the teacher. [Maureen 2b]

Even when you're just doing little exercises, when she's just picking on you, she does say 'Well done, well done!' after everybody, and that kind of thing. And she just generally seems quite optimistic. Maybe that's her character. [Fiona 2b]

What Teacher B does as well, she encourages you (...) I had a chat with her the other week, because I'm thinking 'Oh I'm not doing very well'. She's going to motivate you to keep going, which you do need and she also keeps reminding us how much ground we have covered. It's easy to be negative and sort of say 'Oh, I don't know any vocab!' If we look back at what we've done, we've done an awful lot in a space of a few months really, so I think she's played a huge part in that. [Gill 2b]

Interestingly, the participants of Group A did not mention being reassured by Teacher A to the same extent. One may wonder whether this might have been due to Teacher A's exclusive use of the target language, which prevented her from going beyond simple words of praise in Italian. In other ways, however, Teacher A appeared to be encouraging and supportive, in that she never appeared to belittle or make anyone feel inadequate. This came across clearly from both interviews and observations. For instance, Rosanne spoke about one occasion when she was mortified because she had misunderstood the homework and had failed to complete a particular exercise:

I spoke to a couple of people in the class and they had the same problem they weren't aware of it either. And I know it was voluntary, it wasn't a big deal, and Teacher A never makes you feel bad about anything, she is a really good teacher in that way, because she knows basically we're all trying. We're there because we want to be, we're not time wasters, are we? [Rosanne 2]

As already highlighted by Carol in the previous page with reference to Teacher B, another appreciated quality was the teacher's ability to involve everyone in the learning experience; this is something which Teacher A appeared to be also very skilled at:

She (Teacher A) makes everyone speak and some classes I've been to, one or two people do the work and everybody else just sits back and listens, so I think it's good that she involves everyone and makes sure that everyone is understanding and able to do what she's teaching. [Elaine 2a]

If she's asking things, she does go round asking everybody, involving the whole class; like when we were doing the numbers: everybody took it in turn to say what they were. Sometimes when you are doing it one-to-one, you don't always pick it up that quick but she does involve the whole class. [Amy 2a]

### ***Teacher B as a conveyor of cultural insights***

At least half of Group B participants mentioned how they liked “the cultural side of things, the little snippets” [Mary 2b] offered by Teacher B. The observations below indicate how the participants appreciated this kind of input and felt that, as a native Italian, Teacher B was best placed to provide it.

Because she's Italian she can give us all the little quirks and things like that, and that social Italian is interesting. Yeah, that's what I like. She will say that at the station, the first is a regional train (...) and then she'll say ‘well don't go on this one because it takes forever and I would recommend ...’. Well, an English person teaching Italian would not necessarily have all those personal bits. And she does it with every subject. (...) So the cultural input, yes, definitely. [Carol 2b]

Teacher B does a lot of that in her lesson as well, explaining why things are a certain way and from the area where she's from (...) and customs and things in restaurants and when you buy tickets and things like that, ‘cause that's from experience. She was talking last week about when we did directions about the stamping your ticket on the bus: you don't know that unless- there's nowhere to tell you when you're in Italy, you're just following what everyone else is doing, and things like that are really helpful. [Gill 2b]

Two participants went further by stating that Teacher B personified a typical Italian in their mind:

I think we'll have an image of Teacher B in our head as ‘an Italian’, not just learning Italian, but because of the way she's teaching us, I think I'll have a clear idea of an Italian will think this or someone from Italy would say this or have this kind of idea, possibly. [Ruth 2b]

When we think of Italy we think of Teacher B [laughs], because she puts across something about Italy, and I think consciously in the way she speaks that when she'll say, for instance ‘Cappuccino after a meal? No it's wrong, wrong, do not do that, wrong!’, and ... just a little example, and she demonstrates some of the differences and the reasons why probably a lot of us are interested in Italy, that it's the kind of- the cultural differences, independent of the language side of it. [Daniel 2b]

Interestingly, as no such comments were made by Teacher A's participants, one might assume that this might be due to the fact that she was British.

However, despite not being Italian, Teacher A had lived in Italy and visited it frequently; therefore, she was very familiar with Italian customs and traditions and would have been perfectly able to convey similar ‘snippets’. A more likely reason could be that, by conducting her classes in the target language, she had to use very simple language to be understood, preventing her from providing the same degree of cultural information as Teacher B. The issue of target language use in the classroom is further explored in the next section.

### *Use of Italian versus English*

As already pointed out, one of the most striking differences between Teacher A’s and Teacher B’s approach - also noted during the class observations - was the exclusive use of the target language by the former versus the predominant use of English of the latter. From a methodology perspective, while Teacher A was openly an advocate of target language use in the classroom from day one, Teacher B believed in a gradual introduction of the target language. Both sets of participants were asked how they felt about the use of English versus Italian in class. The majority of Group A learners were very positive about the classes being conducted in Italian:

The very first lesson I thought it was a bit disconcerting because I thought perhaps she was expecting a level of knowledge I didn’t have. But since then, I really like it, because occasionally I’m picking up on things that she’s saying and it’s just actually quite reassuring when you start to understand little bits of it. So I actually quite like it, I think it’s really important to hear it. [Pam 2a]

She uses actions and she uses her hands and I think that helps you to get an overall understanding of what she’s trying to say. You might not understand every single word, but you can pick up the gist of what she’s saying. If she’s talking about the weather and in particular, recently it’s been very windy, she sort of uses her hands to make you look outside, that sort of thing. [Rowena 2a]

Pam and Rowena, like most participants from Group A, were comfortable with just being able to ‘pick up the gist’ of what Teacher A said and appreciated the benefit of hearing the language being spoken. Nevertheless, a couple mentioned how at times they wished that English was used at least to clarify homework instructions:

I appreciate the fact that she uses Italian almost exclusively because I think it's very good for us but I do sometimes come away thinking 'I should have asked her what that was', 'cause I'm not quite sure. (...) She also said before Christmas, when we'd done this comprehension that we could, if we wished, write a letter in reply; well I didn't get that at all! (...) and I spoke to a couple of people in the class and they had the same problem, they weren't aware of it either. [Rosanne 2a]

This suggests that exclusive use of the target language can create some apprehension in zealous learners if they do not understand all the instructions conveyed by the teacher. It must be pointed out, however, that two participants from Group B, where English was used for instructions, also mentioned being unclear about the homework at times; in their view this was due to the fact that homework tasks were always mentioned at the end of the class and rather hurriedly at times.

One particular participant from Group A felt clearly at a loss because of the amount of Italian spoken in class:

I just find that I switch off when she's speaking in Italian. I completely switch off, and I feel that everybody else is understanding what she's saying and I am the only one that just doesn't understand the words still. (...) I should try more to concentrate and understand what Teacher A is saying (...) and I would forever say 'What do you mean?' all the time and so I can't keep doing that. And I struggle to pick up what she's saying and translate it and then actually understand it in the context of the class. [Kate 2a]

When asked what she would rather the teacher did, she replied:

For her not not to use Italian, but to keep translating it, 'cause she says it and looks at us as if we understand it and we- well I don't. I feel personally out of my depth when the Italian isn't translated. And when I do ask a question, Teacher A answers it, but I just feel I can't be interrupting all the time. (...) If I'm honest I wish there was more English spoken and sort maybe gradually over a period of a year or two years introduce more Italian. [Kate 2a]

It is worth noting that 'tolerance of ambiguity' is considered to be one of the key qualities of 'good language learners' (e.g., Rubin, 1975; Naiman, 1978; Griffiths, 2008). Conversely, Kate's level of tolerance for ambiguity appeared to be quite low. However, she later conceded that "there must be in learning a new language a process that you have to go through where you don't know everything and you feel very wobbly about it" [Kate 2a]. Out of the

participants from Group A, Kate came across as the most vulnerable in the second round of interviews; she dropped out shortly after due to family problems, but one may wonder whether the issues described here might also have played a role.

### **6.2.2. Increasing influence of the learner group**

All participants expressed equally positive views about the learner group; they said that they were very comfortable with the rest of the class and, as a result, embarrassment or fear of being judged were minimised:

The good thing is no one is embarrassed, if you don't know the answer or whatever, there's no one pointing the finger, so, at least it's relaxing in the class [no one] is on edge thinking 'Oh my God! I'm getting too far behind or something'. [Kay 2b]

Section 6.3, which deals with the participants' perceived coping potential, will further explore the importance of self-image and confidence within the group.

Some participants expressed a sense of relief at the absence of anyone unpleasant, admitting that the presence of such an individual would make the experience less enjoyable and possibly attending the class a less attractive proposition. This was clearly expressed by Rita:

If there was somebody that I didn't like, then I'd think 'Oh gosh! They're a clever so and so, aren't they?' or 'They're a bit funny'. Everybody seems to be kind of nice and friendly, so I think it does make it enjoyable because I don't have any worries or concerns. I think 'Oh yes, it's Italian tonight' and I enjoy coming, there's no problem with anybody or anything [Rita 2b].

Participants from both groups – for instance Amy and Sally below – were pleased to be amongst other committed learners:

Everyone is doing it for their own reasons; they all want to do it, they want to learn and it's a group that gets on with everybody. I don't think there is anybody in the group that doesn't get on or doesn't want to sit next to each other every week [Amy 2a]

I think it's a nice group, it's a good mix of people who will all have a sort of shared focus, really. We feel quite relaxed about it, but people are taking it quite seriously. [Sally 2b]

Several also mentioned how their group had managed to gel and, as expressed by Mary below, this sense of cohesiveness and shared experiences made it more appealing to attend the class.

It's not just when you're asking about the teacher it's also the group that's managed to gel well together, and I think you go because the teacher and the group is there, there's that little- not a community but there's a bit of identity there with that group that you connect with, so I find that's very satisfying. It's good to have that; I don't know if it's even structure in your life, it's something in your week that you look forward to, and I look forward to that each Tuesday. [Mary 2b]

The issue of group identity and cohesion emerged even more strongly from in the third set of data and it will be explored in more depth in Chapter 7.

### **6.2.3. Course content and class activities**

Participants were generally satisfied with the range of class tasks, which they mostly found relevant and engaging. Both groups appreciated the variety of learning activities conducted in class and found that they kept their interest alive during the sessions:

I like the range of activities. She introduces some really clever activities and they're all different, there's so many different things going on in the class that, as I say, I never get bored, I'm never looking at the clock. [Pam 2a]

She has always got different things set up and ready, and she'll take twenty minutes doing that or ten minutes doing that and you go to a different activity, a different method of learning. It's on the computer, then it's on the board, and then it's round the classroom. Then she'll give you some cards, so she's keeping you interested all the time. [Maggie 2a]

Both groups said that they could not fault the methods and techniques used in class and the usefulness of the learning activities.

*PowerPoints* appealed particularly to those who felt that they could remember better what they saw on screen:

I think the stuff that I remember the most, the stuff that I can absorb more easily is the PowerPoint, for instance when we are looking at positions and all that kind of stuff. I can picture, I can remember those easily, more easily. [Calum 2b]



I can remember the picture and I seem to remember the word underneath it better. When she puts things on the projector, with pictures, I find that easy to remember, the words. [Chiara 2a]

Participants from both groups found watching video clips quite appealing and especially relaxing “because there’s not that pressure on you” [Matt 2b]. When asked what he meant by pressure, Matt replied: “to learn it; it’s just more relaxing listening to him saying it and then seeing it on the screen”. This might indicate that, during a very busy and interactive class, some participants appreciate having moments when they can sit down and just be receptive.

Some participants mentioned that they enjoyed gaining an insight into the culture and the Italian way of life through video clips. This was particularly appreciated by Group A, which, as explained in Section 6.2.1 received less cultural input from the teacher than Group B:

It’s probably a lazy way of learning, but when Teacher A shows a little film of people in real Italy speaking the language and then we look at it and we try and work out what they are saying and the situation, and she showed one about aperitifs in a bar. I find that real life thing quite inspiring. As long as you can pick up and work out, take from it what you will, whether it will be a little bit about the culture and then deal with the language and I find that good when you’re relating it to normal everyday Italian life. I like that, it’s very inspiring. [Kate 2a]

In terms of speaking activities, it was recognised by most participants that having to speak was actually the most useful activity, even though not always a favourite:

I quite enjoy, say the BBC videos that we were shown, but perhaps what I enjoy and what’s perhaps most useful, are probably two different things. I think the most useful thing is that we speak to each other, we say things to each other, I think that is, actually, making us and encouraging us to speak to one another. [Mary 2b]

Participants generally enjoyed working in groups or pairs, finding the interaction a good way to make themselves use the language actively.

At this point, it is worth remembering that both teachers used pair work as the main way to get the learners to practice oral skills, but the way they set up the class was quite different. At the beginning of the course, Teacher A made the point of asking her learners to sit next to a different person each week. The

table layout was always horseshoe shaped. In Group B on the other hand, after a few initial weeks of traditional classroom layout with desks in rows, the learners started to sit around tables in groups of three or four. Teacher B allowed learners to sit where they liked; as a result, a couple of small regular groups were soon formed, whereas two other tables at least seemed to be more fluid and were filled by learners as and when they arrived to the class. However, Teacher B also included some activities where learners either had to walk around the class and talk to one another, or they were occasionally made to sit at other tables for some activities. For this reason, Group A learners tended to do pair work with a different person each week, whereas the learners of Group B tended to work with the same people most weeks.

Participants were asked specifically how they felt about working in pairs. In Kay's case, working with others was good because it gave her the opportunity to share and learn from others:

The working either in the pairs or groups of four is helpful and it's also very good when you move around the class (...). It's when we move around and speak to the others, that's quite helpful because then, of course you can see how other people are doing as well, because in your own little group, if you like, you might think we're doing OK and then you speak to someone else and think 'Um, they've grasped it' but we haven't or something. So I quite like the interaction with the others, which I'd rather do that, moving around and talking to them than speaking individually in front of the class, because I'm not good at it. [Kay 2b]

Two further perceived benefits of working with others transpire from Kay's words: on the one hand practising with new learners gave her the opportunity to check whether she and her little group were keeping up with the rest, on the other it enabled her to practise speaking without having to do it in front of the whole class.

In terms of who the participants preferred to be paired up with, the general consensus was that it was be more beneficial to work with someone slightly better or at the same level. One exception was Chiara who said that, if she was paired off with someone better than her, she would feel insecure.

From the answers of two participants from Group B, there was a sense that doing oral work with a particular individual in that group was more challenging because of his ‘different approach’:

In some of the exercises that we do when we split up, it depends who you’re with, because we’ve all got different approaches, and some people in our group are much more ready to speak and don’t worry too much about making mistakes. (...) it’s not a big issue but if someone wants to be very clear about how you say something and he’s looking up things as opposed to just having a go, then that makes it a different experience. [Daniel 2b]

Daniel went on to say that he found this ‘a little bit frustrating’ and his feelings were echoed by Calum who, referring to the same member of the class was rather more explicit:

There are some people in the group that you can work with quite easily and others ... I feel a bit blunt here, sometimes I feel like I am wasting my time depending who I am partnered with, I don’t mean to be cruel. [Calum 2b]

Daniel’s and Calum’s words may indicate that speaking activities in pairs were generally well received by participants, as long as the person they were partnered with was not too slow, in which case this could lead to frustration.

Group A participants seemed overall positive about pair work, with the exception of Valerie who found it the least useful activity because, in her view, learners were unable to correct each other’s grammatical or pronunciation mistakes. Group A’s most experienced linguist, Tim, admitted to finding that pair exercises went on a little too long and that, by spending less time on pair work, the class could do more listening and grammar activities. Former French teacher, Elaine, also pointed out that pair work had its drawbacks:

I think you make more progress with some people than with others. One person I sat next to, we were doing noughts and crosses but instead of having them the same, we had other things in and they just couldn’t get the concept at all. They were totally confused and that was a bit frustrating. [Elaine 2a]

Elaine’s views echo the earlier comments on the same subject by Daniel and Calum (Group B). In the case of Group A, it is interesting to note that, the only slight criticisms of pair work came from the three learners with arguably the highest level of self-efficacy in relation to language learning.

Even more so than speaking, grammar was an area which participants seemed to have clear views about and one which seemed to influence their perceived self-efficacy. For this reason, a specific section on this topic will feature in the next section.

### **6.3. Perceived coping potential and ongoing appraisal**

In the *actional stage* of the Process Model, *coping potential* falls within the remit of the quality of the learning experience, which has just been examined. However, given the relevance and richness of the data obtained in this area, it seems valuable to explore in a dedicated section how participants felt they were coping in general and in relation to specific issues at the midway point.

#### **6.3.1. Class and pace in general**

When asked the icebreaking question ‘How are things going with your Italian so far?’, participants from both groups provided positive feedback with regard to the learning experience, as shown in Section 6.2. As for the pace of the course, most of Group A deemed it appropriate, with the exception of Tim’s and Valerie who found it slow. In Group B on the other hand, participants generally found the pace of the course quite brisk. The class observations confirmed that Group A classes moved at a slower pace and that longer consolidation and practice exercises were included, the emphasis being more on practising and rehearsing simple structures as well as using vocabulary. Group B classes included more new material, less repetition and a small degree of explicit grammar complemented by slightly more challenging exercises.

The next sections focus on the key thematic threads emerged from the data, namely the challenges posed by grammar, speaking, dealing with self-confidence and memory.

#### **6.3.2. Challenges posed by grammar**

As highlighted in the profile information in section 4.4, both teachers adopted a topic-based, communicative approach to FL language teacher. However,

whereas Teacher A hardly mentioned grammar and tended to “drip-feed it” [Rowena 2a] through communicative activities, Teacher B included some grammar explanations in English and a small number of grammar exercises. Particularly in Group A, it was evident how traditional language learners, including two retired language teachers, longed for more grammar content. The most explicit was Valerie’s view, which denoted a sense of frustration at not being able to ‘get on with it’ and tackle verbs.

I would like to study something and really get on with it, I’d love to do some verbs, I know the verbs are complicated but we need them, we can’t have a sentence without a verb, and I would like to do something along those lines. (...) I still find it rather frustrating because I don’t have the grammatical tools to say what I want to say. [Valerie 2a]

Well, she doesn’t teach grammar. I would like there to be a formal grammar section for each lesson. [Tim 2a]

She said just this week that she doesn’t do the grammar very much at this stage until quite a bit later on. I think it would be useful to have the grammar explained as we go along, so perhaps a bit more explanation on that, but some people don’t like it. [Elaine 2a]

However, even a relatively experienced language learner like Rosanne, who had learnt French in traditional ways, seemed open to Teacher A’s approach, showing faith in her professional judgement:

Part of me wants to say I’d like a more explicit approach but, on the other hand, I only want to know enough for where I am at. Which I think we probably cover, so I think I’ve got faith in Teacher A to get us where we want to get. [Rosanne 2a]

Group A youngest participants, Chiara and Amy, were clearly happy with Teacher A’s methods:

I prefer it when she doesn’t really explain it because, as you learn well, you understand and you think ‘Ah that’s right, it is like that’, I think it falls into place and she doesn’t usually need to explain in great depth. [Chiara 2a]

I prefer the way she’s doing it [grammar], than if she dedicated the whole hour or a whole day doing it, ‘cause we did that at school when we did French and German and I think after five minutes, if you don’t get it, you lose interest, and you don’t pick anything up after that, but I like the way that she does the grammar as and when it comes up, rather than saying ‘This is the way it is’ and after a couple of lessons we’re going to go over it again. She does it as and

when it comes up, so I think you're more receptive to taking it in then. [Amy 2a]

Whereas Chiara seemed to agree with the advantages of 'drip-feeding' grammar, Amy liked this approach because it contrasted with her language learning experience at school where "after five minutes, if you don't get it, you lose interest". It transpired therefore that Amy found Teacher A's approach better suited at sustaining her motivation in class than what she experienced in school.

However, it was not simply a matter of generational differences, with older participants liking grammar versus younger learners disliking it; some older participants in Group A, agreed with Chiara and Amy.

I think it would be a really different class if you did too much grammar and it would lose some of the sort of ... I mean it is a really nice friendly and relaxed atmosphere. I feel we work quite hard but it's quite light hearted and I think if you start introducing grammar, it would change the atmosphere in class, it would make it much more onerous for people and it wouldn't feel as relaxed I think. [Pam 2a]

I think Teacher A's got it right. She's drip feeding us with grammar without us actually realizing it. Oh yes, she does a little bit and she revisits things. I think I would find it awfully boring if we had, say 'we'll do a lesson on grammar today'. I wouldn't like that at all, but I think she sort of introduces little bits of it gradually, as I say, drip feeding it, and presumably as you go on, after this year and maybe after year two, three, whatever, you will have to do more. [Rowena 2a]

Interestingly, grammar appeared to be perceived by those who did not particularly like it or possibly were fearful of it as something which would change the class, making it more formal and possibly boring.

Thus, if the split was not determined by age, one could argue that it might have been down to language learning experience, with the high self-efficacy learners on one side, and the less experienced language learners or those who had less positive experiences of learning languages with a grammar based approach on the other. This, however, is only partially true and does not find full confirmation in the data. Amongst the less experienced language learners, there were in fact some who would have liked more grammar and felt that it

would be beneficial to ‘getting the basics’ [Matt 2b]. When asked if there was anything that he would like to do more of in class, Matt replied:

Maybe just getting the basics into our head, things like ‘I have this, you have that’, and just get them grammar works in your head, for the language. (...) Yeah, but I’ve got some CDs. With the Daily Express it came 9 CDs and a book. And it’s really good that, it’s got ‘I have’ and ‘she has’ and things like that in it. (...) I’m picking it up with that. [Matt 2b]

Matt had previously attended Spanish evening classes, and, although he had struggled with grammar then, he nevertheless had a sense that basic grammar would be useful to him and he enjoyed listening to CDs which would allow him to practice basic structures.

Another participant with little prior language learning experience, Kay, appeared to realise the importance of grammar but felt apprehensive about her perceived shortcomings in this area:

I personally think I’m struggling with the grammar and I think part of it is I need to refresh my own grammar in English. You talk about imperatives and I’m thinking ‘I can’t remember what they mean!’ (...) And then because you’ve got so many different tenses and plural (...) I mean this is just a simple thing, probably, you’ve got your formal and your informal, and on the formal it’s *vada*, *prenda* and then that’s *giri* but the informal is *gira* and I was thinking why isn’t that an *-a*, I’m just struggling to understand. [Kay 2b]

Paradoxically, whereas Kay was slightly worried that she might find it hard to cope with the grammar content of the course, Carol felt somehow insecure given that the Italian course placed less emphasis on grammar than in previous FL courses which she had attended. When asked if she would favour a traditional grammatical approach as opposed to a communicative one, she replied:

No I think it would be better to have a bit of both. But I have nothing to put my pegs on. You see, when you learned something years ago in your head you begin to build up building bricks of how to do it, now I have no real building bricks of how to do it. What I have got, is a lot of words and situation associated vocabulary. [Carol 2b]

Carol said something quite similar in her first interview. On both occasions she equated the lack of grammar with ‘having nothing to put one’s pegs on’,

almost implying that grammar had always been her safety net when she had learnt languages previously.

### 6.3.3. Challenges posed by speaking

Predictably, the class activity which participants found most challenging, both on a cognitive and affective level, was speaking in Italian. From a cognitive perspective, the difficulty of “stringing a sentence together” [Chiara 2a] and “constructing what you say” [Daniel 2b] were highlighted. Esther [2a] mentioned lack of vocabulary as an obstacle, alongside the challenge of pronouncing every vowel in Italian words. It is difficult, however, to completely separate cognitive/ linguistic challenges from affective ones, as it became evident that these two factors were closely interrelated. Lack of confidence in speaking also affected participants with a language learning background. Gill for example, a graduate in French and German, said that she had problems in this area, mainly due to feeling unprepared:

I do struggle at the moment, which is confidence with the conversational things that we do, so I find I'm looking back all the time for a word or looking at my notes to see how you'd say something, but I need to spend more time away from the class looking at that myself really, two hours in a week is not enough to master it, which I know I haven't done. [Gill 2b]

Her difficulties did not appear to be of an aptitudinal or cognitive nature, but simply due to the fact that, she missed several class sessions and struggled to find time for home study as a result of work pressures. Thus, it seems that feeling unprepared, whether due to external demands or low self-regulation, can also affect learners' confidence in the area of speaking.

For some participants, however, low self-efficacy in speaking seemed to be compensated by two important factors; firstly, the participants reported feeling at ease and not embarrassed in their group, and secondly they seemed to take comfort from realizing that they were on a similar level as others, as Gill explained:

I haven't got my confidence with the speaking exercises that we do, I enjoy the listening, that's my comfort zone, the listening and the reading and doing the



exercises in the class, so I'm a bit uncomfortable at the moment with some of the speaking, because of the vocabulary, in the speaking, the things that we do, but everybody is different in the class and everybody is learning things at a different pace, there's no embarrassment or anything, because somebody else could do it if you can't and usually you work with somebody who's different every week anyway in your groups, you kind of get a feel everybody is sort of on the same level, really. [Gill 2b]

Although participants from both groups unanimously claimed to be comfortable with their teachers and peers, there was nevertheless evidence from both interviews and class observations, that some participants experienced a degree of classroom language learning anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) with regard to speaking. Observations confirmed that there was a tendency for the learners to be better equipped to answer questions when a fellow learner was being asked than when they were asked themselves. This phenomenon of 'going blank' or 'freezing' is clearly explained by Mary:

It's exactly what happens; Teacher B would come and the three of us would be working and she'd ask me something and I'd freeze and then Kay would come in and help out and she said 'Oh I can do it when she's not asking me!' I mean, you're not been asked personally, but when the next person next to you is being asked, you're more relaxed. (...) Immediately I freeze, I don't mean literally, but you just lock, your brain locks, you think 'Oh my goodness, what is she saying to me? I don't know what the answer is'. It's a bit like when you were little in school and were asked the tables and what's five times six and you go 'Ohhh' and ... you're just in the spotlight. [Mary 2b]

Mary went on to explain how, as soon as the pressure was off and Teacher B moved on to another learner, this feeling would vanish instantaneously. She also added that this phenomenon would not occur if she was just greeting the teacher in Italian:

If she just said *buonasera*, straight away I'd say *buonasera* back to her or something like that. It's not there then. (...) It's the unfamiliar, as you're moving into the unfamiliar and you're working on that (...) if we've been counting and I have forgotten my numbers and she was going round, it wouldn't be so bad. It's because you're not sure of the answers yet. I wonder if it is about pride? I don't think it is just about pride, because we know each other well enough and we laugh. [Mary 2b]

When asked if this would happen to her in other situations outside the language class, she conceded that it probably would, for example if she was on a quiz show or if asked on the spot to do a mathematical calculation.

From Mary's words it does not transpire that these brief anxiety episodes had any effect on her motivation. When asked whether they minded being put on the spot, most participants said that they did not mind, although they obviously preferred to be able to answer the teacher's questions. Others reported that a little bit of pressure was a positive thing.

#### **6.3.4. Self-confidence and social image**

As seen in the previous section, self-concept beliefs<sup>7</sup> are relevant with regard to speaking, but they are not just limited to one type of activity. Three learners in particular, Maggie, Chiara and Daniel, mentioned confidence repeatedly in their interviews. Chiara admitted not only to lacking confidence in general, but to being a perfectionist who did not like making mistakes:

It is probably because I am generally not that confident, so it is probably to do with speaking, getting it wrong and ... I probably underestimate myself, I probably know more than I think I know but there is a lack of confidence, it stops me from saying things, or I start thinking too much about getting it right and then I get confused when I start (...) It is probably partly my memory, I suppose, because I am fairly new to it, just not being able to remember, but when I see it written down, I remember what the word is (...) I suppose I am quite a perfectionist and I like to get it right. [Chiara 2a]

Maggie shared similar feelings:

I feel I've learnt a lot more than I expected to (...) overall it's really very good. I think it's just me that probably can't express myself, and I don't know if that's my age or ... obviously my confidence. I suppose older people- well probably me, you don't want to make a fool of yourself. I wish I didn't feel like that because I think that probably impedes my learning. Everybody that just goes for it and has a go ... but you can make yourself understood anyway, can't you, pointing and gesticulating, so I don't know why I worry, I suppose it's just embarrassment. [Maggie 2a]

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<sup>7</sup> In the Process Model, self-concept beliefs (including self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-competence and self-worth) feature more prominently in the final *postactional stage*.

Based on the class observations, neither Chiara, nor Maggie came across as especially lacking in confidence in class, but based on the interviews confidence issues were clearly at the back of their mind. At one point Maggie spoke about the time that she had attended a Spanish class with her husband and felt more confident because she was better than him; yet, she envied his ability and that of others to just ‘have a go’ and not worry about making mistakes.

For some participants’ comparisons with their peers seemed to be a way of measuring themselves against others and of seeking confirmation about their own performance. When talking about how Group B was doing, Mary [2b] stated that “nobody is whizzing ahead” and Sally said:

I think everybody else is kind on a similar level of kind of learning at a similar pace, I don’t think anyone is really racing ahead or, really lagging behind. [Sally 2b]

Daniel stated in his first interview that he had never felt confident with learning languages, despite his academic achievements in the medical field. When asked if he felt any more confident at the half way point when compared with his experiences at the beginning of the course, he said:

No I feel similar really. I’m not sure if I feel more confident, I think I can shift my lack of confidence on to the next step, so OK you get this far but what about the next step, and in terms of competence, so I suppose I am reassured that as part of the group I don’t feel terribly behind, and so that’s helpful. [Daniel 2b]

Thus, on the one hand, Daniel felt reassured that he was not lagging behind as part of the group, but on the other he was thinking about what would lie ahead and how difficult it would be to progress further. However, he admitted also that his lack of confidence was often due to a lack in preparation, in the same way as another participant earlier was reported saying that feeling unprepared was her main reason for lacking confidence in speaking, as described in the previous section.

One of the benefits of feeling comfortable with peers in a language class is that “if you don’t get something right it doesn’t really matter in there because you don’t feel that the group are going to laugh at you” [Calum 2a].

Interestingly, the fear of being judged or making mistakes in front of people did not emerge in the first interview as an initial concern, but in the second interview it was often mentioned that being in a positive, supportive environment made the experience more pleasant whilst decreasing the fear of making mistakes.

I feel less and less worried now to be honest, because everybody is caught out occasionally and I suppose because we've got to know each other as a class as well, so it feels quite a friendly kind of class to make mistakes in. So it doesn't really worry me too much. [Pam 2a]

As seen previously, rating other group members' coping potential as very similar to one's own tended to be reassuring. For a member of Group A, though, the presence of a seasoned linguist in the group meant that she felt inadequate at times:

When you've got people like Tim who is a head of languages and, although he hasn't done Italian he's obviously got a flair for languages. I've got a science background and I don't even know what a past participle is or things like that. So when Teacher A talks about these things, I'm thinking 'Oh!' I know we are not doing all about that, but I suppose it goes back to my English training where I didn't take a lot of notice of the grammatical side. [Rowena 2a]

It is interesting to notice that, once again, grammar can be an emotive issue and give rise to insecurities for learners who have not got a strong background in grammar and who compare themselves with those who have.

Having said that, the presence of a learner who is perceived as 'better' than the others is not necessarily discouraging to other learners. For instance, Teresa was generally acknowledged to be the best learner from Group B, due to being a native Spanish speaker and having already mastered English. This however did not appear to particularly worry her peers.

### **6.3.5. Coping through mutual support**

An interesting phenomenon involving at least five participants of Group B, was the creation of a mutually supportive network which started in the first few weeks of the course and was consolidated in the first two months (something

similar happened also in Group A but at the end of the course). Gill, for instance, who struggled to attend regularly found this beneficial:

We've started, there's a little group of us now, we mail each other. I can't go this week, so somebody has posted me the homework, which I didn't have before, so if Maureen and I don't go, you've missed out on what's happened the week before and then the class has moved on and you do something else the week after, that little network's helping, helping a bit. [Gill 2b]

For Mary and this was clearly important in helping her cope with the course:

With the homework I was totally lost but fortunately I'm meeting up with Kay and Teresa on Tuesday night, so we'll go through the homework together there and so I'm not worried. If I didn't have that support, I would struggle and I think 'Oh, my goodness, it's getting too hard for me'. [Mary 2b]

Kay agreed that having such a support system made all the difference:

Well, we met once before but we ended up talking about anything but [laughs]. So we really have to do it because all three of us don't have anyone to practise with at home so we said, we'd get together and just do a little bit and it just might help, if we're struggling with anything. One of the others might know the answer and we just can help each other with that. We're hoping to do it, regularly. I don't suppose we'll manage it every week, but at least we can try. [Kay 2b]

#### **6.4. Self-regulatory strategies**

The last category of motivational influences in the *actional stage* of the Process Model concerns self-regulatory mechanisms, namely *language-learning strategies*, *goal-setting strategies* and *motivational maintenance strategies*. On the basis of the data obtained from the second interview set, however, it would be difficult to break down the participants' perceptions of their self-regulating behaviour in three neat sections. It clearly emerged, however, that several participants were aware of not doing enough independent work between lessons and therefore implicitly self-critiqued their degree of self-regulation.

An indication of this is that in the response to the ice-breaking question 'how are things going with your Italian so far?' the immediate response of several participants was very similar to the one below:

I'm enjoying it, yeah, that's all fine and just finding time for it is the hardest, I'd say. It's very hard to practice. I'm quite good at coming, I only don't come to the lesson if I've got something else that I can't miss so I'm quite good at coming to the lessons, it's just finding the time to practise. [Sally 2b]

It should be noted that most of the participants who responded this way attended the evening class (Group B); the majority of its participants worked full-time, whereas the participants in Group A were either retired or work part-time. While it is impossible to establish if these participants were genuinely unable to find time for language learning between lessons or whether they did not employ effective self-regulatory strategies, the fact remains that such participants appeared to take responsibility for their perceived slow progress or for feeling unprepared, rather than attributing these shortcomings to the learning situation.

To the question 'what do you do to motivate yourself?' most participants said that they did not do anything specific. Some said that having a class to go to, a designed slot in their week, was motivating in itself.

This is why I'm coming to a class, as opposed to just doing something off a tape at home, to actually come, have a definite kind of schedule 'Right, it's Tuesday, I've got to come to a class', because I've had tapes before and, you know, just 35 minutes a day and six weeks later you should be semi-fluent and it never works because who does 35 minutes a day? Whereas having a class and you've got somebody to guide you and for me, personally, I wouldn't progress without that classroom-tutor situation, because somehow I would never find the time, just another week, another week and then six weeks have gone past and you've not opened your books, whereas this, something structured to come to, for me works better. [Rita 2b]

This resonates with what some participants said in the first interview with regard to the reasons why they had joined a course instead of learning independently. Along similar lines, when asked what sustained her motivation, one participant replied:

I think the teacher and the fact that you have a slot, that 7-9 on a Tuesday, this is what you do, I think if you're learning by yourself, you've got to be very motivated to stick your tapes. I've got everything at home and I've never played anything. [Gill 2b]

Chiara and Matt both admitted that, while they found it boring to study from books at home, the simple experience of ‘being in class’ proved conducive to learning:

I think for me it is motivating myself and just being in the class. I need to have a class to go to, otherwise I wouldn't be able to learn it by myself. And obviously, if the teacher's good, I am going to learn quicker. [Chiara 2a]

As well as agreeing with Chiara's point, Sally added that if she did not attend the class, she would feel she had let herself down:

I have to motivate myself to get the work done at home and do that, but coming to classes is easy once I've made the effort. I always feel like I've let myself down if I didn't come, if I'm busy. Because I did start an Italian course once before and I gave it up and I was really, really disappointed in myself so I don't want to. [Sally 2b]

Daniel agreed that he always felt better after going to class, particularly on those evenings when, after a long working day, he had not been looking forward to it.

Amy, however, was one participant who reckoned that she did not need to motivate herself at all:

It does seem to come natural, because it is something that I'd wanted to do for so long that... 'cause I could sit down and do it all day, I've got to motivate myself to do other things I think. [Amy 2a]

According to Rosanne [2a], simply reminding herself of “just how interesting and beautiful” Italian was acted as a motivator in itself.

For five of the participants, having an Italian holiday to look forward to was an important stimulus to carry on. Conversely, lacking a plan to visit the country seemed to work the opposite way for two participants. One of the reasons why Gill and Maureen had started the course together was because they had planned a weekend in Rome in the autumn, i.e., two months after joining the course. By the end of January, when she was interviewed for the second time, Maureen found that she could not motivate herself to spend time on Italian at home because she did not feel passionate enough about it, admitting that the initial motivation was no longer there.

Half an hour, half an hour extra, just to do the homework and maybe to look over the notes, but I would like to tidy them all up, file them all. Because I'm an all-or-nothing person, I would want to be surrounded by (...) if it was my passion, I mean I'm not passionate about it, if I had a passion, I would be listening to the music, I would try to find a television programme or, the radio, but because I've not really got an incentive much to want to learnt, but if I did do, I know what I would do to do it, but I just (laughs) don't do it (laughs). [Maureen 2b]

Maureen and Gill stopped attending the course shortly after their second interview. (Further information on participants who did not complete the course is provided in Section 7.5.

### **6.5. Participants' perceived motivational changes since the first interview**

The second interview ended with a series of more direct and explicit questions aimed at summarising the participants' perceived motivational changes since the beginning of the course. Table 6.1 provides some figures relating to the recurrence of the answers given by the 23 participants who were interviewed half way through the course. Although the sample is clearly too small to claim any statistical validity, some trends are worth noting.

For the large majority of participants, four months into the course, their reasons for learning Italian and attending the course were still the same and, for a couple of them, those motives had become stronger (see Q6a). The initial goals, i.e. what participants hoped to get out of the course (see Q6b) were also unchanged for the great majority of participants, although two felt that they might not progress as much as they had originally thought given the slow pace.

In terms of any original concerns or reservations (see Q6c), seven participants said that any initial concern had disappeared and five said that they had never had any. Although nobody stated that they had serious concerns, three admitted to feeling a little guilty about not making time between lessons. Two participants already mentioned in the previous paragraph had come to the realisation that the scope of the course was more limited than anticipated but were not really concerned about it.



**Table 6.1: Motivational changes since the beginning of the course (second interview)**

<p><i>Q6a. Has anything changed in terms of your initial reasons for learning Italian?</i></p> <p>No change: 20          Reasons have become stronger: 2          Wishes she had more reasons to learn Italian (e.g., a holiday planned): 1</p> <p><i>Q6b. Has anything changed in terms of what you hope to get out of the course?</i></p> <p>No change: 19          Would like to become more confident with her language skills: 1          Now feels she can learn more on the course than expected: 1          Has realised that the scope of the course is more limited than expected: 1          She would like the course to move faster: 1</p> <p><i>Q6c. Has anything changed in terms of any initial concerns or reservations?</i></p> <p>Initial concerns dispelled, now feeling more reassured: 7          Initial concerns confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 (slightly daunted by the enormity of the task)</li> <li>1 (memory)</li> <li>1 (confidence)</li> <li>1 (confidence still an issue, but feels reassured about being at least as good as the others in the group)</li> <li>1 (keeping up)</li> <li>1 (understanding verbs)</li> </ul> <p>New concerns:     2 (pace too slow – not a big concern, more a realisation)                                     3 (making time for independent study between lessons)</p> <p>Never had any concerns: 5</p> <p><i>Q6d. Would you say that now you are as motivated as when you started, more motivated or less motivated?</i></p> <p>Much more motivated/enthusiastic: 1          More motivated/enthusiastic: 6          Slightly more motivated/enthusiastic: 4          Just as motivated/enthusiastic: 11          Slightly less motivated/enthusiastic: 1</p> <p><i>Q6e. Has anything changed in terms of your willingness to continue with the course?</i></p> <p>No change, still keen to continue: 21          Would like to progress faster: 2</p> <p><i>Q6f. To what extent has this experience met your expectations so far?</i></p> <p>Initial expectations exceeded by far: 1          Initial expectations exceeded: 8          Initial expectations met: 9          Initial expectations met overall but wishes the teacher spoke more English: 1          Initial expectations met overall but wishes the pace was faster: 2          Had no expectations to begin with but they are satisfied: 2</p>
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The few participants who mentioned some slight concerns referred to confidence, the challenges of keeping up and grammar.

With the exception of one participant who was less motivated, all the others said that they felt either as motivated as in the beginning (n.11) or more motivated (n.11) (see Q6e). Everybody said that they were still keen to continue with the course (see Q6f). The majority also said that expectations had either been met (n.9) or they had been exceeded (n.9). Two participants declared that they were satisfied even though they had no expectations to begin with.

It should however be noted that three of the initial participants dropped out before the second set of data collection took place and were not available for interviews. Also, the questions listed in Table X were the last in the interview schedule and were fired to the interviewees in fairly quick succession. The answers did not always reflect exactly the conversations which had taken place in the first part of the interview. For instance, several participants spoke openly and at length about certain challenges which they had found in the first part of the course, but when asked in the end if they had any concerns, very few mentioned them, possibly because in their views these did not represent real ‘concerns’. Also, all 23 participants declared that they were still willing to continue with the course, but in reality three of them stopped attending not long after the second interview took place.

In spite of the above limitation, the data paints a positive picture, suggesting that motivation was either sustained or increased for the large majority of the participants. It is, however, important to interpret this numerical data in the context of the more in-depth qualitative findings of this chapter and that which precedes it.

## **6.6. Summary**

This chapter presented the findings related to the second wave of semi-structured interviews conducted with 23 of the original 26 participants. The second interview schedule was mostly based on the conceptual framework of

the *actional stage* in the Process Model and was mainly concerned with exploring motivation half way through the course. In relation to the quality of the learning experience, the participants indicated that both teachers played a key role. The qualities which stood out in particular were: approachability, competence, an encouraging and non-judgemental attitude, as well as the ability to engage learners in interesting class activities.

The increasing importance of the learner group also became evident in the second set of interviews. Feeling comfortable with peers and acknowledging that everyone shared a similar experience meant that there was a supportive atmosphere in both classes. The data also revealed that mutual support was generated by learners working together.

In terms of self-regulatory strategies, most participants felt that having a class to go to every week was the main motivator to continue learning the language.

The chapter concluded with a brief evaluation of summative answers given by the participants in relation to their perceived motivational changes since the first interview. The next chapter will report on the findings uncovered by the final data set, namely the last wave of interviews and focus groups.

## 7. Findings from Phase 3: Motivation at the end of the course and postactional evaluation

### 7.1. Introduction

This chapter reports on the findings derived from the third round of interviews and two focus groups, supported by data from the student evaluation forms completed for the AE course provider.

As with the first and second interview waves, the final interview schedule also drew from the Process Model and in particular the concluding *postactional stage* that is characterised by the formation of *causal attributions*. It should be stressed, however, that the attributional factors addressed here are not limited to justifications for achievement or lack of achievement on the course, but they include a broad *retrospective evaluation* by the participants of how things went for them. Another set of motivational influences of this stage and reported here concerns the reassessment of *self-concept beliefs* in relation to language learning. It should also be noted that, although some of the themes examined here have already been touched upon in Chapters 5 and 6, the emphasis of this chapter is mainly on the participants' summative appraisal of their motivation from the start until the end of the course. When revisiting familiar themes, a particular effort has been made to avoid mere repetitions of elements already covered, but to add novel depth and perspective.

## **7.2. Key motivational factors: an overall appraisal by the participants**

### **7.2.1. Group and peers**

The final data set shows that participants viewed positive group dynamics as something which had contributed considerably to their enjoyment of the course and motivation to complete it. This is not surprising for those who had initially mentioned social interaction as one of their main goals, but it is striking that all participants remarked that the presence of a nice group had enhanced the quality of the experience. The crucial question to address is how, for so many participants, the group turned from a secondary or unimportant motivational factor at the beginning of the course into a major one by the end of the course.

#### ***Feeling at ease with other group members***

In the second interview, participants from both classes reported feeling comfortable in their group (see Section 6.2.2). The final data set revealed that positive group dynamics had become even more influential on the participants' motivation, as in the case of Carol:

The motivation is really to keep going to this class because this is a good class. If it was a bit apathetic, or there were personal problems within the class, because maybe somebody was taking the limelight and the attention wasn't equally divided amongst the students then, I'd think 'Oh what a waste of time that was tonight!' and then my motivation would slip. [Carol 3b]

Over half of the participants said that the presence of one or more 'unpleasant people' in the group would have made a noticeable difference to their motivation and possibly induce them to leave the course.

Some participants gave accounts of what it had been like on AE courses which they had been on in the past. For instance, Elaine explained that in the Spanish class that she had attended the previous year, a learner used to arrive late every time and spend twenty minutes talking about herself before the class was allowed to resume. Despite completing that course, Elaine clearly found that her enjoyment of the classes had been compromised. This experience

must have been quite a memorable one for Elaine, who mentioned it in every interview, as well as in FGa.

Other participants explained how the group dynamics in previous language classes which they had attended, rather than any particular individual, had affected their motivation. For instance, Rosanne, who enjoyed chatting to other learners' during the coffee break or before/after classes, contrasted the friendliness of Group A with the experience of attending a French class a few years earlier:

It was very cliquey and, because I am reasonably outgoing and I like to speak to everybody, I found that certain people, they said 'hello' but they didn't want to connect and I didn't enjoy that class very much at all, and in fact I stopped going because a large part of that for me is the interaction with the people as well. [Rosanne 3a]

During FGb, Sally also explained the difference between an Italian class, which she had briefly attended previously, and the current learner group:

I went to an Italian course before and not continued with it, so I think the difference between that and this group is: I like the people in the group and it's really good fun. [Sally FGb]

And in the interview she added:

In my other course I went to, the people weren't quite as forthcoming and they weren't as interactive. And we didn't really have a break at half time to have a chat about – we all chat during coffee and things as well. [Sally 3b]

Admittedly, not all participants felt that the group had been crucial to their completion of the course. Three participants from Group A and two from Group B stated that, unless the group and the classes had been really awful, they would have kept going. In Daniel's and Ruth's case, this was partly because, as a couple, they saw themselves as forming a small group of their own, even though in class they tended to sit separately and mingle with the rest. Others, such as Amy, Pam, Rita and Calum felt that their original motivation for joining the class would have prevailed in any case, even though finding themselves in such a good group was definitely a bonus.

Some participants commented on the upbeat atmosphere in the class. For instance, Daniel spoke about group members being “actually very positive”, “very optimistic, nice to be with” [3b]. Mary also noted everyone’s “positive outlook” [FGb] whereas Kay pointed out the humorous side which, in her view, contributed to creating a feel good factor.

It’s fun, actually, we have a laugh, it’s not just heads down and I think there are a couple of clowns in the class that lighten the atmosphere as well sometimes. [Kay 3b]

The positive class environment therefore, appeared to have a tangible effect on the group members, who revealed themselves as both its creators and beneficiaries.

Chapter 6 highlighted how some participants considered important not to feel judged or embarrassed in front of their peers. In the third interview and focus groups these views came to the fore even more strongly, for instance from Kay, who felt reassured by the fact that that nobody in the group was “miles better” [3b]. Fiona agreed that making mistakes was not a big issue due to everyone being “in the same boat at one time or another” [3b] and she added:

Because we all seem to be on a similar wave length when it comes to learning and it’s like a nice atmosphere and everyone is really friendly, I guess. You don’t feel stupid for asking, maybe silly questions, even like amongst the group. [Fiona 3b]

Viewing the class as a fairly level playing field contributed therefore to foster a cohesive and supportive atmosphere in Group B.

### ***Not feeling alone when struggling***

Sharing similar challenges also seemed to bring group members together, especially when they realised that others found themselves facing the same difficulties. However, whereas in Group B participants generally felt that abilities within the class were quite even, some mixed feelings emerged during a telling exchange in FGa:

ROWENA: I always look forward to the class, I'm always happy to come back but there have been time in the class when I thought 'Why am I here? I can't do this.' And it comes back to what Pam said, exactly. Teacher A will be talking away to somebody, usually Valerie or Tim and they're replying and I'm thinking 'What are they saying? I just do not have a clue! What is the point in me carrying on?'

PAM: That's exactly how I felt.

ROWENA: So it's really nice to have this chance to find out that you're not on your own, because it's not until you sit down around the table and you find out that there are other people who have similar problems, so I'm finding this really helpful. (...) I talk to myself and say 'Come on, don't be so stupid!' But there are times in the class when I haven't a clue.

PAM: Why does it feel that everybody else knows except you and you think 'What's wrong with me?'

ROWENA: Yeah, I would say that's my biggest stumbling block.

The above extract suggests that, even within a harmonious group, some learners can feel quite lonely at times and think that they are alone in not having understood. Although both Pam and Rowena had already queried in the second interview whether they might not be the only ones feeling out of their depth at times, FGa offered them the opportunity to obtain confirmation of this and get some reassurance.

### *Feeling a sense of identity*

One dimension which emerged from the final data collection round was that of group identity. Daniel, for instance, remarked that one of the most positive aspects of the group experience was a sense of belonging and feeling "fairly similar to each other"; he continued by observing, "we're all sharing something, but it's the fact that we're all doing Italian, we're all I think quite different people." [FGb]

Rosanne also commented that she enjoyed interacting with others and "especially like-minded people with the same sort of values, wanting to make the best of the whole experience." This was something which, in her view, gave the group "such a lovely feel to it." [3a]



Another issue related to the construction of group identity was linked to the Italian names, which Teacher A had given to every class member. The following exchange during FGa reflects this:

MAGGIE: Even giving you Italian names was rather nice.

ROWENA: Because I forget the English names now.

ROSANNE: And they are lovely names as well.

FRANCES: We've got slightly different names, that's why it's made us another person rather our reserved side.

ROSANNE: Do you think it gives us the chance to be somebody a bit different?

VARIOUS: Yeah, yeah.

ROSANNE: Which is quite nice, you know, at sixty odd to be able to...

ESTHER: But in making us different, it has made us have something all the same, like all of us having a new name, and a new persona, for that two hours every week.

AMY: It's a shared interest and then giving us all an Italian name has like bonded everybody, I think, like 'you are going to get on this year'. Nobody is wanting to be nasty or spiteful or anything like that. I think it's just gelled everybody.

The above extract reveals how the fact that everyone could boost an Italian name might have enhanced group identity and made its members almost feel part of an exclusive club. Some Group B participants said that they had got closer by going out together on a few social occasions, although it is difficult to establish whether this simply enabled the group members to get to know each other better, or whether it worked towards establishing a stronger group identity.

### ***Learning from interaction***

Several participants recognised that being in a good group was beneficial to their learning. For Amy, who had previously tried to teach herself Italian, having someone to practise with made all the difference. She maintained that, "when you're in a group situation it's a proper conversation" and it was

possible to “learn from one another” [3a]. Carol and Chiara said that they had enrolled on a language course because they knew that they would learn best in a classroom situation, whereas they would not be motivated to do it independently.

As already highlighted in Section 6.3.5, three participants from Group B started to meet outside the class to study Italian together quite early in the course and they continued to do so until the end. Mary described how beneficial it was when she once met Kay and Teresa:

We actually met up last week and we looked at what the homework was. We did an exercise and we all said, ‘We’ve forgotten everything’, but once we got together and started talking, then we were looking at *del* and *della*, the grid and then we started looking at the questions and slowly we got into it again and worked things out. It wasn’t as bad as we thought it was going to be! [Mary 3b]

Mary’s quote is a good example of how, going over the homework together enabled them to “work things out” and understand a grammar point which they were struggling with. An important aspect of Vygotskian sociocultural theory is linked to Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), whereby learning is fostered by interaction or “in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). In the case of this small group, Teresa, whose first language was Spanish, and who found Italian quite easy, was the more advanced learner. The other benefit of working together appeared to be the mutual support, which enabled them to overcome difficult moments, such as that which occurred when they thought they had “forgotten everything” [Mary 3b].

Another example of ZPD learning came from Ruth:

People are going at it at different rates but I’m quite a magpie as a learner, I quite like it when people are good or because I quite like piggybacking on them, that helps me if they are- so I don’t find that, it doesn’t concern me, I quite like it if there are people around me who are cruising on, because I learn quite well from picking up from other people. [Ruth 3b]

In a way, Ruth was quite unlike some of the participants mentioned earlier, who felt reassured by the fact that everyone was more or less at the same level.

At the end of FGa, Maggie invited the other Group A participants to her house to continue meeting on a Tuesday morning and do some Italian every week; seven participants accepted the offer. Without the guidance of Teacher A, the group decided to practise listening and grammar and, in Elaine's view, who was interviewed shortly after the first get-together, this was a constructive session:

Someone's problem being explained helps you as well. Maggie hadn't understood and most people hadn't understood it and people were sort of pointing at things that they hadn't understood and were helping each other, it was really good. The blind leading the blind! [3b]

Even though Elaine's words suggest that not much Italian was learnt at that particular gathering, it appears that meeting outside the class helped participants construct their own learning in a collaborative way.

The group can also be a powerful motivator and instigator of learning when its members are all committed to working hard. When asked what made her language learning experience a positive one, Rowena replied:

I think the group has a lot to do with it and the group, the individuals in the group are well-motivated as well, and I think you feel, to some extent, you've got to try and keep- not let yourself be dragged behind. You want to keep the momentum going so that you can contribute as much as the others and not feel yourself sinking. [Rowena 3a]

Therefore, in Rowena's experience, being in a motivated group was helpful in keeping her going. She described how she felt she had been carried on a sort of wave of enthusiasm and motivation generated by the group, feeling almost a duty to contribute and be part of it.

At this point it is worth redirecting focus towards the responses given by participants in their end-of-course evaluation forms completed for the AE institution. Besides stating to what extent they felt that they had met the six course learning outcomes, participants were also asked whether there had been 'wider benefits' from attending the course. As indicated in Table 7.1 and Table 7.2, which list the students' qualitative comments, every single

respondent indicated ‘making new friends’, ‘meeting new people’, or ‘being in a very friendly group’ as one of the wider benefits of attending the course.

Hence, although the participants provided quite limited feedback in the evaluation forms administered by the AE course provider, their responses confirmed the findings of the interview and focus group data.

**Table 7.1: End-of-course evaluation conducted by the AE institution – qualitative comments - Group A**

<i>Group A</i>	Learners’ intention to enroll on another course	Learners’ comments on wider benefits of attending the course <i>n.7 respondents</i>
Amy	Yes	Feel more confident when speaking and conversing with Italians. Met new people/friends. Break from normal routine.
Chiara	Yes	Enjoyed meeting new people, social interaction. Feel more confident in speaking a little Italian.
Elaine	Yes	I feel more confident about being able to converse in Italy and cope with travelling and getting around, eating out, etc.
Esther	Yes	Making me think. Bringing discipline – briefly – to the week, i.e., making time for homework. Meeting new people and enjoying their company. Learning a language in a different way.
Pam	Yes	I feel much more confident when visiting Italy recently and really enjoyed attempting to communicate. I have met new people.
Rowena	Yes	Have met some very friendly people and enjoy coming to Italian. However, feel quite inadequate at times since I find the listening still very difficult and cannot remember the grammar. Think my memory is going!
Tim	Yes	Very enjoyable experience! Made some new friends and have learned a little Italian along the way. I’m looking forward to a second year course.

**Table 7.2: End-of-course evaluation conducted by the AE institution - qualitative comments - Group B**

<i>Group B</i>	Learners' intention to enroll on another course	Learners' comments on wider benefits of attending the course <i>n.7 respondents</i>
Calum	Yes	It has been interesting to learn not only about language, but also a bit about Italian culture. I also feel a very good social group has been established with our class and have enjoyed a few great socials. Hope this continues, as we progress to next year's classes!
Carol	Yes	I have thoroughly enjoyed the course and am encouraged to go to the next year's course, hopefully with the same tutor. I have learnt a lot about Italy and its culture from a tutor who is a native speaker. I have made new friends, who have been helpful in lessons and hope to see them again next year.
Daniel	Yes	Excellent course. Excellent tuition by Teacher B who helped us enjoy ourselves as well as making us work hard. Excellent group – very friendly and mixed. Tremendous to be taught by an Italian! (Also enjoyed Researcher's input and reflection on our interviews).
Fiona	Yes	New friends.
Kay	Yes	Course exceeded expectations in most aspects. Very happy with the course, excellent tutor and a great group of students. Good fun as well as learning a lot. Feel confident (or more than I did) to speak in class, and confident to practise Italian when abroad or in restaurants.
Mary	Yes	Gained confidence in speaking a foreign language – thoroughly enjoyed the course – presentation & other students. I have found the teaching style excellent and I am already looking forward to working at the next level. I hope any grammar work will not be too daunting.
Rita	Yes	Enjoyed talking to new people and the learning process.
Ruth	Yes	Tutor encouragement to all group to work in a variety of ways with a variety of people helped group coherence and learning, I think.
Sally	Yes	The course has been extremely well organised by Teacher B who has made the lessons fun but at the same time effective for learning. The rest of the group are great and the lessons are very sociable.

### 7.2.2. Teacher

The final set of findings confirmed the fundamental role played by the teacher in sustaining the participants' motivation throughout the course, as well as facilitating their progress. Table 7.3 summarises the teacher-related factors which were perceived to be motivationally significant by the participants and have contributed to their course completion.

**Table 7.3: Summary of teacher-related motivating factors emerged from the second and third interview, and the focus groups**

<p><u>Applicable to both teachers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• friendly and approachable, she put herself on the same level as the participants</li> <li>• non-judgemental and inclusive</li> <li>• confident and professional</li> <li>• competent and knowledgeable</li> <li>• organised and good at including a variety of activities</li> <li>• good interpersonal skills, easy to talk to</li> <li>• made the classes interesting and fun</li> <li>• made the class content relevant to the learners' interests and needs</li> <li>• never embarrassed learners or 'pointed the finger' if anyone made mistakes</li> <li>• instrumental in making the group gel</li> <li>• displayed a sense of humour</li> </ul> <p><u>Applicable mainly to Teacher A</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• came across as encouraging and reassuring through her demeanour and the way she related to the learners</li> <li>• appeared totally in charge and learners had complete trust in her</li> </ul> <p><u>Applicable mainly to Teacher B</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• verbally encouraged and reassured learners that they were doing fine</li> <li>• as a native speaker, she provided interesting 'snippets' and cultural insights</li> <li>• appeared to have high expectations of and confidence in the group</li> </ul>
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Since Chapter 6 has already examined several of the above issues, this section focuses on those areas most strongly emphasised by the participants in the final data collection round. One such factor was the pivotal role played by the teacher as the initiator of positive group dynamics. In both focus groups, participants found themselves in agreement that the teachers had, to a large

extent, been instrumental in creating a cooperative and positive group atmosphere.

In an interesting exchange during FGa, it was remarked upon how Teacher A was very effective at keeping lessons on track and bringing back to task anyone who might have become distracted. Pam's remark, "she keeps control really well, without you feeling controlled" [FGa], indicates how participants appreciated being led by Teacher A, but did not feel weighed down or overwhelmed by her approach. Also during FGa, Valerie made a comment which generated a number of interesting reactions:

VALERIE: And one thing I've noticed which I think is important; just occasionally we find a word or something, sometimes it happened when you [addressing the researcher] were here, which she didn't know, she didn't know the answer, but she admits, she has the confidence. And personally it gave me confidence, and she will admit it and we'll work it out, and I found that very endearing.

ESTHER: But only a very confident person can do that.

ROWENA: It made her see more on our level rather than being up there. She's only human.

The exchange between the participants highlights the way in which certain indications that Teacher A was not infallible worked in her favour; not only participants admired her confidence in admitting that she did not know something, but they were also glad that they could identify with her as a person at their level.

A novel aspect of Teacher A's teaching emerged for the first time during FGa, when Amy remarked on her knowledge of Italian culture and the motivating effect that the cultural input played for her in comparison with her school language learning experience:

When I was at school trying to learn French and German, it was drummed into you, continually learning all the time and you'd just switched off because it was so boring, but when she teaches, she tells you a bit about the culture, where things originated from and that helps it sink in a bit more, rather than having it on a bit of paper and having to memorise it. [Amy FGa]

It must be noted that in the second part of the course, Teacher A introduced several additional cultural elements into her teaching. For instance, as I noted during an observed session, on one occasion a participant who had recently returned from Italy brought some Italian supermarket fliers. These were distributed to the class and participants who were asked to identify food-related vocabulary. Amy, who from the very first interview revealed a great interest in Italian culture and cookery, immediately found this a source of motivation, similar to the way in which participants from the parallel group found Teacher B's cultural 'snippets' interesting.

FGa also had the opportunity to discuss Teacher A's almost exclusive use of Italian in class. Whereas Rosanne admitted that she would have preferred homework instructions to be in English, Esther felt that the sole use of Italian "set the scene" from the moment one walked into the room, and suggested that diluting this with English might have spoiled the atmosphere. Pam agreed with Esther that Teacher A's exclusive use of Italian served to totally focus her attention. This confirmed that Group A liked being taught in Italian overall. However, it is interesting to note that Kate, the only participant who made clear in the second interview that she felt uncomfortable with this, dropped out of the course, seemingly due to personal reasons.

As for Teacher B, some revealing participants' views emerged during FGb:

KAY: You don't mind getting it wrong because you're not, sort of, singled out (...) And to me that's- that's quite important because if we'd had a teacher that was very much pointing the finger for getting it wrong, I certainly would not have stayed.

MARY: No, I wouldn't either, I wouldn't have come back. So it's very much her personality and her attitude, her positive attitude and how encouraging she is. There isn't the put down, yeah. Probably we wouldn't let it happen, would we (laughs).

RUTH: In terms of how people work together, I think Teacher B has influenced us in that, she's kind of encouraged us to make mistakes with each other. So I think that's fed into that.

The above remarks suggest that Teacher B played a pivotal role in sustaining the learners' motivation and participation, not least by creating a cooperative



group atmosphere. Group B also commented on their teacher's easy-going nature on one hand, and seriousness on the other. As Daniel put it, "Teacher B has blended a kind of fun but serious approach. She makes it clear that this is important, it's important to do things properly and I think she treats us as adults" [3b]. When Daniel made this point in the FGb, Mary agreed that Teacher B had "high expectations" whilst being "passionate about it", whereas Sally said, "she's made it really entertaining but she's quite strict as well!"[3b].

Similarly in Group A, the fact that the teacher clearly took her job seriously appeared to influenced the participants equally strongly, who in turn also felt that they should be earnest about learning. In this regard Esther, who was arguably the most laid back of the Group A participants, commented on having great respect for the amount of work which Teacher A put into preparing the lessons:

I would be ashamed not to turn up myself and actually go because Teacher A puts a lot of effort into it. I feel that she deserves an appreciative audience! (...) I'm also impressed by our Teacher A who starts at ten to ten and finishes at ten past twelve, that is remarkably unusual in this day and age. Talk about value for money! [Esther 3a]

Despite being clearly tongue-in-cheek, Esther's comments seemed to imply that the teacher's motivation and professional attitude had impressed the learners and in turn motivated them to participate.

### **7.2.3. Enjoyment**

Although enjoyment was one of the most frequently given reasons for completing the course, several participants said that they felt that the course had been made enjoyable largely as a result of the group and the teacher, primarily for the reasons highlighted in the previous two sections. Rosanne described the experience as "enjoyable" [3a] because it had been challenging, yet achievable. Some simply liked the class atmosphere as a mix of teacher, group, activities and interaction. Often the enjoyment translated into a feel-good factor during and after the class. This was the case of four participants in Group B, who, due to their busy jobs, often arrived at the class feeling tired but

who always felt better afterwards, almost experiencing a sensation of being refreshed by the end of it. Calum's reason for enjoying the course provided an interesting insight; when asked what had made him go back to the class every week and complete the course, he replied:

I enjoyed it so much and it was a good way to escape the day. It takes you away from what's been going on and it's two hours when you just think about learning Italian rather than everything else. (...) It's created a hobby for me I think. I'm learning a language but it does feel like a hobby. [Calum 3b]

Again in FGB, Calum described his Italian nights as "total escape" [3b] and found others agreeing that the two hours went very quickly. It was also added that, had the classes not been so enjoyable, some of the participants would not have made the effort to come if tired. This point was well made by Ruth in her interview:

RUTH: I think before Christmas, I did think 'Oh, shall I go?' and if you're busy at work and things ... but I did keep going and I realised that, actually, I really enjoyed it and it was a really nice contrast to go.

IR: Contrast against what?

RUTH: Against work really. I mean it was quite hard work but it was nice work somehow, it was different; I suppose there aren't any pressures on you in the same way, are there? So it was nice to go, I realised. Not the same as work at all. So I think I got keener as the year went on. [3b]

Ruth explained how, on that occasion, she realised during the coffee break that she "felt different" and "more relaxed", as if the stress which she carried from work had suddenly vanished. She concluded by saying, "that's the only kind of moment really, in terms of motivation, that I remember most of the time". [3b]

Calum's and Ruth's quotes reveal something rather novel about motivation in the current context of L2 adult language learning: both participants realised that the whole experience was relaxing, rather than hard work, as they had initially expected; it turned out to be a form of escapism which had taken them by surprise, and something which, to their admission, had been key in sustaining their motivation. Similarly, Pam said:

I started with strong motivation and I thought subconsciously that it was going to be a chore but it's going to be worth it because I'll get somewhere and the goal can be worthwhile but actually, the whole process has been quite enjoyable. [Pam FGa]

Half of the participants said that they would carry on learning Italian as long as long as they continued to enjoy it, whilst the others commented that they would continue in any case, but the prospect of continued enjoyment in their learning was a clear incentive.

#### **7.2.4. Initial goal**

The first interview findings highlighted that the majority of participants had enrolled in order to fulfil a genuine desire to learn Italian. The participants varied in their individual reasons for learning the language, and not all were clear about how far they wished to develop their language skills. Therefore, it might seem surprising that a goal considered motivationally crucial at the beginning of the course was not ultimately regarded by many to be quite as important as the group, teacher and general enjoyment of the course in terms of sustaining motivation throughout the year.

Of course, this cannot be said for all participants; at least four maintained that their initial determination to learn Italian was still the main reason why they had completed the course, either because they had wanted to do it for a long time (Amy and Pam), because of an Italian family (Rita) or close friends based in Italy (Calum). These participants recognised that group dynamic, teacher and enjoyment had enhanced the experience as a whole, but also stressed that their initial motivation and goal orientation were sufficiently strong that they would have continued in spite of these features having been different. At this point, one may wonder whether these participants' *choice motivation* – the first of the Process Model stages - might have been stronger than in others. This, however, does not appear to be the case. For instance, mother and daughter, Linda and Diana, who started with strong motivation due to their close Italian family and regular trips to Italy dropped out in the first

term (possible reasons for participants having dropped out of the course are discussed in Section 7.5).

Something rather unexpected happened to Esther, who had joined the class purely to socialise:

I did not have a goal. I truly didn't and I am amazed the way the whole thing has caught my imagination. And I long to go to Italy, I really do, and as I said, the language itself, that I had not even considered ... it was merely a way to get out and meet people. I'm quite surprised by what's happened. [FGa]

In the interview Esther also commented "it has awakened an interest in me that I didn't expect to have, so therefore that is quite something to have achieved without even trying!" [3a]. This seems to indicate that a new motivational dimension came into play. At the end of the course, Esther maintained that mixing with people was important and was delighted that she had found herself with such a positive teacher and group. However, what was most surprising to her was the added motivational dimension of now wishing to learn Italian in earnest.

Esther is the most extreme example of a participant whose motivational orientation at the beginning had clearly altered by the end of the course, but there were others whose motivational focus had shifted direction. Newly retired language teacher Tim had said in his first interview that he was quite serious about learning Italian and wanted to take it to a level where he could converse proficiently with Italians. Moreover, he had enrolled on an adult education class because, after so many years spent teaching in schools, he harboured concerns that he would miss the classroom environment. By the end of the course, however, Tim's views of his own motivation had altered:

I think for me it's a leisure activity rather than an academic activity, and I thoroughly enjoy it. I like the people, I like Teacher A's approach and I look forward to each week. Now that I have so much time, it fills up one of my mornings in a very enjoyable way. (...) yeah, it was a leisurely year and that's what I needed after working hard up to the age of 60. So I thought I deserved a break! [Tim 3a]

Tim pointed out that, since the previous interview, he had reflected on the real purpose of attending and he had realised that, given the limited aims of the

course and the fact that he had been, in his words, “quite lazy” and had chosen not to exert a great deal of effort in between lessons, enjoyment rather than language learning achievement had become increasingly important.

### **7.2.5. Sense of progress and achievement**

At the beginning of the course several participants anticipated that a sense of progress would be fundamental in sustaining their motivation throughout the year. In the first interview, however, the idea of progress appeared to be rather unclear in the participants’ minds and was more generally linked to the notion of improvement. At the beginning of the course, participants’ expectations appeared to have been focussed on moving forward and “not sticking and getting to a certain level and not going any further” [Kay 1b]. In the final round of data collection, most participants had a sense of the progress that had been made, and some of them - Rowena, for instance - found this very satisfying:

I feel if I made the effort, I could book a room, I could ask for something, I could say that something is missing from the room, I could go shopping, I could ask the way, I might not understand what was said straight away, but I think I made a lot of progress, because I’ve gone from nothing to being able to do quite a bit. If you ask me the same thing next year, it might be different because I will already have done some Italian. So I think this year has been a steep learning curve. [Rowena 3a]

As well as offering many examples of what she had learnt, Rowena also stressed that the progress she had made was noticeable because she had started with no language skills at all, a point also made by five other participants. Moreover, four participants mentioned how, when they went home after every lesson, they felt that they had done something worthwhile, and that their sense of progress remained constant from week to week.

In the final interview, participants were also asked to give examples of any ‘highs’ which they had experience with reference to Italian. Calum felt a sense of achievement when he managed to text his friend in Italian; Amy was satisfied that she had been able to tell that the English subtitles of a property programme did not translate exactly what had actually been said in Italian;

Maggie had booked hotels online in Italian; Pam was thrilled that she had made herself understood in Italy during a short trip; Rowena felt proud that she had been complimented by an Italian waiter for ordering her meal in Italian, and Valerie commented she had understood a wine bottle label written in Italian. Although anecdotal, these examples reveal how even apparently small episodes have the potential to generate a sense of achievement in the participants, which in turn may foster motivation on a larger scale.

### **7.2.6. Using Italian in Italy and travel prospects**

In the first interview, most of the participants said that they intended to use the Italian learnt during the course on holiday, when visiting friends or with the intention of purchasing a home in Italy (see Section 5.2). However, in the final round of interviews and in the focus groups, a smaller number of participants reported that the prospect of using Italian in Italy had been crucial in sustaining their motivation on a weekly basis. This had mainly been the case for Maggie and Pam, who were able to travel to Italy while the course was taking place. They said that it had made a great difference when they had successfully used the language in Italy and received positive feedback. During FGa, the conversation turned to Maggie's and Pam's recent trips to Italy:

ROSANNE: But what's come across to me from what you both said about your visits to Italy is the way that they are so pleased that you've taken the trouble to talk Italian and in a sense it is a compliment, we are terribly lazy about that as a race, are we? And it's just making the effort to communicate in the language, wherever you go, even if you know a few words, people are so thrilled.

MAGGIE: Especially if you greet them, they like that, but they're quite happy to help as well, aren't they?

PAM: I did find them incredibly helpful.

FRANCES: Actually, they don't care if you speak it wrong, I don't think, do they? They don't seem to.

ROSANNE: But I don't have any experience. Do they correct you like the French do?

MAGGIE: No, nothing like that.

PAM: I think that's what gives you confidence, really. You don't think you're going to be humiliated trying.

The above exchange reveals that the perceived positive attitudes of Italian people towards foreigners who tried to speak their language was particularly encouraging; the confidence that Pam and Maggie acquired from putting their newly acquired language skills into practice proved motivating. For Pam this was, in fact, a serendipitous experience. She explained that during her travels to Italy during the Easter period she was amazed that she was being understood straight away when speaking Italian, and that she was also receiving “text book answers” which she could understand. She described this as her “biggest high” [3a] during the nine months of the course. Pam's words indicate a shift in her motivation for learning Italian, deriving from a realisation that, instead of just being a classroom activity, she could use the language in the real world. As someone who had never spoken a foreign language abroad before, Pam's positive experience in Italy was a “big thrill” and she relished the “big kick” of being able to understand and being understood.

### **7.2.7. The course as an external motivator**

When asked whether they had ever struggled to motivate themselves to complete the course, the general consensus amongst participants was that, as attending classes was a pleasant experience, it represented no real effort. However some participants noted that having made the commitment to attend the course was fundamental:

I just do not think about it, just go whatever my day has been like, it's Italian at 7. I know frequently I turn up late, well I just think “OK, I've just got to get there”. (...) And then, when it's been a rough day, by the break it's forgotten about, you feel a hell of a lot better. That's what's got me down there a lot of the times. [Calum 3b]

In the way our lives are, I think, unless there's little bits of definite time for doing something, I can't imagine that I will say “I've got a bit of free time now. I know what I shall do: I'll do some Italian”. That's just not going to happen. [Daniel 3b]

Confirming the findings of the first interview (Section 5.3.1) and second interview (Section 6.4), virtually all participants agreed that that, had they not enrolled on the course, their initial L2 motivation would not have been sufficient to actively engage in learning Italian that year.

### **7.3. Self-concept beliefs and the L2 self**

Self-concept beliefs, such as self-confidence and self-worth, are amongst the main motivational influences listed under the *post-actional stage* of the Process Model. These have already been explored in relation to the participants' initial concerns and attitudes towards language learning (Sections 5.5 and 5.6), their perceived coping potential on the course at the mid-way point (Section 6.3) and the evaluation of their abilities in comparison with their peers (Section 7.2.1).

This section deviates somewhat from the Process Model – always intended as a guide, rather than a rigid framework – by reporting some findings which better relate to aspects of the *ideal* and *ought-to self*, as featured in Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005) discussed in Section 3.5. Although the present study was not designed to investigate L2 identity issues specifically, it was anticipated that, given the open ended and exploratory nature of the study, these would emerge to some degree from the participants' responses. Interestingly, over half of the participants said that they *ought to* have done more independent study and come to classes better prepared. This was the response of several participants when they were asked how happy they were with their own input. There were also some, however, who felt they should not be too hard on themselves:

Your automatic reaction is to say, “Oh, yes, I should have done more homework”, that's true, I would know more Italian if I'd done more homework, but that's not the only thing in terms of getting things out of the course, is it really? [Ruth 3b]

Ruth explained that, as it was a night class and she was doing it for pleasure, she was not prepared to feel guilty for not having done more. Therefore,



despite admitting that they could have put more time into learning Italian, there was a general sense from the responses that most participants were realistic about their level of investment in the course and in learning Italian.

In terms of the Ideal L2 Self, the participants were explicitly asked firstly whether their perception of themselves as language learners had changed since the start of the course, secondly, if they had a vision of themselves achieving the desired level of proficiency in Italian, and thirdly, if they had any role models which they aspired to in terms of knowing and using Italian (see third interview guide, Table 4.12, Qs 9-11). In response to the first question, there were mixed reactions:

I was a bit apprehensive at the beginning that if we covered an area like verbs that I couldn't do, would I carry on. (...) Because I've got through this first year and felt that I've come on so long, yeah, I probably think that I am better at learning languages than I thought I was. [Amy 3a]

Like Amy, approximately a quarter of the respondents said that they felt that they were a better language learner than they had expected. For some (e.g., Amy, Sally, Pam, Valerie) their individual perception that they were not particularly good or confident at languages in school was positively altered by their experiences on the Italian course. For Calum, Kay, Mary and Clara, it was not so much a change in their self-concept but a realisation that by sticking at it and persisting, learning a language would be achievable. Others (e.g., Tim, Elaine, Maggie, Daniel) felt the same as they had at the beginning, though considered it to have been an enjoyable and worthwhile experience, as Carol identified:

Do I see myself differently? Probably not, I still see myself as a plodder, but I get a lot more satisfaction out of doing it. [Carol 3b]

When they were asked if they had a vision of their L2 ideal self and what it would be like to have achieved the desired level of proficiency in the language, most of the respondents said that they did not have a clear image, but at least a third of them said that they had some kind of vision, albeit sketchy. Below are a few examples:

I can see myself swanning around shopping and sitting in a café and having a chat about the weather and responding to people who ask me how old my daughter is and without having to count on my fingers just a bit more spontaneous, spontaneity. I suppose I want to be able to have some fluency. [Ruth 3b]

Well, it's a bed & breakfast in Italy so I have to be able to speak Italian to live there basically. (...) You'll need to be pretty fluent to make friends, I think, to make proper friends. [Sally 3b]

I can imagine myself sort of fluffing it a bit but getting through. I am sort of visualising the setting that basically made me want to come and do this. We sat round at my friend's family house and everyone is having a laugh and a joke and I was just sort of out of it. [Calum 3b]

The above remarks suggest that a number of participants did indeed have a vision of an L2 future self, although in almost every case, the response was not immediate, as it appeared to require some thinking time for the interviewee to construct or recall the image in question.

The respondents were also asked whether they had a particular L2 role model that they aspired to and, with the exceptions of five who reported having a parent, linguist friend or family member, there was no indication that motivation had been derived from having a role model. There was, however, an interesting response from Amy when asked if she had any role model:

I don't think so ... nobody in particular that I can think of. I think I am inclined more to be a role-model for my children, rather than looking at somebody else being my teacher or my mentor. I think I'd rather set the example for my kids than anything. [Amy 3a]

When asked to expand on this, Amy explained that she thought it would be a good thing for her children to see their mum as someone who had learnt a foreign language. Indeed, throughout the three rounds of data collection, there were, at various points, passing comments from different respondents about the ignorance and laziness of British people in learning languages and there was a sense of the participants in question possessing some desire to distance themselves from this image.

In sum, issues of L2 identity, both *ought-to* and *ideal self* emerged from the study as illustrated above. However, the findings suggest that these did not

reveal themselves as instrumental in sustaining motivation throughout the language learning process.

#### **7.4. Perceived changes in motivation during the course**

At the mid-way point (see Section 6.5), with the exception of one participant who was less motivated, the others said that they felt either as motivated as in the beginning (n.11) or more motivated (n.11). In the final interview round and focus group seven participants commented that their motivation had increased during the course, and for seven it had remained constant throughout – three specified “constantly high”. The remaining five said that their motivation had been fairly constant and they had never considered giving up, but admitted, particularly in the focus group, that there had been “peaks and troughs throughout the year” [Rosanne FGa]. The participants in question specified that this had either been due to either to reasons unrelated to the course, e.g., health problems, feeling tired because of work, or the occasional dip in confidence (see also FGa exchange on p.183). For Mary, it had been “wavy and bumpy” mainly when “sometimes the homework was too hard” [Mary FGb]. Three other respondents mentioned having to make more of an effort to attend just before Christmas and on some dark winter evenings, but they described these as “tiny bumps, tiny ups and downs” [Sally 3b].

In short, the large majority of the participants perceived their motivation as being constant or having increased throughout the course. It is, however, worth remembering that these were the views of the participants who completed the course. The next section briefly considers possible reasons why participants left before the end.

#### **7.5. Possible reasons for attrition**

Although the present study sought to explore the factors responsible for the participants’ completion of the course, rather than non-completion, it is nevertheless interesting to provide a brief overview of the data concerning the six students who dropped out (see Table 7.4)

**Table 7.4: Information on participants who did not complete the course**

Name	Group	Regular interviews completed	Last class attended	Further contact	Reasons given for dropping out
Kate	A	Autumn (Phase 1) Winter (Phase 2)	13 March	interview 22 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family issues, worries, stress (i.e., son's health, looking after elderly parents)</li> <li>• Lack of concentration due to the above</li> <li>• No time for homework</li> </ul>
Diana	B	Autumn (Phase 1)	7 November		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter, dark nights</li> <li>• Difficulties for Diana with childcare</li> <li>• Tired after work</li> <li>• Other commitments</li> <li>• Diana, to organise childcare</li> <li>• Course 'quite good' but not enough conversation, too much grammar, homework unclear</li> </ul>
Linda	B	Autumn (Phase 1)	7 November	call 26 June	
Gill	B	Autumn (Phase 1) Winter (Phase 2)	6 February		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• busy work schedule (e.g., working away, evening meetings)</li> <li>• no trips to Italy to look forward to</li> <li>• too big a commitment</li> </ul>
Maureen	B	Autumn (Phase 1) Winter (Phase 2)	6 February	phone call 27 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hard to find motivation to attend when Gill could not go</li> <li>• no need for Italian, no more trips planned</li> <li>• not enough reasons to learn</li> <li>• too big a commitment</li> </ul>
Stuart	B	Autumn (Phase 1)	12 December	interview 20 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to do other things on Tuesday evenings (e.g., football)</li> <li>• Not particularly confident in group situations in general (e.g., being put on the spot in group settings)</li> <li>• Persuaded to go by partner initially</li> </ul>

Only one participant from Group A failed to complete the course due to personal reasons. I was able to visit and interview Kate at the end of the course; our conversation did not follow the regular interview schedule but it was a shorter, unstructured interview. She explained that she was just as motivated to learn Italian as ever, and she would hopefully resume with Italian

as soon as her situation improved. She also stressed that she was keen to catch up with what she had missed in order to be able to re-join the same class, as she liked both the group and teacher.

The attrition rate of Group B was much higher and the reasons for this more complex. Five learners – one third of the participants from Group B – had stopped attending by February half-term. It should be noted, however, that they included a mother and daughter (Linda and Diana) and two work colleagues (Gill and Maureen) who started attending together and also stopped attending at the same time. Interestingly, Linda and Diana appeared to be highly motivated initially, due to their husband and father respectively being Italian and the close contact which they had with relatives in Italy. It was difficult to make contact with them after they stopped attending the course, but it was possible to conduct a brief telephone conversation with Linda a few months later. She initially gave generic reasons for giving up the course, as showed in the table below. When prompted further, however, she revealed that the course had not really met hers and Diana's expectations. Going back to their Autumn interview, it was possible to detect even then not all was right. By the time the October interview took place, Linda and Diana had already had four classes. Some anxiety had started emerging, particularly as grammar was introduced:

Last night was a bit daunting, there was an awful lot. You know, from the first three weeks when you sort of- and then 'wush'. It was a lot to take in last night, I felt, a lot, and I think that's what sometimes puts us off, you know we shut off and we think 'Uhm' and then, yeah, it was the two verbs. [Linda 1b]

She also revealed that she had had unsuccessful experiences of learning Italian:

We have done Italian so many times and just given up, we have even had private lessons and given up. (...) When my daughter said, 'Are you coming with me?' I thought 'Yeah, I will' and then I thought 'I don't know if I want to go again' because we failed miserably, I don't know why and then I thought 'No, we'll give it another crack'. [Linda 1b]

The above extracts suggest that a low level of self-efficacy and the memories of past failures might have been more instrumental in giving up the course, than the dark nights and childcare issues.

Interestingly, Linda was not the only one who had been ‘persuaded’ to join the course, as highlighted in the interview extract below:

STUART: Sally kind of booked me on it and I kind of went.

IR: So it wasn’t your original idea to go.

STUART: No, no, no (laughs).

IR: Would you say that perhaps from the start you were maybe a bit reluctant?

STUART: Possibly, I don’t know about reluctant ... yes, that’s probably fair to be honest, yeah.

Given that his parents owned a house in Umbria - which he and Sally visited quite often and which eventually he would inherit - in the first interview Stuart had seemed very keen to learn Italian and be able to communicate over there. However, unlike most of the other participants, learning in a group proved to be a demotivating rather than a motivating factor for him. Stuart explained that he liked the people in the class but he had never been confident in group situations and did not enjoy being put on the spot in group settings.

In Maureen’s case, there was no strong motivation from the start and it emerged that her friend and colleague, Gill, had thought it would do her good to join the class to help fill the void created by her daughter going to university. In her first interview, Maureen revealed a genuine interest for languages, but like Stuart, there were other things which she would rather do on an evening and, despite being quite outgoing, the ‘pull’ of the group and class situation was not a strong enough incentive. In the second interview, immediately after which Gill and Maureen stopped attending, Gill showed signs of being rather disheartened at not being able to attend classes regularly due to her work commitments. She appeared equally interested in learning Italian, but she recognised that it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with the rest.

Gill was unavailable for interviews after that, but Maureen confirmed that these were very similar to her own reasons for learning the course.

In spite of the limited data set, this section has sought to provide a flavour for the perceived reasons behind attrition and possible motivational implications.

### **7.6. Intentions to continue learning Italian and enrol on another course**

All the respondents who took part in the last round of interview said that they intended to continue learning Italian the following autumn by enrolling on the next course. This was also confirmed by the responses provided on the end-of-course AE evaluation form and reported on Table 7.1 and Table 7.2.

Table 7.5 is a visual map of the answers given by the respondents when asked at the end of the interviews and focus groups, ‘what is spurring you on to continue?’ There are three interesting point to make when considering

The first is that the teacher and, to some extent, the group were not mentioned as providing a great deal of motivation for continuing with Italian, as they had been in relation to the motivation during the course. Secondly, three of the most frequently mentioned initial goals in the first interview re-emerged, even though they did not play a key role in sustaining motivation. Finally, the wish to make progress with Italian, to acquire more skills and knowledge, is the most frequently mentioned reason for wishing to continue.

These findings seem to suggest, as stated in the Process Model, that the motivational influences during the *actional stage* do not interface with those of the *postactional stage*.

**Table 7.5: Reasons given for wishing to enrol on the next course and carry on learning Italian (third interview and focus group)**

	Same teacher	Same group	Social activity	Enjoyment	Wish to progress, learn more Italian	Initial goal -To communicate with Italian family and friends	Initial goal -To communicate in Italy on holiday	Initial goal - To buy a house , live in Italy one day, integrate	Personal satisfaction , to enhance own confidence	Love for the language	To keep up a good habit
<b>Group A</b>											
Amy	✓	✓			✓			✓			
Chiara						✓			✓		
Elaine				✓	✓		✓				
Esther	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	
Maggie								✓			
Pam				✓	✓		✓				
Rosanne	✓	✓		✓					✓		
Rowena	✓	✓	✓				✓				✓
Tim			✓	✓							
Valerie				✓	✓					✓	
<b>Group B</b>											
Calum		✓			✓	✓					
Carol		✓			✓		✓		✓		
Daniel		✓		✓					✓		✓
Fiona		✓						✓			
Kay					✓		✓	✓			
Mary					✓		✓				✓
Rita	✓				✓	✓					
Ruth					✓		✓				
Sally					✓	✓		✓			
	5	8	3	7	11	4	7	5	4	2	3



## 7.7. Summary

The findings reported in this chapter sought to provide some tentative answers to the second and third research questions of the present study; firstly, which factors the participants perceived to be motivationally important when looking back at their overall experience, and secondly, how in their view the above factors accounted for the completion of the course and for their wish to carry on learning the language, in their view.

Whilst the importance of the role played by the teacher was confirmed, the motivational effect of the group and the social situation became increasingly prominent when compared with earlier rounds of data analysis. A third element which was perceived as crucial to sustaining the participants' motivation through the course was the overall enjoyment of the experience. The initial goals played a lesser role, but some students saw their initial goals changing and acquiring new motivational dimensions. The presence of the *ought-to* and *ideal L2 self* emerged but they did not appear to have significantly influenced the participants motivation.

Perceived motivation throughout the course appeared to be fairly stable amongst the participants who completed the course. Some reasons for learner attrition were also explored, based on the interview data available for participants who dropped out. The chapter concludes with a summary of the participants' reasons for continuing to learn Italian in an educational AE setting.

## 8. Discussion

### 8.1. Introduction

The previous three chapters presented the findings of the current research in relation to the main themes and issues that emerged from each of the three data collection phases. This was carried out by splitting, purposefully reassembling and analysing data chunks and clusters in order to ‘tell the story’ of the study in a way which would read as both coherent and trustworthy. The present chapter seeks instead to reconstruct a more holistic and critical understanding.

First, there is a synthesis and discussion of the findings in relation to the adult learning and L2 motivation literatures reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. In the final section, I propose a new conceptual model based on the study’s theoretical implications, in an attempt to further our current understanding of adult FL motivation.

### 8.2. Impact of the FL learning experience

This section and those few that follow discuss the factors which the participants in the present study perceived as key in shaping and sustaining their motivation during the nine-month period. They will not be presented chronologically as in Chapters 5-7, but as overarching themes and in relation to existing research.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the *learning experience* features in various L2 motivation theories, even though different models have conceptualised it in slightly different ways. For instance, Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model uses the terms *attitudes to the learning situation* to indicate attitudes towards the teacher and the course in general. In Dörnyei’s (1994) framework of L2 motivation, the *learning situation level* consists of course-, teacher- and group-specific motivational components; Williams & Burden (1997) refer to the learning context as *external factors* to the learner as an individual. As already anticipated in Section 6.2, the working definition of *L2 learning*

*experience* adopted for the present study “concerns situated motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g., the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success)” (Dörnyei, 2010, p.80).

The findings of the current research reveal that the role of the *learning experience* acquired increasing motivational importance from the moment the course began. In order to understand how this occurred, its main components - teacher and group - are first revisited and discussed.

### **8.2.1. Teacher as motivation catalyst**

The pivotal role which the teachers appear to have played in the present study is in line with other research (e.g., Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Chambers, 1999) and with the view that “almost everything a teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students” (Dörnyei, 2001, p.120). From the first interview, it emerged that the participants perceived the teacher as an important guide on their FL learning journey. The findings revealed also that both teachers were very popular with the participants and appeared to be fully in charge of the learning process and their group as a whole.

Rogers (2007, p.87) warns that a tutor’s directive or *telling* style may lead adult learners to rebel or feel treated like children. However, this did not appear to be the case in the present study, with groups appreciating their teacher for being very approachable and yet remaining in charge of the teaching and learning situation. Rogers (2007) argues that this is one of the pluses of a *telling* tutor style, namely the fact that the group is likely to feel ‘in safe hands’. In the present study, the teachers’ firm but gentle manner seemed to have the effect of reassuring and securing the trust of the learners, rather than intimidating or irritating them. Both observation and interview data revealed that, although the familiarity between teachers and learners grew as time passed, the teacher’s approach remained stable and did not become less directive as the group developed, as often occurs (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). Learners seemed to appreciate this consistency and did not express a wish to be

given more free rein. In some ways this goes against the andragogical view that, given adults' tendency towards self-directedness, teachers should not be directive, but rather facilitators of learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

Sections 6.2.1 and 7.2.2 reported in some detail on the teacher-related motivating factors that emerged from the interviews and focus groups. At this point one might query what exactly these teachers 'got right' and whether these practices can be conceptualised in some way, rather than simply representing a list of desirable traits. I would argue that the perceived strengths of these FL teachers broadly confirm Wlodkowski's (2008) five pillars of motivating instructors of adults: *expertise*, *empathy*, *enthusiasm*, *clarity* and *cultural responsiveness*. Table 8.1 seeks to map the motivating characteristics identified by the study in relation to Teacher A and Teacher B, as presented in Table 7.3, against the 'five pillars'.

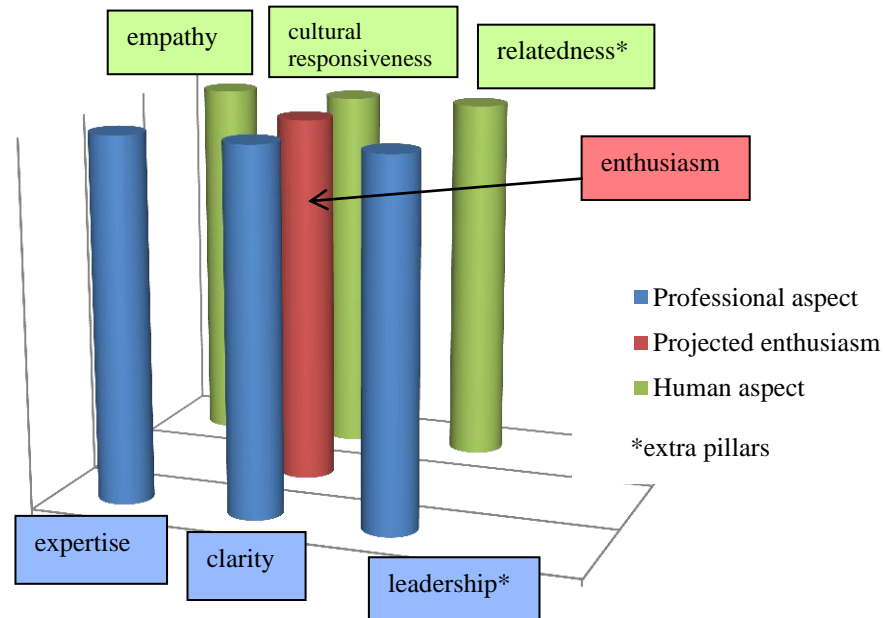
*Empathy* and *cultural responsiveness* seem particularly meaningful in the present context. The teachers in question were perceived by the participants as having both an understanding of adults' challenges in learning a foreign language and an ability to generate an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration. It should be noted, however, that Wlodkowski's concept of *cultural responsiveness* is quite a broad one and it includes the teachers' skills in accounting for learners' personal histories and diverse cultural, social and educational backgrounds, as well as fostering group relationships, respect and cooperation. Based on the findings of this study, I would suggest that the fifth pillar may be better split into two, with *relatedness* as a separate pillar, to include everything the teacher does to enhance the learning experience from a context-bound, social perspective to connect with the learners, encourage group cohesiveness and mutual support and generally ensure the 'gelling' of the group.

**Table 8.1: Teacher motivating characteristics in relation to the ‘five pillars’ of motivating instructors (Wlodkowski, 2008)**

Five pillars of motivating instructors	Teacher	Teacher-related motivating factors emerged from the present study (as reported in Table 7.3)
EXPERTISE i.e., knowledge and preparation	A, B A, B A, B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confident and professional</li> <li>• competent and knowledgeable</li> <li>• made the class content relevant to the learners’ interests and needs</li> </ul>
EMPATHY i.e., understanding and compassion	A B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• came across as encouraging and reassuring through her demeanour and the way she related to the learners</li> <li>• verbally encouraged and reassured learners that they were doing fine</li> </ul>
ENTHUSIASM i.e., commitment and expressiveness	A, B A, B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• displayed a sense of humour</li> <li>• made the classes interesting and fun by using a variety of activities and teaching methods</li> </ul>
CLARITY i.e., organisation and language	A, B A, B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organised and good at managing a variety of activities</li> <li>• good interpersonal skills, easy to talk to</li> </ul>
CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS i.e., respect, inclusiveness and connectedness	A, B A, B A, B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• friendly and approachable, she put herself on the same level as the participants</li> <li>• non-judgemental and inclusive</li> <li>• she never embarrassed learners or ‘pointed the finger’ if anyone made mistakes</li> <li>• instrumental in making the group gel</li> </ul>

It has also been highlighted how the participants perceived their teachers’ ability to organise, lead and move the learning forward as a key strength which gave them confidence and contributed to a feeling of progress. Therefore, a seventh and final ‘pillar’, which may be called *leadership*, could be introduced to represent the motivational effects of the teacher’s skill in handling the whole FL learning experience, including the learning process, as well as group management. The importance of group leadership in the L2/FL classroom (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003) and in teaching adults (Rogers, 2007; Rogers & Horrocks, 2010) has been previously emphasised, in terms of the motivational effects which it can have in learning situations.

Figure 8.1 is a pictorial representation of a possible revised model.

**Figure 8.1: Pictorial representation of the suggested 'seven pillars'**

It is suggested that the three columns in blue at the front stand for the teaching-related or *professional* skills. The green columns at the back could indicate the more *human* or 'soft' skills, with the central column in red representing the teacher's *enthusiasm* as perceived by the learners. I would argue that the *human* aspect, represented by the green columns, may be the 'X-factor' or special quality which is required by FL teachers of adults in addition to the more traditional skills and traits deemed desirable in a good teacher. In the current study, it emerged that a lack of the green pillars would have led to lower motivation and, very likely, higher attrition. For instance, it was pointed out by Kay (2b, 3b) and Maggie (FGa) that if the teacher had embarrassed anyone or made them feel inadequate, they would have likely left the course (*empathy*). Carol (3b) said that, had the *relatedness* within the group being poor, for instance with one learner being allowed to take the limelight and the attention not being equally divided between the participants, she would have dropped out. Two participants mentioned how in previous FL classes which they had attended, the lack of friendliness and cohesiveness in the group had

led them to abandon the course. In the focus groups, too, the general consensus was that the teacher had been instrumental in securing a positive group dynamic.

It can be argued that *cultural responsiveness*, which represents inclusivity, respect for diversity and social responsibility (Wlodkowski, 2008), does not refer to diversity of social class or ethnicity in the present study, but has more to do with variations in the FL learners' prior language learning experience and perceived self-efficacy, particularly in relation to the 'technical' aspect of language learning, such as grammar. FL teachers of adults, who are not sensitive to these issues, and instead assume that all learners in a beginner class must be the same, might lose some of the less confident or less experienced FL learners. At this point, it would be natural to ask whether the three green pillars defined as *human aspect* are really specific to adult FL learning, or if they could contribute to enhancing motivation in any teaching situation. Although such qualities intuitively seem desirable in any teacher, one could argue that a school or university teacher may still be able to foster a good degree of student motivation with a low degree of *empathy*, *cultural responsiveness* and *relatedness*, provided that the other four pillars are sound. However, in an adult education environment, where participation is voluntary, the extra sensitivity required by teachers in those three areas may well make the difference between learners staying or leaving.

It should be noted that the columns in Figure 8.1 are all of the same height for simplicity of representation. However, if the column size stood for the degree of each skill as demonstrated by the teacher, it is clear that each column height would be different according to teachers' skills, learners' requirements and educational context, the requirements of the group of adults involved and also to possible changes in the teachers' approach. As Wlodkowski (2008) explains: "Our most advantageous approach as instructors is to see these pillars as skills and not as abstractions or personality traits. They can be learned, and they can be improved upon through practice and effort" (p.50).

Similarly, Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) *Ten commandments for motivating language learners* included motivating techniques which FL teachers could adopt and develop, though these were based on a survey with EFL teachers of school and university students, rather than adults. Dörnyei & Csizér (1998) recognise that:

... no motivational strategy has absolute and general value because such strategies are to be implemented in dynamically changing and very diverse learning contexts, in which the personality of the individual learners and the teacher, as well as the composition and structure of the learner group, will always interplay with the effectiveness of the strategy. (p. 224)

According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 104), the problem is that no matter how intuitively effective teacher motivational strategies or positive teacher traits may be on a practical level, there is not yet a unifying theory or framework which can be generalised and applied to all teaching and learning situations. By that token, however, one could argue that there is not yet a comprehensive theory of L2 motivation which applies to all contexts either. Therefore, I would contend that, while the quest for new paradigms is underway, workable and flexible 'mini-models' of motivational teaching and learning approaches should be given space to help L2/FL teachers and learners in a variety of scenarios. This is an area which currently seems to be regaining real momentum – arguably for the first time since the process-oriented period of the 1990s-early 2000s – with publications dedicated to the development of new motivational strategies in the L2/FL classroom (see Dörnyei, 2013; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova in press; Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013).

### **8.2.2. Peer group as motivation stimulus**

While the teachers soon emerged as the shapers of the FL learning experience in the current study, the motivational influence of the peer group became increasingly powerful as time went by. Whilst most participants had anticipated from the start that the teacher and goals would play an important role, such a strong impact of group dynamics and positive social forces upon individual learners' motivation had not been predicted. Sections 6.2.2, 6.3.5



and in particular Section 7.2.1 examined the group-related factors perceived by the participants in the present study as important in shaping and sustaining their motivation throughout the course. This section briefly recaps the most salient themes which emerged from the findings and attempts to reveal a deeper understanding of what lies beneath them.

***The group as non-judgemental, safe and egalitarian***

In a non-cohesive adult FL group, where some learners are either perceived to be seeking the limelight or to outdo the others, there is a danger that less confident learners might feel isolated, become despondent and eventually drop out (Gibson & Shutt, 2002). Conversely, the participants in the current study felt reassured when they realised, first, that other learners faced similar difficulties and second, that, despite one or two people in their group finding the course a little easier, it was a fairly even playing field and nobody was making anyone else feel inferior. Being judged in the classroom' is a common fear for FL adult learners (Turula, 2002). Participants in the present research, however, said that they felt safe and were not worried about making mistakes or losing face because nobody appeared to be judging them or "pointing the finger" (Kay, 2b).

***The group as a source of fun and enjoyment***

The general consensus amongst the participants who completed the course was that it had been an enjoyable experience and that this had contributed to their attending classes regularly and completing the programme. A great deal of this enjoyment seemed to come as a result of the atmosphere created by the teacher but also by that generated by the group. Laughter and humour appeared to contribute to the perceived pleasantness of the learning experience.

***Group identity and peers as source of mutual support***

Several participants said that they felt a sense of community with their fellow Italian learners, due to a shared focus and interest. A case could be made for a link to Lever and Wenger's (1991) CoPs theories, where people learn and

come together through engaging in the same *practice*. Also noticeable was the formation of clusters of self-supporting mini groups of learners who met outside class to study Italian together and to reassure one another when facing challenges. Moreover, theories such as Zones of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), whereby learning is fostered by interaction and collaboration with others, can be used to explain some of the roles which the peer group has played in this study.

### ***The group as a transmitter of L2 motivation***

Seeing other members of the group taking learning seriously was perceived as a source of motivation. Many said that by seeing their peers as motivated and hardworking, they also felt motivated to contribute in the same way.

Based on the above summary, it is easy to see how many of the present findings resonate with the positive group factors which other authors have identified as beneficial; not simply in L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Ehrman 1998, Dörnyei 2001a; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003), but also in adult learning (Wlodkowski, 2008; Connolly, 2008) and school classroom motivation (Brophy, 2010). The importance of the peer group in this study also finds some confirmation in sociocultural approaches to L2 motivation which consider L2 learning as “socially mediated” (Ushioda, 2003). Thus, if it is widely recognised that group cohesiveness, cooperative learning and harmonious relationships between peers are desirable in any group learning situation, one may question whether the current research has revealed anything new.

In response to this, it is worth considering two issues raised by the present study in relation to group-generated motivation. The first is a purely pragmatic one. It is suggested here that positive group factors are not only desirable, such is the case in any classroom situation, but may be crucial for sustained participation in voluntary adult FL courses and foster retention. Of course, in educational settings where one *has to* attend, there may well also be

demotivation and poor attendance, but it is less likely that learners are able to simply walk out of the classroom and fail to return.

Secondly, and at a more fundamental level, the current research findings suggest that more emphasis should be placed on social motives for participating in adult FL learning (see Houle's and Boshier's *activity orientation* in Table 2.2) and on the motivation which adult learners derive from social interaction in the classroom (Chang, 2010). In other words, by shifting the theoretical focus from individualistic and psychological factors to the motivational pull of social participation and positive social interaction within the context of the learning experience, it may be possible to shed a new light on adult FL learning motivation.

The adjective *social* features often in the L2 motivation discourse, starting from Gardner and Lambert's (1972) social (or socio) psychological model, the link with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) and sociocultural perspectives on L2 motivation (Rueda & Moll, 1994; Ushioda, 2007). These, however, have not paid much attention to the learners' situated, socialising experiences in the classroom, which instead have generally fallen within the remit of instructional contextual factors. Even Dörnyei's extensive work on the impact of group dynamics on L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997; Dörnyei & Ehrman 1998, Dörnyei 2001a; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003), tended to focus more on positive group dynamics and norms which would create positive motivational conditions, rather than adopting a social participation lens.

Moreover, the tendency in recent years to study L2 motivation in relation to notions of self and identity has shifted the debate away from the situated, social, learning environment, back in the direction of intrinsic motives and projected goals. For even though one of the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009) is called *L2 learning experience*, the emphasis has largely been on the other two components, the *Ideal L2 self* and the *Ought-to L2 self*, as discussed in Section 3.5. Of course, this does not imply that psychological or identity models are unimportant, but

in order to explain adult FL motivation – at least in the early stages of FL learning – the social participation perspective (Courtney, 1992) seems worth exploring.

There is another related point to be made here. It is undeniable that today's FL classes – regardless of the participants' ages – are places for communication and verbal interaction, more so than in other subject areas. This might not have been the case 40 or 50 years ago when the focus of FL teaching was more on reading, writing, grammar and translation, but things have changed over the years and the 'talk and chalk' approach is definitely less common nowadays. As Ushioda (2013) points out, "it seems that the underlying 'reasons' for L2 learning are essentially social and pragmatic – that is, to enable effective communication and understanding" (p.226).

The present study has also found that the initial purpose of the majority of the participants was to learn to 'get by' and one day to communicate with Italian speakers in their language. Arthur and Beaton (2000) also found that learning to communicate abroad was one of the key reasons that adult learners joined adult FL classes. Therefore, simplifying somewhat, it can be argued that the micro-context of the language classroom represents a kind of 'sandpit' where learners can practise and take risks before testing out their newly acquired language skills in real FL situations and settings. This hypothetical sandpit is also a place of social participation, as it is for small children in a playground (see Figure 8.2).

Those who find it a pleasant environment for socialising are more likely to 'carry on playing' than those who feel uncomfortable, isolated or undermined by others. Inevitably, there will be the formation of subgroups; some learners will be equally happy 'to play' on their own and the teacher will oversee the situation. Clearly, the analogy does not fit perfectly and the role of the FL teacher cannot be exactly compared to a parent watching children playing.

**Figure 8.2: Image of a sandpit as place of social participation**

Photo source: <http://www.derbyarboretum.co.uk/Playopening.htm>

Even so, it is possible to see how the classroom as a successful place for socialisation can not only enhance the learning experience, but also sustain motivation, as explained by one of the participants in the present study:

This is just my personal perspective on why I think adults are motivated through social interaction, and I think it's because, if I feel comfortable with the people with whom I'm working in a group situation, then I feel that I can contribute and (...) that I am getting as much out as I am putting into it. And that is very satisfying. (...) But if I was in a group of people and the social interaction was that some people were condescending or patronizing, I would not feel comfortable and I would consider what is my position and why do I want to stay with this group when I'm getting nothing out of it! What is the point? I'm here because I want to be here, so why the heck should I go to work with a group of people who are dominating the class. That just doesn't happen with Teacher B. We work with absolutely anybody in that class, and that really is partly due to how the teacher organizes it, (...) it's the teacher who leads by example and addresses everybody. (...) People will come because they feel happy with the group they're working with. If they don't feel happy, you get drop outs. Or if they get so far behind, that's another reason. (...) We do it because we want to do it and the social interaction is really, really important. (Carol, 3b)

Although the above extract represents the explicit voice of only one learner, the data suggests that this was quite a common feeling and that a compelling case can arguably be made to view social interaction and socialisation at the classroom micro level as one of the keys to adult FL motivation.

### 8.3. Goals and orientations as changeable points of reference

Amongst the arguably most unexpected findings of the present study were the different roles played by the participants' goals in shaping and sustaining their motivation throughout the course.

Over the years, L2 motivation research has placed considerable emphasis on different types of learner orientations. The best known are *integrative* and *instrumental* (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), *intrinsic* vs. *extrinsic* (Vallerand, 1997; Noels, 2001; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 2001) and the striving towards an *Ideal L2 self* (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), to name a few. What all the above essentially share is the notion that individuals engage with L2 learning in order to acquire another language for a purpose, generally pursuing some kind of L2-related goal or aspiration. The other common assumption is that, allowing for a number of contextual factors coming into play, those orientations will somewhat fuel L2 motivation; in other words, the stronger the integrative motive, intrinsic orientation or Ideal L2 self, the more motivated the L2 learner is likely to be.

The findings of the current study, however, paint a different picture on several grounds. Firstly, in the first interview all participants could think of reasons why they had decided to learn Italian and enrol on a course, but, in most cases, their goals were rather vague. Some had decided to enrol on the course without giving it much thought. Admittedly, this could be because they were not sure at that stage how they would progress with the language.

Secondly, the reasons why some of the participants had decided to learn Italian were not so much language-related, but instead connected to issues of life transition (Aslanian & Bricknell, 1980; Aldridge, 2009), the need to socialise (Houle, 1961) or to pursue leisure (Dattilo, Ewart, & Dattilo, 2012).

Thirdly, the orientations of several participants changed throughout the course. For instance, one participant who had started attending language classes purely to make herself get out of the house and talk to people, developed an intrinsic interest in Italian during the course. Another participant, a former language teacher who had started with the intention of studying Italian

in earnest, soon developed a very relaxed approach to FL learning and, by the end, he recognised that his reasons for attending were essentially social and leisure oriented.

Most participants perceived their goals or reasons for learning Italian to be motivationally more important at the beginning than during the course; several, in fact, admitted that their initial motives alone would probably not have been sufficient to sustain motivation for nine months. Some, however, reported that their initial reasons and goals were responsible for their completion of the course and it was also why they intended to continue learning Italian in the future.

Yet, as seen earlier, some of those who initially appeared to be least goal-oriented were amongst the most motivated by the end. It is impossible to say whether a less positive learning situation would have made these learners more likely to drop out, but the fact is that, to their admission, the learning situation contributed to enhancing L2 motivation and made them more likely to complete the course. Conversely, the two participants who were the first to drop out after only eight weeks had strong Italian family connections, visited Italy frequently and, on paper, could be considered the most motivated to learn the language. It could therefore be argued that robust initial intentions and motives might not necessarily translate to sustained motivation and participation on an adult FL learning programme.

#### **8.4. Course as external regulator**

Given the importance of self-regulatory mechanisms in the Process Model of L2 motivation, it is interesting to note that several participants in this study admitted to being poor at self-regulating, as far as learning Italian was concerned.

The role of a language course as the framework for organising learning is usually taken for granted in studies investigating L2 motivation amongst school pupils or university students. Adults outside full-time education, on the other hand, have to decide how to go about learning a foreign language. As seen in

Chapter 1, if they do not have the option of spending time abroad or employing a personal tutor, they can choose to teach themselves with the help of books, CDs or multimedia materials. The majority of the participants, however, said that they would never find the motivation to fit such an activity in their daily life if left to their own devices. They seem to perceive the Italian AE class as an external regulator which would ‘make them do it’ every week and at a regular time. Clearly, this was the general consensus with these learners and it is not to say that other adults might not successfully teach themselves a foreign language.

The participants of this study displayed varying degrees of self-regulation, ranging from those who would type up all their class notes or devote one hour to Italian daily, to those who tended to spend ten minutes on their homework just before the class. This begs the question: are the apparently self-regulated learners more motivated than the others? Despite the links made by the L2 literature between self-regulation and L2 motivation, it was not clear from the current study whether the apparently more self-disciplined learners were actually any more motivated than the last-minute improvisers.

In the present study, a very self-motivated and driven learner who completed the course, had previously tried to teach herself Italian a number of times but failed because “she couldn’t get further than the tapes” [Amy 1a]. Another learner in the same group, a former language teacher, admitted to doing his homework 20 minutes before the class. He said that his lack of self-regulation was perhaps due to finding the class quite easy and, had the class been harder, he would have pushed himself more.

The importance of the course as an effective external regulator or anchor has never been made significantly by the L2 motivation literature.

The above examples suggest that even self-regulatory and autonomous behaviours are not fixed and can be influenced by context and the learning experience. Hence the challenge here is whether self-regulation and autonomy can be viewed not just as desirable traits or behaviours, but as context-dependent factors; the course therefore might be seen as a help, rather than a



hindrance, to self-regulation. The data, in fact, shows that various learners, particularly those who had busy lives and jobs relied on that external regulator.

### **8.5. Learners as agents in context**

Some important learner-dependent factors emerged from the findings.

Prior language learning experience, as explained by attribution theory (Weiner, 1985, 1986) can affect learners' motivation in a positive or in a negative way. Whilst this seemed to have some relevance when learners were first asked about their L2 learning past, it became less significant as the course progressed. Generally, the data in the second and third round did not suggest that learner motivation was being noticeably influenced by past successes or failures.

In terms of confidence and self-efficacy, some tensions related to grammar emerged. Some learners, for instance, kept questioning their ability to understand it, but even in this area some shifts in attitudes took place. In the first round of interview, there were divided opinions about grammar. However, in the third interview two participants who had initially dreaded grammar revealed that they had bought themselves grammar books so that they could independently learn some verbs during the summer.

It is also interesting to note that most of the learners who had felt rather unconfident in their FL learning abilities at the beginning of the course revealed that they thought they become more confident by the end. When asked how this had occurred, they mostly attributed their change in perception to one or more aspects of the positive learning experience. Even two participants who said that they still did not feel they were good at languages, revealed that this was no longer worrying them, because they enjoyed the experience all the same.

The last point is quite revealing, in that individual traits such as confidence, anxiety and consequently motivation in the present study, did not appear to be fixed learner characteristics, but instead seemed to be influenced by the learning experience. This may be because learners themselves cannot avoid interacting

with the context of a language classroom and shaping it – as well as being shaped by it. Ushioda's (2009) "person-in-context relational view of motivation" considers language learners holistically as complete human beings, with busy lives and multiple identities – a definition which seems particularly fitting to the adult FL learner. Such view also takes into account the influence of 'others', namely the importance of context, situatedness and relatedness in defining motivation in the language classroom and within the individual.

### **8.6. A new conceptual model of adult FL motivation: The river metaphor**

The present chapter began with a discussion of the influence and the dynamic interplay of factors that the participants in the current study considered important in shaping and sustaining their motivation. The picture that has emerged is rather fragmented, with a number of interconnected dynamic factors that seem to have contributed to the participants' motivation.

At this point, I would like to propose a new model of adult FL motivation that is based upon a metaphor, which I have called the *Fiume* Model of adult L2 motivation. The word *fiume* means river in Italian and has been chosen firstly because it was inspired by the current study involving FL learners of Italian, and secondly to avoid confusion with the Kawa-River Model for Culturally Relevant Occupational Therapy (Iwama, 2006)<sup>8</sup>.

The present study has revealed – and it is not the first to have done so – that the reasons that an individual embarks on a FL learning journey are diverse. Whereas school pupils, university students and L2 learners mostly find themselves in a situation in which they are offered the opportunity or obliged to learn a particular language, often from a relatively early age, adults tend to engage in FL learning voluntarily and for a number of different reasons. On the basis of the current study and the literature review of this thesis, Houle's

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<sup>8</sup> I discovered the existence of The Kawa (Japanese for 'river') Model (Iwama, 2006) through an online search shortly before completing this thesis. It should be stressed that, despite similarities in the name, the Kawa Model is applied to different concepts in a different field. The *Fiume* Model was therefore not inspired by the Kawa model – it simply happened to share a similar metaphor.

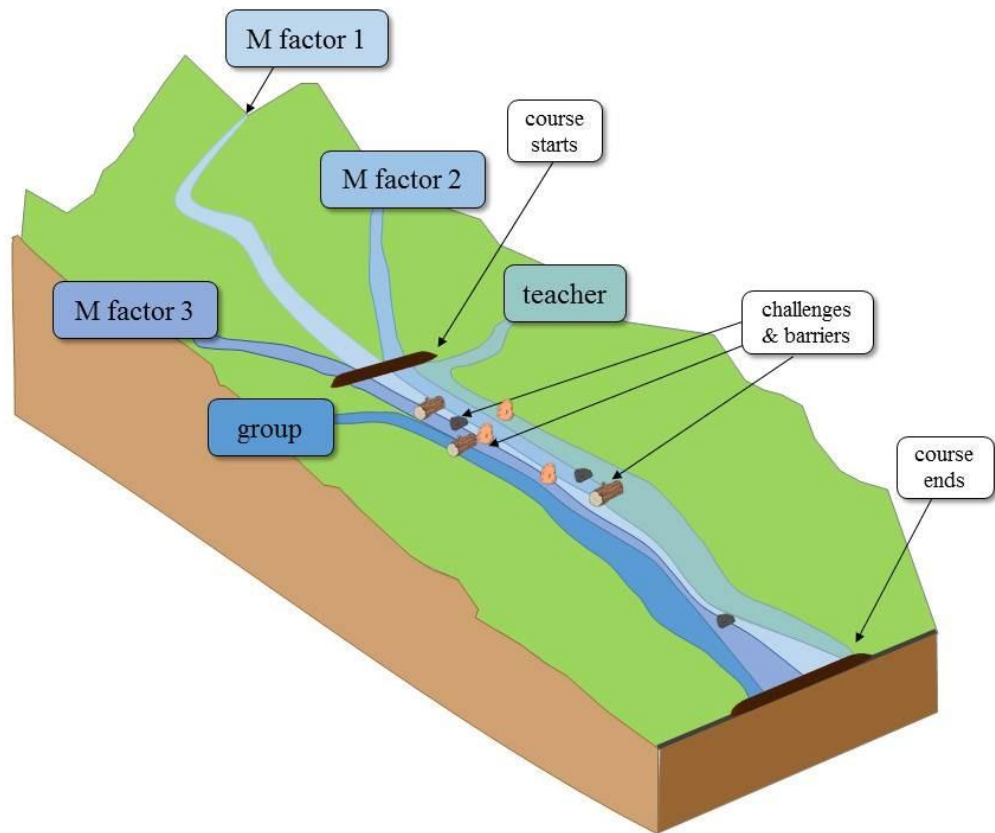
tripartite typology of adult learning orientations (*goal, learning and activity*) or Illeris's Three Dimensions of Learning (*content, incentive and interaction*) seem better equipped to explain what motivates adults to engage in FL learning than existing L2 motivation theories. I would argue that this may be due to the fact that both models allow for a dimension (Houle's *activity* orientation and Illeris's *interaction* factor) which has little to do with learning or the actual subject of study, and is particularly relevant to the socially situated context in which learning activities take place.

Having said that, the *Fiume* Model does not argue in favour of any particular motivational influence or factor over another, whether intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative, instrumental, L2-identity driven or other. As we have seen, there could be multiple answers as to why some L1-English adults are motivated to learn another language, depending on the 'person-in-context'.

As this is a highly visual model, it is opportune at this point to describe what each different element represents and refer to the graphic illustration on page 228.

The *river* stands for adult FL motivation; the picture clearly does not represent the full river course, but a section corresponding to the start of FL 'motivation' until the end of a particular course or phase of engagement with FL learning. In other words, it must be borne in mind that motivation would not come to an abrupt end, as the image suggests, but that continuing 'sections' would follow.

The labels, 'M factor 1', 'M factor 2' and 'M factor 3' (M stands for 'motivation') represent the *sources* of the river, or sources of FL motivation. Three are present, but there might just be one *source*, as in a real river, with the others forming *tributaries* (one or several): in other words, additional contributors to the more fundamental source of motivation. In reality, it may not be as definite as shown in the illustration at what stage these join and become part of the same motivational flow.

Figure 8.3: The *Fiume* Model of adult FL learning motivation

Graphics inspired by illustration at

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/water\\_rivers/river\\_profiles\\_rev2.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/water_rivers/river_profiles_rev2.shtml)

To reiterate a point made earlier, the key point is that motivational *source* and/or *tributaries*, whatever their essence, will be different for each individual or groups of individuals.

As soon as learners join an FL course, two additional key tributaries start flowing in the main river: the *teacher* and the *peer group*. Arguably, their contribution will be crucial in determining how well the river will flow and whether it will continue to flow, given that there will inevitably be some obstacles to overcome along the way. These are represented by the rocks and driftwood in the picture. These ‘obstacles’ could be external commitments, health problems, finding the course too difficult or too easy, challenges in remembering, etc. In the model above, the teacher and group tributaries are influential to the healthy course of the river and, at various stages, their

contribution is more substantial than the original source and other tributaries. However, if we imagine the teacher and group to have a minimal motivating effect (or a demotivating effect), the course of the river would be forced to rely on its original sources and these may not prove sufficient to sustain motivation or to overcome the obstacles along the way. At that point, the river might 'run dry' or become exhausted. In the present study, this happened only with a few students, but if we turn back to Section 7.5, in which possible reasons for students dropping out were discussed, one could hypothesise that it is possible that Gill (work commitments) and Kate (family issues) experienced insurmountable obstacles, whereas Stuart and Gill had low motivation from the start (or source). In this case, group and teacher were not sufficient to sustain their attendance. In Stuart's case, the group was not a motivator at all, as he explained in his final interview.

For the majority of the participants in the current study, an adaptation of the main model is probably reasonably fitting. One thing to take note of, shown in the picture if examined closely, is that the contribution of group and teacher increases as the course progresses, but subsequently diminishes towards the end to once again create space for the flow of the initial sources (goals, motives, orientations). These re-emerge once the course is complete and when learners think about enrolling on another course or continue to engage other methods to study the language.

The metaphor could be extended further and in more detail. For example, the riverbed could represent the learners' underlying attitudes and belief towards language learning, including past experiences. The margins and surrounding environment could represent the wider context in which the learning occurs. Other smaller tributaries, in addition to teacher and group, could come into play at any point, for example a holiday to a country in which the FL is spoken, and so forth.

Arguably, the potential of the model lies within its flexibility and the fact that it allows for several elements, which can be taken into account dynamically and over time at different stages.

## 8.7. Summary

This chapter has discussed the key findings of the study, in an attempt to critically address and theorise the substantial issues emerged in Chapters 5-7.

As part of the positive *learning experience*, which emerged as a key factor, the role played by the teacher was discussed in relation to Wlodkowski's (2008) "five pillars" of adult motivational teaching. In the light of the findings of my study, I proposed an extension of the model to include two further elements, *leadership* and *relatedness* and explained how these, alongside the existing pillars, could provide a simple and useful tool to identify the crucial motivating skills which adult FL learners appreciate in their teachers.

The chapter also revisited the role of the peer group and argued that, rather than viewing positive group dynamics simply as desirable outcomes within the broad category of instructional contextual factors, it might be fruitful to explore the motivational effect of the situated, social participation experiences within the adult FL classroom. I used the metaphor of a children sandpit as an enjoyable and safe environment for engaging with adult FL learning.

Then, it was discussed how the participants' initial goals and motives for FL learning were often vague and subject to change and variation throughout the course, largely due to the transformative effect of the learning experience. The perceived effectiveness of the course itself as external regulator was also highlighted, questioning the importance which is usually attached to self-regulatory mechanisms in L2 motivation.

Finally, the chapter presented and discussed a new conceptual model, which adopts the metaphor of a river (*fiume*) as a heuristic device for the purpose of exploring and explaining the complex dynamics of adult FL motivation.

## 9. Conclusions

### 9.1. Introduction

This final chapter summarises the principal findings of the research, examines the study's limitations, highlights its contributions to knowledge, makes suggestions for future research and identifies implications for practice in the area of adult FL learning motivation.

The chapter begins with a re-statement of the main aim and research questions in attempt to show how these were addressed. Due to their open, exploratory nature, they were not answered individually but were frequently addressed by common findings. Thus, the next section provides a holistic, rather than an individual, response to each question, in the hope that the reader will gain a clearer and richer understanding of the conclusions drawn.

### 9.2. Summary of findings

The aim of this research was to explore the motivation of adult learners during an Italian beginners' course. It was hoped that a better insight into the learners' perceptions of motivationally salient factors throughout the programme would shed light on how their motivation was shaped and sustained. The three broad research questions posed were: 1) How do adult L1-English learners view their motivation during a beginners' FL course? 2) What factors do they perceive to be motivationally significant at different stages of the course and overall? And 3) In the learners' view, how do the above factors account for their completion of the course and for their wish to carry on learning the language?

In line with the research aim and the interpretivist/social constructivist paradigm underpinning the study, self-report data was collected by means of three rounds of semi-structured interviews with 26 participants, who were purposefully selected at the start a 30-week AE course for Italian beginners. The study also involved two summative focus groups in the final phase, while class observations and some course documents provided contextualising and

supportive data. The study adopted the Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 motivation (1998, 2001) as a loose conceptual framework upon which the three-stage research design and the interview guides were based. The interview and focus group data was transcribed, coded, analysed, and finally synthesised according to themes. The key findings are summarised below.

1) A positive *learning experience* emerged as a key factor in sustaining motivation and participation. For the participants who completed the course, teacher and group seemed to be the two most important components of the overall experience. As far as the *teachers* were concerned, the data suggested that certain qualities and behaviours had been instrumental:

- Friendly and approachable. Participants saw them as pleasant and accessible, also with a sense of humour.
- Competent and knowledgeable. Both teachers were respected and viewed as confident, professional and organised. Learners found the conveying of cultural insights particularly motivating, as well as the engagement in interesting, relevant and varied learning activities.
- Skilled at leading the group and facilitating cohesiveness. Participants seemed to appreciate that the teachers appeared in charge without coming across as oppressive or domineering. Learners also perceived the teachers as instrumental in making the group gel.
- Non-judgemental and reassuring. Both teachers came across as sensitive to the participants' vulnerability as FL learners, being encouraging rather than critical.

Another key element of the learning experience was the role of the group as:

- A non-judgemental, safe and egalitarian platform. Generally participants perceived their peers as 'nice people', on a similar level, with nobody trying to outdo others or seek the limelight. The classroom featured no face-threatening actions and was a 'safe' place to make mistakes. This appeared to contribute to a relaxed atmosphere.



- Source of fun and enjoyment – the above seemed to contribute to a general sense of pleasantness and enjoyment, which in turn contributed to a sustained desire to continue to attend the classes.
- Source of support and sense of community – the positive atmosphere fostered a cooperative spirit amongst peers, some of whom met outside class to study Italian together. A sense of commonality, due to having a shared interest and being engaged in the same activity, seemed also to enhance group cohesiveness.

2) The *course* itself appeared to act as an effective external motivator and an incentive to remain in the learning situation. Whereas some participants felt that just having made the commitment and paid for the course would have been sufficient to keep them attending, others thought that, had the learning situation not been satisfactory, they would not have continued.

3) The initial wishes and intentions seemed important to prompt the learners to embark on the course, even though *goals* were in most cases rather hazy. The initial reasons for attending the course changed for some participants over the year: the importance of some intensified, whilst others diminished. Several participants admitted that their initial reasons for joining alone would not have been sufficient to motivate them through the whole course. However, initial goals and initial motives re-emerged at the end of the course and, together with the prospect of learning with the same teacher and group, they seem to determine the participants' future intentions to continue learning Italian.

5) The findings provide some confirmation for the appropriateness of a relational rather than linear approach to understand adult FL motivation. One such concept is Ushioda's (2009) "person-in-context relational view", in other words "a perspective that focuses on the intentional agency of real people embedded in an intricate and fluid web of social relations and multiple micro- and macro-contexts. (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 354)

### 9.3. Contribution to knowledge and understanding

Firstly, the current study has sought to partly compensate for the dearth of research into adult FL motivation. Moreover, English was not the FL in question – as in the majority of L2 motivation studies – but the L1 of the participants. It is also worth noting that, even though the research did not place great emphasis on Italian specifically, the study has nevertheless shed some light on what motivates adults to learn Italian in England and in an AE setting.

Secondly, from a methodological perspective, this research responds to calls for more qualitative research by L2 motivation scholars, such as Ushioda (2008) who states that “the most promising line of inquiry lies in enabling language learners' own voices and stories to take centre stage” (p.29). Alongside traditional semi-structured interviews, the current study also adopted focus-groups to explore learners' views of FL learning motivation through interaction and from a group perspective. The longitudinal design of the study enabled also to map FL motivation dynamically and over a period of time.

Thirdly, the research has revalued the importance of the *learning experience* in a broader and more holistic sense, valuing participants' voices not simply as FL learners, but as ‘persons-in context’, whose motivation goes beyond mastering the L2/FL.

Finally, perhaps the most original contribution of to our knowledge and understanding of adult FL motivation is the proposal of a ‘*Fiume Model of adult FL motivation*’ which, by means of a visual metaphor, attempts to map the changing and dynamic nature of adult FL motivation, taking into account the varying input of different factors contributing to it over a period of time.

### 9.4. Limitations of the study

One limitation of the study is probably the time which it took to complete the thesis. Although the data was transcribed within a year of completing data collection and the bulk of the analysis within two, the part-time nature of the research meant that, several waves of literature reviews were carried out to keep abreast of current debates. It is felt, however, that although the data dates

back a few years, the reality of the adult FL learner in an AE setting has not changed dramatically and the findings continue to have relevance.

Another limitation of the study is that it was small-scale and, although longitudinal, it only covered one academic year. In hindsight, there could have been one more wave of interviews after the summer to identify which learners had actually continued with the course, and if now, why.

In terms of the choice of the Dörnyei-Ottó Process Model of L2 motivation, it was certainly a robust conceptual framework to base the study design on. However, since the study was conceived, other models and perspectives have emerged which would perhaps be preferable, should a similar study be repeated.

### **9.5. Implications for research and practice**

This research could be the starting point for more empirical studies in the area of adult FL motivation. As mentioned earlier, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study tracking learners over a longer period of time. Further research could also focus on certain populations, for instance women or older learners.

In particular, it would be beneficial to investigate further whether notions of leisure participation and social participation at a micro, classroom and course level, could complement existing educational psychological perspectives.

Most importantly, there may be scope for extending the *fiume* metaphor to other contexts and settings, both in the adult learning motivation and the L2 motivation field.

In terms of implications for practice, the revised ‘7 pillar model’ of adult teaching, could be adopted as a reflexive and development tool, to enable teachers to identify areas where they might need to enhance their skills in order to help them sustain “that compulsion which keeps a person within the learning situation and encourages them to learn” (Rogers & Horrocks, 2010, p. 105).

# Appendices

## **Appendix A Briefing sheet given to the teachers to introduce the study**

Provisional title of study:

“Adults learning a FL in an institutional setting: L1 English learners’ perceptions of motivational fluctuations and constants during an Italian beginners’ course.”

Main data gathering methods:

- 3 interviews of approx. 30 mins each with each participant, at the start, in the middle and end of the course
- Observation of every other lesson (if possible)

Guidelines for the teachers on how they can present the study to the learners to gauge their interest in participating (no need to give the title of the study):

The aim of this research project is to find out what people think about their experience of learning a FL from scratch. We are interested in what they enjoy and feel good about, and what they don’t like so much, what they find easy and not so easy. This is not a test as there are no right or wrong answers or approaches. We are looking at the whole experience and we’d like the whole class to be involved. We are asking a little bit of your time outside class, in that the researcher would like to have a chat with you every few months, starting soon. This chat should be around half an hour long and can be arranged for a time that is convenient for you and there will be a little gift for everyone who takes part. We believe that you will personally benefit from this. Because starting a new language can be a daunting task, having the opportunity to talk about your learning with another experienced teacher will be an extra source of guidance and support throughout the course.

**Appendix B Participant consent form**

Researcher's name: Liviana Ferrari

Participant's name: .....

Description of the proposed study

The aim of this research project is to find out how learners experience learning a FL from scratch. We are interested in what they enjoy and feel good about, and what they don't like so much, what they find easy and not so easy during the course. We are looking at the whole experience. I am asking a little of your time outside class, in that I would like to have a chat with you at the beginning in the middle and at the end of the 30-week course. This interview should be around half an hour long and can be arranged for a time that is convenient for you.

Declaration of consent

I have been informed about the aims and procedures involved in the research project I am participating in. I reserve the right to withdraw at any stage in the proceedings. Any information that I have provided as part of the study will be destroyed or my identity removed unless I agree otherwise.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix C Early course evaluation conducted by the AE institution

*n.13 respondents*

### Quantitative replies - mid-November (week 9) – Group A

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Dis-agree	Strongly Dis-Agree	% Agree	% Response	Rating	Variation
<b>Before the Course</b>								
1. The course information was accurate	10	2	1	0	92%	100%	85	-3
2. Enrolment was handled efficiently	10	1	2	0	85%	100%	81	-7
3. Publicity brochures and leaflets were helpful	9	2	1	0	92%	92%	83	9
<b>My Induction</b>								
4. Staff made me feel welcome	12	1	0	0	100%	100%	96	1
5. I was given all information needed to start the course	12	1	0	0	100%	100%	96	3
^ I was given a copy of Student Charter	12	1	0	0	100%	100%	96	1
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>								
7. I feel I am on the right level course	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	11
8. The teaching on my course is good	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	7
9. My tutor has good subject knowledge	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	3
10. I am learning at the right pace	12	1	0	0	100%	100%	96	12
11. Teaching and learning methods suit me	12	1	0	0	100%	100%	96	9
12. My sessions start at the agreed time	12	1	0	0	100%	100%	96	0
13. The tutor makes the learning aims clear	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	6
<b>Assessments</b>								
14. The feedback received from the tutor is helpful	12	1	0	0	100%	100%	96	6
<b>Organisation of Course</b>								
15. The course is well organised	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	11
<b>Support Received</b>								
16. I know who to ask for help with any problems	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	6
<b>Accommodation and Equipment</b>								
17. The rooms I use for my course are clean and tidy	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	14
18. The rooms I use are suitable for my course	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	13
19. I am learning in a safe environment	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	7
<b>Quality Assurance</b>								
20. I am satisfied with my course	13	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	9

## Appendix C (cont.d)

### Qualitative comments - mid-November (week 9) – Group A

Best Comments	Worst Comments
Excellent teaching of a lovely language & a very enthusiastic teacher. The centre is beautifully organised and welcoming, parking is good	Can't identify anything - at present!
Having to think and stretch one's brain	I think it's a very good course
It's fun! And I'm learning something	only once a week.....
The time - mornings are much more convenient than evenings, friendly group - a good mix of people	Feeling inadequate! (nothing to do with the class or tutor!)
Atmosphere - teacher is friendly and approachable as are other students. Relaxed atmosphere makes it enjoyable and easy to learn	Location - difficult to get here on public transport
The teacher and her methods and resources, nice atmosphere in class	
The teacher is enthusiastic, well prepared and makes the classes most enjoyable and successful	Nothing
Well planned course at the right pace. Very pleasant class. I enjoy it very much	I am totally satisfied
The teacher, fellow students and venue	Filling in myriad forms
Learning Italian	Getting here
It brings fun and enjoyment into everyday life	My frustration with my slow learning and a yearning to understand the grammar, verbs and the spoken word
The learning is fun, the group is well gelled & I really look forward to it. It has already enabled me to use the little Italian I have on holiday	Totally satisfied
Superb tutor, excellent sessions very enjoyable. I feel I'm learning at a good pace with a very professional teacher	Not very helpful regarding my dealings with Future Prospects, but tutor assistance has been professional and consistently outstanding

## Appendix D Early course evaluation conducted by the AE institution

*n.14 respondents*

### Quantitative replies - in mid-November (week 9) – Group B

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Dis-agree	Strongly Dis-Agree	% Agree	% Response	Rating	Variation
<b>Before the Course</b>								
1. The course information was accurate	14	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	12
2. Enrolment was handled efficiently	14	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	12
3. Publicity brochures and leaflets were helpful	4	7	0	0	100%	79%	68	-6
<b>My Induction</b>								
4. Staff made me feel welcome	14	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	5
5. I was given all information needed to start the course	13	1	0	0	100%	100%	96	3
6. I was given a copy of Student Charter	12	0	0	0	100%	86%	100	5
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>								
7. I feel I am on the right level course	12	2	0	0	100%	100%	93	4
8. The teaching on my course is good	11	3	0	0	100%	100%	89	-4
9. My tutor has good subject knowledge	14	0	0	0	100%	100%	100	3
10. I am learning at the right pace	5	6	3	0	79%	100%	57	-27
11. Teaching and learning methods suit me	5	5	3	0	77%	93%	58	-29
12. My sessions start at the agreed time	13	1	0	0	100%	100%	96	0
13. The tutor makes the learning aims clear	12	2	0	0	100%	100%	93	-1
<b>Assessments</b>								
14. The feedback received from the tutor is helpful	4	6	1	1	83%	86%	58	-32
<b>Organisation of Course</b>								
15. The course is well organised	12	1	1	0	93%	100%	89	0
<b>Support Received</b>								
16. I know who to ask for help with any problems	12	2	0	0	100%	100%	93	-1
<b>Accommodation and Equipment</b>								
17. The rooms I use for my course are clean and tidy	12	2	0	0	100%	100%	93	7
18. The rooms I use are suitable for my course	10	4	0	0	100%	100%	86	-1
19. I am learning in a safe environment	12	2	0	0	100%	100%	93	0
<b>Quality Assurance</b>								
20. I am satisfied with my course	9	5	0	0	100%	100%	82	-9



## Appendix D (cont.d)

### Qualitative comments - in mid-November (week 9) – Group B

Best Comments	Worst Comments
Chance to learn something I wouldn't manage otherwise	Getting there at end of working day
Increased understanding and vocab	Nothing!
Learning something new	being short of time at home to do homework
Keeping my brain active and learning something new	sometimes tired after work
Meeting new people	
Hopefully to achieve what I hoped to gain	winter
Learning a language of my choice, to hopefully achieve what I have set out to do	The time of year - would prefer a course through the summer months
To learn at leisure something that I enjoy	the time, I work until 6pm
It is fun and I enjoy learning the subject	perhaps it is a little fast
The pace is just right	
I like the style of the course - lots of verbal practice	I wonder whether I should have gone on the next course rather than this, but at least I'm able to refresh my memory as we go along
Getting back to education - getting brain back to work! Meeting people	
The dynamic exercises	N/A

## Appendix E Interview extracts

*Extract from third interview with participant from Group B. (IR indicates the interviewer)*

IR: What do you think has made you go back every week and complete the course?

KAY: I was quite determined from the beginning that I was going to. So that's one factor, plus I think it being such a nice group of people makes all the difference and the fact that we all seem to get on quite well and there's nobody miles better, shall we say, or pointing the finger and show you're not quite so good. And everyone is quite encouraging, I just enjoy the whole experience really. Plus, I think Teacher B is very good and keeps us interested, we're not just doing the same thing every week or reading from the same book every week, we've got lots of exercises to do from other sources (indistinct) the recommended course book. So I think it's just a combination of all those factors really.

IR: So overall it sounds like it's been quite a successful and positive experience.

KAY: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

IR: And what have been the main ingredients, what has made it so successful?

KAY: It's because it's interesting, it's fun actually we have a laugh, it's not just all heads down and I think there're a couple of clowns in the class that lighten the atmosphere as well, sometimes. I think the people make it, I think it could all be a different story if it was a different group of people, but perhaps more serious or because I haven't done an evening class before but I have friends who have and haven't enjoyed it so much. It just takes one person I think in a group sometimes to have a different slant on it or perhaps not be quite so nice and then it changes the whole atmosphere, but, no I think we've been very lucky with the group, and it's unfortunate that a couple of people have dropped out but the people that are left are all up the same lines, they want to continue to do the class next year.

IR: OK, good. Have you ever started to learn Italian in the past and not continued? Or did you ever start another course or to learn another language and not continued?

KAY: No.

IR: What has been the difference between doing Italian this year and what you remember of you doing, say, French at school?

KAY: I did study French at school and, from what I can remember a long time ago, we were actually split into two groups with different teachers and I just remember our teacher wasn't particularly good and she let people play up in class and stuff, so we weren't very focused so I don't feel I had the best teacher in French and I didn't pursue it. Just very minimal, what I call school girl French. I think, I'm going back so long, I probably wasn't particularly interested at that time. It was something that we had to do, it wasn't something that we chose to do.

IR: Whereas it is different now?

KAY: Yeah, because I chose to do it, it is something that I actually wanted to do, felt ready. I didn't leave school thinking 'Oh, I really wish I could go back and do French again' or I never had any firming desire to do an evening class in French at all. I think the wanting to do Italian stems from us having spent quite a few holidays out there and us wanting to go and live there. So that's where the determination comes from to do it.

IR: Very good. Now overall how well do you think you have done this year in terms of your own progress?

KAY: I felt like I was doing really quite well in the first few weeks when I had more time at that point spent doing homework and I felt 'Oh this is really good', then my job changed and I don't have as much free time to do homework and now I'm not so sure. I think I'm doing OK, I would say, I think I have a long way to go, definitely [laughs].

## Appendix F Focus group extracts

*Extract from Focus Group A transcript (IR indicates the interviewer, moderator)*

IR: If you look back at the past eight months what do you think has made people come back every week and complete the course?

ESTHER: The teacher for one thing [others agree] probably the main reasons.

ELAINE: Yes, it's very well thought, when I compare it with the Spanish class I did, it's much better.

ESTHER: Yes, I suppose it's her experience. Does she teach adults mainly?

IR: So which aspect of Teacher A's teaching and presence do you think has motivated you throughout the year? Can you give me some examples?

ROSANNE: Well, she's totally unflappable and I find that very reassuring and actually comforting. It doesn't matter whatever happens, it doesn't fazed her, I don't know how she's feeling inside but she appears totally calm and in control and I really appreciate that. I expect like the rest of you I have worked with many people before who make you kind of [indistinct] and I am really grateful for that aspect.

PAM: I just think it gives you a reassurance that you can really trust her. You can sit back and obviously have to be proactive but you can just trust that you are going to be taken through this thing.

ROSANNE: And you know too that you can ask her anything if you are not happy about something, she's quite happy to go through it even if she's done it ten times already, it's never an issue with her, and one really appreciates that.

VALERIE: She's got a lovely sense of humour and so she can laugh at us and we can laugh at her and it's all taken in very good part. It's like the pronunciation, which we find terribly funny and she emphasises. When we were doing the days of the week *saabato*. And other things like that, and she laughs with us because she's obviously making a point and it goes home and she does it in the nicest possible way. But one of my neighbours, not the one I mentioned but another neighbour who lives in my village, I met her at the Christmas party and we were talking about Italian and she said she was learning with Teacher A and what an excellent teacher she was. And she's quite advanced now.

IR: So her reputation goes before her.

PAMELA: But she uses a lot of different teaching methods as well, which makes it-

ESTHER: The work which she must have put in. I mean all those - I was going to say little silly bits of paper, almost child-like and yet the thought and the effort over the years that's gone into producing them and they just sort of flow out at the appropriate time. It's a bit like a swan, floating calmly on top and paddling [indistinct].

AMY: I think it's her knowledge about the actual Italian culture that she knows as well that she can bring into it. I know the time when I was at school anyway, trying to learn French and German, it was drummed into you, continually learning all the time and you'd just switch off because it was so boring but when she teaches she tells you a bit about the culture, where things originated from and that helps it sink in a bit more, rather than having it on a bit of paper and having to memorise it.

ESTHER: And the lovely videos, we get a glimpse of Italy every now and again.

ROWENA: Also, the little anecdotes that she puts in to help you remember how to pronounce a word or what a word means. I always remember her telling us what anchovy was, I think it's *acciuga* and she was saying 'a tissue' and that's the way I remember it and it's all this little things, it's amazing

## Appendix G Coding scheme: Autumn interview data

<b>Code-Filter: All</b>	
HU: Autumn interviews File: [C:\Documents and Settings\LF\My Documents\Scientific Software\ATLAsTi\TextBank\Autumn interviews.hpr5]	
Action onset Action onset: recommendation Age Antic deM: be left behind/too fast Antic deM: exam Antic deM: ext demands Antic deM: group, others Antic deM: methods Antic deM: stop being fun Antic deM: too much homework Antic deM: too slow Antic M: do it with partner Antic M: forthcoming trip to It Antic M: group (all at same level) Antic M: group (more able people) Antic M: group (motivated) Antic M: group (peer support) Antic M: group (people get on) Antic M: having time Antic M: meth (grammar) Antic M: meth (speaking) Antic M: meth (varied activities) Antic M: self (avoid failure) Antic M: self (be able to ask Qs) Antic M: self (confidence) Antic M: self (enjoyment, interest) Antic M: self (having paid) Antic M: self (having to work at it) Antic M: self (intrinsic) Antic M: self (keeping up) Antic M: self (progress) Antic M: teacher Attit: being picked on Attit: comprehension Attit: cse, LL as hobby, escape Attit: curiosity of other cultures Attit: embarrassed, inhibited, confide Attit: frustrat if can't commun abroad	Attit: mistakes Attit: pairwork Attit: reading Attit: self-confidence in LL Attit: sound of languages Attit: speaking Belief: embarrassed for not spk lang Belief: have to be enthusiastic Belief: idealisation of Italy Belief: import of memory Belief: importance of teacher Belief: ling self-confident Belief: LL diff for people Belief: looking silly Belief: methods Belief: mind not as quick Belief: see it written down Belief: self-study Belief: sounding too fluent Belief: tune in, listen Belief: use of TL Belief: working with others Confidence Early impr: content Early impr: coping so far Early impr: diff from school Early impr: easy Early impr: fast pace Early impr: fun, enjoyable course Early impr: general Early impr: group Early impr: group (their motiv) Early impr: like going back to school Early impr: methods Early impr: of Italian Early impr: plsd with what learnt so far Early impr: relaxed atmos Early impr: teacher

## Appendix G (cont.d)

Early impr: time goes quickly	Init M: recommendation
Early impr: use of TL	Init M: availability of cse
Goal L/T: become fully immersed	Init M: brain stimulation
Goal L/T: become quite good at it	Init M: buy property
Goal L/T: buy a house in It	Init M: coincidences
Goal L/T: GCSE	Init M: do sth different
Goal L/T: hold a conversation	Init M: easy to pick up
Goal L/T: intg (communicate there)	Init M: enjoy langs
Goal L/T: intg (live/work there)	Init M: enjoying learning
Goal L/T: read mags & news	Init M: family, heritage, It friends
Goal L/T: show others	Init M: meet people
Goal/xpc this yr: commun, get by	Init M: role model
Goal/xpc this yr: confidence to do it	Init M: travel memories
Goal/xpc this yr: learn about culture	Init M: travel, hols
Goal/xpc this yr: make progress	Init M: turning point in life
Goal/xpc this yr: meet people	L2 self: I feel I should speak it
Goal/xpc this yr: see how it goes	LL role-model
Grammar	LL xpr It: childhood, family, friends
Init class challenges	LL xpr It: holidays
Init concern: be left behind	LL xpr It: other cses
Init concern: confidence	LL xpr It: self-study
Init concern: daunting task	LL xpr It: y gave up
Init concern: dislike the teacher	LL xpr: abroad
Init concern: do it on her own	LL xpr: AdEd
Init concern: ext pressures	LL xpr: beyond school
Init concern: fear of failure	LL xpr: other cses
Init concern: fear of the unknown	LL xpr: school -
Init concern: giving up	LL xpr: school - (being showed up)
Init concern: grammar	LL xpr: school - (exams)
Init concern: lack of M/ other things to do	LL xpr: school +
Init concern: memory	LL xpr: school neutral
Init concern: need to see it written	LL xpr: y stopped (did other subjs)
Init concern: none	LL xpr: y stopped (relevance)
Init concern: none: T's reputation	LL xpr: y stopped (teacher ~)
Init concern: not right level	LL xpr: y stopped (too fast)
Init concern: school memories	LL xpr: y stopped (xt circms)
Init concern: too much hard work	Self-regulation
Init M intg: art	Surprises: use of name
Init M intg: cookery	Time: 'I'd wanted to do It for years'
Init M intg: culture	Time: lack of time to understand & reply
Init M intg: lifestyle	Time: why now
Init M intg: not to sound ignorant	Time: y day class
Init M intg: sound of It lang	Xpect of self: not too much

## Appendix H Themes emerged from analysing the autumn interview data

How learners viewed their motivation at the beginning of the course, including reasons for joining

Integrative orientation:	Family heritage
Interest in Italian culture:	1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation Italian parent
art ~ cookery ~ culture	Communicating with relatives
Visiting Italy:	Social pursuit:
communicating there	Getting out and meeting people
not sounding ignorant	Speaking to people
Instrumental orientation:	Spurred on by life event/phase
buying a property	Intellectual/linguistic pursuit:
living or working there	Love for languages
	Love for learning
	Keeping brain active

Factors perceived by learners as being motivationally:

Positive:	Negative:
Individual	Individual
Making progress	Feeling like not making progress
Self-confidence	Lack of self-confidence
Enjoyment, interest maintained	Not enjoying the course anymore
Keeping up	Struggling to keep up
Attending classes with a partner	Course-related factors
Having a trip lined up	too fast or too hard
Not letting oneself down	stops being fun
Feeling pushed	too much homework
External	
Having paid for it	
Having allocated time, committed	
Teacher	
Approachable	
Students able to ask question	
Doesn't 'hone in on you'	
Group	
Participants get on	
Motivated	
Supportive	

## Appendix H (cont.d)

Starting attitudes, beliefs and concerns which might affect motivation:

Own language learning preferences/beliefs

Speaking

embarrassment

fear of making a fool of oneself

fear of making mistakes

inhibition & blockage

frustration

for not being able to express oneself

for being too slow

grammar

like it & want it (old school, that's how they learned)

prefer it 'drip fed', don't want to get bogged down

admit to struggling with it and not understanding it

preferred ways of language learning

seeing it written down

listening

Attitude towards a course

way of making oneself do it (many failed in the self-teaching method)

part of one's routine

## Appendix I Coding scheme: Spring interview and focus group data

### Code-Filter: All

HU: Spring Summer interviews & Focus groups  
 File: [C:\Documents and Settings\LF\My Documents\Scientific Software\ATLAsTi\TextBank\...\Spring Summer Interviews.hpr5]

Anxiety/discomfort	Memory
Challenges	Other langs
Class envir: M factor	Ought-to Self
Class envir: Pr factor	Past reasons for continuing or not
Confidence	Practical use: M factor
Confidence: grammar	Progress factors: misc
Course scope & content	Progress/success: self-assessment
Enjoyment	Progress: examples of
Expectations	Progress: M factor
External influences	Reas for giving up: effort to go to class
Goals	Reas for giving up: lagging behind
Goals - initial: M factor	Reas for giving up: low initial M
Grammar	Reas for giving up: teacher or group
Group: comparison with others	Reas for giving up: too busy
Group: learn from interaction	School: difference from
Group: M factor	Self-regulation
Group: social & identity	Self limitations
Group: supporting one another	Self percep as lang learner
High points	Spurring on
Integrativeness	Structure & routine
Intrinsic M	Task M
Italian per se: M factor	Teach yourself: difference with
Keeping up: M factor	Teacher A
L2 self future	Teacher B
Leisure activity/hobby/escape	Teacher: M factor
Researcher effect	Teacher: other reasons
Low points	Teacher: Pr factor
M factors: misc	Travel: M factor
M stability	



## Appendix J Example of ATLAS-ti5 output by code

HU: Spring Summer Interviews

File: [C:\Documents and Settings\LF\My Documents\Scientific Software\ATLAS\...\Spring Summer Interviews.hpr5]

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Codes-quotations list

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Code: Enjoyment {20-0}

P 8: 3 Rosanne.doc - 8:9 [I always feel at the end of th..] (29:29)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

I always feel at the end of the two hours that has been really worthwhile, pretty intensive, but enjoyable, quite challenging really, but enjoyable. It's nice to be challenge and sort of think 'Um, that was good!'

P21: 3 Ruth.doc - 21:2 [and because I was enjoying it ..] (5:5)

Codes: [Class enviro: M factor] [Enjoyment]

and because I was enjoying it and increasingly because I was enjoying it. And it was also the way of ensuring that I did do some Italian that week, because my ability to do it under my own steam is limited, but in the class I worked hard and got somewhere so it was a good way of getting somewhere with it.

P 8: 3 Rosanne.doc - 8:12 [and I think if learning is fun..] (42:42)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

and I think if learning is fun it's- you're on a winner are you? You must know that because you're a teacher yourself, and if you go for enjoying it, you must get far better results from them than if they're a miserable group that don't get on together and harass you all the time, as the teacher.

P18: 3 Mary.doc - 18:3 [But I enjoy it I really enjoy ..] (5:5)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

But I enjoy it I really enjoy it! Yes, if I didn't enjoy it I would have given up the course, yeah.

P 3: 3 Elaine.doc - 3:1 [Enjoyment I think, and I feel ..] (5:5)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

Enjoyment I think, and I feel I'm getting a lot out of it. I've learnt a lot more than I thought I would do, and I really enjoy going. I think these are probably the main reasons.

P12: 3 Calum.doc - 12:13 [Not really, just not think about] (93:93)

Codes: [Enjoyment] [Structure & routine]

Not really, just not think about it, just go whatever my day has been like, it's Italian at 7. I know frequently I turn up at 5 past or 10 past 7, it was like, well I just think 'OK, I've just got to get there' and I know it's not good to turn up to this stuff late but I'd rather get there late than not get there. And then, like I say, when it's been a rough day, by the break it is forgotten about, you feel a hell of a lot better so. That's what's got me down there a lot of the times.

P21: 3 Ruth.doc - 21:16 [Just a general enjoyment] (81:85)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

Just a general enjoyment of the lesson. I laugh a lot there, and realized that I find it all quite amusing. We're all overall quite funny, it's quite a nice group. And Daniel always makes me laugh.

RUTH: I think it makes things enjoyable, I think it's nice that a group of people get together for to do one thing really, to try and learn Italian. I think, and I think everyone is trying to do that, so, I think that makes it quite fun.

P24: FOCUS GROUP A transcript - 24:18 [ROSANNE: I agree with that but..] (247:257)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

ROSANNE: I agree with that but personally I found it quite forbidding that first. Also I never went home and thought 'Well that was a waste of time'. I always felt I got a lot out of the morning.

ROWENA: I was always looking forward to the next lesson.

ESTHER: I always find it quite exciting, getting here and amazed, because sometimes I crowd in here and yet the morning just goes.

IR: How do you feel when you've left the class?

ROWENA: Tired!

ELAINE: I always feel I've enjoyed the class, yes, and I want to come back the next week and I shall miss it now I'm not coming during the summer.

P 4: 3 Esther.doc - 4:5 [But if I didn't enjoy going, n..] (19:19)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

But if I didn't enjoy going, no matter how much I wanted to, I don't think I would.

P10: 3 Tim.doc - 10:1 [I enjoy it very much. I've bee..] (5:5)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

I enjoy it very much. I've been thinking about it since the last interview and I think for me it's a leisure activity rather than an academic activity, and I thoroughly enjoy it. I like the people, I like Teacher A's approach and I look forward to each week. Now that I have so much time it fills up one of my mornings in a very enjoyable way.

P13: 3 Carol.doc - 13:1 [I think it's because I enjoy i..] (5:5)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

I think it's because I enjoy it, that's the prime factor; if I didn't enjoy it I wouldn't do it.

P 8: 3 Rosanne.doc - 8:24 [Just to enjoy it, that's alway..] (82:82)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

Just to enjoy it, that's always been my goal to enjoy it. The minute I stop enjoying it, I shan't do it anymore. And I honestly can't see that happening, because listening to the others talking about going to Italy and some of them have been and come back. Maggie is always going, and Pam's been and listening to them I think 'Oh yes! I really do, I've always wanted to go back' and that sort of fires your enthusiasm and (indistinct) this time I'll be able to understand a bit and ask my way around and things instead of looking for somebody who can speak English.

P12: 3 Calum.doc - 12:1 [What has made you go back to t..] (3:5)

Codes: [Enjoyment] [Goals - initial: M factor] [Leisure activity/hobby/escape]

CALUM: Mainly I've enjoyed it, but as I said before, the reasons for going- to learn the language, is why I went back and back, but it helps because I enjoyed it so much and it was a good way to escape the day. It takes you away from what's been going on and it's two hours when you just think about learning Italian rather than everything else.

P15: 3 Fiona.doc - 15:1 [what has made it positive and ..] (15:17)

Codes: [Enjoyment] [Group: M factor]

FIONA: Because I feel I've actually learnt something and because the people were so nice and the teacher have made it. So I guess if they hadn't been, it would not have been much an enjoyment.

P25: FOCUS GROUP B transcript - 25:24 [FIONA: No because if I hadn't ..] (478:480)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

FIONA: No because if I hadn't enjoyed it, I could have waited another five or ten years, it's just a step up the ladder.

KAY: I have a long way to go but ... so long since I'd been in a classroom and to be back... has been brilliant, I've enjoyed it and I think that's what has made me want to do something else. I'm not confident at all in speaking or whatever but I stick at it.

P 4: 3 Esther.doc - 4:6 [If you're talking about a succ..] (27:27)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

If you're talking about a success in the sense of enjoyment, yes it certainly rates well on that. I think I probably know more than I realise so I have learnt something. I surprise myself sometimes but I should have learnt more, I really should have done, that's why I question the success.

P10: 3 Tim.doc - 10:2 [Well, the people and Teacher A..] (9:9)

Codes: [Enjoyment] [Group: social & identity]

Well, the people and Teacher A is a very good teacher, and I like interacting with the people, it's often humorous, we have a laugh. As I say, I enjoy it as a social and as a leisure activity. And also, of course, I'm beginning to learn Italian, but I am aware that at the end of a year I know very little, but some of that is down to the nature of the course, which has got very limited goals but also the time that I've given it, which is why, as I say, I think for me it's been a leisure activity rather than a serious academic one.

P20: 3 Rita.doc - 20:20 [Well, I've enjoyed the style o..] (9:9)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

Well, I've enjoyed the style of the class and the other members of the class and the teaching style - it's all made it quite enjoyable. Possibly if I'd not really liked the teacher or if I'd really not like the class, or possibly the style, it might have made it more of a struggle but it's been quite I've enjoyed it and the people that have been there, it's been quite a good mix of people and, yeah, the mix as well, people and everything, that's, so you look forward to going.

P 4: 3 Esther.doc - 4:7 [I suppose, basically, the ] (33:35)

Codes: [Enjoyment] [Group: M factor]

ESTHER: I suppose, basically, the interaction with other people, and I like learning things, I like knowing things maybe that other people don't. It's fun you do learn and enjoy it and I put it down to our teacher, she puts up with a lot [laughs].

P 8: 3 Rosanne.doc - 8:28 ['That's what I enjoy, it's bee..] (111:111)

Codes: [Enjoyment]

'That's what I enjoy, it's been able to talk to people who are native speakers and communicate!

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## List of abbreviations

- AE:** Adult Education  
**CofP:** Community of Practice  
**HE:** Higher Education  
**FE:** Further Education  
**FL:** Foreign Language  
**L1:** First Language (or mother tongue)  
**L2:** Second Language  
**SLA:** Second Language Acquisition  
**TL:** Target Language

### *In Chapters 5-8*

- 1a:** First interview with participant from group A  
**1b:** First interview with participant from group B  
**2a:** Second interview with participant from group A  
**2b:** Second interview with participant from group B  
**3a:** Third interview with participant from group A  
**3b:** Third interview with participant from group B  
**FGa:** Focus group with participants from group A  
**FGb:** Focus group with participants from group B

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