

THE RESHAPING OF LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION DURING COVID-19-IMPOSED DISTANCE LEARNING

Daniel Schug¹  Hanane Sarnou² 

¹ Université Paris Nanterre (France), CREA-GREMLIN Laboratory
dschug@parisnanterre.fr

² Université Abdelhamid Ibn Badis Mostaganem (Algeria), DSPM Laboratory
hanane.sarnou@univ-mosta.dz

Abstract

Language learning motivation (LLM) has been a major focus in research over the last decades, though it remains difficult to define and measure. Some study LLM as a binary phenomenon, with certain learner orientations, such as extrinsic motivation, being at odds with others, such as intrinsic motivation. More recently, the general tendency has been to study LLM as a dynamic phenomenon, subject to frequent changes based on innumerable factors, including and especially the learning environment itself. The COVID-19 pandemic and the large-scale imposition of online learning constituted a major change in the learning environment for students around the world, causing students and teachers to rethink their attitudes and habits regarding language learning. This paper offers a rigorous analysis of recent LLM research to understand how online learning impacted language courses. The study revealed an increased focus on the learning environment, autonomous learning, and innovation in teaching practice. Conclusions show that, even as we return to in-person instruction, the pandemic's long-term impact on language learning can already be seen.

Keywords: Language motivation, learner autonomy, learning environment, online learning, teaching innovation

1. Introduction

Language learning motivation (LLM) is thought to be one of the most decisive variables impacting learner success (Loziquez-Ben Gayed & Rivens Mompean, 2009). It pushes learners to persevere and make the necessary effort through periods of boredom, anxiety, and stress. Despite the significant interest LLM has generated, the concept remains difficult to define (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009). Generally speaking, it is normally measured in terms of behaviors and efforts (Ushioda, 1996), and requires some sort of needs fulfillment to be activated (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009), but the full picture is much more complicated.

Part of LLM's complexity stems from the fact that it is highly personalized and subject to frequent, unpredictable changes based on a myriad of factors; media consumption in the target language, traveling abroad (Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva, 2011), teachers (Solak & Bayer, 2014), personality, past experiences with the target language (Seven, 2020), and the desk setup in the classroom (Gocer, 2010) are just a sampling of the different elements capable of impacting a learner's engagement at a given time. To account for these different variables,

¹ Corresponding author: Daniel Schug ORCID ID : <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3137-2320> // Sarnou - <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0433-2785>

increased attention has been given to the language learning environment (L2LE). Any modifications in the L2LE can trigger major changes in student attitudes and behaviors (Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva, 2011), making it a major factor in LLM research.

In the early part of 2020, the L2LE changed drastically for students all over the world as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; classes at all levels were abruptly forced online as a matter of public health. In this online instruction, teachers rarely had the necessary training and students struggled to work autonomously and with limited interaction (Jansem, 2021). For most, this learning format lasted a year or more. Even though universities have largely returned to traditional, face-to-face learning, research indicates that motivation is at least partly based on one's past experiences with the language (Ushioda, 2014), so the impact of forced online learning is likely to continue to affect student attitudes well into the future.

It is in this context that this paper has found its inspiration. Viewing motivation as a complex, dynamic phenomenon on which the L2LE can enact long-term changes in students' attitudes and learning behaviors, this paper is guided by the following questions:

1. What were the principal factors impacting LLM during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How did teachers and students describe their experiences with these factors?

This paper begins with an overview of related research on LLM, with a focus on how it has been measured in the past. Following is an analysis of research studies on online learning motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis will ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of LLM moving forward, that takes into account what was learned during the pandemic, ultimately addressing a third research question meant to inspire reflection:

3. How can LLM be expected to change following the return to in-person classes?

2. Literature Review: Evolving Perspectives on Language Learning Motivation

In early studies on LLM, motivation was seen as a relatively static phenomenon, based essentially on one's attitudes and goals for language learning. Research using Gardner's socio-educational model, for example, often compares students' levels of instrumental and integrative motivation. Students pushed by instrumental motives tend to be utilitarian in their learning; they study the language for the purpose of getting a job or finishing their degree. Integrative motives, however, relate to learners' attitudes towards the target language community and their desire to associate with it (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Studies using questionnaires often measured students' integrative and instrumental orientations. Al-Tamimi & Shuib (2009) give one such example with engineering students in an EFL course; data from their Likert scale questionnaire revealed that learners often reported higher levels of instrumental motivation, given their professional goals, and lower levels of integrative motivation, with mixed views on anglophone cultures.

A similar trend is found in research based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), whose two major orientations, extrinsic & intrinsic motivation, exist on a continuum. The former resembles instrumentality; students learn a language because they want to pass a test or get a job. The latter, on the other hand, is more internalized, as the learner attaches a personal value to language mastery (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Again, questionnaires are often used to measure students' association with each of these orientations; Chumcharoenusk (2013) used a questionnaire to compare levels of different LLM orientations, showing that university students in Thailand and Cambodia had higher levels of extrinsic motivation. Gonzalez Ardeo (2016) had similar findings with Spanish university students.

The SDT considers that motivation is determined by three factors: 1) relatedness, or the extent to which a course or a goal relates to a student's needs and interests, 2) competence, or the extent to which a task provides an adequate level of challenge, allowing the learner to expand existing knowledge but without being overwhelmingly difficult, 3) autonomy, or the extent to which the learner has the ability to take control of their own learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy, as a matter of fact, is a crucial part of this theory and appears regularly in research on LLM. Daloiso (2009) claims that giving students the chance to practice autonomously helps teachers to retain their focus in class. Lamb & Wedell (2015) confirm this idea with their finding that learners are motivated by teachers who not only provide stimulating and communicative tasks, but also who offer autonomy. Wu (2003) also notes that encouraging autonomy promotes intrinsic motivation.

While these two theories have resulted in significant contributions to the field of LLM, recent years have seen calls for a more dynamic approach to motivation that highlights its complex, multifaceted nature. Against this backdrop, Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System (2009) focuses on three orientations that could drive student engagement: the L2 Ought to Self, the L2 Ideal Self, and the L2 Learning Environment (L2OS, L2IS, and L2LE, respectively). Learners pushed by an L2IS will make an effort to learn the L2 because it aligns with their deeply valued personal goals and how they envision themselves in the future. Conversely, those pushed by an L2OS are looking to avoid the negative consequences of not learning a language. This framework incorporates elements from several other LLM theories while providing more practical implications for teaching practice and class design, hence the L2LE orientation; the L2LE is a major distinguishing element of this framework and the most important for this paper.

Essentially, the L2LE includes all the social and cultural dynamics present in a given learning system and can have a major impact on learning behaviours (Papi & Teimouri, 2012; Aubrey, 2014). It may include the curriculum, relationships between peers and with the teachers, the setup of the classroom, the local culture's attitude towards the L2, one's past experiences with the L2, as well as a myriad of other factors. Contrary to other orientations, this concept can result in frequent fluctuations in LLM (Waninge, 2015), which could have potentially long-term consequences. To analyze these fluctuations, innovative research methodologies have been developed. With EFL learners in a Polish high school, Pawlak (2012) had students report their engagement levels at 5-minute intervals during a lesson. Students were then interviewed and asked to explain fluctuations. Interview responses were paired with questionnaire data. Spikes in motivational intensity were noticed during certain activities, such as group work. Interviews with EFL learners in other contexts further reinforce the importance of the activity in determining students' L2LE motivation. MacIntyre & Serroul (2015), for example, had participants re-watch recordings of themselves completing oral tasks and comment on their attitudes. Learners often reported lower motivation when the task was too easy. Waninge (2015) found that students most often cited interest when describing moments of high motivation; their interest stemmed from pre-existing goals, but also the affective and contextual elements present in the classroom, such as an enjoyment of the activity or the exchanges between peers and the teacher.

These studies show that teachers, through the creation of relevant, engaging materials and the fostering of a positive, friendly classroom atmosphere, are crucial to strengthening students' LLM. Indeed, positive experiences with L2 learning and use can positively impact the amount of effort students put forth in their learning (Develotte et al, 2008). The forced online learning brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, constituted a major change in the learning format that many students were accustomed to. Teachers therefore needed to think about motivation differently and adapt their courses to compensate for the absence of in-person social

exchanges. The following section describes how research articles were selected for inclusion in this study and summarizes findings from these forced online learning experiences to better understand how motivation was measured in research and thought about in classroom practice.

3. Methodology

To date, numerous reports have described the impact of forced online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of this paper is to identify patterns in LLM research during this period in order to identify trends that could help inform research and teaching practice moving forward. A research synthesis has been selected as the appropriate methodology for this purpose, which, according to Copper & Hedges (2009), allows for creating generalizations, analyzing existing research, and identifying central issues to be studied in the future.

To conduct the research synthesis, the researchers established a list of criteria that would determine which studies were included in this analysis. The list of criteria is adapted from the methodology described in Chen (2023). A series of recent articles were gathered based on the criteria summarized in Table 1.

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
<i>Date of publication</i>	From 2020–Present (2023)	Articles written before 2020, as the pandemic had not yet been declared.
<i>Language of publication</i>	English or French, the common languages of the two researchers	Other languages, not spoken by both researchers
<i>Type of publication</i>	1) Empirical studies using original, quantitative or qualitative data 2) Articles in refereed journals	1) Non-empirical reports, theoretical papers, literature reviews 2) Articles in non-refereed journals
<i>Research participants</i>	Students and teachers, at all levels	Other stakeholders (parents, policymakers, principals, school directors, administrative staff)
<i>Article availability</i>	Full-text available	Abstract or title only, no access to full text.
<i>Location of the research</i>	A variety of geographical areas (different countries) should be represented.	No specific exclusion criterion, just an understanding that the study will seek to represent studies from a variety of contexts.
<i>Topic</i>	Generally speaking, the article should be about LLM and similar topics (learner engagement, autonomy, enjoyment, effort...)	Other topics not relating to teaching/learning, but not LLM. Motivation for learning in other topics

The search for articles took place on a variety of online platforms, including Google Scholar, university library databases, and in journals familiar to the researchers relating to language teaching. Search terms included “covid,” “language learning,” “online learning,” “online teaching”, and “learner motivation.” The term “covid” was a necessary item because the focus of this study is specifically on learning during the pandemic. Ultimately, 20 articles were retained for analysis, responding to all seven of the selection criteria.

After a close reading of the 20 articles, an a posteriori analysis, as described by Swain (2018) was performed to identify common themes across the articles. Given the exploratory nature of this study, researchers did not find it pertinent to define categories before analyzing the articles; establishing the themes after ensured that the analysis was kept open to better reflect what was found.

4. Results & Discussion

As stated previously, COVID-19 has had a noticeable impact on language learning and teaching, which in turn, strongly affected LLM. Issues that were rare or irrelevant in traditional language classrooms, such as problems with a home internet connection, navigating new technologies without teacher support, and not being able to see one's peers, were now having a strong, often negative impact on student engagement (Klimova, 2021). The effect of this situation was also seen in motivation research, with changing foci and differing research methods. This report analyzed 20 research articles on learner motivation to answer two major research questions regarding how LLM was studied at the height of the pandemic and how teachers and learners described their experiences with LLM. The analysis of literature revealed several major themes, as described below.

4.1) RQ1: What were the principal factors impacting LLM during the COVID-19 pandemic?

LLM was the subject of substantial research interest at the height of the pandemic. In earlier years, motivation research suggested a need for practical implications (Dörnyei, 2005), learner autonomy (Murray, 2011), and increased attention to the L2LE (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015). The context of forced online learning called these three elements to the foreground. Following the a posteriori content analysis of the selected articles, the researchers established the categorization presented in Table 2.

L2LE	Learner autonomy	Innovative tool and strategy use
<u>Klimova (2021)</u>	<u>Albantani et al (2022)</u>	Sebastian & Souza (2022)
<u>Janssem (2021)</u>	<u>Stevani & Ginting (2022)</u>	Schug & Torea (2023)
<u>Ikhwan et al (2021)</u>	<u>Irgatoğlu et al (2022)</u>	<u>Al-Abidi et al (2023)</u>
<u>Rahardjo & Pertiwi (2020)</u>	Chen (2021)	Santos & <u>Vélez Ruiz (2021)</u>
<u>Anwar & Wahid (2021)</u>	<u>Hidayati & Husna (2021)</u>	<u>Fansury et al (2020)</u>
<u>Maican & Cocorada (2021)</u>	<u>Bardus et al (2021)</u>	Phuong (2022)
		<u>Alabay (2021)</u>
		<u>Muslimin & Harintama (2020)</u>

The above articles represent a wide range of countries including, but not limited to Vietnam, Turkey, Czech Republic, Romania, France, the United States, Ecuador, and Indonesia. All levels of language learning are represented as well, from primary school to university. Questionnaires, interviews, and mixed-methods approaches were used in these studies, providing a rich mix of quantitative and qualitative data.

4.2) RQ2: How did students and teachers describe their experiences with these factors?

Unsurprisingly, teachers and students had varied experiences during the pandemic. From the teachers' perspective, LLM decreased due to the lack of institutional support, an inability to adapt traditional courses to online platforms, and the absence of communication with students (Janssem, 2021; Klimova, 2021). On a positive note, language instructors at various levels reported on the different strategies that successfully kept LLM alive and even helped it grow in online courses. Games, different online platforms, virtual exchanges and many other strategies helped keep students engaged and provide them with authentic practice (Santos & Vélez Ruiz, 2021; Phuong, 2022; Schug & Toréa, 2023). This period was therefore characterized by a range of difficulties for teachers, but also some unprecedented innovation and creativity.

Although students often gave positive feedback about these innovative practices, research tended to show that learning experiences were often described in negative terms. For instance, while students started their courses with high levels of LLM, they recognized that this teaching format was not sustainable, and their courses were more watered down (Janssem, 2021). Lastly, the inability to communicate with peers also weighed heavily on learners as well, which would seem to highlight how vital the social element of learning is. The subsections below outline provide a brief description of research during this period.

4.2.a) A focus on teaching innovation & strategies

The forced online learning that came with the COVID-19 pandemic created a situation in which there were minimal to no opportunities for authentic interaction between peers or with the teacher. Given that this context could have disastrous effects on both language learning and learner motivation, teachers had to become more innovative in how they delivered their lessons. This innovation became a major focus of LLM research starting in mid-2020.

One such activity that was shown to have a substantial effect on student engagement is virtual exchanges, which saw an uptick in online courses. In several countries, including the US, Spain, France, and China, virtual exchanges allowed students to practice spoken language skills in an authentic context at a time when in-person interaction was impossible. In one program involving university students in Spain and the US, Sebastian & Souza (2022) described a 2-week online conversation exchange between Spanish learners of English and American learners of Spanish; students had conversation prompts but were essentially able to discuss whatever they wanted. Data collected at the end of the program revealed that students had a very positive experience, while open-ended questions revealed that the positive relationships between partners, the opportunity to improve language skills in a judgment-free space, cultural exposure, and the technology all made the individual meetings engaging and interesting for the students. Most importantly, however, was that participation in this program resulted in an increase in students' desire to travel and study abroad.

Similarly, Schug and Torea (2023) reported on an exchange program between a French and an American university, with students practising their target language in a series of organized communicative activities relating to their respective areas of study. Participants made journal entries after each exchange which, despite often mentioning technological and scheduling issues, generally indicated that students were very satisfied with the experience, with many making an effort to prolong the conversation and discuss unassigned topics. Students again referenced increased confidence while speaking, enjoying the dynamic with their partners, and expanding their language and cultural knowledge. At the end of the program, participant questionnaire responses indicated a higher association with the L2IS, as

students began to attach more importance to learning their target language to achieve their goals. These two studies highlight an important point about LLM: repeated positive experiences with the target language can lead to increases in long-term learning motivation. Providing such experiences can prove to be a challenging task in normal circumstances, but the novelty of the activity combined with the unique L2LE of being isolated during the pandemic created a situation where students were enthusiastic and excited about the socialization provided by virtual exchanges. The result in both studies was a long-term increase in LLM, as students had a greater appreciation for the value of the target language.

In addition to learning activities, LLM research at the height of the pandemic focused on learning platforms. Deprived of the traditional face-to-face format, language instructors had to experiment with other tools to ensure continuity in their courses, which naturally influenced how students' felt about their language learning. One such platform is ClassDojo, a tool used with Ecuadorian students learning English, as described by Santos & Vélez Ruiz (2021). Questionnaires, interviews with students, and journals completed by teachers showed that the specificities of this tool helped save learner motivation in online English courses. Pre- and post-questionnaires revealed that class participation greatly increased as a result of ClassDojo; students appreciated the elements of competition, entertainment, self-paced learning, and fun. Most importantly, however, was that, as students continued practicing on the platform, they felt more comfortable interacting with peers, leading to higher motivation. Similarly, a study on Microsoft Teams in a Saudi university English course encouraged students to discuss classroom materials using the online platform. While motivation did not significantly increase, students did report higher levels of autonomy with the mobile app than with face-to-face classes (Al-Abidi et al, 2023). Likewise, Microsoft Teams was found to be very much appreciated by learners of French at a Turkish university; interviews with students revealed that it was very user-friendly and offered a variety of capabilities not available in face-to-face lessons. While acknowledging some of the shortcomings of online courses, students benefited from the ability to re-watch video lectures, follow lessons from the comfort of their own home, and even find and upload additional materials on an easy-to-navigate system (Alabay, 2021).

The use of authentic digital content and online gaming also became commonplace as language teachers sought to engage students in creative ways; the result of implementing these strategies is generally an increase in LLM (Kaharuddin et al, 2020). In a remedial English course offered online at a Vietnamese university, Phuong (2022) reported that students were essentially extrinsically motivated and were engaging for the sole purpose of obtaining a passing grade. During the course, however, instances of intrinsic motivation were reported as students enjoyed the learning activities, particularly games. Focus groups revealed that these games were a welcome element of online courses that increased student enjoyment. Lastly, in a study at an Indonesian high school, interviews and questionnaires revealed teachers and students alike found that using digital content created by native speakers from anglophone countries provided learners with useful linguistic input and cultural knowledge. Additionally, students were against the use of traditional teaching materials in their online courses and felt that digital content, even from social media websites, provided a more engaging alternative (Fansury et al, 2020).

Of course, despite an often positive impact on motivation, these innovative teaching practices sometimes created difficulties not seen in face-to-face classrooms. In a remedial course offered to Indonesian university students, instructors opted to use the text messaging application, WhatsApp, for their lessons (Muslimin et al, 2020). Students struggled to interact in group message threads, because they hesitated to interrupt ongoing discussions. Additionally, given that messages were visible to all course participants, some

students felt anxious about communicating because they could not verify whether their language use was perfect. Internet connection problems and a lack of financial means to purchase phone data also created problems. Still, students reported actively finding ways to maintain their motivation during the course, such as reminding themselves why they were doing it (Muslimin et al, 2020).

The studies referenced above highlight several factors that were found crucial for maintaining LLM in online courses. First, learners need socialization; Samida (2004) references socialization as a key teaching strategy in general, and it is all the more important in the context of a language classroom (Dörnyei, 1998). This element may have been taken for granted in face-to-face classes, but its absence in online courses was clearly felt by learners. Through the study of games and virtual exchanges, LLM research during the pandemic revealed the virtuous cycle that could be possible when applying innovative practices. Students have positive experiences with a language, their motivation increases, and they continue to seek additional positive experiences. Additionally, recent studies have shown the importance of using a variety of materials that are relevant to learners, consistent with past recommendations (Daloiso, 2009). The use of digital content and gaming allows learners to see parallels between their learning and their everyday lives; these strategies provide novelty and pique students' interest.

4.2.b) The impact of an online learning environment on LLM

Despite receiving relatively little attention in earlier research, the learning environment (L2LE) has been shown to be a determining factor of LLM (Aubrey, 2014; MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015). The L2LE encompasses a wide array of factors, but research prior to COVID-19 has shown that certain elements tend to lead to higher levels of motivation and engagement: a culture or family background that encourages the L2 learning (Azarnoosh, 2014), opportunities for positive, authentic L2 practice (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013), specialized language classes (You & Dörnyei, 2016), and interactive tasks that are both feasible and interesting to the learner (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015; Pawlak, 2012; Waninge, 2015).

The forced online courses that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic created a situation where teachers had to know and deal with the contexts in which students were learning and how they impacted engagement. Indeed, research from this period has shown the necessity of a deep understanding of the students' learning environment; teachers must be aware of how learners acquire and practice language both inside and outside of the classroom (Nguyen, 2021). Language teachers in some contexts were able to adapt to their online lessons effectively. In one Indonesian secondary school, for example, students reported that the change in teaching format did have an impact on their motivation and their course achievement. The impact, however, was low, indicating that teachers were able to successfully implement online learning in a way that sufficiently resembled their in-person learning (Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020).

With several studies reporting LLM levels dropping in online courses, two common themes emerge: isolation and a lack of internet connectivity. Even in cultures with large numbers of internet users (Fansuary et al, 2020), the online L2LE created severe inequalities. Technology problems and a lack of internet connectivity resulted in frustrated learners, slow progress, and even giving up (Ikhwan & Andriyanti, 2021; Klimova, 2021). Questionnaire results showed that learners in Indonesia completed their activities and remained committed to passing their course, but reported low levels of motivation; this trend was due, in part, to an L2LE characterized by numerous technological problems, slow internet connections, and a nostalgic preference for in-person courses. (Ikhwan & Andriyanti, 2021). A similar trend was observed with university students in the Czech Republic; while students

expressed wanting to improve their English, the L2LE during this period proved too complex to navigate (Klimova, 2021). Students reported that a change in course format, from weekly in-person lessons, to short-term, intensive online courses made it difficult to stay concentrated. Furthermore, internet connection issues, a lack of sufficient technology, delays in getting responses, and the absence of regular interaction led to 47% of participants saying they did not feel motivated to learn in this environment. Even those who remained motivated acknowledged that this context was not sustainable and their LLM was not going to remain high.

Internet connectivity was not the only technological problem students experienced. In a study on Indonesian learners of English, questionnaire and interview results showed that some teachers gave more work to make up for the lack of interaction (Anwar & Wahid, 2021). This additional work did not always have clear expectations and evaluation criteria. Moreover, for students without computer access, their learning environment was a smartphone; creating video projects yields heavy files that can quickly take up all the space in one's phone memory. Lastly, many students reported that information for contacting the professor was not readily available and communication remained difficult.

In addition to the limitations of technology and poor internet connections, part of the isolation also comes from a lack of institutional support. Janssem (2021) noted that, in one Thai university, teachers felt they did not have the necessary support or materials to create effective online lessons; even those who supported online learning for language courses recognized the importance of getting proper tools and training for implementation. Student feedback on the online courses echoed this sentiment, with many stating that their courses lacked depth or that their teachers did not master the technology. Consequently, they lost interest and reported being unable to focus long enough to do supplementary activities.

Student attitudes and the institutional context may also play a role in how the L2LE is shaped. In their study with Romanian university students taking online foreign language classes, Maican & Cocorada (2021) show that many of learners agree that e-learning should continue to play a role in language education in the future, but a majority feel that it should not again be the only learning format available. Other feelings, like anxiety or embarrassment, were also present, causing students to participate less, even when they wanted to improve. The small importance accorded to foreign language courses when calculating students' overall grade point averages may also have been a factor here, as language electives counted less than other courses (Maican & Cocorada, 2021).

As shown above, the abrupt shift to online courses created a L2LE in which many of the factors shown to be motivating in language courses prior to COVID-19 were absent. A lack of course depth, authentic language practice, and interactive activities constituted a major change from face-to-face lessons. Add to this the large presence of technological issues, a lack of materials, and spotty internet connections, and it is not surprising that the L2LE was often not conducive to long-term LLM. With the default L2LE being online environments, teachers needed to be creative and explore different pedagogical tools to retain students' attention, to help them persevere through the inevitable logistical troubles.

4.2.c) Learner autonomy in online courses

Offering opportunities for autonomous learning has long been considered a hallmark of motivating teaching practice (Daloiso, 2009; Lamb & Wedell, 2015). Learners are more engaged when they have some control over their learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Closely connected to LLM, autonomy requires guidance and careful direction, particularly at early stages (Hismanoglu, 2000). In various university contexts, however, students have struggled because they did not know how to be autonomous (Terrier & Maury, 2015; Missoum, 2016)

In the context of unstable internet activity, a lack of institutional support, and difficulties contacting the professor, learner autonomy was crucial for ensuring student success. Many students, despite being initially motivated, quickly became frustrated as their learning was unguided and progress was difficult to track. In response, some learners found ways to make their own progress. In a study of Ukrainian university students, it was shown that a large portion of learners were using smartphone apps to progress in their language learning. These apps, though not part of the course, were carefully chosen by students. They selected apps that helped them develop specific skills they, whether it be grammatical accuracy, vocabulary acquisition, or production and comprehension. Though all apps had their advantages and disadvantages, it was generally found that students had trouble maintaining their motivation in their autonomous practice, despite the initial desire to progress (Bardus et al, 2021).

Similar results were found in other contexts. In an online Arabic course offered to students at an Indonesian university, a questionnaire revealed that students were generally highly motivated to master the language and even looked for ways to overcome difficulties and make progress. The progress was unfortunately limited, however, as students reported not having the strategies to advance on their own (Albantani et al, 2022). In an English course offered at a Turkish university, researchers compared learner autonomy before and after the onset of the pandemic and online learning. Questionnaire data revealed that students were actually more autonomous before the pandemic, contrary to expectations. Researchers hypothesized that this finding was perhaps due to the fact that learners did not have to actively use English for communication in online courses, as would be necessary in in-person courses (Irgatoğlu et al, 2022); likewise, motivation and learning strategy use also fell in online courses. Even at the primary school level, a questionnaire to English teachers in Indonesia found that learners were less autonomous in online courses during the pandemic. Students understood the importance of learning autonomously, but often lost focus due to typical online distractions, such as pop ups and games; they also feared working independently because they simply were not used to working without guidance from their teacher (Stevani & Ginting, 2022).

Still, some positive changes were observed, as students adapted to online learning and became more independent. In Stevani & Ginting's (2022) report, students appreciated the authentic documents found online. In an online Chinese course offered to foreign students at a Chinese university, Chen (2021) found that students were initially not very independent; they asked questions that were already answered in various study guides and course documents. They did not want to complete the independent practice exercises prepared by the teacher, because they did not see the relevance to their test result goals. As the course went on, however, learners became more autonomous in their learning and took initiatives to do practice exercises just to expand their own language and cultural knowledge. Indonesian learners of English at the secondary level generally reported being somewhat pleased with their online English courses, despite the difficulties with communicating with their teachers. As the course went on, they reported somewhat high levels of potential for autonomous learning, such as being able to identify their weaknesses and expressing a desire to voice opinions about their English courses. Furthermore, many students participated in a variety of independent practice activities, such as taking private lessons, watching films in English, or reading books in English (Hidayati & Husna, 2020).

The studies referenced above differ somewhat from previous studies on learner autonomy; they seem to indicate that, while participating in online courses, students understood the need to play a more active role in their learning, even if they lacked the resources to do so. This new level of independence, though it lacked guidance and resources during the

pandemic, is likely to impact student learning moving forward and needs to be taken into consideration while planning courses.

4.3) RQ3: How can we expect LLM to change following the return to in-person classes?

As stated in the introduction, the ultimate goal of this analysis is to examine major trends in LLM research during the pandemic and draw lessons that will help to better describe how learner motivation has changed and how it can be encouraged in the classroom moving forward. This subsection explores very recent research from the period immediately following the return to in-person learning, in order to identify practical implications for classroom practice.

First, it would be natural to expect that students have changed their expectations regarding how language courses should be taught. Web applications, virtual exchanges, and digital content gave learners authentic experiences with the L2 when in-class interaction was not possible; these tools had very positive effects on LLM and teachers should reflect on ways to continue their use in the return to traditional lessons. In recent studies, innovative practices such as the use of ChatGPT (Ali et al, 2023), online courses (Siok et al, 2023), and even teaching via telephone and email (Sarani, Ayati & Naderi, 2023) had positive associations with higher LLM. These studies build on earlier research showing the advantages of using technology to facilitate student learning, particularly with e-tandems (Develotte et al 2008) and flipped classrooms (Hernández Nanclares & Pérez Rodriguez, 2015). Although technology incorporation requires careful planning and a deep understanding of students' capacities, it remains an aspect of everyday life. Teachers should therefore strive to continue organizing courses in a way that offers the autonomy and freedom given in online learning, while still capitalizing on the benefits of interaction and guidance present in face-to-face learning.

Additionally, forced online courses have reinforced the importance of guiding learner autonomy. The connection between motivation and autonomy has been established for many years (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ushioda, 1996), yet research before and during the height of the pandemic indicates that students, even with high motivation and a desire to learn, struggle to be autonomous, to the detriment of language acquisition & learning. Though Al-Abidi et al (2023) have shown that exceptions do exist, it is important to note that even the students in their study did not experience increases in motivation, despite their increased autonomy. The main takeaway from research in these online courses is that instructors must help students become autonomous. To do so, numerous strategies exist to encourage independent practice, such as carefully guided personal projects (Labetoulle, 2017) and learner diaries (Woodfield & Lazarus, 1998). Still, encouraging autonomy is a long-term process that requires teachers to help students define their goals and create a realistic plan towards achieving them (Vlaeva & Dörnyei, 2021). Given that it may not be possible for all students to be constantly engaged during all parts of a lesson, whether in-person or online, autonomous practice gives them the chance to work on tasks that are relevant and interesting to them, ensuring long-term motivation and effort.

Lastly, online learning highlighted again the importance of the L2LE on LLM. As stated previously, the L2LE received comparatively little attention in LLM research in the years prior to the pandemic (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015). But with the unceremonious switch to online courses, students' individual learning environments literally could not be ignored. A lack of steady internet access exacerbated inequalities all over the world (Walters, 2020); students were unable to consult online learning platforms or attend video conference calls. The digital divide resulted in large-scale disengagement and drops in motivation, a shift that was particularly pronounced in some poor and rural contexts (Devkota, 2021). These issues worsened the lack of communication and engagement many students reported in the studies referenced

above. While many assume that the university students of today are constantly connected, this experience with online courses proves that that is not always the case. Devkota (2021) calls on institutions to adopt an approach adapted to their specific contexts to bridge the digital divide moving forward. It bears repeating that computer access is not the only important aspect of the L2LE, though it was perhaps the most prominent at the height of the pandemic. A multitude of other factors can play a role, including parents' attitudes towards language learning (Martin, 2021), the status of the target language (Rosiak, 2022), and even the classroom seating chart (Henry, 2015). As these factors and numerous others can have strong impacts on LLM, it is important that language teachers perform a thorough analysis of the learning environment to offer more relevant and feasible activities.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was essentially twofold. First, the researchers wanted to examine how language learning motivation was experienced and studied at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time where many students were forced to attend lessons online and work independently, regardless of whether they had internet at home. Second, a goal was to identify takeaways from the unexpected change in the learning environment that could be used to foster LLM in the language classroom.

It was revealed that studies on LLM during the pandemic followed the overall tendency of motivation research, which involved studying motivation as a dynamic phenomenon subject to frequent changes (Waninge et al, 2014). Students across the world saw drastic changes in their LLM and effort levels while learning online. The factors causing these changes, such as a lack of internet access and social support, were widely studied; the dynamic and multi-faceted nature of LLM continues to be a focus in research even today. Future research should continue to explore the myriad of factors capable of impacting students' desire to learn a foreign language.

Additionally, this paper sheds light on the use of technology in online language learning and issues in learner autonomy. It is fair to expect that students got used to a certain level of independence during the pandemic and that we, as teachers, should continue to encourage and guide them. Moving forward, research on autonomy and how technology can facilitate and enhance learning should take a greater place in motivation research.

References

- Alabay, S. (2021). Students' views on learning French online with Microsoft Teams during Covid-19 pandemic. *African Educational Research Journal*, 9(2), 333-338. DOI: 10.30918./AERJ.92.21.053.
- Al-Abidi, S., Owais, A., & Alabedi F. (2023). The effects of using MS Teams mobile application on language learners' motivation during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(2), 260-270. doi:10.5430/wjel.v13n2p260.
- Albantani, A.M., Madkur, A., & Rahmadi, I.F. (2022). Agency in online foreign language learning amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education - TOJDE*, 23(4), 196-211.
- Ali, J., Shamsan, M., A., A., Hezam, T. & Mohammed A. A. Q. (2023). Impact of ChatGPT on learning motivation: Teachers and students' voices. *Journal of English Studies in Arabia Felix*, 2(1), 41-49. 10.56540/jesaf. v2i1.51
- Al-Tamimi, A., & Shuib, M. (2009). Motivation and attitudes towards learning English: A study of petroleum engineering undergraduates at Hadhramout University of Sciences and Technology. *GEMA: Online Journal of Language Studies*, 9(2), 29-55.

- Anwar, I.W. & Wahid, J.H.J. (2021). Learners' perceptions of online learning implementation during COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 9(2), 126-138. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v%vi%i.3576>.
- Aubrey, S. (2014). Development of the L2 Motivational Self System: English at a University in Japan. *JALT Journal*, 36(2), 153-174.
- Azarnoosh, M. (2014). When learning English is compulsory at school: Fluctuations in L2 Motivational Self System. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 3(6), 102-112.
- Bardus, I., Herasymenko, Y., Nalyvaiko, O., Rozumna, T., Vaseiko, Y., & Pozdniakova, V. (2021). Organization of Foreign Languages Blended Learning in COVID-19 Conditions by Means of Mobile Applications. *Revista Romaneasca Pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*, 13(2), 268-287. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/13.2/421>.
- Chen, C. (2021). Using scaffolding materials to facilitate autonomous online Chinese as a foreign language learning: A study during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sage Open*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211040131>.
- Chen, J. (2023). Neoliberalism and neocolonialism in the mix: Evidence of glocalization in the globalization-localization dynamics of early childhood practices in Hong Kong. *Policy Futures in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103231171977>.
- Chumcharoensuk, N. (2013). A comparative study of English learning motivation types between Thai and Cambodian first year undergraduate English majors. Paper presented at the 3rd Conference on Foreign Language Learning and Teaching, Thammasat, Thailand (p. 1-18).
- Cooper, H. & Hedges, L.V. (2009) Research synthesis as a scientific process. In H.L. Cooper, V. Hedges, & J.C. Valentine (eds). *The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 3-16). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Daloiso, M. (2009). *I fondamenti neuropsicologici dell'educazione linguistica*. Venice, Italy: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina.
- Develotte, C., Guichon, N. & Kern, R. (2008). "Allo Berkeley ? Ici Lyon... Vous nous voyez bien ?" Étude d'un dispositif de formation en ligne synchrone franco-américain à travers les discours de ses usagers. *Alsic*, 11(2), 129-156.
- Devkota, K.R. (2021). Inequalities reinforced through online and distance education in the age of COVID-19: The case of higher education in Nepal. *International Review of Education*, 67, 145-165. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-021-09886-x>.
- Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language teaching*, 31(03), 117-135. doi: 10.1017/S026144480001315X.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self-system. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds). *Motivation, language identity, and the L2 self* (pp. 9-42). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Fansury, A.H., Januarty, R., Rahman, A.W. & Syawal (2020). Digital content for millennial generations: The English foreign language learner on Covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of Southwest Jiaotong University*, 55(3). DOI: 10.35741/issn.0258-2724.55.3.40.
- Gardner, R. & Lambert, W. (1959). Motivational variables in second language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 13, 266-272.
- Gocer, A. (2010). Qualitative research on the teaching strategies and class applications of the high school teachers who teach English in Turkey as a foreign language. *Education*, 131(1), 196-219.

- Gonzalez Ardeo, J. (2016). Learning motivation and strategies of ESP university students. *Revista de Lenguas para Fines Específicos*, 22(1), 141-169.
- Henry, A. (2015a). The dynamics of L3 motivation: A longitudinal interview/observation-based study. In Z. Dörnyei, P. MacIntyre & A. Henry (Eds), *Motivational dynamics in language learning* (pp. 315-342). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Hernández Nanclares, N. & Pérez Rodríguez, M. (2015). Students' satisfaction with a blended instructional design: The potential of a "flipped classroom" in higher education. *Journal of Interactive Media in Higher Education*, 1(4), 1-12.
- Hismanoglu, M. (2000). Language learning strategies in foreign language learning and teaching. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 11(8). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Hismanoglu-Strategies.html>.
- Hidayati, T. & Husna, F. (2020). Learning English from home during the COVID-19: Investigating learners' experience for online and autonomous learning. *Journal of the Association for Arabic and English*, 6(2), 202-217. <http://dx.doi.org/10.31332/lkw.v6i2.1962>.
- Ikhwan, E. J. Q., & Andriyanti, E. (2021). Students' motivation to acquire English through virtual learning in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic. *Lingua Cultura*, 15(1), 11-20. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v15i1.6839>.
- Irgatoğlu, A., Sariçoban, A., Özcan, M. & Dağbaşı, G. (2022). Learner autonomy and learning strategy use before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability*, 14(10), 6118. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14106118>.
- Jansem, A. (2021). The feasibility of foreign language online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative case study of instructors' and students' reflections. *International Education Studies*, 14(4), 93-102. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v14n4p93>.
- Kaharuddin, A., Ahmad, D., Nurdin, M., & Rusni, S.S. (2020). Contributions of technology, culture, and attitude to English learning motivation during Covid-19 outbreaks. *Sys Rev Pharm*, 11(11), 76-84.
- Klimova, B. (2021). An insight into online foreign language learning and teaching in the era of COVID-19 pandemic. *Procedia Computer Science*, 192, 1787-1794. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2021.08.183>.
- Labetoulle, A. (2017). Dynamic and complex systems approach to needs analysis, course development, and evaluation of LANSOD course in a French musicology undergraduate programme. In C. Sarré & S. Whyte (Eds). *New developments in ESP teaching and learning research* (pp. 31-50). Research-publishing.net.
- Lamb, M.V. & Wedell, M. (2015). Cultural contrasts and commonalities in inspiring language teaching. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(2), 207-224.
- Lozinguey-Ben Gayed, L. & Rivens Mompean, A. (2009). L'impact d'une cyberquête sur la motivation d'apprenants en anglais de spécialité. *Lidil*, 40, 89-104.
- MacIntyre, P. & Serroul, A. (2015). Motivational on a per-second timescale: Examining approach-avoidance motivation during L2 task performance. In Z. Dörnyei, P. MacIntyre & A. Henry (Eds), *Motivational dynamics in language learning* (pp. 109-138). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Maican, M. & Cocorada, E. (2021). Online foreign language learning in higher education and its correlates during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability*, 13(781). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020781>.
- Martin, C. (2021). Modern foreign language learning: Exploring the possible impact of parental experiences on student motivation. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 17(2), 321-339.

- Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva, V. (2011). Identity, motivation and autonomy in second language acquisition from the perspective of complex adaptive systems. In G. Murray, X. Gao & T. Lamb (Eds). *Identity, motivation and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 57-73). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Missoum, M. (2016). Culture and learner autonomy. *Journal of Arts and Languages - University of Blida, Algeria*, 67-92.
- Murray, G. (2011). Identity, motivation and autonomy: Stretching our boundaries. In G. Murray, X. Gao & T. Lamb (Eds). *Identity, motivation and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 247-261). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Muslimin, A. I. & Harintama, F. (2020). Online learning during pandemic: Students' motivation, challenges, and alternatives. *Loquen: English Studies Journal*, 13(2), 60-68. <http://dx.doi.org/10.32678/loquen.v13i02>.
- Nguyen, V. M. (2021). English language-learning environments in COVID-19 era. *AsiaCALL Online Journal*, 3(21), 39-46.
- Papi, M., & Teimouri, Y. (2012). Dynamics of selves and motivation: A cross-sectional study in the EFL Context of Iran. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 22(3), 287-309. doi:10.1111/j.1473-4192.2012.00312.x
- Pawlak, M. (2012). The dynamic nature of motivation in language learning: A classroom perspective. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 2, 249–278.
- Phuong, T.T.H. (2022). Learning motivation of Vietnamese EFL learners in fully online classes during COVID-19: A mixed methods study. *Issues in Educational Research*, 32(2), 681-700.
- Rahardjo, A. & Pertiwi, S. (2020). Learning motivation and students' achievement in learning English: A case study at secondary school students in the Covid-19 pandemic situation. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature*, 1(2), 56-64.
- Rosiak, K. (2022). The role of language attitudes and ideologies in minority language learning motivation: A case study of Polish migrants' (de)motivation to learn Welsh. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), 26-52. <https://doi.org/10.1515/eujal-2021-0018>.
- Ryan, R. & Deci, E. (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *The American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- Ryan, S. & Dörnyei, Z. (2013). The long-term evolution of language motivation and the L2 self. In A. Berndt (Ed.), *Fremdsprachen in der Perspektive lebenslangen Lernens* (pp. 89-100). Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.
- Samida, D.K. (2004). Language learning strategies. Retrieved from <http://libro.dobunkyodai.ac.jp/research/pdf/treatises05/01Samidaa.pdf>.
- Santos, J. C. & Vélez Ruiz, M. C. (2021). Using ClassDojo to motivate kids' participation in the English as foreign language online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic: A case study. *AtoZ: novas práticas em informação e conhecimento*, 10(2), 58-65. DOI: 10.5380/atoz.v10i2.78711.
- Sarani, H., Ayati, M., Naderi, F. (2023). The effects of teaching English language course via phone and email on learning and achievement's motivation. *Quarterly Journal of Research and Planning in Higher Education*, 20(3), 141-159.
- Schug, D. & Torea, T. (2023). International e-tandems: A tool for increasing student motivation in the foreign language classroom. *Arab World English Journal, Special Issue on Communication and Language in Virtual Spaces*, 3-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4348320>.
- Sebastian, P., & Souza, B. (2022). Connecting the disconnected: analysis of a virtual exchange during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Virtual Exchange*, 5, 94-104. <https://doi.org/10.21827/jve.5.38374>.

- Seven, M.A. (2020). Motivation in language learning and teaching. *African Educational Research Journal*, 8(2), 62-71. DOI: 10.30918/AERJ.8S2.20.033.
- Siok, T. H., Sim, M. S., Rahmat, N.H. (2023). Motivation to learn online: An analysis from McClelland's theory of needs. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Sciences*, 13(3), 215-234. DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i3/16471
- Solak, E., & Bayer, A. (2014). The factors influencing the motivational strategy use of non-native English teachers. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 2(2).
- Stevani, M. & Ginting, F.Y.A. (2022). English teachers' perspectives of learner autonomy in online reading comprehension in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Teaching and Learning in Elementary Education*, 5(2), 166-189.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.33578/jtlee.v5i2.7934>.
- Swain, J. (2018) *A hybrid approach to thematic analysis in qualitative research: Using a practical example*. In *SAGE Research Methods Cases*, SAGE Publications Ltd.: London, UK.
- Terrier, L. & Maury, C. (2015). De la gestion des masses à une offre de formation individualisée en anglais-LANSAD : Tensions et structuration. *Recherche et Pratiques Pédagogiques en Langues de Spécialité*, 34(1), 67-89.
- Ushioda, E. (1996). The role of motivation. *Learner Autonomy*. Dublin, Ireland: Authentik Language Learning Resources Ltd.
- Ushioda, E. (2014). Motivation, autonomy and metacognition: Exploring their interactions. In D. Lasagabaster, A. Doiz, J. M. Sierra (Eds.), *Motivation and foreign language learning* (pp. 31-50). Philadelphia, PA, USA & Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Vlaeva, D. & Dörnyei, Z. (2021). Vision enhancement and language learning: A critical analysis of vision building in an English for Academic Purposes programme. *Language Teaching Research*, 25(6), 946-971.
- Walters, A. (2020). Inequities in access to education: Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter*, 36(8), 8.
- Waninge, F. (2015). Motivation, emotion, and cognition: Attractor states in the classroom. In Z. Dörnyei, P. MacIntyre & A. Henry (Eds), *Motivational dynamics in language learning* (pp. 195-213). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Waninge, F., Dörnyei, Z., & de Bot, K. (2014). Motivational dynamics in language learning: change, stability, and context. *Modern Language Journal*, 98(3), 704-723. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Woodfield, H. & Lazarus, E. (1998). Diaries: A reflective tool on an INSET language course. *ELT Journal*, 52(4), 315-322.
- Wu, X. (2003). Intrinsic motivation and young language learners: the impact of the classroom environment. *System*, 31(4), 501-517.
- You, C. J. & Dörnyei, Z. (2016). Language learning motivation in China: Results of a large-scale stratified survey. *Applied Linguistics*, 37(4), 495-516.