Italian identity and heritage language motivation:

Five stories of heritage language learning

in traditional foreign language courses in

Wellington, New Zealand

A thesis presented in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

Linguistics and Second Language Teaching

at Massey University,

Palmerston North, New Zealand

Arianna Berardi-Wiltshire

2009

Abstract

The study explores the motivational role of the personal constructions of Italian identity (*Italianità*) of five learners of Italian descent studying their heritage language by means of traditional foreign language courses in Wellington, New Zealand. By adopting a social constructivist perspective on both language learning and the motivational processes underlying it, and by applying such concepts as investment (Norton, 2000), ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2009) and language learning as identity reconstruction (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), the study aims to further our understanding of heritage language learning motivation as a socially mediated process (Ushioda, 2003).

Qualitative data was collected through waves of semi-structured interviews from five case-study participants over the course of several months of learning. Responses were used to map the influence that the participants' constructions of their own *Italianità* exerted on three aspects of their language learning motivation: their reasons for learning the language, the decision to embark on the study of it, and the maintenance of their interest and learning efforts throughout the learning process. Detailed observations of learning sites, classes and materials, and interviews with teachers provided rich contextual data concerning key episodes identified by the students as relating to different aspects of motivation.

The findings suggest that *Italianità* is heavily implicated in the initial stages of motivation, but that its influence is mediated by the learners' personal constructions of a multitude of internal and external factors, through which they come to personalise and prioritise their own objectives and identity ambitions in ways that guide their motivational arousal, their decision to pursue the language and their creation and visualisation of learning goals. *Italianità* is also found to have an influence on the maintenance and shifts in the participants' motivational states throughout their learning, supporting a socially mediated view of L2 motivation in which motivational fluctuations are explained as the result of the learners' own processing of and reaction to elements of their context, including critical events inside and outside the classroom, exchanges with teachers, peers and speakers of Italian, and ongoing developments of opportunities and challenges for the achievement of the personal goals and identity ambitions driving their learning.

Acknowledgements

The long and at times difficult pursuit of this project was only made possible with the help, support and input from a number of people.

I am indebted to the two institutions mentioned in the study and to the teachers, members, administrators and students who assisted me in gaining access to the learner participants and to all of the information needed along the way. I extend my particular gratitude to the five learners whose stories feature in the study for all the time and effort they so generously volunteered, and for their willingness to share their journey with me.

I am grateful to my supervisors, Dr. Martin Paviour-Smith and Prof. Cynthia White for all the professional support, encouragement and constructive criticism during all the stages of the work. Particular thanks go to Prof. White for her ongoing guidance, her precious suggestions, and her unwavering faith in my abilities.

My institution, Massey University provided a doctoral scholarship without which this project would have never come to completion. I also thank my work and study colleagues at the university who offered friendship and moral support throughout the venture. Among these, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to Paul Lyons, for the many hours spent proofreading and for his immensely valuable comments, questions and suggestions, and to Dr. Gillian Skyrme, who, having recently completed her doctorate journey, has been both a mentor and an inspiration.

Finally, I thank my family, especially my husband David and my daughter Elisa for their patience in sharing me for so long and for being my anchor to reality, and to my mother Angela for coming all the way to New Zealand from Italy to offer moral and practical support during the final stages of the project.

Table of contents

ix

List of figures

Chapter One: What we always needed to know about heritage language learners but never dared to ask

1.1 Background to the study

> My Italian heritage certainly does not help my language skills, but I think perhaps the feeling… I sort of have an affinity to everything Italian. I sort of feel myself that that's because I have got that ancestry (…). The other people of course don't have Italian blood, and I just sort of get the feeling that they are not quite as passionate as I am. (…) It's an advantage, because you've got the passion and you really want to do it. For many reasons, but the main reason is that you've got that blood and it's just a bond, really. (E3)

The above quote is taken from the data collected from Esther[1], one of the participants in this study. Esther is a 67-year old New Zealander, whose grandfather emigrated from Italy to New Zealand in the late 1800s. Esther never met her Italian grandfather, or had any contact with other Italians until the age of 50, when she suddenly realised she wanted to explore her Italian roots and so began learning Italian language through weekly evening classes, a task that still occupies her today, 17 years later.

Esther's story is in this - and in other - respects extraordinary, but language learners with a similar motivation are commonly found among the students of most courses of Italian as a foreign language in New Zealand. I personally discovered this fact about ten years ago, when, as a new migrant from Italy, I was offered a job teaching my native Italian language at the local night-school. Though at the time I was instructed to design courses aimed at prospective tourists to Italy with no previous knowledge of the language, I soon discovered this was only a fair description of some of the students that would populate my classes, as among these there was a small number of students with Italian ancestry for whom the need to learn Italian to one day visit Italy was not their main priority. While normally such students showed no outward sign of their Italian heritage (they often had no Italian surname and spoke English without the hint of an accent), it usually did not take long before they found ways to assert their Italian roots in the classroom, and after they did, it often became apparent that their sense of connection

---

[1] All names used are pseudonyms. For more details on the use of pseudonyms and of participants' data in this thesis see Appendix 1.

to the culture and the traditions of Italy was the main driving force behind many aspects of their learning experience.

While I am not certain that I could say they were in any absolute way more "passionate" or "enthusiastic" (to use Esther's terms) than the other students, learners with Italian ancestry often seemed to have an air of entitlement about what they were learning, and they relished every opportunity to show their personal connections to the language and the culture of Italy: their comments in class often included mention of their experiences with Italian people in their lives, or things their Italian ancestors said or did, or of the Italian places they had visited. They sometimes knew Italian or dialectal swearwords and delighted in showcasing their knowledge of these in front the rest of the class, clearly relishing the feeling of intimacy with the language that derives from knowing such taboo expressions. In this sense, I originally thought the connection these learners had with the language might represent a learning advantage, especially in terms of their degree of curiosity and enthusiasm for the language, and of the emotional fulfilment they seemed to gain from learning it. However having Italian ancestry also seemed to be associated with a number of problems. For example, having their Italian corrected, especially when this happened in front of the whole class, could be particularly upsetting for some of these learners, leading many of them to struggle with criticism even of the most constructive kind. For the ones who regularly made use of dialectal forms to fill the gaps of their Italian, my explanations of the differences and uses of standard Italian versus dialectal varieties seemed particularly difficult to grasp and/or to accept. Furthermore, while learners with Italian ancestry happily collaborated with other students on classroom tasks and activities, their close relationship with the language and/or culture of Italy often singled them out as different and at times made it difficult for them to form friendship bonds with other students. Even when interacting with other learners with Italian ancestry, differing regional backgrounds meant that they often felt they had little in common, contributing to the general sense of isolation that seemed to accompany them throughout the courses they attended.

In spite of the challenges that their special status seemed to entail, the sheer joy these learners experienced in making progress in their learning was always palpable, and as a teacher, I took much satisfaction in facilitating that. Nevertheless, it also concerned me that something that I might say or do in class, even with the best of intentions, might offend these very special learners, or exacerbate their sense of being different. Deci and Flaste (1995) once compared learners to avocados: if you put an avocado pit in the earth

it will probably grow because it its nature to do so, but not all pits become trees. Some will shrivel and die because the climate is inadequate or the necessary nutrients are lacking. Just as avocado growers must supply the optimal conditions for their plants to thrive, in the language classroom, it is the teacher's responsibility to support students' efforts by creating an appropriate learning environment and by meeting the students' learning needs. With regard to my Italian classes, I gradually came to the realisation that the learning environment I had created – which seemed to work so well for most of my students – could be at times less than ideal for the heritage language learners among them, simply because their learning needs were different. In my allegorical avocado orchard, it seemed, I also had a few mango trees, and unless I understood exactly in what conditions these grew best and supplied those conditions, my poor little mango trees would eventually wither and die.

This realisation set me on the path towards understanding what made Italian-language students with Italian ancestry different from other Italian-language learners and how such differences were reflected in their personal learning needs. Immediately, language learning motivation came to mind as a possible significant factor: quite clearly heritage learners differed from other students in their reasons to study Italian, as well as in the ways in which having Italian heritage seemed to support their interest and enthusiasm throughout the learning process. But I was also aware that language learning motivation – especially when conceptualised in traditional terms – could only account for one small part of a much wider and complex picture. In time, I understood that what really made heritage language learners unique was their special connection to the language and the culture of Italy, a connection that included historical, familial, psychological and emotional aspects, all coming together to form each learner's understanding of their own personal relationship with their Italian heritage. This sense of connection, (which in the study is termed *Italianità*, Italian for 'Italianness'), seemed to me to be even more significant than language learning (or L2) motivation; in fact, it seemed to lie at the very basis of motivation itself, directing not only the learners' wishes and desires at the beginning of their learning journey but also and above all, the ways in which they managed their learning throughout the duration of their courses, including, for example, how they responded to teacher feedback and how they adjusted their expectations and goals as their learning progressed.

My curiosity for the motivational implications of the construction of *Italianità* of heritage learners in my Italian classes continued for a few years, until in 2004 I was

given the opportunity to pursue my interest by conducting my doctoral research on this very subject. My interest in the topic derives from multiple perspectives. Firstly, as an Italian immigrant to New Zealand with a personal sense of *Italianità*, I appreciate the opportunity to discover other types and nuances of it as a means to better understand my own: one's assessment and specific portrayal of one's own ethnic identity is not often a conscious, well articulated process, and coming into contact with different, or even challenging perspectives of what it means to be Italian can bring one's own views into focus, and so represent a positive tool for self-discovery. Secondly, as a linguist, I am fascinated by the ways in which language development is inextricably linked to the development of identity, a fascination which is made even more acute by my own experiences as a second language learner and speaker, and by the personal identity implications of conducting most of my life in what is for me a second language. Finally, as a language teacher who has witnessed both the enthusiasm and the discouragement that heritage language learners can experience in the foreign language classroom, I am interested in contributing towards the production of knowledge aimed at sensitising teaching professionals to the needs of these learners as often neglected members of foreign language classes, and in helping create guidelines for teaching and curriculum design to support the learning efforts of this particular type of language learner.

1.2 The problem

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, New Zealand was the target of extensive migration from Italy. Throughout this period, thousands of Italian citizens left their native Italian villages in an attempt to escape war and poverty and find a better life on these distant shores. Since then, the variety of Italian dialects migrants brought with them have continued to exist within the numerous Italian communities around the country, even though throughout the years, their use has inexorably declined to the point where the majority of today's New Zealand Italians are English monolinguals with little or no knowledge of the language of their ancestors.

This is not to say Italians in New Zealand do not appreciate or want to preserve their distinctive identity; on the contrary, according to the many teachers of Italian I interviewed for this study, now more than ever before, New Zealanders of Italian ancestry are interested in discovering their ethnic roots and in reconnecting with the culture of their ancestors, and in order to do so, some decide to learn Italian language. In New Zealand, where the teaching of immigrant languages is not regulated or assisted by

an official language policy, the responsibility for providing language courses especially designed for heritage language learners is left in the hands of individual communities. Unfortunately in most cases these decide to invest their limited resources in establishing only heritage language courses for children, often leaving adult learners no choice but to enrol in traditional foreign language classes, such as those offered by community education institutions, or by universities.

In recent years, numerous scholars in the field of heritage language education have raised concerns about the unsuitability of traditional foreign language classes for heritage language learners, coming to a general consensus that wherever possible, heritage language learners should be placed in programmes that separate them from the traditional foreign language students (Draper & Hicks, 2000). While most of such concerns centre on the different language competencies that heritage and non-heritage learners might bring to the classroom (for a review of studies see Kondo-Brown, 2003), discrepancies in the language learning motivation of heritage and non-heritage learners have also been proposed as a potential source of problems, prompting some scholars to identify language learning motivation as a significant factor in understanding the dynamics and challenges of mixed learning settings, and to call for increased research efforts on this subject (Lee, 2006; Lee & Kim, 2007; Weger-Guntharp, 2006). Studies of the motivation of heritage language learners are also advocated as potentially significant in increasing our knowledge of the specific learning needs of these learners, and so to design courses that better suit such needs (Kagan, 2005; Lacorte & Canabal, 2003; Lee & Kim, 2007).

Despite the documented need for an increased focus on heritage language learning motivation, research efforts on this subject remain scarce, with most of the existent studies utilising traditional, and in most cases outdated, theoretical paradigms that view motivation as a fixed characteristic of the learner, and that categorise it as having either an instrumental or an integrative orientation. Even rarer in the relevant literature are studies of motivation of heritage language learners in traditional foreign language settings (one notable exception being Weger-Guntharp, 2006). There is thus a significant investigative gap, which means that the relationship between these learners' language-learning motivation and the opportunities and challenges they meet with in this less-than-ideal setting remain largely uncharted. Particularly pressing in this regard is the need for qualitative, micro-level research into the motivational implications of the ongoing process of heritage identity (re)construction that is inherent in heritage language

learning. This is another largely unexplored area of study that could greatly contribute to our understanding of the experiences and learning behaviour of heritage language learners in foreign language classes, and hence help inform teaching practice in the interest of this type of learner. The need for this kind of research is particularly urgent in the New Zealand context, where, as already mentioned, a lack of language courses specifically designed for adult heritage learners means that a great majority of these are enrolled in traditional foreign language classes, and where a distinctive lack of studies on adult heritage language learners means that this is area for which we have no real in-depth perspective.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The general aim of the study is to explore the links between *Italianità* and language learning motivation in the self-reported experiences of five learners of Italian as a heritage language enrolled in traditional foreign language course in Wellington, New Zealand. However, a full understanding of what the task really implies can only be arrived at through a clarification of the two main concepts involved, *Italianità* and motivation.

The term *Italianità*, which is used throughout the study to refer to the participants' personal understanding of their own Italian identity, has been chosen to denote an aspect of the learners' self-concept which they construct as a result of their interactions with their external world, and in particular with Italian people and environments throughout their whole lives. The link between the learners' construction of their own *Italianità* and their motivation to learn Italian as their heritage language is most obvious in the reasons they offer for their pursuit of it, which often reveal goals such as reconnecting to one's own roots, exploring the ancestors' culture, and understanding what it means to be Italian. But the most intriguing motivational implications of the learners' *Italianità* are derived from the fact that like all aspects of identity/self-concept, *Italianità* is fluid and changes over time in response to interactions with the external world. As Phinney states, "ethnic identity is not a fixed categorisation, but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic background. Ethnic identity is constructed and modified as individuals become aware of their ethnicity within the large (sociocultural) setting" (2003, p. 63). From this point of view, the language classroom itself is no longer just a place where language learning takes place, but a site of identity creation and negotiation, and where interactions with Italian teachers and with peers can have dramatic effects on

the learners' sense of Italian identity, and so ultimately on their motivation for studying the language. At the same time, social interactions outside the classroom can be significant in influencing one's construction of *Italianità*, and so also one's motivation to learn Italian.

In order to account for the implications of *Italianità* on both the initial arousal and the maintenance of the learners' interest and enthusiasm for Italian throughout their learning, the study advocates a model of motivation as both a state and a process. In defining L2 motivation as a state, the study adopts the definition by Williams and Burden of motivation as "a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)" (1997, p. 120). As a process, motivation is assumed to be constituted by three main stages, which are also defined by Williams and Burden as "reasons for doing something", "deciding to do something" and "sustaining the effort, or persisting" (1997, p. 121).

By examining the participants' accounts of their relationship with their Italian heritage from the beginning of their interest in learning Italian and throughout their language learning journeys, the study aims to gain insights into the processes by which the sense of *Italianità* that they constructed as a result of their interactions with their larger sociocultural environment has an influence on the formation and maintenance of their motivational state throughout their language learning experiences. In conducting the study, particular attention is paid to how personal constructions of *Italianità* are supported, challenged and modified as a result of the learners' own understanding of critical factors inside and outside the classroom throughout their learning, ultimately aiming at uncovering some of the specific cognitive, emotional and social processes by which contextual elements come to play an important role in the learning trajectories of the participants to the study.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The choice of principles underlying the design and implementation of the enquiry is informed by a social constructivist theoretical framework. Social constructivism as a modern theory of cognitive development has its roots in Jean Piaget's theory of constructivist learning (Piaget, 1966, 1972, 1974), which assumes that from birth, individuals are involved in constructing their own personal understanding of the world, and that learning occurs through a process of individual meaning-making of their

experiences of the surrounding environment. While advocates of modern social constructivism still uphold this central principle of Piagetian constructivism, they tend to place less emphasis on the cognitive processes taking place within the individual's mind and to stress instead the role that interpersonal relations play in the construction of personal meaning. From this perspective, the process of meaning-making is no longer conceived of as characteristic of the individual and separate from the context in which the person thinks, but as the result of a dynamic and reciprocal influence of the individual and the context (Rogoff, 1982), ultimately explaining the nature of learning as a confluence of personal, social and situational factors.

An important element of a social constructive approach is that learning is seen as active process (Sutherland, 1992): learners are not passive receivers of knowledge, but are actively involved in its creation by processing external input in ways that are personal to them, and in making their own personal sense of the social experiences that form the basis of their learning. Also directly connected with the idea of personal meaning-making is the assumption that each learner is a unique individual, with a unique history and background and distinctive personal needs, and that a learner's uniqueness is key to creating knowledge that is internal and personal to the individual: "There is no such thing as absolute knowledge. Different individuals will have different understandings and create their own meanings that are personal to them" (Williams & Burden, 1999, p. 193). Learner uniqueness, therefore, needs to be valued and supported by learning environments that are as personalised as possible. It is because of the intensely personal nature of learning, and because of the powerful mediating role of contextual factors on the process of personal meaning-making, that from a social constructivist perspective, instructors are seen not as teachers in a traditional sense, but as facilitators, working to help the learner to get to his or her own understanding of the content (Bauersfeld, 1995). Ultimately, according to von Glasersfeld, the responsibility for learning should reside increasingly with the learner (1987), with the instructor principally fulfilling the role of guide, supporter, and creator of suitable learning environments.

Because social constructivism is primarily a paradigm for cognitive development, it is easily adaptable to conceptualising motivation in learning situations (Sivan, 1986, p. 210), and one of the aspects of such a paradigm that makes it particularly suitable as framework for L2 motivation is that it allows for a discussion of contextual and interpersonal influences on motivation. From a constructivist perspective, motivation is

viewed as contingent upon context, but the role of context is extended beyond that of simply influencing or determining how motivation will appear (Sivan, 1986, p. 217). On one hand, social constructivism places emphasis on the motivationally mediating role of interactions with people in the learners' context (especially language instructors, who can then fulfil their role as learning facilitators by also becoming motivational facilitators), while on the other it stresses the importance of the learner's own agency, and in particular the importance of the fact that, motivationally, learners are not at the mercy of external influences that cause them to be motivated or demotivated through processes over which they have no control. On the contrary, as active co-constructors of their realities, they always retain a certain degree of choice on how these come to affect their motivational states and hence their learning behaviour. Furthermore, and as a corollary of the previous points, a social constructivist view of motivation assumes that each learner is motivated differently:

> People will make their own sense of the various external influences that surround them in ways that are personal to them, and they will act on their personal disposition and use their persona attributes in unique ways. Therefore, what motivates one person to learn a foreign language 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 (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 120).

Finally, a social constructivist view can also provide a useful framework for understanding the motivational implications of identity/self-concept on language learning. Social constructivists place learners' conceptions of themselves at the centre of the learning process because these conceptions greatly influence our perspective on everything we experience and hence play an important role in the way we construct new knowledge (Williams & Burden, 1999, p. 193). For example, in the language classroom, how we see ourselves as learners affects our approach to tackling new learning tasks and our overall attitude to what it is we are expected to learn (Seifert, 1997). In this sense the potential implications of aspects of one's self-concept (including one's sense of one's own ethnic identity) are clear: how we see ourselves is likely to influence not only our reasons for learning a language (and hence the goals that drive our learning), but also what elements of our environment support or hinder our motivation, hence representing a prime determinant in the choices we make in relation to our learning.

1.5 Research questions

In consideration of the issues discussed throughout the previous sections, the focal point of the enquiry can be summarised in just one overarching research question:

What is the motivational role of the learners' construction of their own Italianità in learning Italian as their heritage language?

However, in aiming to explore *Italianità* as one of many influences on language-learning motivation, which the study conceptualises as composed of different and very distinctive stages, three sub-questions were also generated to ensure that each of these stages are appropriately covered by the investigation:

1. *What is the motivational role of the learners' construction of their own Italianità in their reasons for studying Italian as their heritage language?*

2. *What is the motivational role of the learners' construction of their own Italianità in making the decision to study Italian as their heritage language?*

3. *What is the motivational role of the learners' construction of their own Italianità on the maintenance and development of their motivational states while studying Italian as their heritage language?*

1.6   Research design

In order to answer the questions above, the study is designed to provide a longitudinal investigation of the language learning journeys of five main learner participants of Italian descent. Data collection for the study involved a range of sources and instruments. For the most part, qualitative data was collected from the main participants through an average of five waves of semi-structured interviews over a period of several months of language study. Throughout this time, participant classroom observations, teacher interviews and document collection all served as complementary sources of data and as means of triangulating the data from the participants' interviews.

Once analysed, data from all sources was used to compose the five individual case studies that constitute the core of the study. Each of these is designed to encapsulate the language learning story of one of the learners in a way that specifically highlights the motivational processes behind their behaviour at different stages of their journey. Above all, the content of the case studies is organised to show how the participants' constructions of their own Italian identity are implicated in the arousal, sustenance and

fluctuations of their motivational states throughout their learning, and so provide satisfactory answers to the questions directing the investigation.

1.7 Overview of chapters

This first chapter has provided an overview of the thesis, including a brief background to the study, a statement of the research problem and of the questions driving the investigation, and an outline of the research design.

Chapter two situates the study in the context of the existing literature on language learning motivation and of identity in L2 learning, particularly highlighting theories, models and definitions related to these two concepts that are seen as most pertinent to the current investigation. Overall the content of the chapter suggests that a focus on learner identity and identity processes can greatly enhance the explanatory power of traditional L2 motivation paradigms by allowing us to better understand the depth and complexity of the language learning journeys presented in the current study.

In chapter three I provide a discussion of the status of the study participants as heritage language learners which is centred around a consideration of the links between identity and language learning motivation that have been shown to be particularly relevant in the learning experiences of this unique class of learners. The chapter also situates the study within a body of existing works relating to the learning of Italian as a heritage language in countries with a prominent history of Italian migration (Australia and Canada) and within previous research on learners/speakers of Italian language in New Zealand.

Chapter four concerns the methodology of the study. First, it attempts to show the overall relevance of the study's social constructivist framework in the choice of research methods and instruments. It then provides a detailed description of the data collection and analysis procedures, as well as of the process of writing up the individual case studies that form the heart of the thesis.

Chapter five aims to provide the reader with an overview of the two learning settings within which the participants' stories unfold. The descriptions of the two institutions include a discussion of the teaching objectives and philosophies that lay at the basis of the design and delivery and the programmes/courses offered, including a consideration of the teachers' views and attitudes towards students with Italian ancestry and towards teaching Italian to classes that include both heritage and non-heritage language learners.

Chapters six to ten are dedicated to the five individual case studies that make up the main findings of the current study. The initial part of each of these chapters' aims to introduce the reader to the learners' construction of their own personal reality – including their sense of *Italianità* – and to illustrate the main motivational processes at play throughout their learning. In a later stage, the focus shifts to revisiting and expanding some of the evidence presented in the first section toward a specific consideration of the motivational role of the participant's Italian heritage and identity at different stages of their learning.

In chapter eleven revisits some of the material included in the case studies by providing a discussion of several insights that have emerged from findings relating to the links between *Italianità* and motivation in the participants' personal accounts of their learning. In doing so, the chapter highlights both general trends and examples of individuality in the ways the participants' motivation is aroused and sustained throughout their learning by means of cognitive, affective and social processes that have at their heart the learners' own construction of *Italianità*, in a focussed attempt to come to some general conclusions with regard to the three main research questions.

The closing chapter begins with a final review of the study's conclusions in relation to the research questions that drove the enquiry. It highlights the ways in which the learners' construction of their own *Italianità* is found to be central to all the motivational processes at the basis of learning Italian as a heritage language, representing not only the starting point for the formation of the identity ambitions that accompany the arousal of the learners' motivation, but also providing strong feelings of connection to the target language and culture that serves to support their motivation once the learning has begun. Finally, the chapter moves on to a consideration of the study's theoretical and pedagogical implications, to conclude with a final summary of the study's contributions to the related fields.

Chapter two: Motivation and identity

2.1 Conceptualising motivation and identity

This is a study of the learning experiences of a group of students of Italian ancestry in which I examine the learners' perceptions of their Italian identity and the role they play in the formation and maintenance of language learning motivation (henceforth L2 motivation)[2]. Within such an investigation, the concepts of motivation, identity, and heritage language learner are crucial to the discussion of the participants' experiences and so deserve some treatment to clarify their meanings and show their relevance and applications to the present study. In order to provide such a treatment, this chapter begins with a review of the conceptualisations of L2 motivation and related concepts which are seen as most pertinent to the current enquiry, with a particular focus on less traditional aspects and interpretations of motivation such as its nature as a temporally dynamic and socially mediated process. I will then move to a discussion of learner identity and self-concept based on a review of the ways these have been shown to be significant in explaining L2 motivation, ultimately suggesting that a focus on learner identity and identity processes can enhance the explanatory power of traditional L2 motivation models allowing us to better capture the depth and complexity of the stories presented in the current study.

2.1.1 Language learning motivation: A cognitive perspective

Second language acquisition theory and research leaves no doubt about the importance of motivation in the language learning process, with many experts agreeing that motivation is "crucial for L2 learning" (Oxford & Shearin, 1996, p. 122) and some even suggesting it to be "the *most* important factor in language learning [original italics]" (van Lier, 1996, p. 98). The belief in the centrality of motivation is reflected in the amount of literature on the subject, the fact that L2 motivation has become central to a number of theories of L2 acquisition (Clément, 1980; Gardner, 1985; Krashen, 1981; Spolsky, 1985), and that motivation is generally recognised as a key factor influencing the rate and success of L2 learning (Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei & Ottó 1998; Ely, 1986a,

---

[2] All acronyms are explained on their first instance. For a list of all acronyms used in this thesis see Appendix 3.

1986b; Gardner, 1985; Oxford & Shearin, 1996; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Williams & Burden, 1997). It is somewhat surprising therefore to find that over forty years of motivational research in the SLA (second language acquisition) field has provided no universally accepted definition or theory of L2 motivation, leaving us instead with a rather bewildering plethora of blanket terms and hypothetical conceptualisations which have led some to suggest that "many of the researchers at least in the field of language learning motivation… seem to have been working in this complex field without knowing exactly what it is" (Nakata, 2006, p. 23). According to Dörnyei (2001), the main problem in theorising L2 motivation is one of "reduction vs. comprehensiveness", or, in other words, of having to fit the vast array of potential influences on human behaviour into manageable, theoretically-driven constructs which might be helpful in determining the valence and interrelationship of single constituents of motivation, but which cannot account for the full complexity of its workings (p. 8). For some, the theoretical limitations of these models have also led to limitations in the researcher's ability to explain L2 motivation from the point of view of the individual learner. Ushioda (2009) expresses this point when she writes "such research might be able to tell us something about certain types of learner in an abstract, collective sense. But… can tell us very little about particular students sitting in our classroom, at home or in the self access centre, about how they are motivated or not motivated and why" (p. 290).

To counteract the reductionist tendencies of traditional motivational research, Ushioda (1996, 2001) advocates the adoption of "L2 motivation as a qualitative construct", within which L2 motivation might be "defined not in terms of observable and measurable activity, but in terms of what *patterns and of thinking and belief* [my italics] underlie such activity and shape students' engagement in the learning process" (2001, p. 96). This cognitive perspective on L2 motivation aims to describe how the individual's thoughts and beliefs are turned into action, and views motivation as the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). In cognitive investigations of motivation, the focus on achievement is replaced by a focus on "how students differ in the way they value and interpret goals and how such differences in motivational thinking might affect their involvement in learning" (Ushioda, 2001, p. 97) and because of this such investigations are useful in identifying particular patterns of thinking leading to effective motivational behaviour (McCombs, 1994), therefore offering valuable pedagogical implications for language teaching. Above all, by

uncovering the learners' "patterns of thinking" (e.g. goal setting, self-perception of competence, self-efficacy, causal attributions, locus of control) a cognitive perspective is useful in painting a global picture of the complex motivational processes at work in the learners' mind, and hence to describe L2 motivation from an individual perspective.

The limitation of a purely cognitive approach, however, is that it fails to take account of social and contextual influences (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 119). As Nakata (2006) notices, "motivation cannot be explained solely from a learner's psychology. It is more appropriate to understand that their psychology is the product of their interaction with peers, teachers, schools, texts, and society" (p. 110). Those who agree with this view believe that a comprehensive perspective on motivation can only be achieved through a consideration of its social interactive aspects.

2.1.2   Motivation as socially mediated

There has been much interest in recent years in conceptions of learning that emphasise its social interactive nature. Adhering to the principles laid out by Vygotsky (1978) and other social constructivist theorists (Bruffee, 1986; Dewey, 1938; von Glasersfeld, 1987; Wertsch, 1991) contemporary educationalists tend to see learning as a constructive process that can only take place through social interaction within a sociocultural setting (Bruner, 1996; Shuell, 1996). Similarly in SLA, there is a growing body of literature that advocates sociocultural and social constructivist views of language learning as an interactively mediated sociocultural process rather than a purely cognitive psycholinguistic one (for reviews see Johnson, 2004; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Such views of learning and SLA have deep implications for how we conceptualise language learning motivation. Central to a social constructivist view of motivation is the recognition that the social context can have deep repercussions on an individual's L2 motivation. A central premise of Vygotsky's theory of learning (1978) which is particularly suitable for conceptualising L2 motivation in a social constructive framework is the assumption that the development of higher mental abilities (i.e. learning) occurs within a social context on two planes: first at the social level between individuals (interpsychological), and later cognitively within the learner (intrapsychological). As learners interact with others, they internalise the help they receive to make their own sense of it and use it for their own ends. This dynamic interplay of personal and contextual influences on motivation is stressed for example by Galloway, Rogers, Armstrong and Leo (1998) who summarise it by writing

"understanding motivation is not about understanding individual differences in response to a given set of experiences, tasks and teaching methods… individual differences are important, but so is the *interaction between them and contextual influences* [original italics]" (p. 119). Along the same line, Van Lier (1996) describes L2 motivation as arising from the dynamic interdependence between internal and external factors, which "may well start out as being separate, but which converge and intertwine… until it may well become impossible to tell one from the other" (p. 111).

Within the field of educational psychology, Rueda and Moll (1994) propose a conceptualisation of motivation consistent with sociocultural, interactionist perspectives on cognitive abilities as distributed and socially constructed:

> Motivation is not located solely within the individual without reference to the social and cultural contexts within which individual action take place…. The key point, again, is the interconnectedness of social and cognitive activity, where psychological characteristics, such as motivation, are not viewed as characteristics of the individual, but of the individual-in-action within specific contexts. (pp. 120-121)

Recently, following Rueda and Moll (1994), Ushioda (2003), has proposed a view of L2 motivation as a "socially mediated process" (p. 90) by suggesting that if learning is about "mediated participation" (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 148), the motivation to learn must also socially and culturally mediated. According to this view, motivation in learning an L2 is developed through social interactions within society, meaning that "learners never come to school without any influence from society, or without any experience in relation to learning… having been influenced by parents, friends, relatives and TV" (Nakata, 2006). Support for the socially mediated view of L2 motivation comes from studies that have investigated the role held by teachers and peers in the language classroom. Among these, Ushioda (2003) uses data from the CLCS Learner Autonomy Project (Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2002), to show that the social unit of the classroom is instrumental in developing and supporting the motivation of the individual, but also that L2 motivation is also mediated by influences outside the classroom, such as parental encouragement, contacts with target language speakers, and a family history of language learning (p. 93). The resulting view of L2 motivation is one that sees the impetus to learn as coming from within the learner, but which is developed as a function of their engagement in interaction with motivationally supportive or unsupportive significant others in and out of the classroom. Such a view of motivation is clearly in harmony with the social constructivist approach taken in the study, which sees motivation arousal and above all maintenance as dependent on the mediating role of interactions with people within the learner's context. As the study will show, even the smallest and most

unexpected of social exchanges has the potential to critically influence the participants' constructions of their realities and of their place within them, and to give rise to and shape their desires and ambitions relating to such positions. In this sense, a socially mediated view of L2 motivation also distances itself from more traditional conceptions of L2 motivation as a purely cognitive construct to consider aspects of the learner's identity as crucial in the formation and sustenance of their interest and engagement in the L2. Because of this, such a perspective is also highly compatible with many of the theoretical principles put forward by studies of L2 from sociocultural and poststructuralist perspectives, which tend to explain much of a learner's motivation and learning behaviour as the result of their ongoing efforts to create and negotiate aspects of their complex identity in interaction with the social worlds around them. Given that in the current study Italian identity is conceptualised as one such aspect, and that the participants' socially mediated constructions of their *Italianità* are investigated as the potential basis of their motivation to learn their heritage language, the theoretical significance of a socially mediated view of motivation and of a sociocultural perspective on language and identity are considered central to the current enquiry and will be discussed in more detail in the second half of this chapter (see section 2.4).

2.1.3 The temporal dimension of L2 motivation

In establishing a conceptual framework for investigating heritage language motivation in ways that may highlight both the cognitive and social processes involved in its arousal and maintenance, it is necessary to define motivation not only as a relatively stable psycho-emotional state observable at one particular point in time, but also as a dynamic entity that changes and evolves throughout the participants' learning experiences, and this involves conceptualising motivation as having a temporal dimension.

In endorsing the use of a temporal frame of reference for the study of L2 motivation, Dörnyei (2000) explains that such a perspective is crucial in studying the fluctuating nature of the motivational process and the interplay of influences on different stages of the L2 learning process:

> Motivation to do something usually evolves gradually, through a complex mental process that involved initial planning and goal setting, intention formation and task generation, and finally action implementation and control. In sustained, long-term activities, such as the mastering of a school subject, motivation does not remain constant but is characterised by regular reappraisal and balancing of the various internal and external influences that the individual is exposed to, resulting in a somewhat fluctuating pattern of effort and commitment. (p. 524)

17

Also highlighting the need to add a temporal dimension to the study of L2 motivation, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) propose a process model of motivation which "organises the motivational influences of L2 along a sequence of discrete actional events within the chain of initiating and enacting motivational behaviour" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 85). In substance, the model proposes a view of L2 motivation as composed of three successive stages: a *preactional* stage, during which the learner's initial wishes and desires are turned into goals and intentions, an *actional* stage during which regulation processes sustain motivation, and finally a *postactional* stage, which involves a critical evaluation of the process. In addition to a temporal structure for L2 motivation, the model also offers a list of main motivational influences for each of the stages described, based on the assumption that each of the many personal and contextual influences acting on an individual's motivation tends to exert their force on particular stages of the process: for example, learner expectations, goals and attitudes mainly influence the preactional stage of motivation, while elements to do with the immediate learning setting are seen as influencing the actional stage (Figure 1).

By mapping the stages of motivation and the main motivational influences on these, the model offers a comprehensive framework of how L2 motivation arises and develops and provides a structure for interpreting and integrating the many motivational factors that can affect a student's L2 learning behaviours. Because of this, the model represents a useful general guideline in studying L2 motivation longitudinally. However, the model also presents some weaknesses that prevent its full application in empirical studies. In addition to those identified by Dörnyei himself (2000, p. 530), the classification of the main motivation influences the model ascribes to each of the stages (Figure 1) appears to be too rigid to effectively capture the complex interplay of factors influencing students' motivation and learning behaviour, which because of their socially mediated and contextualised nature, are likely to reflect highly personal and idiosyncratic dynamics.

Preactional Stage | **Actional Stage** | **Postactional Stage**

CHOICE MOTIVATION

Motivational functions:

- Setting goals
- Forming intentions
- Launching action

Main motivational influences:

- Various goal properties (e.g., goal relevance, specificity and proximity)
- Values associated with the learning process itself, as well as with its outcomes and consequences
- Attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers
- Expectancy of success and perceived coping potential
- Learner beliefs and strategies
- Environmental support or hindrance

EXECUTIVE MOTIVATION

Motivational functions:

- Generating and carrying out subtasks
- Ongoing appraisal (of one's achievement)
- Action control (self-regulation)

Main motivational influences:

- Quality of the learning experience (pleasantness, need significance, coping potential, self and social image)
- Sense of autonomy
- Teachers' and parents' influence
- Classroom reward- and goal structure (e.g. competitive or cooperative)
- Influence of the learner group
- Knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies (e.g., goal setting, learning, and self-motivating strategies)

MOTIVATIONAL RETROSPECTION

Motivational functions:

- Forming causal attributions
- Elaborating standards and strategies
- Dismissing the intention and further planning

Main motivational influences:

- Attributional factors (e.g., attributional styles and biases)
- Self-concept beliefs (e.g., self-confidence and self-worth)
- Received feedback, praise, grades

Figure 1. Motivational influences according to Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) model

Similar to Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), Williams and Burden (1997) see L2 motivation as a three-stage temporal process:

Reasons for doing something → Deciding to do something → Sustaining the effort, or persisting
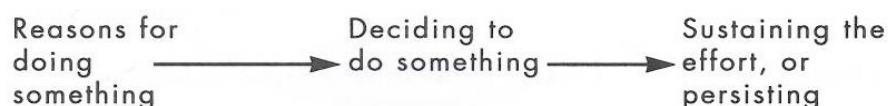
Figure 2. Williams and Burden's model of motivation (1997, p. 121)

In this model, the first stage is associated with motivational arousal, the second with the making of a conscious decision to act and the third with sustaining the effort required to achieve a goal or a set of goals. As in the previous model, L2 motivation is seen as influenced by a number of factors or motivational influences, which the authors classify as internal or external to the learner (Figure 3).

19

Internal factors	7. Other affective states
1. Intrinsic interest of activity	Confidence
Arousal of curiosity	Anxiety, fear
Optimal degree of challenge (zone of next potential)	**8. Developmental age and stage**
2. Perceived value of activity	**9. Gender**
Personal relevance	
Anticipated value of outcomes	**External factors**
Intrinsic value attributed to the activity	**1. Significant others**
3. Sense of agency	Parents
Locus of causality (origin versus pawn)	Teachers
Locus of control re process and outcomes	Peers
Ability to set appropriate goals	**2. The nature of interaction with significant others**
4. Mastery	Mediated learning experiences
Feelings of competence	The nature and amount of feedback
Awareness of developing skill and mastery	Rewards
Self-efficacy	The nature and amount of appropriate praise
5. Self-concept	Punishments, sanctions
awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses	**3. The learning environment**
definitions and judgements of success and failure	Comfort
Self-worth concern	Resources
Learned helplessness	Time of day, week, year
6. Attitudes	Size of class and school
To language learning in general	Class and school ethos
To the target language	**4. The broader context**
To the target language community and culture	Wider family networks
	The local education system
	Conflicting interests
	Cultural norms
	Societal expectations and attitudes

Figure 3. Factors impinging on L2 motivation (Williams and Burden, 1997)

Differently from Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) however, Williams and Burden do not prescribe the influence of particular factors on particular stages of the motivational process, and propose instead that the direction and force of such influences depends on the situation, experiences and personal characteristics that the learner brings to the situation. The social constructivist perspective of the model is evident in the fact that internal and external factors are not simply seen as having a direct influence on the learner's motivation and hence behaviour, but as working in interaction with each other and with the learner's personal characteristics. The learner is therefore not seen as a separate entity subject to single influences, but as a co-constructor of motivation through his or her interactions with the external world:

A constructivist view of motivation centres around the premise that each individual is motivated differently. People will make their own sense of the various external influences that surround them in ways that are personal to them, and they will act on their internal disposition and use their personal attributes in unique ways. … However an individual's motivation is also subject to social and contextual influences. These will include the whole culture and context and social situation, as well as significant other people and the individual's interactions with these people. (p. 120)

The model is thus summarised in Figure 4.
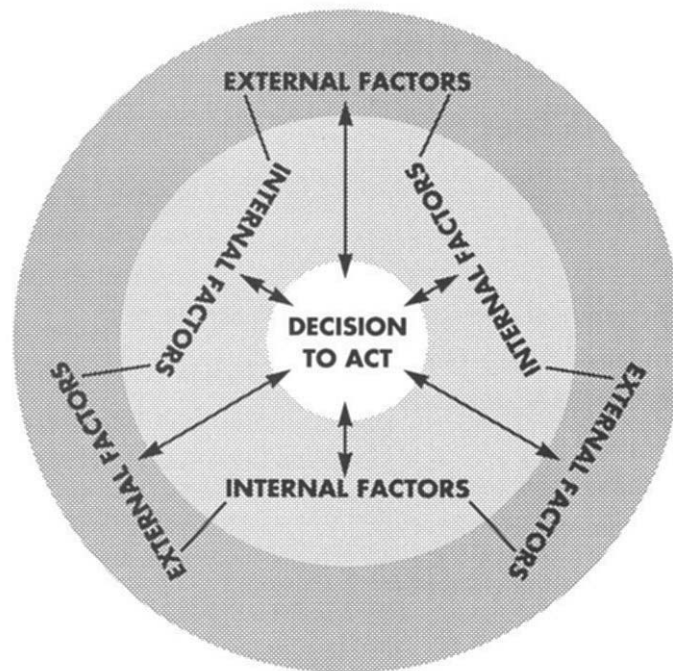
Figure 4. Williams and Burden's model of motivation (1997, p. 140)

As part of this model, Williams and Burden propose a definition of motivation, cognitive in essence but which fits within a social constructive framework. Motivation is thus understood as:

- A state of cognitive and emotional arousal
- which leads to a conscious decision to act, and
- which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort
- in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals) (Williams and Burden 1997, p. 120)

21

2.2 L2 motivation: An overview of the process

Having presented arguments for the inclusion of cognitive, social and temporal dimensions to the motivation construct, I am now in the position to propose the terms of a broad motivational framework that sets out a temporal frame for a longitudinal investigation of motivation and some general guidelines for the exploration of motivationally significant factors. This framework is conceived as a tool for a macro-level analysis of the participants' stories, and is expected to help us discern the overall structure of their motivation, which in turn will form the basis for a micro-level investigation of the motivational implications of each learner's personal construction of *Italianità*.

In order to construct such a framework, the study adopts some elements of Williams and Burden's (1997) definition and model of L2 motivation (2.2.3): L2 motivation is seen as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal which is influenced by the interplay of personal and contextual factors. For ease of reference, the study also adopts Williams and Burden's (1997) distinction between internal and external motivational factors, though in accordance with Vygotsky's theory of learning (1978), it is assumed that all external factors need to be internalised before they can influence behaviour, meaning that a learner will not act as a direct result of, for example, an event, but on the way they interpret and make their own sense of such event, participate in it and co-construct its meaning in interaction with the other people involved. While generally agreeing with Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) that the influence of certain factors tends to be more prominent during certain stages of the process (e.g. that factors to do with the learning setting exert their influence mainly on the degree of learner persistence, rather than on their motivational arousal or their decision to act), the study assumes that the interplay of contextual and personal factors can potentially influence any stage of the process in ways which are distinctively personal, making the dynamics of the motivational process highly idiosyncratic.

2.2.1 Stage one: Reasons for doing something

The process begins with the arousal of the learner's motivation. At this stage the individual is seen as having a set of reasons for acting. Such reasons will be different for each individual learner because they are the result of the interaction of personal and

external influences, and they are born out of the learners' own construction of their own background and circumstances. A learner's reasons to learn an L2 might be the product of recent life developments, or they might have existed for some time. In the latter case, particular factors or sets of factors might be responsible for bringing such reasons to the forefront of the learner's consciousness, or to make them relevant enough to instigate action.

2.2.2 Stage two: Deciding to act

As a result of motivation having been aroused, the person might make a decision to act, for example by enrolling in a language course. However, often motivation is not all that is needed to act: people might be strongly motivated to do something but not actually decide to act on it. The decision to act is subject to "the availability of the necessary means and resources" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 88) (such as the necessary time and money to invest in a language course) and to the right opportunities (such as the availability of a suitable language course). The immediate antecedent of the learner's decision to act, is, in most cases, the formation of one or more goals which in general reflect the learner's personal objectives and ambitions, but that are also shaped by elements of the learners' context such as teachers, course curriculum, and social pressures from outside the classroom.

2.2.3 Stage three: Persisting

Once learning has begun, the learner needs to sustain the effort required to achieve their goal(s) to their satisfaction. Their persistence is seen as making continuous decisions to act towards their goal(s), by investing time and effort in each stage of the journey, but also by monitoring and regulating levels of motivation in response to the occurrences of demotivation that are inherent to the learning process. Persistence will depend on the degree to which the initial motivation is sustained, but also on the nature and frequency of new waves of arousal. How well a learner can sustain their motivation or instigate/be susceptible to new waves of arousal depends on their own personality, the nature of the arousals and by the interplay of various internal and external factors.

2.2.4 Three key elements of L2 motivation

Among the wide range of psychological processes that have been identified as important components of L2 motivation, three are particularly relevant to the conceptualisation of motivation as a dynamic process adopted in the current study as

they can be useful to understand the mental mechanisms associated with each of the stages of the motivation process. These three elements are goal–setting, demotivation and self-regulation.

2.2.4.1 Goal-setting

Nakata (2006) defines goals as "the current cognitive representations of a general 'energy' construct that activates learners' behaviour towards the desired direction" (p. 95). L2 motivation studies have drawn from two main goal theories from motivational psychology: goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990, 1994) and goal orientation theory (Ames, 1992; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Goal-setting theory proposes that human action is purposeful and that it is directed by conscious goals (Locke & Latham, 1994, p. 14) and defines goals as specific situations that the individual is trying to achieve. According to this theory all human beings have the ability to set their own goals and to pursue them by making efforts towards them. Setting appropriate goals plays an important role in the motivation process because the goals people set can sustain their motivation and therefore their efforts in learning. In particular, Dörnyei (2001, p. 26) specifies four main mechanisms through which goals affect performance:

- by directing attention and effort towards goal-relevant activities at the expense of non-relevant action
- by regulating effort expenditure according to the difficulty of the task
- by encouraging persistence until goal is achieved
- by promoting search for relevant action plans and strategies

Goal-setting theory assumes that the individual's motivation and performance are a function of their goal-setting ability: high commitment to goals is attained when the individual believes the goals are important and attainable, and the highest performance is achieved through setting goals that are both specific and optimally challenging (Locke, 1996).

Goal orientation theory (Ames, 1992; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996) differentiates between performance goals (where the learner focuses on demonstrating ability, getting good grades and/or outdoing peers) and mastery goals (where the learners focuses on learning the content). Mastery goals have been found to be particularly important as they promote engagement in self-regulating activities (Schunk, 1996), increase persistence in

the face of difficulty (Elliott & Dweck, 1988) and augment the amount of effort spent on learning-related activities (Butler, 1988).

In L2 motivation theory and research, discussion of goals is often linked to issues of learner autonomy. The general belief is that, since individual goal setting is one of the most effective methods to support one's motivation in learning an L2, learners should be encouraged to increase their "goal-orientedness" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 125) and to develop their own reasons for learning, their own agendas and their own goals (Little, 1999, p. 83). Recently, in advocating a socially mediated view of motivation, Ushioda (2003) has pointed out that while learning is driven by personal goals, needs and interests, the learners' immediate social environment (both in and out of the classroom) can play a crucial role in mediating, supporting and enhancing these by relating the development of the learners' language skills to their personal interests and lives. Quoting Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001, p. 46), Ushioda (2003) reminds us that

> learners are not simply "learners" in an abstract sense, but people with complex individual histories and a variety of sometimes conflicting goals and motives. If the social learning environment is to support rather than inhibit the healthy growth of individual motivation it is clear that there must be a close alignment between pedagogical goals and values, individual needs and interests, and peer-related interpersonal goals. (p. 95)

The point has important implications for our investigation of the role that Italian identity plays in the formation of the participants' motivation: an exploration of learners' goals as arising from their dynamic interplay with elements of their social environment, necessarily implies a consideration of how these reflect their sense of who they are and who they would like to be, or, in other words of their identities. In the case of the heritage language learners in the current study, the association between L2 goals and identity is made particularly pertinent by the strong links that can exist between one's ancestral language and one's perceptions and ambitions of identity; in particular, as we will see, most of the participants to the study recognise that their desire to learn Italian is associated with a parallel desire to cultivate their *Italianità*. In this sense, the link between goal-setting as an aspect of motivation and identity as *Italianità* constitutes a central focus of our investigation, and one to which I will return as part of a more detailed discussion of identity in L2 below (see section 2.4).

2.2.4.2 Demotivation

Dörnyei (2001) defines demotivation as a drop in motivation due to "motivational influences that that have a detrimental rather than a positive effect on motivation, that is, which instead of energizing action 'de-energize it'" (p. 141). According to this

definition, demotivation does not mean that all the motivational influences that constituted the motivational basis for behaviour have been annulled, but that their resulting force has been dampened by a negative component, while some of the positive influences might remain operational (p. 143).

L2 learning research has often pointed to a decline in motivation once a learner's initial enthusiasm for learning an L2 begins to dissipate. Using a longitudinal qualitative study of motivational changes among seventh-grade Japanese English learners, Koizumi and Matsuo (1993) found that students' motivation dramatically decreased after the initial stage of the learning process. Similar findings were obtained by Little, Ridley and Ushioda (2002), Nikolov (2001), Chambers (1999), Williams (2004), Williams, Burden and Lanvers (2002). Among the main sources of demotivation, negative aspects of institutionalised learning contexts have often been identified as the main culprit (Chambers, 1999; Nikolov, 2001; Tse, 2000; Ushioda, 1998). These studies have consistently identified teacher's behaviour, course content and materials as the main causes of demotivation among language students of different ages and proficiencies.

But the classroom environment is not the only area of the learner's context that can negatively impinge on their motivation. In general terms, just as motivation is the product of the positive and constructive interplay between the learner's internal drives and external support systems, demotivation can also be constructed as socially mediated, arising from those situations "when there is not a happy fusion between internal and external forces, but a negative tension where the latter dominate at the expense of the former… individual motivation becomes controlled, suppressed or distorted by external forces" (Ushioda, 2003, p. 93). Within a social constructive view of L2 motivation, this "negative tension" is not just limited to elements of the classroom, but includes the world outside it, highlighting the potentially motivational/demotivational role held by the social processes in which the learner may take part in everyday life. The significance of a socially mediated view of demotivation for the current study is particularly clear when we consider that *Italianità* as an aspect of the learners' self-concept/social identity is assumed to be constructed through interactions with the external world, and in particular with people closely associated with their learning efforts such as teachers and peers. Exchanges with these people are then potentially significant in the arousal and maintenance of the learners' motivation because interacting with them might offer opportunities to construct and negotiate one's *Italianità*, which depending on their outcome, can result in either increased motivation or demotivation.

2.2.4.3 Self-regulation

While the learner's social and learning environment can have an influence on the incidence of motivation and demotivation, there are also many things individuals can do to help themselves stay motivated. Purposeful behaviour aimed at the maintenance of motivational states is generally referred to as motivational self-regulation. Examples of motivational self-regulation might include setting intermediate goals, organising one's time and energy, using positive self-talk, motivating oneself with images and self-rewards. The array of such strategies is described and classified by different authors under different names: effective motivational thinking (Ushioda, 2003) and motivational self-regulating (Ushioda, 2007), self-motivating strategies (Dörnyei, 2001), affective learning strategies (Oxford, 1990), and efficacy management (Wolters, 2003).

While the notion of self-regulation in L2 learning is described as being a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and behavioural processes (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 191) some authors also suggest that, together with all other elements of the learning process, self-regulation is also, at least partially, socially mediated. Quoting McCombs (1994) Ushioda (2003, 2007) argues that since learners' capacity for motivational self-regulation is a function of the degree of their awareness of their role as agents in the construction of their motivational states, a learning environment that fosters such awareness is crucial for the ongoing support of learners' motivation.

The implications of this last point are particularly significant for the participants in our study: as heritage language learners enrolled in traditional foreign language classes, they often need to use their self-regulative skills to meet the motivational challenges presented by elements of their learning environment that were not designed with their specific needs in mind. Indeed, the study will show evidence that learners are more likely to engage in self-regulative behaviour when they feel in control of their learning, and for the beneficial influence of interactions with people around them who encourage and support their sense of agency (e.g. Giulia, Francesco). Above all, an exploration of the self-regulative strategies employed by the participants in the study will help us understand the ways in which motivational self-regulation is influenced by their constructions of *Italianità*, ultimately suggesting that, while encouraging a sense of autonomy might be crucial in helping all language learners manage their motivation, in the case of heritage language learners it is especially important that such encouragement

also validates and supports the sense and ambitions of heritage identity that lie at the root of their motivation.

2.3 Identity and L2 motivation

Having established a general framework for the investigation of L2 motivation in the current study, the remainder of the chapter will offer a discussion of learner identity as a less-studied dimension of L2 motivation. As part of this discussion, I will present a range of conceptual tools useful for a micro-level analysis of the learners' experiences especially aimed at highlighting the links between the participants' heritage identity and their motivation to study Italian.

2.3.1 Identity and L2 learning: Current perspectives

The view that learner identity influences L2 motivation is not new. Some of the earliest and most influential theories of L2 motivation were aimed at explaining the correlation between motivation, (ethnic) group identity and language learning. Among these we find Gardner and Lambert's (1972) motivational studies, Giles and Byrne's (1982) intergroup model, Schumann's acculturation theory (1978) and situated language identity theory by Clément and colleagues (Clément & Noels, 1992; Noels & Clément, 1996; Noels, Pon, & Clément, 1996).

Over the past decade there has been an increasing interest among theorists and researchers in investigating the relationship between language acquisition and identity from sociocultural and poststructuralist perspectives. Much of this "social turn in SLA" (Block, 2003) has been characterised by a rejection of traditional views of identity (as illustrated in the studies above) as static, unitary and fixed towards an understanding of these as fluid, multiple, negotiable and created through social interaction. As Pavlenko and Blackledge (2003) explain, this new perspective "privileges a dynamic view of identities, with individuals continuously involved in the production of selves, positions of others, revision of identity narratives, and creations of new ones which valorise new modes of being and belonging" (p. 19).

Though most studies within this body of literature are not concerned with L2 motivation in traditional terms (i.e. with the perspectives presented in the previous sections), many describe the experiences of individual learners by discussing the reasons for their choices and by detailing identity processes which underlie their learning behaviour; by doing so they indirectly deal with aspects of the learners' motivation. A

focus on motivation as intention and choices for example is expressed by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) when they propose that "it is ultimately through their own intentions and agency that people decide to undergo or not undergo the frequently agonizing process of linguistic, cultural and personal transformation" that is L2 learning (p. 171). In a similar way, Pavlenko (2002) stresses the influence of identity on motivation when she points out that "recasting the notion of identity from unitary and stable into multiple and dynamic allows researchers to examine how identity options afforded by the L2 influence learners choices and learning trajectories" (p. 286). Because of the understated yet strong links between motivational and sociocultural and poststructuralist studies of SLA, the latter are seen as having much to contribute to our understanding of what motivates L2 learning, and this is particularly true of heritage language learning, where learner identity is potentially a salient factor influencing both reasons for and persistence in L2 learning.

2.3.2 Identity (re)construction and negotiation

One characteristic of sociocultural and poststructuralist approaches to L2 learning is the idea that this does not involve just the acquisition of a new set of grammatical, lexical and phonological forms, but often also a struggle to negotiate facets of one's identity to participate in or become a member of a certain community by gaining the "ability to communicate in the language of this community and act according to its particular norms" (Sfard, 1998, p. 6). Adopting such a view of L2 learning involves shifting the focus of investigation from language structure to issues of affiliation and belonging (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 156) and from the inner mental workings of the individual as an isolated learner to a consideration of learners as complex people operating in a variety of contexts where identities are continually created and negotiated.

The struggle to negotiate one's identity within target language (henceforth TL) social networks is stressed by Norton Pierce (1995) who, building on the work by Heller (1982) points out that language is the medium through which learners develop their TL identity, and through which learners gain or are denied access to social networks wherein opportunities to speak are created. The struggle this process involves finds illustration in her work involving five adult English learners in Canada, where Norton highlights the ways in which the learners' developing L2 identities are continuously challenged in and out of the classroom, and the ways in which they respond to such challenges by a strategic use of their personal experiences, talents and parallel identities

in order to maximise their access to the L2 and create new and more favourable realities for themselves.

This idea of language learning as a struggle for identity reconstruction is also central to the work of Kinginger (2003). The participant in her qualitative life-story study is Alice, an American learner of French, who embarks on her learning journey in order to gain education, cultural capital and refinement, and so to lift herself away from life experienced as a "downward spiral of transience, homelessness and hardship" in a bid to "imagine herself anew in a context where her social options are broadened" (2003, pp. 226, 219).

For both Norton and Kinginger's participants, language learning offers the possibility to advance one's social standing by improving the access to symbolic and material resources available to TL speakers. The process by which learners' expectations of the advantages that learning the L2 will afford them support their efforts through the negotiation of their L2 identity is, in many ways akin to motivation; however in order to best highlight its differences from more traditional motivational constructs, it is instead termed investment.

In her pioneering work, Norton Peirce (1995) challenged the static conceptualisations commonly associated with previous motivation models such as Deci & Ryan (1985) and Gardner & Lambert (1972). She maintained that investment is a more useful term than motivation as it "conceives of the language learner as having a complex social identity and multiple desires" (p. 17-18) rather than being fixed and static. Whereas motivation is traditionally seen as a trait of the language learner, investment refers to the complex, socially and historically constructed and dynamic relationship of the learner to the TL and their sometime ambivalent desire to learn and practice it (Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995). Furthermore, she argues that investment is more appropriate for explaining patterns of target language use in L2-speaking contexts, by capturing the relevance of economic metaphors, as learners of a second language "do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 17)

According to this view, to speak L2 is to invest in an identity as a speaker of L2, but because investment in L2 is closely bound up with changing social identities, a learner's investment in a language, unlike L2 motivation as previously conceptualised, is not fixed, but is changing over time and sometime contradictory.

A learner's interest in the development of the L2 as an elements of a 'new and improved' L2 identity is the reason why the concept of investment is especially apt to describe the experiences of the participants in our study, whose engagement with their heritage language is seen as principally guided by their perceptions of their own Italian identity and by their identity-related ambitions: whether these learners invest in a stereotypically Italian identity or simply in a version of themselves which is more in touch with their Italian heritage, the learning of their heritage language is inextricably linked to issues of identity that must be seen as crucial determinants of the direction and sustenance of their motivation, and as such deserve a degree of consideration in the current study.

2.3.3 Identity and imagination

In accord with neo-Vygotskian perspectives, Lave and Wenger (1991) view learning as a fundamentally social activity, whereby knowledge and understandings are negotiated in interaction with other people. In particular, they contend that learning can be understood in relation to communities of practice to which learners gradually gain fuller participation through engagement in community activities, interaction with more experienced members, and the gradual alignment of their practice with those of these experts.

Communities of practice may be "as broad as a society or culture, or as narrow as a particular language classroom" (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 148); they may be a real community in which a person has regular involvement (e.g. a school) or an *imagined community*, defined by Kanno and Norton (2003, p. 241) as "groups of people not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination". The term, initially coined by Anderson (1991) to describe how nation states use language to provide a sense of community to citizens, is commonly used in L2 learning studies to describe how some language learners are stimulated to invest in a second language according to the L2 communities they see or imagine themselves belonging to in the preset and/or future.

The motivational role of imagined communities is expressed by Murphey, Jin, & Li-Chi when they say "as learners want to belong to a community and construct their identities as members of the group, they invest energy and time into learning how to be like those members" (2005, p. 85). Such role is also highlighted by Kramsch (2006, p.

102) who comments on the power of imagination in motivating L2 learners in adolescence when identity formation is particularly significant:

> Like rap and hip hop, a foreign language can reveal unexpected meanings, alternative truths that broaden the scope of the sayable and the imaginable… Seduced by the foreign sounds, rhythms and meanings, and by the 'coolness' of native speakers, many adolescent learners strive to enter new, exotic worlds where they can be, or at least pretend to be, someone else, where they too can become 'cool' and inhabit their bodies in more powerful ways. (p. 102)

In Kinginger's study mentioned above (2003), Alice's struggle for a better future is motivated by her own romanticised vision of France as a picturesque and bucolic place populated by sophisticated, elegant people, whom she wishes to join in order to take on some of those characteristics and so improve her life. Similarly in Kanno (2000), Rui is a Japanese teenager who spent two thirds of his life in English-speaking countries who is however determined to maintain his Japanese language proficiency in order to maintain his access to Japanese society by his personal, idealised vision of Japan, which throughout his learning journey provides the impetus for particular actions and initiatives. Though Rui's private, imagined community has little resemblance to the real Japan he later experienced when he returned to the country, it nonetheless "created a powerful vision, giving him and important sense of direction" (2003, p. 243).

While these studies show that learners' imagined communities can represent a strong motivational factor, they also highlight the fact that clashes between one's imagination and reality can be demotivating, at times bringing L2 to a complete halt. For example Norton (2000, 2001) offers the story of Katarina, a Polish immigrant to Canada, who during an ESL class expresses her wish to take a computer course, only to be discouraged by the teacher on account of her English not being "good enough". As a result of the exchange, Katarina feels so insulted that she never returns to class. Norton argues that Katarina's decision is best explained by her investment into an imagined community of professionals, to which she saw herself as belonging. The teacher's comment positioned her as a mere immigrant, hence denying her the chance to gain access to her imagined community. According to Norton's interpretation, non-participation in this case resulted from a "disjuncture between Katarina's imagined community and the teacher's educational vision" (Norton & Kanno, 2003, p. 243). Similarly in the studies by Kinginger and Kanno mentioned above, the motivation derived by the visions of France and Japan is compromised when the learners experience these countries first hand, resulting in both cases in negative emotional reactions that lead to a decision to end L2 learning.

In the current investigation, just as the motivational role of the participants' identity images can help us explain their engagement and persistence in learning their heritage language, some instances of demotivation can be interpreted as resulting from irreconcilable differences between their own sense of belonging to particular L2 communities (real or imagined), and those afforded by their immediate learning and social context. Because of this, an exploration of the participants' imagination as relating to their *Italianità* and the Italian communities they may wish to belong to represents an integral part of the current investigation.

2.4 Identity vs. self-concept

Though it would be reasonable to think that the concepts of identity and self-concept are somewhat analogous in referring to an individual's representation of his or her own persona, the precise interrelation between the two terms can be rather difficult to determine as in the literature they tend to be dealt with as completely separate entities. As Walker points out (2004) this is perhaps because the two concepts are associated with different disciplinary paradigms: identity with social identity theories, and self-concept with psychology.

A fruitful approach to reconciling identity and self-concept is offered by Stevens (1996), who suggests that both personal and social identity reflect a dual dimension of the self. According to this view, by integrating how we view ourselves (personal identity) and how others see us (social identity), these two types of identity become complementary constituents of the self-concept, where self-concept is defined as "the amalgamation of all our perceptions and conceptions about ourselves which gives rise to our sense of personal identity" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 97).

By way of clarification, the current study generally agrees with the view of identity and self-concept proposed by Tajfel (1982) who suggests that while self-concept relates to an assumed *inner self at the individual level*, it may form only in reference to the individual's interaction to the *external world* (people, things and places), thus giving rise to identity at a collective level. Conceptually, therefore, the main difference between identity and self-concept seems to be that the first is understood to be external (created and negotiated during social intercourse), while the other is internal (a set of beliefs about who we are). It is accepted, however, that this distinction is largely artificial, because, as Tajfel points out, the internal self-concept is determined by social relationships, while the social personae we create in interaction are largely directed by

our internal self-concept. For this reason, one can never exist independently from the other and so the two can be aptly thought of as the two sides of the same coin.

A detailed theoretical discussion that can help elucidate the notion of self-concept and its role as a crucial determinant of linguistic behaviour is that offered by Walker (2004), who describes self-concept as a multifaceted notion comprising of a range of aspects:

1. affective: in terms of one's emotional make-up and personal history
2. social: to navigate intrapersonal and interpersonal interaction
3. cognitive/relational: a tool to conceptualize and represent the self in relation to the sociocultural environment
4. culture-specific: in terms of its definition, content and role
5. linguistic: as a representational and articulatory force (p. 125-126)

It is perhaps interesting to notice the parallels between these aspects of self-concepts and those included in sociocultural and constructionist definitions of identity delineated in the previous sections (2.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2). However, the real value of Walker's operationalisation of self-concept for the current study goes beyond articulating the already evident similarities between the notions of self-concept and identity, as the author proposes a view of self-concept that also links it to motivation when she describes it as "a tool for interpreting and organising one's inner and social world, which guides human behaviour" and as a "catalyst for human agency" (p. 126).

In fact, though not explicitly directed at investigating language learning motivation, Walker's study of the relationship between language proficiency and self-concept among migrants to New Zealand (2004) clearly highlights the motivational links between some migrants' sense of self and their feelings, attitudes and behaviours to do with their self-perceived mother tongue proficiency in the face of the sociolinguistic discontinuities brought about by the migration process. Among the study's findings we notice, for instance, how some of the subjects' engagement in particular language-related behaviours (e.g. using their mother tongue for writing personal letters and reading newspapers in their original language) is linked to their sense of their own ethnicity associated with their self-perceived language proficiency, and ultimately driven by the resulting desire to maintain or deepen their connection with their original culture (p. 343). Clearly, this demonstrates a causal relationship between aspects of the subjects' self-concept and their agency in dealing with the changes involved in adapting to life in a new country; a relationship that can, in many ways, be considered analogous to that

between Italian self-concept and agency in L2 learning which constitutes the main focus of the current study.

While Walker's study only hints at the motivational role of aspect of the self-concept of language users/learners as a way to explore more general issues to do with the continuity of self throughout the migration process, the motivational implications of language learners' sense of self have recently become the focus of a fresh line of theory and research in L2 learning motivation which seeks to explore the ways in which a learner's sense of who they are and who they wish to become influences their motivation in studying a second/foreign language. The following section is dedicated to a review of relevant works within such line of research.

2.5 Self-concept and motivation

While sociocultural and poststructuralist approaches to L2 learning stress the role of learner' multiple identities as constructed and negotiated socially, traditional L2 motivation has followed the lead of motivational psychology in focussing on the motivational role of aspects of the learners' self-concept.

Recently, drawing on the insights of self psychology (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006; Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989), Dörnyei (2005, 2009) has developed a new conceptualisation of L2 motivation based on the concept of the *ideal self*, which according to Markus and Nurius (1986) represent individuals' ideas of "what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" and so can be thought of "the cognitive manifestations of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears, and threats" (p. 954). Complementary to the ideal self, is the concept of *ought-to self*, which refers to the attributes that one believes one ought to possess and so can exert motivational power through social pressure. In Dörnyei's model, the ideal and the ought-to selves provide a conceptual link between the self-concept and L2 motivation in that learners who have a specific ideal/ought-to L2 self will be strongly motivated to work towards becoming L2-users because of the psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between one's current and one's ideal/ought-to self.

Though in accord with the psychological studies that inspired it the focus of this theory is on aspects of learners' individual mind, the formation of the ideal self and of the complementary ought-to self are seen as occurring within and through the social domains in which the individual operates. Markus and Nurius (1986) explain that "the

pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particular sociocultural and historical context" (p. 954), thus linking the theory to sociocultural and social constructivist views of motivation as the result of dynamic interaction between the personal and the social spheres (see section 2.2.2) and with conceptualisations of L2 learning as the pursuit of imagined communities (see 2.4.2.2).

Literature dealing with L2 ideal and ought-to selves is part of an emerging research domain, however some interesting studies have already begun to emerge. Lamb (2004) for example, draws on qualitative self-report data from junior high school students in Indonesia integrating the concepts of ideal and ought-to selves with concepts of identity to conclude that their motivation to learn English may partly be shaped by the pursuit of a bicultural identity – that is, a global or world citizen identity on the one hand, and a sense of local or national identity as an Indonesian on the other. Students may thus aspire to "a vision of an English-speaking globally-involved but nationally responsible future self" (p. 16).

Theories relating to L2 learners ideal and ought-to selves seem particularly suitable for an explanation of L2 motivation in situations where an actual TL community does not exist or is not available to the learner, and as such it can be especially useful in understanding the motivational implication of the identity ambitions of heritage language learners such as those in the current study, for whom the imagined heritage language community is often geographically or temporally removed. Regardless of the nature of the language community the learners might wish to join, the ways they imagine themselves at the end of the language learning process can instigate and sustain their engagement with their heritage language and with heritage language speakers, and for this reason, a consideration of the participants' imagination in relation to their learning objectives represents a central element of the current investigation. Furthermore, a consideration of the applicable ought-to selves and their interactions with the learners ideal selves can throw light on how harmony and disharmony between self-concept and social identity can impinge on the motivational process, thus helping us understand the complex and at times motivationally problematic interrelations between a person's own idea of their *Italianità* and those upheld and promulgated by learning institutions, TL communities and society at large.

2.6 Summary and conclusion

The current study proposes a view of motivation as a complex, multidimensional and dynamic state of arousal that originates in and is maintained by the individual learner in interaction with the world around them. While many concepts and processes described in traditional L2 motivation theory and research can be useful in framing its conceptualisation, its most socially interactive aspects and its links to issues of learner identity are better explored through the adoption of once less orthodox (but increasingly becoming more mainstream) motivational frameworks, such as those provided by sociocultural and poststructuralist approaches to L2 learning and psychological theories of the ideal self. In exploring the motivational role of the self-perceived heritage identity of a group of learners of Italian descent, the current study employs a synthesis of the perspectives described in the previous sections, in order to investigate and represent the highly personal and contextualised nature of each learner's motivation.

Chapter three: Heritage language learning

3.1 Introduction

Having proposed a framework for the exploration of motivation and identity in the learning experiences of the participants to the study, I now move to a discussion of the status of the participants as heritage language learners through a consideration of the links between identity and language learning motivation that have been shown to be particularly relevant in the learning experiences of this unique class of learners. The chapter will close by situating the study within a body of works relating to the learning of Italian as a heritage language in countries with a prominent history of Italian migration (Australia and Canada) and finally within previous research on learners and speakers of Italian language in New Zealand.

3.2 On choosing definitions: Heritage language

Though the exact definition of "heritage language" (henceforth HL) is contested and has been the focus of much discussion among scholars (for reviews see Fishman, 2001; Valdés, 2001; Wiley, 2001), in its most general meaning the expression is used to identify languages other than the dominant language(s) in a given social context. While North American scholars and educators have recently adopted this term as a way to avoid the negative and/or limited connotations of expressions such as *migrant*, *ethnic*, *minority*, *indigenous* and *colonial* language, in Europe, Australia and New Zealand the term community language is used instead. It must be noted however that *heritage* and *community* are not necessarily interchangeable identifiers, that the differences between their meanings and the shortcomings and ambiguities associated with each term have been highlighted by sizable amount of literature (for reviews see Hornberger, 2005; Wiley, 2005) and that no consensus has yet been reached regarding the most appropriate terminology.

The choice of *heritage* over *community* for the current study reflects subtle differences in connotation between the two terms that I believe are significant in defining the focus of the enquiry. The term *community language* has collective and inclusive connotations that tend to draw attention to the fact that languages are used in a range of shared social and cultural contexts (Clyne, 1991b). Until very recently, community language research has largely reflected this by focussing on the language

experiences of groups rather than of individuals, by collecting data on the maintenance and shift of community languages, and by arguing for the legitimisation and the continuing existence of immigrant and indigenous languages groups as part of multilingual societies. On the other hand, the meanings of the term *heritage* are related to history, ancestry, and cultural and familial ties. Because of its associations with the past, the term has been described as less than suitable for discussions about living, thriving language communities (Baker & Jones, 1998); however, its semantic links to the ideas of inheritance, ancestry, and tradition are seen as favourable to the current study, in that they point to a personal interpretation of identities and ethnic background, and to a consideration of diversity rather than commonalities. Theory and research on heritage languages and heritage language learners reflect the less collective connotation of the term by focussing more on the specific learning needs of HL learners through considerations of personal experiences, which has recently included some illuminating studies of the links between HL, heritage identity, and HL motivation (see following sections for details). Most importantly, the term can be used to suggest individuals' connections to linguistic communities that might be temporally and/or geographically remote, and that might not be thought of as homogenous and cohesive groups. This last point is particularly relevant when considering the communities of Italian speakers that play a role in the learning experiences of the participants to our study, communities that, as we will discover in the following chapters, are defined by the participants' personal backgrounds, histories and experiences and thus do not often correspond to objectively identifiable "living, thriving language communities" (Baker & Jones, 1998) existing in the learners' actual social surroundings or anywhere else except perhaps in their own minds.

3.2.1 Heritage language learner (HLL)

Another ongoing discussion in the field of heritage language education concerns what types of learners should be included under the heritage language label, with the central question being largely focused on whether a definition should be based on one's proficiency in the HL or in one's affiliation to a particular ethnolinguistic group.

Supporters of proficiency-based definitions argue that, from a pedagogical point of view, levels of proficiency in an ancestral language are important because of their implications for the process of language acquisition: although a learner might be a member of a HL group, without any language, their learning process will closely

resemble that of any other monolingual student of a foreign language (henceforth FL). In order to highlight and address the differences between the two processes, Valdés (2005) limits her definition of HLL to "a student of a language who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken. The student might speak or merely understand the heritage language and be, to some degree, bilingual in English and the heritage language" (p. 412).

A broader definition is given by Fishman (2001), for whom HL refers to any ancestral language (indigenous, colonial or immigrant) which may or might not be a language regularly used in the home or in the community, hence basing his definition of HLL not on proficiency but on what Kondo-Brown (2003) calls "the association one establishes between one's identity and the ancestral language" (p. 2). According to this view, the term HL is used to suggest a connection to past traditions and the maintenance of ancestral languages (Wiley & Valdes, 2000) and might even include true beginners who developed an interest in their ancestral language and culture after generations of little or no family connections with the target language and culture.

Scalera (2003), goes even further in suggesting that a HLL can be defined simply as "someone who has a personal emotional connection to a language other than English. Somewhere in their personal histories there is a link to that language that is important" (p. 1). This definition, the author argues, acknowledges the crucial power of language to shape our thoughts and self-definition and challenges educators to study the ways in which students' personal and emotional connections to their heritage impact their learning experiences. Her own personal experience is offered as an example:

> I cannot speak, read, write or understand Italian even though I grew up in a home where Italian was spoken by my mother and grandmother. The only time they used Italian was at 5.30 in the morning before everybody else was awake…. My mother and grandmother thought that I was sleeping and couldn't understand what they were saying. During these conversations I was usually able to understand the essence of what they were saying, and so was always far ahead of everyone else on family gossip. One morning for example my mother revealed she was pregnant with her fourth child. She said it in Italian and I understood it. I have no measurable functional abilities in Italian, however some of my most powerful childhood memories occurred in that language. The ability to understand my mother and my grandmother's conversations helped me in my foreign language classes. (p. 1)

A proficiency-based definition of HLL would not be applicable to the participants to the current inquiry, whose Italian skills at the time of approaching the study of their HL ranged from none whatsoever to near-fluency in an Italian dialect. Instead, what unifies the five stories discussed in the following chapters is precisely the "personal emotional connection" to the HL described by Scalera above, a basic connection that, in spite of

significant differences in background, history, and personality, lies at the root of each of the participants' desire to learn Italian and acts like a kind of compass by which their ongoing learning behaviour is directed. In view of this point, the study adopts a definition of HLL based on ethnolinguistic affiliation.

3.2.2   Heritage language vs. foreign language

Because of the worldwide shortage of language programmes specifically designed for HLLs, many individuals from minority language backgrounds who wish to study their ancestral language in formal school settings have no choice but to take traditional foreign language classes. Though, as yet, little research has examined in detail the personal experiences of HLLs in traditional foreign language classes, concerns have long been voiced that these situations can be inefficient and prove very frustrating for HLLs (Kondo-Brown, 2003, p. 4) and that such students might be wasting their time in attending courses that are not tailored to their particular needs (Marcos, 1999). In response to the need of designing language programmes that more closely suit the needs of HLLs, a large body of literature within the larger field of heritage language studies has been devoted to the exploration of aspects of language teaching (especially curriculum and testing/assessment) that are particularly relevant to heritage language learners (see Kondo-Brown, 2003; Lacorte & Canabal, 2003 for reviews). From such an educational perspective, proficiency in the HL has commonly been assumed as the main distinction between heritage and foreign language students. Advocating such a view, Valdés (2001; 2005) has highlighted the immense diversity of social and linguistic circumstances in which HLLs can find themselves and the resulting wide range of proficiencies that exist among this class of learners. Central to her argument for the development of specific guidelines for teaching HLLs is the recognition that traditional models of second and foreign language learning do not apply to learners that have some level of receptive language skills in the HL (Valdés, 2001). The same perspective is found in the work of Kagan and Dillon, (2001) who, having reviewed the language proficiencies of HL and non-HL students in the same foreign language classrooms, argue that for pedagogical purposes heritage speakers cannot be viewed either as native speakers of the target language or as foreign language learners, and are best treated as a separate population requiring their own curriculum and materials (p. 508). Belief in the key role of HL proficiency as a discriminating factor between HL and FL learners is so widespread among educators that it has been adopted as the main criteria for entrance by

the rising numbers of post-secondary institutions in the US and Canada that are now offering classes especially designed for HLLs. Educators involved in these programs believe that the learners in their classes have linguistic skills beyond those of their peers in traditional FL classes and that they are able to learn at a much faster rate (Kondo-Brown, 2003, p. 5).

On the other hand, some also suggest that a crucial distinction between foreign language learners and HLLs can be made on the basis of elements other than how much of the language the students already know. Lacorte and Canabal (2003), for example point out that research has demonstrated that HLLs are different from traditional foreign language students with regard to their sociolinguistic background, which indeed might imply differences in their linguistic competencies, but also and above all in pedagogically significant affective dimensions of their learning, and in particular of their motivation. They propose that HLLs might distinguish themselves from non-HLLs in the FL classroom in their reasons for studying the language, which might include seeking "greater understanding of their culture or seek to connect with members of their family" or to "reinforce the development of their own identity as members of a group with specific cultural characteristics" (p. 116). Such motivations, many believe, have important consequences for learning behaviour, and hence must also be kept in consideration when teaching HLLs in foreign language settings. For example Kagan (2005) suggests that while placement of students in HL programmes should not be based exclusively on their emotional attachment to the language, their reasons for studying should be used as a guide in determining the content of such programmes. She cites data from a survey of heritage learners of Russian conducted at UCLA in 2000 in which 16 out of 41 students named "preserving family ties" as the main reason for studying Russian, and in which 31 mentioned their desire to preserve Russian culture. In considering such figures, the author argues for the inclusion of cultural content such as literature, film and poetry in programmes designed for HLLs, and for the adoption of a cross-cultural perspective that would clarify the learners' home culture through comparison with the dominant one (p. 219).

This last point is particularly pertinent to the experiences of the participants in the current study who, despite their personal connection to the language, its culture and its speakers, find themselves in traditional foreign language courses designed in accordance with the needs of non-heritage learners. The unavoidable clashes between personal and course objectives in such situations are potentially problematic for the HLLs'

motivation, as they can bring students to perceive contents, tasks, or even the whole course as unsuitable for their own needs, at times even triggering identity struggles with instructors and peers which can prove highly counterproductive in terms of motivation.

3.3 Heritage language learners and identity

As highlighted by Lacorte & Canabal (2003) in the previous section, central to many learners' wish to develop their HL is their desire to maximise their affiliation with existing communities, or to cultivate their personal relationships with ancestry, making the learning of HL a tool to increase ethnic identity. The links between HL and identity seem so significant in fact that it is not surprising to find that a vast part of HL research and theory have explored this connection, often noting that many HLLs are motivated to learn the HL because they feel that language is a part of their own cultural heritage that they do not want to lose or want to (re)gain (for examples see Chinen, 2005; Cho, 2000; Cho, Cho, & Tse, 1997; Feuerverger, 1991; He, 2006; Lee, 2002; Ryu Yang, 2003; Tse, 1996, 2000; Wen, 1997; You, 2005).

Recently research into HLLs has begun to open to more detailed explorations of HLLs' subjective interpretations of ethnic identity and of its links to heritage languages in an attempt to better understand the specific roles that these can play in the learning experiences of individual learners. In this regard, a significant classification of HLLs based on Erickson and Shultz's model of primary and secondary group membership (1982) is discussed by Carreira (2004) as an illustration of the ways in which HLLs can differ from each other with respect to their relationship to the community that lays claim to their language of study. According to such a classification, a first type of HL learner (HLL1) can be characterised as having primary membership in the HL community. For these students, the learning of the HL is a way to lay deeper roots in a community of which they already consider themselves members. Examples of this type of HLL are common in the studies cited in the previous paragraph, where HLLs have grown up with a home language other than English, are commonly surrounded by communities of HL speakers, and where parents and members of the community assume significant roles in the socialisation and language development of the learners. For a second type of learners (HLL2), developing the HL is a means to acquire the ways of a community of non-primary membership, reaching from the outside of a group of people that might be geographically and/or temporally removed from the learner, as in the case of fourth or fifth-generation descendants of migrants to a country who wish to acquire the language

43

of their ancestors. In some cases, because of the remoteness of the community of speakers, these HLLs might not have access to instruction in their particular language of ancestry, and their choice of language might be a case of the "next best thing" (Carreira, 2004), as it is indeed the case with some of the HLLs in the current study, for whom the *standard* variety of Italian learned in class is only an approximation of the regional dialect originally spoken by their immigrant ancestors.

Though the HLL1/HLL2 distinction can be useful in beginning to understand the range that exists with regard to personal constructions of identities among HLLs, the two categories are still just a rough generalisation. Depending on their particular background and context, many heritage learners might 'fall through the cracks' and not be accurately described by either category. Matters are further complicated if we assume a view of group membership or identity as multiple, flexible and dependent on one's interaction with others, or, in other words, if in considering the implications of HLLs for the development of their HL, we apply the observations about identity that have recently revolutionised much of SLA theory and research (section 2.4). From such a perspective, HLLs' ethnic identities are no longer fixed and unitary: they are chosen, constructed and performed by these learners through interactions with different individuals and groups of people, including teachers, peers and speakers of the HL; they are changeable and complex, and interact with other facets of the learner's identity to make each individual unique. In the words of Hornberger & Wang (2008):

> Regardless of how we categorize them, HLLs do learn to use one, two or more languages in isolation. Consequently there is no single profile of HLLs…. We adopt an ecological view of HLL identity. Specifically, we view HLLs as individuals with familial or ancestral ties to a language other than English who exert their agency in determining if they are HLLs of the language. (p. 6-7)

This ecological view of HLL identity is indeed reflected in the highly personal and context-dependent conceptualisations of Italian identity that are found in the participants' stories, which reveal not one, but many types of *Italianità*, all clearly implicated in the motivational processes underlying the participants' learning journeys.

3.4 Heritage language learning motivation

Whether explicitly expressed or subtly implied, issues to do with learner motivation pervade a great part of the literature on heritage language learning, and this is largely because the motivation of HLLs is universally recognised as one of the key elements distinguishing them from other types of language learners (see section 3.2.3). The motivation of HLLs is seen as so distinctive and important in fact, that an understanding

of it is often advocated as the main source of guiding principles for the construction of a pedagogical framework for the teaching of HLs (Lee & Kim, 2007, p. 160), and hence crucial for the development of the field itself.

It is therefore somewhat surprising to find that there has been little empirical research focussing on the motivation of HLLs (Lee & Kim, 2007; Lynch, 2003; van Deusen-Scholl, 2003) and that most of the HL studies that do include a discussion of motivation have focussed on this only as reasons to study a HL – hence neglecting the temporal dimension of motivation – and often describing it by means of outdated motivational paradigms, such as purely in terms of integrative versus instrumental orientation. Within this body of studies, some authors have emphasised the instrumental value of HLs, highlighting the links between HL development and the academic and economic success that can come from it, arguing that proficiency in a HL can represent a clear academic advantage and can allow for better job opportunities (Carreira, 2001; Cho, 2000; Cho et al., 1997; Crawford, 1999; Kagan & Dillon, 2001; Lee, 2002). Taking a more integrative perspective, others have emphasised the role of cultural motivations associated with ethnic identity formation and cultural awareness, and the personal empowerment and social advantages that come from a better understanding of one's heritage culture (Cho et al., 1997; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Tosi, 1984a, 1984b). Ultimately, most studies discussing instrumental and integrative motivation of HLLs have shown that both orientations are commonly present in the motivation of this type of learner (Cho et al., 1997; Feuerverger, 1991; Geisherik, 2004; Kagan & Dillon, 2001; Kondo-Brown, 2001; Lee, 2002; Wen, 1997).

Outside the integrative-instrumental dichotomy framework, some researchers have explored the motivational role of individual psychological factors such as causal attribution and goal setting theory (Kondo-Brown, 2001, 2003) as well as goal salience, goal valence and self-efficacy (Lee & Kim, 2007). Independently from the particular theories and definitions used, the studies cited so far have consistently shown that the language learning motivation of HLLs is closely linked to their ethnic heritage particularly in terms of reasons for studying and language learning goals, but also that issues related to the learners' perceptions of their heritage/ethnic identity can influence ongoing motivational states, hindering and/or supporting their efforts as learning unfolds.

More recently, some researchers have begun investigating HL motivation from newer perspectives beyond older psychological and socio-psychological L2 theories, and

started exploring motivation as linked to processes of identity creation and looking at the ways in which learners' social interactions in and out of the classrooms can influence their HL motivation. For example Syed (2001) conducted a longitudinal study that investigated the "patterns of thinking and belief" (2001, p. 127) (see section 2.2.1) underlying the learning experiences of HLLs. The study shows that for many HLLs learning their ancestral language is a path to forging a new identity which includes elements of their cultural heritage but that also reflects social and familial expectations, and is to be seen as a part of a more general process of personal development and maturation, which includes finding their place in a multilingual society. The author's discussion offers a multifaceted view of motivation as interrelated with a complex and changeable identity as the product of personal drives and external influences that is compatible with views of motivation and identity adopted by this study (see section 2.4). It also clearly shows how classroom elements can aid in validating the students' needs and backgrounds by adapting elements to their specific requirements, hence supporting motivation and interest.

Weger-Guntharp's (2006) longitudinal qualitative inquiry focuses on learners for whom the learning of their HL is key to their development of self-identity in spite of the very limited exposure they have had to the language in the home environment. The author follows a group of such students in the context of a first semester course of Chinese as a foreign language at a U.S. university and draws on theories of motivation, HL learning and social identity to illustrate the complex nature of their HL motivation as linked to the construction of complex identities. Interestingly, the findings paint a picture of the motivational process not as a linear path from intention to action, but as a net of intricate interrelations of desires and investments influenced by both the learners' interaction with their social environment and the dynamics of the classroom, often involving struggles of power between the HLLs, their peers and their teachers.

The identity struggles inherent in the process of learning one's HL have also been highlighted by Potowski (2001), who in her study of HLLs in an FL classroom, illustrates the motivational challenges HL students face in having to deal with the teachers' and other students' positioning of them as reflected by their unreasonable expectations concerning their knowledge of the FL, as well as from ordinary classroom situations and interactions (such as receiving teacher feedback) which are often interpreted by HL students as signs of disrespect or disregard of their cultural identity.

Studies such as those by Syed (2001), Weger-Guntharp (2007) and Potowski (2001) are important in that they illustrate facets of HLLs' motivation that had previously been ignored, such as a view of motivation as more than just the reasons for undertaking the learning of the HL, and of motivated behaviour as inevitably linked to the learners' ongoing constructions of their own heritage identity. The applicability and importance of studies of HL identity as linked to motivation is stressed by Hornberger & Wang (2008) when they write that the decision to learn and use an HL "represents the dynamic interface of ability, opportunity incentive, individual and social constraints and personal choices…. Given this state of affairs, we contend that language educators, language planners and language users must make concerted efforts to address these issues" (p. 15). In this sense, an exploration of issues of identity that are specifically pertinent to students with a HL background, and of how such issues influence their motivation, can useful in identifying classroom dynamics and patterns of learning behaviour that are specific to this class of learners, thus representing a potentially important source of pedagogical guidelines for the teaching of HLs.

3.5 Italian as a heritage language

The following section offers a first look at the historical and linguistic background of HLLs of Italian in New Zealand as revealed by a review of the existing studies of speakers and learners of Italian in this country. In preparing to write about the data I collected from HLLs of Italian in Wellington, I have also found it useful to review the existing literature on Italian as a heritage language in countries where varieties of this language exist within social and linguistic contexts that most resemble that of the Italian community in Wellington. Among these, research on the linguistic and language learning practices of Italian Australians and Italian Canadians have been particularly illuminating, as they often relate to students of Italian ancestry who, while retaining strong familial, cultural and emotional connection to their Italian roots, are often English monolingual for whom learning and speaking their ancestral language is consciously undertaken to explore and deepen their sense of *Italianità*. A summary of this body of research is presented below.

3.5.1 Italian language in Canada

Today's Italian community in Canada is the result of some seven hundred thousand migrants entering Canada in the last one hundred years. Differently from immigrants

from the United States, where the bulk of Italian migration took place before World War II, most of the original Italian migrants settled in Canada in the decade 1951-1961, when according to the Canadian census figures, the number of Italians in Canada nearly tripled, from 150,000 to just below 450,000. This wave of migration brought to Canada people from both the north and the south of Italy, mainly from rural and coastal areas with a high rate of illiteracy and with mostly regional dialects as first languages.

The politics of multiculturalism adopted by the Canadian government is aimed at promoting the preservation of the numerous ethnic languages that exist within the country through cultural and artistic events and organisations, and through the teaching of community languages in schools. Currently the languages spoken in Canada amount to more than 80; Italian is among these, being, according to the 2001 Canadian census, the first language of 371,200 people across the territory (Statistics Canada, 2001). This makes Italian one of the most widely spoken non-official languages in Canada, specifically the fourth most spoken language after English, French and Chinese. Italian language is taught in primary and secondary schools in Ontario and Quebec and in universities across the country. Maintenance of Italian in Canada is aided by the extensive range of Italian newspapers and by the recently opened television channel for the broadcasting of Italian programmes.

There has certainly been extensive sociolinguistic research on the Italian language and its speakers in Canada. Much of this research has focussed on the linguistic practices of the Italian-Canadian community in relation to the ways Italian as a 'transplanted' language has come to satisfy the communicative needs of the migrants in the form of Italiese (the Italian-English contact language) and its lexical and grammatical innovations (Auer, 1991; Danesi, 1984, 1986, 1987; Pietropaolo, 1974; Vizmuller-Zocco, 1987). The social uses of Italian in Canada have also been documented through discussions of language choice and codeswitching across various contexts (Di Sciullo, Van Amerigen, Cedergren, & Pupier, 1976; Labrie, 1989, 1990, 1999; Labrie & Deshaies, 1989; Silvestri, 1990), as well as of issues relating to language attitudes, maintenance and shift (Bettoni & Rubino, 1996; Tosi, 1991).

Research on heritage language learning and heritage language pedagogy in teaching students with Italian background has been scarce. Among the few studies available, Feuerverger (1989) investigated the relationships across language use patterns in the home, different formats of the Canadian Heritage Language program and subjective perceptions of ethnolinguistic vitality among eighth-grade HLLs of Italian in Toronto,

highlighting, among other less relevant findings, that greater access to the HL at home corresponds to more positive perceptions of ethnolinguistic vitality, hence confirming the existence of a positive relationship between ethnic identification and HL retention (p. 64). More interesting insights into the personal learning experiences of Canadian HLLs of Italian are also offered by a later study by the same author (Feuerverger, 1991), whose discussion of qualitative data from a small group of university Italian HLLs stressed the motivating effects of feelings of pride and belonging triggered by visits to the ancestral homeland, as well as the dangers to HL maintenance deriving from the cultural gap between immigrant parents from villages of Southern Italy and their Toronto-born children.

More recently, Frances Giampapa (2003) took up a postmodernist framework to investigate the ways second and third-generation Italo-Canadian youths negotiate their identities through their everyday language practices. Though not centred on the learning of Italian as a HL, the study offers a detailed treatment of constructions of *Italianità* generated by both the society at large and the Italian community itself. Such identity constructions or types of *Italianità* act as identity landmarks according to which the participants position themselves. The study shows that the Italian Canadian informants draw on different aspects of their identity in different situations and with different interlocutors, emphasising only certain aspects of their *Italianità* each time, having to negotiate some aspects of their complex social identity when these clash with what is most 'valuable' in the social market place.

The existence of multiple notions of *Italianità*, and of the interaction of personal and societal versions of these seems particularly pertinent to a study of learning of a heritage language as a process of identity (re)construction. In the current study, where learner motivation is seen as intimately related to personal identity ambitions which are being continuously shaped by interactions with the surrounding world, an understanding of how different types of *Italianità* are constructed and negotiated is crucial to understanding the students' choices to do with their learning and thus to a faithful portrayal of their language learning journeys.

3.5.2 Italian language in Australia

As in Canada, the greatest wave of migration from Italy to Australia took place in the years between 1950 and the end of the 1960s. According to Castles (1992) the number of migrants arriving every year peaked in the decade 1951-1961, when more than 18,000

new arrivals were counted for each year. Not unlike the Italians who in the same period created a new life in many other countries in the world, Italian migrants to Australia mainly came from small rural centres of the most depressed regions at the time (Campania, Calabria, Veneto, Sicily) and had a regional dialect as their first language and Italian as their second. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Italian children grew up in Australia in tightly-knit communities where it was possible to develop both Italian, dialects and English: thus many people of this generation often became trilingual. During the years of mass migration Italian was first introduced into many Australian secondary schools and universities as a 'language of culture', taught by curricula with strong literary and grammatical emphasis which did not suit the learning needs of the migrants' children (Rubino, 2002). The Italian communities' response to this was to set up their own Saturday schools to promote the study of Italian language and culture among the children of migrants. Finally, in the late 1970s, following the Australian move from assimilationist policy to the current multicultural policy, many Australian states introduced the teaching of community languages into the curricula of primary schools, a move that would make Italian the most studied language other than English in Australia (Di Biase, 1989).

Sociolinguistic enquiry into the Australian Italian community began in earnest in the 1980s. At macro level, Clyne (1991) and later Clyne and Kipp (1996; 1997) used the Australian census data on language use to measure changes in use of community languages and to identify some of the socio-demographic factors influencing maintenance and shift, while at micro level Bettoni (1985a; 1985b) studied the process of anglicisation among Italian speakers and explored correlations between types and amounts of transfer with various kinds of social, demographic and linguistic factors.

A number of studies made use of a social psychological paradigm to explore attitudes towards the main varieties spoken by Italo-Austalians (dialects and English/dialect or English/Italian mixtures) (Bettoni & Gibbons, 1988; Gibbons & Ashcroft, 1995), while others looked at the influence of specific core values in their level of language maintenance (Chiro & Smolicz, 1994; Smolicz, 1981).

Though to my knowledge no Australian study has specifically looked at HLLs' motivation to study Italian, researchers have begun to show interest in the ways Italo-Australians are today constructing their Italian identities. Baldassar (1993; 1994) for example studied the construction of *Italianità* in a group of young Italian-Australian people in Perth and found clear signs of their adoption of many aspects of Italian culture,

especially in their use of space, clothing and social networks. Although Baldassar's study suggests that these young people's identity can have more salient elements than language, it also suggests that the adoption of markedly Italian identities might lead to an increased use of Italian language, thus highlighting the link between personal sense of heritage identity and motivation to learn one's ancestral language.

Migliorino (2000) conducted a small qualitative project to explore the construction of Italianness among young third-generation Italians and concluded "there is both a discernable and accessible Italo-Austalian culture that young third-generation children can opt into and are doing so in large numbers" (p. 421). Though the study focuses on the Italianness as mainly defined by experiences, behaviours, and cultural values other than language proficiency or use, Migliorino's study also acknowledges the important role of Italian language in the maintenance of identity and culture.

A closer connection between identity and language is suggested by Chiro and Smolicz (1993; 1994) who in their studies of the evaluations of Italian cultural values by a group of tertiary students of Italian ancestry, show a higher rate of Italian language use among the students who positioned themselves as 'Italophiles' (for their positive evaluations of Italo-Australian cultural values) than among the students that conformed to the dominant culture or expressed overall negative attitudes towards aspects of Italo-Australian culture.

Speculating on the bearing that a possible Italian cultural revival could have on the future of Italian language in Australia, Rubino (2002) concludes:

> Students have confirmed that a good Italian proficiency enjoys high prestige and elicits positive attitudes among Italo-Australian youth, even among those who do not speak it (…). Overall, while there is limited evidence available as yet, it seems likely that a link between an Italo-Australian Identity and language competence and use still exists. In the process of negotiating self-identification, (better) language competence and (higher) language use may well mark a stronger in-group membership. (p. 9)

3.5.3 Italian language in New Zealand

Most New Zealanders of Italian ancestry today are descendants of the great number of Italian migrants that arrived in New Zealand through migratory chains that originated in Italy around the 1890's. The most notable of these chains from Italy originated in the southern localities of Massa Lubrense near Sorrento and Stromboli, a volcanic island in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Migrants from these two centres were the first to settle in the Wellington area of Eastbourne, where they quickly developed the first Italian fishing village in New Zealand. Although today most of the people who consider themselves to be of Italian ethnicity in New Zealand are to be found in the Auckland region (Statistics

New Zealand, 2006), the Italian community of Wellington is still generally considered the country's Italian community par excellence and as such it has been the subject of much written material, academic and otherwise, which has attempted to describe various aspects of Italian migration to this region. The main Italian settlement in Wellington is found in the area of Island Bay which Italian migrants began to inhabit in the 1920s, when many Strombolani fishermen from Eastbourne moved across the bay attracted by better fishing. The other main settlement of Italians in Wellington is that of Avalon in the Hutt valley, where mostly migrants from the Italian provinces of Pistoia, Belluno and Treviso established themselves before World War I and started cultivating the land of the Hutt river valley, growing market vegetables and especially tomatoes.

As it is clear from the history of the community, the Italians in Wellington do not represent a unified and homogeneous group of people, but the community is instead made up of many small groups that originated in different parts of Italy, reached New Zealand at different times and settled in different areas. The Italians who originally settled in Wellington mainly came from three Italian areas: the Veneto (Belluno, Treviso), Campania (Massa Lubrense, Capri, Sorrento) and Sicily (Stromboli) regions. The origins and development of all these groups had a marked effect on the linguistic situation of the community as a whole, and especially on the linguistic repertoire of its first and second-generation speakers. According to the general sociolinguistic situation in Italy at the time of the first migrations, and of the socio-economic conditions of the typical migrants described in Bettoni (1985b), the linguistic repertoire of the Italians who reached New Zealand was, until well after the end of World War II, in most cases a spoken knowledge of their local variety (dialect). It is thought that in Italy after the war dialect-Italian bilingualism became more widespread, but in general the vast majority of migrants who arrived before the 1960s would have had a dialect as their first language. As has been noted by researchers who have looked at Italian migrant communities abroad, it is also very likely that, together with their original language or languages, the migrants took with them attitudes to these varieties born out of the diglossic situation, and more specifically the contemplation of Italian as the ideal language and the prestigious variety of educated Italians, versus the view of the dialect as the language of simple, uneducated and unrefined folk.

With migration to anglophone New Zealand, the Italians had to add English to their linguistic repertoire. Not having had any contact with this language before, they had to learn it as a second language without any formal instruction when they got to New

Zealand. The process was particularly difficult for the early migrants due to the relative geographical and social isolation in which they found themselves.

Although no specific data is available on the linguistic development of the second-generation Italians in Wellington, we can perhaps assume the same processes observed in the Australian and Canadian Italian communities also took place in Wellington, where most probably the children of the original migrants in all likelihood first came into contact with and learned English at school. While, before school age the children were raised in the regional dialect of the parents (and perhaps a small percentage also in Italian) and retained these varieties in the family domain, for the majority, English became the language of all other domains, quickly becoming the dominant language for the second and following generations.

Like Canada and Australia, New Zealand is a relatively young culture that since its creation has been the target of extensive migration from a wide range of sources, contributing to its status as a multi-ethnic and multilingual society. Unlike Canada and Australia, however, New Zealand has no official language policy giving direction or special assistance to the teaching learning or maintenance of immigrant languages (Peddie, 2003, p. 14). As a result of this, the teaching of Italian as a heritage language in New Zealand has been largely left in the hands of individual immigrant communities, leading to the emergence of Italian Sunday schools for children of immigrant background as part of the activities organised by various Italian social clubs around the country. Adult heritage learners on the other hand, have often had no choice other than to study Italian in traditional foreign language classes, such as those offered by community education institutions (often in form of evening classes) and by universities.

Studies of Italian language in New Zealand are scant. Specific information about the language proficiency, patterns of language use and language attitudes within the community can be found in a study by Camille Plimmer (1994), who conducted a sociolinguistic survey of the Wellington Italian community by collecting data from a sample of sixteen informants focusing on the maintenance and shift of Italian languages. The conclusions of the study pointed to a very pronounced level of language shift for both *standard* Italian and Italian dialects, especially among members of the second generation, with English being the dominant language in all domains, Italian being used within the community in public situations and dialects only used at home or with close friends and relatives. The study found that all respondents had very positive attitudes towards Italian, although the positive attitude scores for the informants of the first

generation were slightly lower for the dialect than for the official language, reflecting the diglossic situation of Italy when the migrants left the country for New Zealand. The author concluded that the level of language shift within the community had to be attributed mainly to the lack of institutional support for the maintenance of the community language. Her interpretation was driven by the results for the other two kinds of factors, status and demographic, which generally indicated that the community had a very positive and distinctive self image and strong social networks allowing most members participation in a range of community activities promoting language maintenance.

The latest contribution to a description of the linguistic situation of the Wellington Italian community is that of Miranda (2001) which attempted to find a correlation between the attitudes towards and use of Italian varieties among community members of first, second and third generation. Her study confirms Plimmer's results by showing that English is the most used language within the community in all domains and that dialects are the second most used languages, followed by Italian in third place. The study however shows that proficiency in Italian does not correlate with positive attitudes towards it; in fact the most positive attitudes were recorded from people with little or no competence in Italian. When the correlation attitudes/competence was tested for the dialects, it was found that the speakers with the highest competence in the dialects were the ones to display the most positive attitudes towards the *standard* variety and also those with the less positive attitudes towards the dialect. According to the author, this is explained by the diglossic position covered by the varieties in the community repertoire, which perfectly reflects observations made in other Italian communities in anglophone countries (Bettoni 1993, p. 416). Most importantly, Miranda's study showed that the ability to speak Italian (or dialect) did not represent an important element in the participants' idea of *Italianità* and that therefore language is not considered a core value or a strong symbol of ethnic identity for this particular community. However, the respondents who expressed the strongest feelings of belonging towards Italian culture were the ones with the highest competence in the dialects, showing perhaps that knowing the heritage language, even a non-standard variety, helps people feel more a part of the parents' country and culture of origin.

3.6 Summary and conclusion

The literature paints a picture of HLLs as learners with strong emotional ties to their ancestral language who often pursue the learning of it as a way to regain aspects of a heritage identity they feel has diminished through the generations, as well as for other instrumental reasons. While the motivation of HLLs is considered important for a definition of this type of learners and for the creation of curricula and courses that satisfy their particular needs, most discussions of the motivation of HLLs only consider it as reasons or goals for studying and do not include a consideration of the choices involved in selecting ways of developing their proficiency and sustaining their learning effort, and of the contextual and social factors influencing such choices. More specifically, little research has focussed on how personal issues of ethnic identity construction direct, support or hinder the development of individual learners' motivational states throughout the learning of their heritage language.

Studies of adult HLLs are particularly scarce in New Zealand, where literature on community languages has tended to focus principally on issues of language maintenance and shift, and on the bilingualism and biliteracy of individuals (especially children) from immigrant background (for reviews see Barnard & Glynn, 2003; Hirsh, 1987; Holmes & Harlow, 1991). The need for a consideration of heritage language learners is particularly urgent in the case of the New Zealand Italian community, of which previous research has succeeded in giving us a general picture, while revealing little about its individual members – especially those of the latest generations – and about their desire to reconnect to their heritage through the learning of their ancestral language. To a large extent, this project was thought up with these needs in mind, seeking to deepen our understanding of a class of learners that in the context of current global tendencies towards increasingly multiethnic and multilingual societies, is fast becoming one of the main concerns of the field.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Situating the study

Since the beginning of research into language learning motivation over 40 years ago, a quantitative approach has been the traditional choice of researchers involved in this area of SLA research. This trend has been driven by the influence of social psychology on motivational research and of a view of motivation as a measurable individual variable to be investigated because of its significance for L2 achievement. The 1990s brought about a broadening of this conceptual framework and researchers' interest gradually shifted away from attempting to relate measures of student motivation and achievement to wanting to describe L2 motivation beyond traditional categories and to document the variety of factors that can influence it (for a detailed overview see Dörnyei, 2005). Following this shift, in recent years quantitative research methodologies have been increasingly complemented by qualitative approaches, especially as a way to investigate the role of social and contextual factors impinging on L2 motivation and the dynamic nature of motivational processes. Exploring the personal learning experiences of a group of heritage language students and the influence that their heritage identity exerts on their motivation to learn Italian, the current study situates itself among this latter group of studies, both in terms of its conceptual paradigm, the issues under study, and the research methods employed.

4.2 Choosing the approach: The qualitative case study

The decision to adopt a qualitative approach was made early in the study as a direct result of the social constructivist perspective taken in framing the enquiry (see section 1.4). In particular, the theoretical framework adopted means that its aim is not to identify a single truth or to find dominant patterns to be used to predict future behaviour. Rather, the 'reality' we seek to capture with regard to how the participants' *Italianità* influence their motivation to study Italian is understood to be multifaceted and to lie at the heart of each of the multiple perspectives uncovered. A social constructivist view of L2 motivation centres on the premise that the choices learners make with regard to their language learning are the product of their own interpretation of the world around them and that their motivation is subject to social and contextual influences (Williams & Burden, 1997). According to this view, I anticipated that each of the participants'

motivational profiles would be unique, not only because each learner would be motivated by a different set of factors, but also because, depending on the personal meanings attributed to these, each factor would have the potential of influencing each learner in different ways. Establishing the motivational role of the learners' own sense of heritage identity also implied gaining an understanding of the complex layers of personal meaning associated with their construction of their own *Italianità*. As Merriam (1998) writes, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding *the meaning people have constructed* [original italics], that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6). In this sense, designing the study as a qualitative inquiry clearly offered the best means to reach such an understanding.

Conceptualising the project as a series of individual case studies was driven by the same need to understand and illustrate the deeply personal nature of the motivational processes at work in the participants' stories. As an intensive, holistic analysis of a single entity, case studies can provide highly detailed descriptions that lend themselves to highlighting subjectivity and idiosyncrasy (Stake, 1988). Another advantage is the situated nature of the data that case studies yield, and the resulting potential to throw light on the complex of motivational influences that originate in the learners' interactions with their sociocultural environment, allowing the researcher to "observe effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects [my italics]" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 81). This focus on elements of the sociocultural context is also crucial to understand how issues of identity relate to the formation and maintenance of motivational states. Belonging to a social unit is a key factor in shaping individual motivation to learn (Kohonen, 2001) and so L2 motivation is mediated by significant social influences outside the classroom such as for example, familial support and contacts with speakers of the L2 (Ushioda, 2003). The case study is thus seen as an effective tool for explaining not only motivational effects of elements to do with the learning environment – teachers, peers, teaching materials, etc. – but also to elucidate the more complex examples of motivation (and demotivation) arising from the incidence of critical events in and out of the classroom, and of social interactions and relationships that have a bearing on the learner's construction of their own Italian heritage and identity.

In accord with the tenets of the qualitative approach and in an attempt to avoid reductionism of any kind, all the methodological choices relating to this study were made with the intention of keeping an open mind to what emerged from the investigation

rather than applying preset categories to shape its process and later the analysis of the data. In this sense the project put into practice the general principles of a grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as flexible heuristic strategies (Charmaz, 2003) even without a full implementation of the analytical procedures the theory offers.

4.3 The longitudinal perspective

A further advantage of the qualitative case study is that it can be easily associated with a longitudinal perspective to investigate changes, processes and developments that take place over time. The combination of the case study strategy with a longitudinal perspective gives rise to what is termed a fixed-sample longitudinal panel design (Ruane, 2004, p. 91), where data is collected from the same sample of respondents at multiple points in time. The strength of this design lies in its ability to capture the temporal fluidity of the person-in-context perspective offered by the case study, and so to look at how people construct concepts and views of their social world and of themselves, and how these views change over time (Coupland & Nussbaum, 1993). Also, a longitudinal perspective "allows for an in-depth and comprehensive coverage of a wide range of variables, both initial and emergent" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 216) and this is of course particularly important in this study, where motivation is conceived as a dynamic process that is subject to different influences at different stages of the L2 learning process. Above all, the research questions direct our attention to the processes of identity change, construction and reconstruction that are seen as potentially significant for the learner's motivation, and it is imperative that such processes be tracked as they unfold. By enabling "change to be analysed at the individual/micro level" the longitudinal case study can enable us to observe the "dynamics of change", "the flows into and out or particular states" and "the transitions between state" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 219), all elements that represent an integral part of the identity-based motivational process the study seeks to capture and explain.

4.4 Instruments

4.4.1 The semi-structured interview

The main data-collecting instrument used in the study was the semi-structured interview, eloquently defined by McCracken (1988) as "one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armoury" (p. 9). Semi-structured interviews entail the use of

an interview guide as a general lead during the interview process, but allow the researcher and participants the freedom to expand on and /or deviate from the guide to follow interesting issues that might arise during the interview, therefore encouraging a relatively free flow of information to emerge from the interaction. Because of this feature, according to Kvale (1996), the semi-structured interview is "particularly suited for studying peoples' understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world" (p. 105).

In composing each individual interview guide, I began by following a general interview template I had produced for each of the waves of the investigation. I felt this was necessary in order to ensure that the same terrain was covered with each of the participants (McCracken, 1988, p. 24) and so avoid puzzling "on whether what was missing from an interview was unimportant to the interviewee, or important but just didn't come up in the interview" (Gomm, 2003, p. 124). The templates, however, were only a starting point, and from the second round of interviews I began basing the preparation of each guide on my analysis of previous data from the same participant. Ultimately this process produced highly personalised interview guides while still ensuring that all respondents had been given the opportunity to comment on the same basic areas.

Flexibility was also applied during the interview itself. Throughout the process I strove to be "responsive to nuances and opportunity" (Richards, 2003, p. 69) and to use additional, improvised prompts and questions to keep the flow of talk going or to ask unobtrusively for clarifications or expansions. Specific questions were often changed or abandoned according to the particular circumstances at hand. For some of the respondents, an opening invitation to talk would be enough to evoke ample discussion and my only task would be that of offering some direction to the flow of talk once in a while; others preferred a more structured approach. In the latter cases, the interview guide represented a valuable tool to stimulate and support the participant's contribution.

It is often stated that in qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Merriam, 1998) taking the place that inventories, questionnaires, or machines play in quantitative studies. This however does not mean that the role of the researcher must necessarily be an objective and detached one. In establishing my role as a researcher in this study, I drew on several lines of reflective enquiry in the literature. Fontana and Frey (2005) for example argue

that the goal of scientific neutrality in an interview session is "largely mythical" (p. 696) because interviewing is not just a neutral exchange involving collecting information, but a social interaction through which interpretations are expressed and meaning created, and where the researcher assumes the crucial role of co-constructor of such meaning. As Cohen et al. (2007) explain:

> Researchers are in the world and of the world. They bring their own biographies to the research situation and participants behave in particular way in their presence. Reflexivity suggests that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research. (p. 171)

To disclose one's self is not only natural for the researcher involved in an interview, but also in many ways desirable, because assuming the role of the distant and objective scientist might not be conducive to the process of self-disclosure that is sought from the respondent. Ultimately it is often suggested that "the investigator must be careful to establish a relationship of substance and some kind of connection with the respondent" (McCracken, 1988, p. 26). My own experience in this regard showed that just as in any other social exchange, participants are more likely to be willing to disclose their thoughts and feelings when they know these are received with some degree of empathy. On the other hand, the dangers of excessive intimacy and "over-rapport" (Miller, 1952) can also be counterproductive, and so one of the main responsibilities of the interviewer is to carefully manage one's presentation of self to reach a degree of optimal distance between oneself and the interviewee. According to McCracken (1988) this is best done by manipulating the degree of formality of the exchange, which can be achieved by stressing the professional nature of the interviewer, and by attempting to cast oneself as "someone who asks very personal questions out of not personal but professional curiosity" (p. 26).

Of course this was not always easy. The longitudinal and recursive nature of the study meant that over time the relationships with the participants tends to develop and evolve just like any other social relationship and that the burden of keeping a professional degree of distance rests entirely with the researcher. Female participants of a similar age to mine, especially, tended to treat our meetings more as amiable chats than parts of a rigorous scientific investigation, and often displayed friendly behaviours that I felt I had to reciprocate to a degree, lest I should alienate them by appearing discourteous. Ultimately, I found myself agreeing with Kvale (1996) when he writes that "interviewing is a craft: it does not follow content and context-free rules of method, but

rests on the judgements of a qualified researcher…. The outcome of an interview depends on the knowledge, sensitivity and empathy of the interviewer (p. 105).

4.4.2 Additional data-collecting methods

In designing each case study, several sources of information were used as a strategy to increase accuracy and plausibility, as multiple sources of data allow researchers to "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (Yin, 2002, p. 87). In considering the study's focus on social and contextual influences on identity processes and motivation, complementing the interviews with observations of the participants in the language classroom seemed like a logical choice, particularly in view of the fact that "as an outsider, an observer will notice things that have become routine to the participants themselves, things that might lead to understanding the context" (Merriam, 1998, p. 85).

In planning observations I decided not to follow a predetermined observational schedule. Instead I followed the principles used for achieving a thick description as described by Geertz (1973), which can be used in trying to explicate the connection between behaviours and events in their contexts, and to identify the subjective meaning the participants attribute to elements of the context (Ruane, 2004, p. 168). In the later stages of the study, having learned something of the participants' perspectives on elements of their learning settings, I found myself approaching the observation by wanting to cross-check elements of the participants' accounts and this made for a slightly more structured approach.

In the impossibility to be a complete observer (to observe from hidden or in a public setting) I assumed the role of observer-as-participant (Gold, 1958), but to minimise the possibility of the Hawthorne effect[3], I attempted to limit as much as possible my involvement in the situation I was observing. This worked better in some locations than others, and, again, I had to allow for flexibility in this approach when teachers and students in small classes expressed the desire to include me in their activities or discussions. In these cases, though my presence clearly influenced the dynamics of the situation, the situation still offered itself as an opportunity to collect information on pre-determined elements of the lesson such as its structure, contents and teaching techniques, and to gather up written evidence such as handouts, textbooks and assessment sheets.

---

[3] The *Hawthorne effect* is the phenomenon in which subjects in behavioural studies change their performance in response to being observed.

Document collection initiated in the context of the observation sessions, was later complemented by gathering a range of other written evidence to do with the learners' own accounts (emails, journal pages, exercise books, feedback notes on assessment, etc.) and with their learning environments (websites, newsletters, online teaching material, course outlines, advertising material, etc.). Parts of the evidence gathered this way were at times presented to the participants as discussion-starters during the interviews, and so helped me cross-check my interpretations of the influence of elements of the learning environment on their motivation, as well adding an interesting level of detail to the description of elements of the sociocultural and learning contexts which can be found in the following chapter.

4.5   Ethical considerations

The methodological procedures for this study were designed according to the Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants, which sets out the principles for carrying out ethical research involving human subjects. The key requirements of this code include the need for informed consent, for confidentiality and anonymity, for truthfulness, for social and cultural sensitivity and for the minimising of possible harm to participants and researchers. As part of the ethical approval process, the project was evaluated by peer review and judged to be 'low risk', recognising from the outset that, once the code's ethical requirements were observed, the study would entail little danger of harm for the participants (see Appendix 4).

Having ensured that the study was built on ethically sound foundations, my focus shifted to finding ways to extend those ethical principles to my day-to-day dealings with the participants. I was particularly concerned about the interview process itself, as I imagined that being a respondent in a qualitative study (especially of the longitudinal kind) could prove to be a taxing experience; as McCracken (1988) explains, because participation in qualitative interviews can be time consuming and intellectually and emotionally demanding, researchers must ensure the respondent is not victimised by the process (p. 27). For this reason, throughout the study I endeavoured to minimise participants' discomfort during interviews and in all my other dealings with them in by adopting an ethical attitude rather than a fixed "cookbook chapter" view of ethical procedures (Josselson, 2007, p. 538), a strategy that I felt better equipped me to deal with the multifaceted and prolonged nature of my contacts with the respondents.

Another issue that concerned me was that of reciprocity. Kvale (1996) reminds us that in qualitative research there should be a balance between what the subjects give and what they receive from participation in the study (p. 116) and so I thought it necessary to find an appropriate way to reciprocate the participants' contribution to the study. Offering small gifts as tokens of gratitude was part of this plan. I did often think that my expertise as a teacher/speaker of Italian would make a more useful contribution, but I struggled to find ways to offer my help that would not compromise the delicate relationship between me and the participants, and so the nature of the data collected. Eventually I resolved to simply remain open to possible requests for assistance from the participants and to do my best to find appropriate ways to satisfy them. When such requests arose, they mostly took the form of questions about Italian language and culture (food, politics, history, the north-south cultural divide, etc.), which I endeavoured to answer to the best of my knowledge.

In the end, though my help in these matters might have somewhat helped the total cost/benefit ratio of the participants' involvement in the study, I also formed the opinion that, almost paradoxically, most of them drew much satisfaction from the interview process itself. Giulia, for example, thanked me for the "opportunity to vent" her frustrations at a time when she felt particularly lonely and isolated, and said she always looked forward to our meeting as to a kind of "therapy session". Francesco too, expressed his gratitude, as he thought the interviews helped him understand his reasons for learning and his relationship with his Italian heritage. Such reactions went a long way to counterbalance my worries about needing to compensate the respondents' contribution, as they suggested that in fact, even without my intervention, for most of them the benefits of their participation seemed to outweigh the costs.

4.6 Generalisability, validity and reliability

It has often been written that the aim of qualitative research is not to achieve results that are generalisible to other cases (Cohen et al., 2007; Glaser, 1998; Stake, 1994; Yin, 2002). This point is said to apply particularly well to research employing case studies; because "the real business of case study is particularisation" and its "emphasis is on understanding the case itself" (Stake, 1995, p. 8), the interest of the current project in offering a series of propositional generalisations is small. Still, much can be learned from single cases through a process of *naturalistic generalization* as described by Stake (1995), by which we come to understand the world around us by forming generalisations

from our own and others' experiences. This view of generalisability is in accord with the social constructivist paradigm adopted here in that "knowledge is socially constructed… and thus case study researchers assist readers in the construction of knowledge" (Stake, 1994, p. 240).

As observed by Creswell (1994), "qualitative researchers have no single stance or consensus on addressing traditional topics such as validity and reliability in qualitative studies" (p. 157), however according to a sizable body of literature, the concepts of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and dependability (Mertens, 1998) can be adopted to replace the traditionally positivistic notions of validity and reliability as criteria to establish quality in qualitative research.

Constructing validity and trustworthiness is particularly problematic in qualitative case study research because of its focus on individual meaning and because of potential investigator subjectivity (Tellis, 1997, p. 6); even so, researchers working within this paradigm can employ a number of strategies to control validity threats and to generate trustworthiness (Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 60-62). One of these strategies, triangulation, was employed in the study by gathering data of different kinds (interview data, observation notes, and written documents) from different sources (learners, teachers, teaching material, lessons) (see section 4.7.5). In accordance with the constructivist paradigm of the study, the use of triangulation was not strictly aimed at verifying the 'truth' of the data collected, but rather to achieve a "holistic understanding" of the situation and construct "plausible explanations about the phenomena being studied" (Mathison, 1988, p. 88).

"Research designs that emphasise the quantity of engagement with the target community/phenomenon carry more face validity" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 61). In this sense, a longitudinal research design can be seen as having an in-built potential to increase the validity of the inferences made from the data (Duff, 2008). In the current study one of the main advantages of the longitudinal perspective lay in the opportunity for cyclic analysis, which allowed me to revisit and deepen my understanding of significant issues, and to continually verify the respondents' meanings and my interpretations of them.

Employing triangulation and member checks are also often mentioned as ways to ensure dependability, though according to Mertens (1998) this is mainly achieved through a transparent discussion of data collection and analysis. The same point is made by Maykut and Morehouse (1994) who invite the researcher "to walk people through your work, from beginning to end, so that they can understand the path you took and

judge the trustworthiness of your outcomes" (p. 146). In an attempt to do this, the remainder of the chapter will discuss the details of the implementation of the project.

4.7 Implementation

Once the decision had been made to focus my research on learners of Italian with Italian ancestry, the first stage of the study was largely exploratory in nature. A series of informal talks with local heritage language learners (ex-students from the courses of Italian I used to teach) proved to be valuable by allowing me to familiarise myself with the topic, frame the research problem and decide on a tentative set of research questions. It also lead me to realise that, given the extremely low numbers of suitable respondents available locally, I would have to look for participants elsewhere. The city of Wellington, with its long history of Italian immigration and a range of institutions teaching Italian as a foreign language, was a logical choice. Even so, with an average of just one or two learners of Italian descent in each of the courses surveyed, I knew that finding an appropriately large sample was going to be a challenge. It was mainly for this reason that the criteria for participation in the study were kept as wide as possible and I resolved to look for any adult learner with Italian ancestry, involved in the study of Italian at any level through any mode of instruction. I fixed the main data-collecting period at ten months, from February to December 2006, as it seemed logical to have this coincide with the academic year and so to collect data relating to a whole year's learning: considering a shorter period might have meant missing the dynamics associated with the academic year as a natural cycle; in addition, a longer period would have resulted in unmanageable amounts of data.

In July 2005 I felt that the conceptual groundwork for the project was in place. Anticipating the data collection would commence with the opening of the new year's courses in February 2006, the remainder of the year was dedicated to recruiting the participants, deciding on a data-gathering schedule and preparing the interview guides.

4.7.1 Recruitment

In my preliminary survey of Wellington courses I had made contact with a number of teachers of Italian who had confirmed the presence of students with Italian ancestry in their classes. Now the same teachers were contacted again and asked to help me identify possible participants. This method yielded a total of 11 potential participants from two

institutions, all of whom were students who had been studying Italian in 2005 and who were expected to enrol again in 2006.

Most introductory interviews were run in late 2005. My main objectives for this first meeting with potential participants were to introduce myself to them, to describe the project and, having ascertained their suitability as respondents, offer them a place in the study. In the first meeting I collected preliminary information about the respondents' ancestry and language learning history, and explained the aims, general procedures and duration of the study. During this meeting I also posed some initial questions about the nature of the participants' initial motivation to learn their heritage language and their expectations of the language courses they were about to begin. At this stage all potential participants were given a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent form (Appendix 5 and 6). Throughout the process I was aware of the importance of making a good first impression, as on the basis of this first meeting the participant could decide whether to meet me again, so I endeavoured to make this first encounter short and undemanding.

All of the students interviewed agreed to take part in the study; however in January 2006, only six out of 11 were still enrolled in courses of Italian. The necessity to keep the sample as big as possible prompted another recruitment round, which this time targeted mainly the newly formed rolls of the 2006 first-year courses that were about to begin. With days to spare before the start of the academic year, two more students agreed to take part in the study, bringing the total number of participants to eight.

4.7.2 Preparing for the interviews

In February 2006 I began collecting data from eight main student participants. I developed an interview calendar that defined the timeline to follow in interviewing all participants four times during the course of the year, with intervals of about two months between meetings. The four waves of study were set to take place in February/March, May/June, August/September and November/December. By designating a maximum period of two months for each wave I gave myself an eight-week window to complete each wave, thus avoiding the pressure of fairly fixed dates for the interviews. As it happened, each interview round only took two to three weeks to run. The data-collecting calendar is reproduced in Figure 5.

2005   **2006**

Jul › Aug › Sep › Oct › Nov › Dec › Jan › Feb › Mar › Apr › May › Jun › Jul › Aug › Sep › Oct › Nov › Dec

Introductory interviews | Wave 1 Feb/Mar | Wave 2 May/Jun | Wave 3 Aug/Sep | Wave 4 Nov/Dec

Feb - Dec: Teacher interviews, observations, document collection
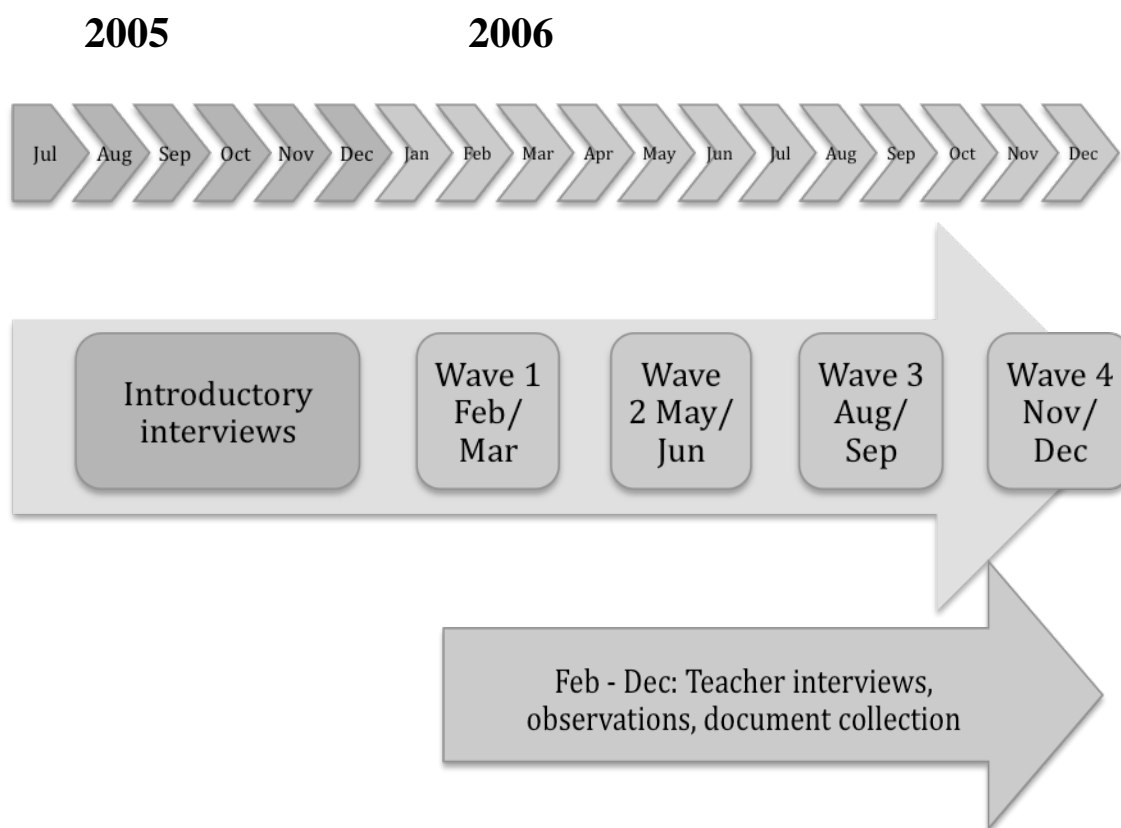
Figure 5. Data collection timeline

According to the schedule, I originally anticipated finishing the data-collecting stage after interviewing each participant five times in total (once for the introductory interview plus once for each of the rounds). In fact, in the end some of the respondents were interviewed six times, and one seven. Extra interviews were at times dictated by necessity (as for example when the previous interview had not been completed for some reason) and other times by opportunity (impromptu interviews sometimes took place right after the observations sessions). During the course of the year, two respondents withdrew from the study (one moved to Australia, the other discontinued her Italian studies). The main data-collection stage ended in December 2006 with all rounds of interviews completed for six of the original eight participants.

4.7.2.1 The interview guides

From the outset I assumed that because of the socially constructed nature of identity, the sense of *Italianità* of the learners under study was likely to be enmeshed with

elements of their sociocultural context and of their own self-concept. Following from this, I expected that gaining a comprehensive view of the main personal and situational influences on a learner's motivation could also provide some clues to some of the ways their construction of their own Italian identity might be implicated in their L2 motivation. The prospect was, however, complicated by the adoption of a view of both motivation and identity as dynamic constructs. According to this view, motivation and identity are created and developed in response to factors, relationships and interactions whose influence changes over time, meaning that in order to get a comprehensive picture of the links between aspects of learner identity and L2 motivation, one must track their ongoing development, and study the factors that are implicated in their changes over time. In view of the complex nature of the investigation, it was decided that the best way to approach the elicitation of the data would be through flexible interview guides containing different types of questions.

Interviews were normally planned to begin with questions aimed at capturing the participants' perspective on their current situation. In this part of the interview specific questions such as "Do you feel very motivated?" or "What motivates you…?" were avoided. Instead, questions were worded so to invite some general discussion, comments and anecdotes relating to the participants' current or recent learning experiences. Questions such as "What can you tell me about the last two months?" or "How have things been since I saw you last?" worked well because they gave the participant the opportunity to provide a general overview of the situation which often included details about their motivational state and any recent significant events. This part of the interview was largely unstructured and followed the pattern of a naturally occurring conversation, and so was also effective in breaking the ice and allowing the participant to approach the process of self-disclosure in their own terms. After this introductory stage, probes were often used to gather further data on particular points or issues raised by the participant's general account, or to invite reflection on how circumstances might have changed since the last meeting. In later interview rounds, details of data from previous interviews were often used as discussion starters or as ways to invite comparisons with past experiences, a strategy that also gave the interview a logical progression. At times, questions included in this part of the interview would emerge spontaneously from the exchange, while other times they were predetermined and originated in the analysis of data from previous interviews as ways to deepen my understanding of some significant issues or themes.

The second part of the interview was more structured and implied a more focussed investigation of the influences on the students' motivation. The initial draft of this section of the guide was based on a list of motivational influences informed by my review of literature on language learning motivation, and in particular by the temporal models of L2 motivation proposed by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) and Williams and Burden (1997) (see section 2.2.3). The list was then split into three sections and each of the three lists obtained this way formed the basis for one of the first three waves of the investigation in 2006. At the time of composing this section of the guide I was aware of the potentially reductionist effects of pre-determining a range of factors to be investigated, so measures were put in place to counteract this possibility. The first was to design and use the questions to invite discussion around general topics rather than specific answers. To ascertain the motivational role of the respondents' family, for example, I would ask questions such as "What can you tell me about your family?" or "What does your family think of…?". By leaving the respondent a large degree of freedom as to what to include in their answer I hoped to avoid guiding them into a specific consideration of the motivational role of each factor, and letting this emerge by their general discussion instead. The second strategy employed was to personalise each guide on the basis of previous data from the same participant. This could involve for example excluding factors that had already been shown to be irrelevant, or returning to previously covered issues for further probing. Ultimately, this resulted in very different interview guides tailored for each of the participants while still ensuring that everyone had been given the opportunity to reflect and comment on the range of factors on the original list.

4.7.2.2 Specific questions

Throughout the whole study only two questions were intended to be presented to all the learner participants in the same form. The *identity-continuum question* was designed to stimulate the participants' thoughts about their own *Italianità* and of the factors that influencing it. It involved giving the learner a drawing of a continuum between 'Italian' and 'non-Italian' and asking them to place themselves on it. In most cases, an explanation for their choice followed naturally, providing data useful for a contextualisation of the initial response; if not, I would ask for it. The question worked particularly well in obtaining a picture of the degree of *Italianità* the respondents attributed to themselves and of what they believed to lie at its basis (e.g. I am Italian

because of the way I feel when I am in Italy, I am Italian because my family is Italian).
Sometimes the exercise would prompt the respondent to consider the elements that were
missing from their *Italianità* (e.g. Italian fluency, full 'Italian blood') and so to link the
response to a discussion of their L2 motivation. Even richer data was collected when the
respondent was uncertain and expressed their own train of thoughts while they
considered the issue, as often in these cases their responses showed not only something
of how their constructed their *Italianità*, but also of how this was linked or interacted
with other facets of their identity, such as their Kiwi identity or their membership of
certain social networks. Finally, the question's visual element made it particularly
memorable and often it would be remembered or revisited during a later interview,
stimulating additional data around the issue.

The *magic overnight fluency question* involved asking the respondent for their
reaction to a hypothetical scenario within which they wake up one morning to discover
they can speak Italian. The question was initially designed with the aim of freeing the
respondents from time and circumstantial constraints to reveal the nature of the capital
they hoped to gain by learning their heritage language; however in the end it also led to
evidence to do with the respondents' constructions of their ideal selves, of the obstacles
in achieving these and of the compromises involved in negotiating their ambitions, both
in terms of language learning and identity (re)construction.

4.7.2.3 Piloting

Pilot interviews were conducted in January 2005 with two heritage language learners
found among the students of the Italian courses at the local night-school using the semi
structured interview guide developed for use with the main participants to the study. The
main purpose was to test the two-part format of the guide, refine the wording of the
questions and gain some experience in the interview process. The exercise was
altogether successful and only prompted minimal changes to the guide.

4.7.3 Conducting the interviews

The logistics of conducting the interviews away from my hometown made the
process rather expensive and time-consuming and so required me to take full advantage
of each trip to Wellington by interviewing up to four participants in any one day, a task
that required considerable organising and time-management skills, and which was
further complicated by having to conduct the interviews in different venues. In general,

university students were interviewed in the 'Italian Library' (a study room for use of students of the department), while the meeting place for the Centro's students was the Wellington City Library, except for one of the Centro's participants, who invited me to meet her at workplace, where we had access to a private meeting room. In two occasions, interviews were conducted in the Centro's teaching rooms after a class, and once, on invitation, in one of the participants' home.

All interviews were preceded by a general overview of the themes I intended to touch on during the meeting and a reminder that questions, comments and requests to stop would be welcome at any time. In closing, I would again invite any questions or comments, thank the participant, indicate the general timeframe for the next wave of the study and promise to contact them in due time to arrange another meeting.

Interviews usually lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were recorded, with permission, as mp4 data files on a digital recorder. They were later downloaded on a password-protected computer in my university office. After I personally transcribed the interviews, the same computer was also used store all the transcription files.

4.7.4 Supplementary data collection

Data was also collected from the teachers of Italian involved in the design and delivery of the courses the participants attended throughout the study. These interviews were also structured on a flexible interview guide, but unlike the students' interviews, they did not follow a strict time schedule. Instead, I took advantage of the time in between other interviews and of empty slots in the interview schedule to engage with the teachers, whose busy workday normally meant they could only dedicate short portions of their time to me.

Most of the teachers were already known to me before the start of the study and so the interviews were mostly a very informal form and were amiably conducted over coffee or lunch. In spite of the relaxed nature of these encounters, they proved to be an invaluable tool for understanding the primary context in which most of the participants' learning took place, and in particular they helped me form an objective idea of facets of the learning environment that had a significant influence on their motivation, ranging from lesson content, techniques and assessment, to more encompassing issues of teaching objectives and philosophies. Also, talking to the teachers allowed me to understand their perspective on the students of Italian descent in their courses, and what effect the presence of such students had on their management of the courses they taught.

The evidence gathered from the teachers served mainly as the basis for the description and discussion of the two learning settings presented in the following chapter.

4.7.5 Data analysis cycle

Merriam (1998) contends that data collection and data analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research. In the present study, the imperative to begin analysing the data early was dictated by the longitudinal nature of the investigation and in particular by the need to approach each wave of interviews with a clear idea of what the previous waves had revealed.

Analysis of the data was conducted according to the principles of the system advocated by McCracken (1988), which, in synthesis, describes a process of interpretation that proceeds from the particular to the general. In this system, observations on single portions of the interview transcript are noted, developed, and then used as "a kind of lens with which the transcript can be scanned" (p. 45) to uncover similarities and differences and to highlight meaningful issues or themes, which are then examined one in relation to the other, and again in relation to other data, looking for logical relations, causal inferences and contradictions. As the analysis proceeded, the data began to cluster into themes related to motivational factors and issues, such as elements of the classroom environment, issues of identity, factors to do with self-confidence and familial support. Once these major factors were identified, the analysis became more focussed on exploring the dynamic interplay of these factors and their influence on motivational fluctuations, self-regulative behaviour and learning choices. To achieve this, each interview was transcribed and analysed to frame subsequent interviews. Using this system of cyclic analysis, each round of interviews simultaneously extended and deepened the pool of data, while also revealing a number of new and potentially fertile paths of inquiry.

When all data had been collected and transcribed, the influences on the participants' motivation were further investigated by a systematic process of "comparing data from the same individual with themselves at a different point in time" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 259) in order to develop a sense of how motivation fluctuated over time, the causes of such fluctuations and how significant motivational factors fitted in the overall picture of each participant's journey. To help achieve this task, after the second round of interviews I began mapping the findings on diagrams aimed at representing each of the participants' stories. Each of the diagrams began by tracing a line from the top to the

bottom of a large sheet of paper and by adopting this as the main timeline of the participant's story. I would then add notes, quotes, symbols and other components representing elements arising from my analysis of the data to gain a visual representation of the participant's motivational profile (an example of one such diagram can be seen in Figure 6).

The latter stages of the analysis took place during the writing up of the case studies: once the individual motivational profiles had taken shape, a further comparison of findings across different participants highlighted similarities and differences and gave rise to another set of observations, which were then brought together in a "tidy package of limited themes" (McCracken, 1988, p. 47) thus providing a skeleton structure for the discussion chapter.

4.7.6   The last interview: Reflecting on the journey

The last wave of the study, which was scheduled to take place near the end of 2006, had been originally conceived as a retrospective interview to encourage each learner to reflect on his or her learning journey so far. However as I began preparing the interview guide, I found myself basing much of it on the diagrams I had created during my ongoing analysis of the data and so I began thinking of the graphic representations of the learners' motivational profiles as a potential visual prompt for the participants. As a result of this – and also encouraged by a colleague who had recently implemented a similar method in her own research project (Skyrme, 2008) – I decided to include the diagrams themselves as part of the last interview guide and to let the participants see my interpretation of the journey they had shared with me.

The technique turned out to be very successful in a number of ways. As I talked them through the diagram, the participants were able to re-trace and reflect on the course of their experiences and to extend, elaborate and alter any elements of the diagram according to their perspective, thus simultaneously verifying and deepening my interpretation of the data they had provided. Though some additions were made and clarifications asked, none of the participants disputed any of the diagram contents; in fact, all of the participants seemed very impressed with the representations and seemed to draw much satisfaction from the process of reviewing their journey and, I imagine, discovering how someone else might interpret elements of their lives.
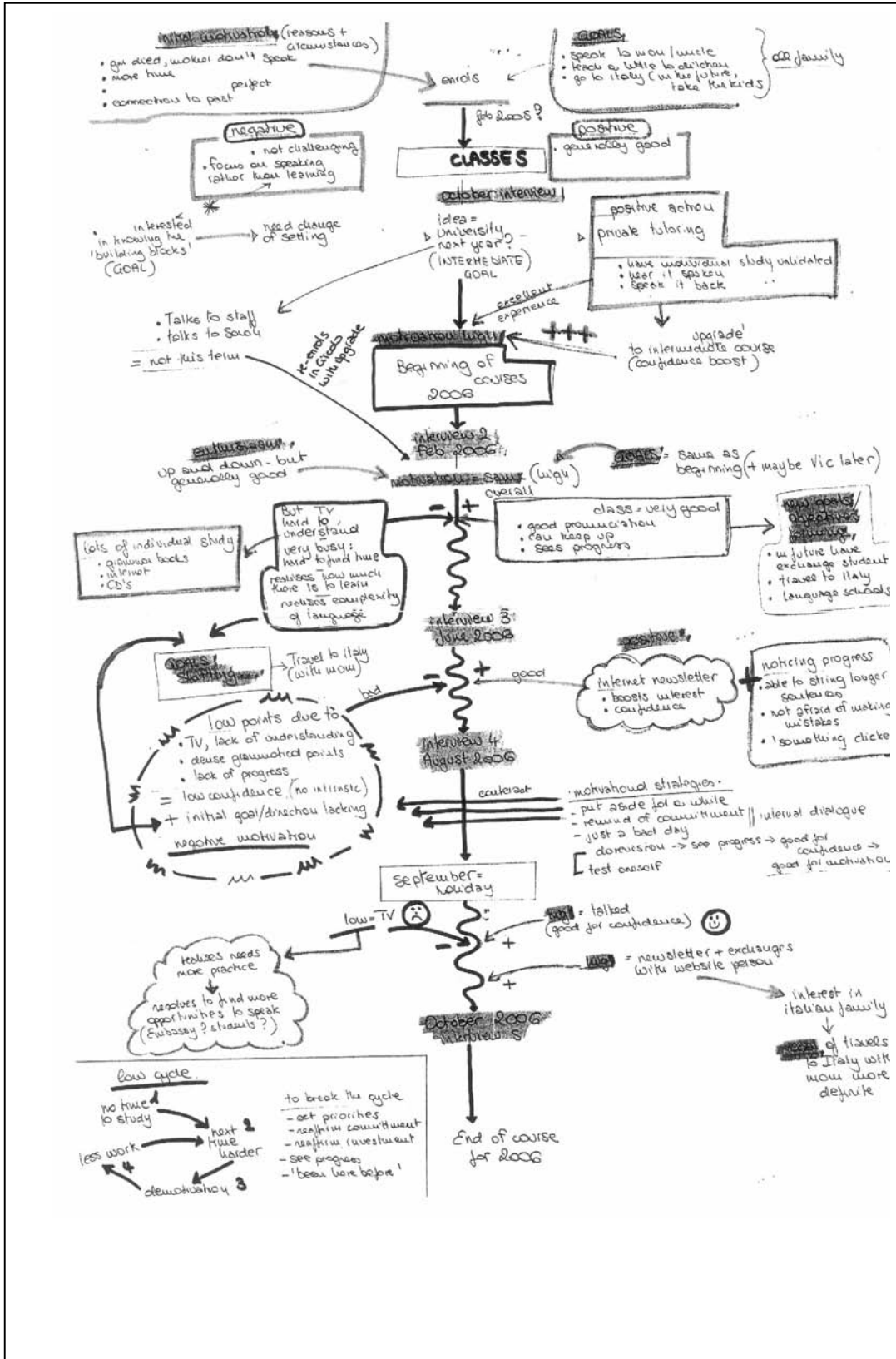
Figure 6. Motivational profile diagram

4.8   Writing up

Having completed all of the interview rounds with a total of six participants, my first concern in approaching the writing up of the project was that of deciding on the final number of case studies to include in it. Following McCracken's (1988) advice that "less is more" (p. 17) I opted to focus on five cases only, which meant that I also needed to decide which one of the six stories I had been working on would not feature in the finished project. As it happened, the choice was not at all difficult: since the beginning of the data collection, my interviews with one of the learners had been fraught with logistic difficulties and delays, resulting in a body of data that was in many ways inferior to the other five. Ultimately, this was the story I decided not to include in the study.

The next step would be to attempt to organise the voluminous quantity of folders, pages, memos and notes that had been produced through the previous stages of the research to write up the chapters dedicated to the individual case studies. From the outset I decided that to illustrate the dynamic nature of the motivational processes underlying the learners' experiences and the shifting nature of the factors influencing them, the temporal sequence of such experiences should be preserved and that the case study chapters would be presented as chronological narratives of the learners' stories. The diagrams of the participants' motivational profiles I had previously drawn were again of assistance at this point, as they provided the blueprint for each of these chapters.

In composing the final draft of these, I was particularly concerned by the need to achieve the right combination of description and analysis. Including too much analysis in the chronological account would have made this too heavy, preventing the reader from appreciating the continuity of the story itself; on the other hand, too little analysis and the reader would not have been able to follow the inferences leading to the answering of the research questions.

The solution, I decided, would be to write up the case studies in two distinct sections. The first would be a narrative account of the learner's relationship to their heritage language and HL learning experiences told mainly through their own words. This section would introduce the reader to the learner's construction of their personal reality – including that of their own heritage identity – and illustrate the main motivational processes at play throughout their learning. My contribution to this section would be to

help the reader notice significant elements, relationships and transitions in the account rather than providing an in-depth analysis of the texts.

The second section would be more closely focussed on the research questions, and would revisit and expand some of the evidence uncovered in the first section toward a specific consideration of the motivational role of the participant's Italian heritage and identity in their learning. Here, analysis would predominate over description and my role would be that of presenting the reader with the main conclusion drawn from the analysis of the participants' data, and to clearly highlight the most significant points, which would then be specifically considered in the discussion chapter. More details on the writing process, and in particular on the way excerpts from the participants' data are presented in the thesis, are included in Appendix 1.

As I put the finishing touches on the report, I realised it had been nearly two years since I had spoken to the participants, and I wondered what had become of them. That's when the idea of adding a postscript to the each of the stories first emerged. Shortly afterwards I contacted all the respondents again, some by email, some by telephone, looking to obtain an update on their language learning in particular and their lives in general. This was not done in the attempt to gather more data in order to confirm or disprove any of the findings, but simply as a way to placate my own, (and possibly the reader's) curiosity and to give appropriate closure to the stories. The information gathered this way was added to each of the case study chapter in a final 'Postscript' section.

Chapter Five: The learning settings

5.1 Introduction

In the process of establishing a conceptual framework for use in the current enquiry, the previous chapters have highlighted the crucial role that elements of the learners' context can play in the arousal and maintenance of language learning motivation. Specific consideration was given, in particular, to the motivationally mediating role of learners' exchanges with people in their learning context, ultimately painting a picture of L2 motivation as arising from the interaction of personal and contextual factors and as dependent on the interconnectedness of the learners' social and cognitive activity.

To assist in the exploration of the role that contextual elements play in the motivational profiles of the participants to our study, the present chapter provides an overview of the two learning settings within which the participants to our study have decided to pursue the learning of their heritage language. The discussion, which is largely based on an interpretation of data from teacher interviews, classroom observations and course-related documents, includes descriptions of the teaching objectives and philosophies that lie at the basis of the design and delivery of the programmes and courses offered, as well as a consideration of the teachers' views on the heritage language learners in their classes and of teaching Italian to groups that include both heritage and non-heritage students. Above all, by focusing on elements of the learning environments that will be shown to be particularly significant to the motivational processes underlying the participants' learning, the chapter is especially meant as a scene-setting foreword to the individual case studies that follow.

5.2 Learning setting one: Centro Italiano of Wellington

In the heart of Wellington, in what is known as the *Casa del Tricolore*[4], is the venue of the Centro Italiano of Wellington. A short flight of stairs away from the busy city street, a door is adorned with a red, white and green flag, announcing that one is entering Italian territory. Once through the door, an enormous square room opens, decorated with dozens of pictures of Italian landscapes and artworks posted on the light-blue walls. The Italian atmosphere pervades every inch of the massive open space, while the elegantly

---

[4] 'House of the Italian flag'

curved drink bar and the polished wooden floor, makes this place looks more like a ballroom than a language school. And with good reason: the Centro Italiano and its sister association the Club Italia, with which it shares this venue, do offer Italian language courses, but are, above all, social clubs, and as such, principally use this space for social occasions like theme evenings, shared lunches, Christmas parties, and other celebrations. For the Centro's members, these events represent much more than opportunities for socialising, as in the words of the Centro's president published on the association's website, the aim of the Centro Italiano is to:

> promote Italian language and culture amongst people who are interested in, and appreciate, the old and new values of Italian civilisation, and also amongst Italian expatriates who wish to keep a close bond with their native land. (CIweb)

To fulfil this purpose, the committee of unpaid volunteers that acts as the Centro's governing body works every year to organise monthly social evenings during which the members can experience and learn about Italy and its people through lectures, discussions, concerts and exhibitions, which are often organised in collaboration with guest speakers from the local university or from Italy. Topics can vary, but normally have to do with travel to Italy, Italian art, literature and music. Italian history and culture are also made accessible through the monthly screenings of Italian movies with English subtitles, which the Centro organises on behalf of the Italia Club and that always attract a number of members from both clubs. In fact today, the two clubs not only share a venue, but also enjoy the benefits of a friendly collaboration. However, this wasn't always the case, as a consideration of their common history reveals.

5.2.1 History and relationship with Club Italia

The Centro Italiano of Wellington was founded in 1949. The original members were people from all walks of life for whom Italian language was a common denominator. They included Italian war-brides brought to New Zealand by their soldier husbands, Italian Jewish refugees who had fled Italy to escape the fascist regime, and a number of Italian women from the Island Bay Italian community who were not allowed to join the other Italian association in Wellington, the Italia Club, as membership was reserved to males only (the first female members were admitted to Club Italia in 1992). Unlike the Italia Club, membership into the Centro Italiano was never based on Italian ancestry, but on love of and interest in Italian language and culture. Also, unlike the Italia Club, which

at the time attracted principally dialect-speaking Italian migrants with little or no formal education, the Centro counted among its members a majority of speakers of standard Italian, including doctors, lawyers, and academics. With such different populations and philosophies, it is not surprising that animosity soon developed between the two clubs. The Centro Italiano's president explains the situation as follows:

> P: The Club Italia people always looked to the Centro as being snobby. The Centro's people used to look down at the Italia people 'cause they were fishermen, uneducated.
>
> A: Do you think the language they spoke had something to do with it?
>
> P: Yes. For example the Centro used to have these lovely musical evenings and they had little playgroups that put on wonderful plays in Italian… So I think it might also be for the fact that the Centro used to put on things that the Italia people didn't understand or want to understand… They used to play classical music… The Italia club were a working men's club, they were a family's group… Very different. So for a long long time they hated each other. Wouldn't talk to each other. (P1)

Relations between the two clubs began to change in 1992, when, after the Italia Club acquired the *Casa del Tricolore*, a far-sighted member of the Centro Italiano committee initiated the negotiations that eventually lead to the Centro leasing the premises of the Italia Club for its own activities. The Centro had been offering Italian language courses since 1988, but it wasn't until the new premises were occupied that the number of members began to increase steadily. With membership numbers on the rise, the Centro's social meetings, which until then had been irregular, became a fixed monthly appointment, regularly attracting groups of more than fifty members on any one occasion.

Through the years the relations between the Centro Italiano and Italia Club have much improved: the clubs now work in close contact with each other, and members from each club enjoy reciprocal hospitality at their respective social functions. Yet, each club still retains its own distinct nature: as a social club focused on cultural maintenance among descendants of Italian migrants, the Italia club runs family-oriented events such as shared Sunday lunches and children's Christmas parties and offers Italian language classes for children of Italian descent only, while the Centro Italiano retains its open-door policy in providing social evening and adult language classes to all New Zealanders with an interest for Italian language and culture.

5.2.2 The language courses

According to the Centro Italiano's website, in 2008 the club included 150 members, of which 110 are also students of Italian enrolled in the Centro's courses. At present, these include two beginners' courses (stage one and two), a pre-intermediate, an intermediate and an advanced course. The beginners' classes are by far the largest, each counting more than 30 students. The pre-intermediate classes include around 15 students each, while the remaining pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced classes each have around 10 students each. Beginners' classes meet once a week for one hour of tuition, which increases to one and a half hours from the pre-intermediate level.

The Centro's typical beginner student is described by the president as over forty years of age, often older, and as wanting to learn the basics of Italian conversation in preparation for a holiday in Italy. Many allow themselves a year or two of tuition before their trip, and so complete the first and perhaps the second beginners' course, but do not take their studies any further:

> Generally the people we get are over forty, they are people that can afford to go to Italy and stay in hotels. They are basically interested not so much in the Club as such, but they are interested in learning the language so that they can then converse when they get to Italy. (P1)

A smaller group of students are regular visitors to Italy who travel there for either pleasure or business every year or so, and so study Italian in order to maintain or improve their language skills in between visits. Many of the students in this category have a passion for Italian language and culture and often foster other hobbies in some way connected to Italy or Italian, like for example opera or cuisine. These students often continue their studies past the beginners' courses into the pre- intermediate and beyond.

It was the identification of these two main groups of students that lead the Centro's organisers to structure the Italian teaching programme into two distinct units, the beginners' level and the advanced (pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced). As we will see in the following sections, the aims, contents and teaching styles of the two units are widely different, with the advanced level courses being considerably more demanding on the students' time and energy, as well on the linguistic skills required. Mainly for this reason enrolment into the pre-intermediate course is now regulated by a written entrance test. As none of the courses offered by the Centro include any formal assessment, the test is in place to ensure that students have achieved a level of Italian

that will allow them to cope with the advanced classes, and to provide a way to measure the students' level of commitment and confidence. Only a small number of students take the test every year, while the majority either opts to discontinue their Italian studies or to repeat the beginners' stage two course until they feel ready to take the test and move forward.

A third group of student often mentioned in my conversation with the Centro's president and teachers is that of students with Italian heritage. These tend to represent a small minority of the Centro's learners, and can present varying degrees of Italian competence, from none at all, to perfect fluency in one or more Italian dialects. In spite of the low numbers of heritage learners, the Centro committee and staff, and in particular the president, are aware of the uniqueness of their circumstances and motivation, and of the obstacles they often experience while learning Italian:

> A lot of Italians have been brought up at home to speak dialect. (…) Every now and then we have somebody at the club, like the ambassador, she'd make a speech, they can't understand her, so what they do is they come to me afterwards and say "Look we'd like to come along to the classes" so that's ok, they come along but then they get frustrated because Italian language, I don't think they realise how different it is from the dialect until they actually sit down in class. So they start speaking in the dialect and the teacher says 'No, that's dialect. In Italian'. And she is very patient with them, very very patient, but they get frustrated because we are there in the classroom and we are actually quite slow, whereas they can understand the dialect and I think they are in hurry, they want it faster so they just get frustrated with it and they don't stay with us very long. (P1)

Throughout the years, the president has witnessed the unsuccessful attempts to learn Italian of a number of students of Italian ancestry, and this has lead to some discussion among the Centro's volunteers about the possibility of offering a course of Italian language especially tailored to the needs of this group. However, the Centro's resources are, at least for the moment, too limited to make this a reality.

The Centro Italiano is affiliated to the *Società Dante Alighieri* of Rome, an Italian institution that promotes Italian culture and language around the world through the establishment of schools of Italian language and social clubs. But, unlike the majority of Dante Alighieri schools, the Centro Italiano's courses do not follow a fixed curriculum imposed by the Rome head office and do not lead to official qualifications in Italian. Since the institution of its language courses, the Centro has employed a number of tutors to teach its courses, mostly native speakers of Italian or people of Italian heritage who

learned Italian later in life. To teach at the Centro, tutors do not need any formal qualifications in Italian or second language teaching, even though some teaching experience is preferred. The tutors are the only staff on the Centro's payroll and are in charge of the preparation and delivery of all of the club's Italian courses. In the period covered by the current study, the Centro employed two tutors, Gianna, who was in charge of the beginners' courses, and Teresa, who taught all the advanced level courses.

5.2.2.1 *I corsi per principianti: The beginners' courses*

I had the pleasure of meeting Gianna early in the data collection stage of the study. I initially made contact in order to recruit participants for the study from her classes; however while talking to her on the phone I found myself fascinated by her background and soon asked her for a face-to-face interview. Just like the learner participants in the study, Gianna comes from an Italian immigrant family, and only learned Italian as an adult through formal learning, starting in 1998 with the courses offered by the Centro, later at Wellesley University and finally at the Dante Alighieri School of Livorno, Italy.

Gianna has been teaching the Centro's beginners' courses since 2003. According to the Centro's president, the decision to place the courses in the hands of a non-native speaker of Italian was an easy one:

> We actually like to have a person who is not Italian teaching our beginners because it's a tourist language, and it can be a bit boring for an Italian I think just to be teaching about tea and coffee and catching buses and trains. (P1)

Because of the numbers of students attending the beginners' courses, these take place in the large hall, where Gianna herself always spends about 15 minutes before the students arrival setting up the normally empty space with long lines of tables and chairs. Gianna is very punctual: every Monday and Wednesday, as soon as the clock strikes 5.30, she begins the lesson, even when nearly half of the seats are still empty. Many of the missing students usually arrive in the following five minutes or so, and trying not to disturb the lesson already in progress, go find their usual places. Gianna's classes tend to follow the same structure every week. To begin with, she directs the students to a particular section of the textbook, from which she chooses one or more phrases or sentences, which she then asks the students to repeat in chorus. She then proceeds to illustrate the meaning and uses of these expressions and to encourage the students to

practise their pronunciation by including the expressions into short question-and-answer exchanges, which she then acts out with each student in turn:

Gianna:	Frank, quanti anni ha lei?	(Frank, how old are you?)
Student:	Ho cinquantadue anni	(I am 52)
Gianna:	Bene	(Good)
Gianna:	Anna, da dove viene lei?	(Anna, where are you from?)
Student:	Vengo dalla Nuova Zelanda.	(I am from New Zealand)
Gianna:	Brava (CB1obs)	(Good)

After each of the students' answers, Gianna provides immediate feedback in Italian using the words *bravo*, *brava*, *bene*, *benissimo*[5] when the student is correct, or the correct form when the answer is incorrect, after which she encourages the student to repeat the correct form she has just given them. The second part of the lesson usually involves the study of dialogues from the textbook, which are often presented to the students with the help of an audio recording or short video. The dialogues are normally short exchanges that aim to illustrate typical situations a foreigner might face when travelling in Italy, such as asking for directions, ordering a meal or booking accommodation. The students are asked to listen to the dialogue or watch the clip a few times and/or listen to the teacher while she reads it, then read the text out loud in chorus, and then work in pairs to provide a translation. After the assigned time for the task the teacher provides a translation against which the students can check their own work. They are then asked to act the dialogue out in pairs, twice, each taking both roles. During this activity the teacher walks through the desks, briefly stopping beside each couple to listen and provide corrections when needed.

The lesson usually terminates with the assignment of the *compiti*, or homework, which normally involves completing some of the exercises from the textbook and is aimed at practising the content covered in class. Occasionally, the following lesson begins with the students having to read out their solutions to the exercises. More often, Gianna encourages the students to revise some of the expressions covered in the past lesson(s) by engaging in the usual question-and-answer session; for example parts of

---

[5] All expressions mean 'very good' or 'well done'.

greeting formulae presented during the first few lessons are subsequently incorporated in a formalised series of exchanges between teacher and students.

Gianna:	Buonasera Mary	(Good evening Mary)
Student:	Buonasera	(Good evening)
Gianna:	Come sta?	(How are you)
Student:	Bene grazie, e lei?	(I am well, and you?)
Gianna:	Bene	(Good)
Gianna:	Buonasera, come si chiama?	(Good evening, what is your name?)
Student:	Mi chiamo Frank	(My name is Frank)
Gianna:	Piacere	(Pleased to meet you)
Student:	Piacere (CB1obs)	(Me too)

Throughout the lesson, Gianna attempts to expose her students to as much Italian language as possible. She speaks Italian when reading or presenting most content and during the question-and-answer practice sessions that make up much of the lessons. Nevertheless, the level of comprehension of her students is such that she must switch to English for all other purposes, such as to give instructions on how to approach an activity, to explain difficult points, to explain her corrections, or to tell brief anecdotes.

Clearly, Gianna focuses most of her teaching time on developing the students' speaking skills, and in particular on the acquisition of set expressions and their correct pronunciation. Her first and foremost aim is to encourage the students to speak Italian as soon as possible, as she believes that, especially for a beginner student, it is important to "see results quickly". Her lessons might not be very long, she admits, but her students are likely to go home satisfied because they have just spent one whole hour listening to and actually speaking Italian, hopefully without ever feeling bored. In Gianna's own words:

> First I get them to say it, I want them to open their mouths. And then, right at the very beginning of the class I get them to say the complicated things, and then later we study it a little bit further so they know how it works. (GA1)

In Gianna's classes, grammar is never explicitly taught. Throughout her lessons in fact, one gets the distinct impression that Gianna intentionally means to avoid content or situations that will require her to offer grammatical explanations. Even in second year classes, grammatical terminology is never mentioned, and Italian language always tends

to be described rather than explained, in other words the students are encouraged to notice grammatical details (e.g. gender agreement, verbal conjugations, prepositions, etc.) but they are never given specific rules that they can generalise to language not presented in class. Gianna calls this "slipping the grammar under their noses":

> I slip it in under their noses, they don't even know that they are doing it. I had them saying right from the first class '*mi piace, mi piacciono*'[6]. They don't know that it's an irregular verb in the third person taking an indirect object pronoun, they don't know nothing, but I slip it in. I say to them the book is on two levels: you can study Italian or you can learn it, it's different. If you're learning Italian you are building the language, you are putting it together like a jigsaw puzzle, and if you study the language you are ripping it apart, shredding it, and we're not doing that. They seem to have an aversion for the word grammar, so as soon as you mention the word grammar... It's all over. (GA1)

As someone who has recently learned Italian herself, Gianna is acutely aware of the difficulties most people experience when faced with Italian grammar for the first time, and of the powerful demotivating effects it can have on students, particularly those who are new to language learning. In this sense, her decision to minimise the student's exposure to explicit grammar teaching shows a particular sensitivity to the students' motivational needs and a willingness to adapt her teaching style to suit these. Gianna's choice not to teach grammar is rooted on some assumptions about her students and their motivation. The first is that the majority of learners enrolled in the beginners' classes are prospective tourists to Italy. It is not a coincidence in fact that the whole of the two beginners' courses are designed to appeal to this type of learner, not just in the absence of linguistic technicalities, but also in the communicative settings explored in the lessons (e.g. *A che ora parte?*[7] - asking about departure and arrival times, *Ha una camera?*[8] - booking accommodation, *Quanto costa?*[9] - buying things) and in the great number of suggestions and anecdotes provided by the teacher clearly aimed at assisting tourists in various situations. Secondly, it is assumed that most students share the common goal to build a repertoire of single vocabulary items and formulaic expressions to use while holidaying in Italy, and have little interest in grammar and its applications. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there is an assumption that learners that do not fit the above-

---

[6] 'I like it, I like them'
[7] 'At what time does it leave?'
[8] 'Are there rooms available?'
[9] 'How much is it?'

mentioned majority will be sufficiently resourceful, adaptable and motivated to remedy what they would perceive as shortcomings of the courses by engaging in extensive self-directed learning. The philosophy of the first beginners' course is summed up by the Centro's president:

> That first year, they are really sort of like parrots. They are put in together in a group, they do get to speak, but they are basically following what the tutor is giving them, they've got a textbook which they are following basically every word, you know, and they can go forward, they can go backward, they've got the explanations of the grammar at the back, it's a very simple way of doing Italian. (P1)

While the course design born of above-mentioned assumptions might indeed suit the needs of the majority of the students enrolled in the Centro's beginners' courses, it can also place some students at a disadvantage. Among these, learners of Italian ancestry, who are often driven by the complex motives to do with the (re)construction of their heritage identity, might feel that the objectives of the courses are not aligned with their personal goals, with potentially demotivating consequences. Gianna is aware that every year a number of learners of Italian ancestry enrol in the Centro's beginners' courses, and feels very sympathetic towards them. In particular she believes she understands well the feelings of guilt, shame and inadequacy that many heritage language learners experience as a result of not having acquired their ancestral language earlier:

> There is a certain kind of shame we all have to carry – that I look Italian, I have the culture, the food everything, and they expect you to speak Italian and you can't, your parents didn't teach you… Mine didn't. Some of the students come up to me and they have Italian blood and they feel that they should know, and they don't, and that bothers them, and I always say "we can't atone for a sin we didn't commit, it's wonderful that you are learning now". (GA1)

However, as far as teaching is concerned, Gianna makes no distinction between the heritage and the non-heritage students in her classes.

5.2.2.2 I corsi avanzati: The advanced courses

The Centro's advanced courses include three levels, pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced. Access to these courses is open to learners who have completed both the beginners' courses and have successfully sat the entrance test into the pre-intermediate course (or can demonstrate equivalent knowledge of Italian language).

The typical student enrolled in the Centro's advanced courses is difficult to describe, as at this level we find learners of a variety of ages and walks of life. Many of the learners are frequent travellers to Italy; others have travelled there only once or twice and developed a passion for the language and/or the culture or some other aspect of Italian life. For a few, Italian language is a hobby of many years, in some cases linked to some other Italian-oriented interest like cuisine or opera, while for others studying the language is a way to exercise their minds.

With the exception of the pre-intermediate class, which is likely to receive an inflow of new students from the beginners' courses at the beginning of each year, the advanced level classes tend to be small (the maximum number of students for the intermediate and advanced classes is ten) and since advancement to the next level is by teacher invitation only and depends on the availability of spaces, a majority of learners stay in the same class for more than one year. As a result, many of the learners develop friendships within their groups, and are motivated to continue attending not only by linguistic interests and goals, but also by the pleasure they take from the social dimension of the weekly classes. The main reason why many learners are happy to remain at the same level year after year is because the advanced courses do not follow a fixed curriculum and so students are never offered exactly the same content and materials as the previous year. This is only possible thanks to the dedication of Teresa, the tutor responsible for the design and teaching of all of the advanced courses.

Teresa was born in the former Yugoslavia, but grew up in Libya, where her family transferred when she was just a toddler. There she attended an Italian school and so gained fluency in Italian from a very young age. Once out of school, she attended college in Italy, and obtained a certificate of Italian language teaching from the prestigious University of Perugia. Teresa has been employed by the Centro Italiano as a tutor for many years and is held in exceptionally high regard by all the study participants who have come into contact with her.

Teresa's advanced classes are diametrically opposed to those taught by Gianna in a number of ways. To begin with, the advanced students are not required to purchase a textbook, as the tutor provides all the printed materials they need in order to follow the course. Secondly, as already mentioned, the courses do not follow a fixed curriculum and do not have specific objectives in terms of the level of competency the students ought to achieve. When asked to describe the content of her courses, Teresa smiled and raised her shoulders. "A bit of everything" she said simply. Thirdly, Teresa's classes

include the explicit explanation of Italian grammar, as well as plenty of opportunities to practise the written component of language. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the students of the advanced classes are no longer "parrots", but they are encouraged to use Italian language creatively to express their own ideas, opinions and experiences, as well as to discuss those of others.

Even with much variation in the materials covered and the activities presented in class, some elements of Teresa's lessons tend to recur week after week and in all of her lessons. For example, she always opens the session by handing back to the students the written homework that she has corrected. In the absence of any form of student assessment, the weekly homework is one of the very few ways Teresa can gauge the level and progress of the students, and as such she treats *la correzione dei compiti*[10] as a regular feature of all her lessons.

Another habitual component are the five to ten minutes dedicated to small talk in Italian, during which Teresa actively encourages the learners to talk about how they are and the week that has been. The middle part of the lesson is the most variable, as it can be taken up by a number of different activities. Generally this section can be devoted to the introduction and practice of a grammatical point, or the students can be presented with and asked to work on one or more examples of Italian texts from a variety of sources and concerning an assortment of topics (some examples are: articles from Italian newspapers and magazines about Italian lifestyle, culture, politics; excerpts from Italian websites about art history; readings from Italian language textbooks regarding the Italian regions and their dialects; Italian poetry; Italian popular song lyrics). Other times, this portion of the lesson is taken up by language games, which the students can play as individuals or in small groups.

Other activities that often feature in Teresa's lessons are the watching and discussing of Italian films and documentaries. Teresa justifies the frequent use of this medium by explaining its potential for exposing the learners to naturally occurring Italian language. Teresa believes that remedying the limited opportunities for language exposure which are inherent to foreign language learning should be among her primary concerns, and her continuing dedication to finding ever-changing sources of Italian language for her students is proof of her conviction on this matter.

---

[10] 'Correction of the homework'

Just as within Gianna's classes, students with Italian ancestry represent a very small percentage of the advanced classes, however in these groups their numbers tend to be even smaller, as not all of the students with Italian ancestry continue to study Italian beyond the beginners' courses. Both Francesco and Esther for example, the two learner participants who attended Teresa's classes, were the only students of Italian descent in their groups. When heritage learners do join Teresa's class, she tends to regulate her approach towards them depending on whether they are dialect speakers or not, as she realises that fluency of an Italian dialect can be a severe impairment to the learning of standard Italian, especially because of the frustration dialect speakers can experience from confusing the two languages, the embarrassment of the often frequent corrections from the teacher (as discreet as these might be), and the perceived inadequacy that might stem from feeling Italian and discovering one's inability to speak Italian. She admits however that in most cases, heritage students' knowledge of their ancestral language is so limited (as in the case of Francesco and Esther for example) to be completely irrelevant to the students' learning, thus rendering their experience indistinguishable from that of their non-heritage peers.

5.3   Learning setting two: Wellesley University

Wellesley University's Jackson Campus is the oldest and largest of the university's four campuses. Made up of a combination of historic and modern buildings stretching over both sides of a busy city street, this campus perfectly reflects the attractive if a little incoherent mixture of qualities that characterise Wellington as a city: young but old, creative but grounded, stylish but unpretentious. Interestingly, the same fascinating incoherence also applies to the physical venue of the second learning setting considered in this study, Wellesley University's Italian language department. Spread over two floors of a red-painted, concrete and glass high-rise building, the Italian programme shares this space with the programmes of French, Spanish, and German. Here, the ghost of old Europe is everywhere: in the pictures of scenery and artworks on the office doors, on the spines of the volumes on the shelves, in the accents of lecturers and students. It brings a sense of history and wisdom to this modern structure, where even the claustrophobic low ceilings seem somewhat neutralised by the open spaces of the piazzas posted on the walls.

In the parts of the building occupied by the Italian department, seminar rooms and staff offices alternate with each other along the narrow corridors, contributing to a sense

of unity and community. The well-stocked Italian library room is small but welcoming, with plenty of desk space and even a couch by the window. Here, students of Italian come to study, talk or just relax before and after lectures and exams, so the room is never empty of people. Not far away the seaside facing departmental lecture room hosts most lectures and tutorials of second and third-year courses, and so is also in near-constant use, with students spilling in and out of it at the end of every hour.

The Italian programme teaching staff includes three full-time lecturers and two part-time tutors who together are responsible for the design and delivery of 17 courses ranging from beginners' to PhD level. The greatest concentration of students is found in the programme's first year courses, 'Introduction to Italian language' and 'Elementary Italian', which normally include between 70 and 80 students each. Of these, a great majority (about 60% according to the programme coordinator) are school-leavers who often have not yet decided on a set course of study and are experimenting with different subjects. Another substantial group of first-year students study Italian as an elective subject or as part of a second major or second degree. In fact studying Italian as a complement to other, some would say more career-worthy subjects such as tourism, business and law, is an appealing solution for the more language-oriented students, and one that is actively encouraged by the university.

The reasons that lead so many people to enrol in first-year Italian courses are many, and the programme's teachers know that different combinations of several factors can come to influence the decision of each student. However, according to some, some patterns are more common than others:

> I think that especially for NZ students there is this feeling of this country at the absolute opposite side of the world that's geographically similar to NZ but so different, so exotic and that has such a long history, and then there are all the things that people are attracted to the glamorous side, the fashion, the cinema. There is definitely a number of students who really fall for the stereotypes (…) and I think that's also what's interesting about teaching, to expand their idea of what Italy is, give them a bigger picture. (S1)

Together with the high numbers of school-leavers, first-year Italian courses also attract some mature students, who in most cases wish to study Italian as a result of some previous contact with Italy through travel. The typical mature student is described by the programme's teachers as diligent and hard working, two qualities that are often explained with reference to their age and strong motivation:

90

SA: C'è la classe di 15 studenti, 11 ragazzini e due o tre adulti e gli adulti sono quelli che fanno le domande, sono quelli che studiano, son quelli che sono sempre in classe con tutto che devono prendere ore libere dal lavoro, e gli altri sono quelli che vengono quando vogliono loro, non studiano o studiano solo quanto basta, è così, è sempre così. Cioè ci sono le eccezioni, ci sono anche studenti giovani che son capaci e che hanno voglia, però...

A: Secondo te cos' è, l'età?

SA: Secondo me un po' sì, un po' che uno come adulto si fa meno... Cioè è meno imbarazzato non gliene frega niente, le hai già viste tutte a poi anche perché un adulto, che magari ha già fatto università o comunque ha già vissuto altre cose, quando ritorna università ritorna perché lo vuol davvero fare. (SA1)

SA: In a class of 15 students, 11 young ones and two or three adults, the adults are the ones who are asking questions, the ones who study, the ones who are always in class in spite of the fact that they have to ask for time off work, and the others are the ones who turn up when only when it suits them, don't study or only study just enough, it's the same, it's always the same. There are exceptions, of course, there are also young students who want to learn and apply themselves, but…

A: What do you think that's due to, age?

SA: I think that partly it is, but also that as an adult one is less embarrassed, you care less about, because as adults often they have already been to university or anyway had similar experiences and when they come back to university they do because they really want to. (SA1)

The high numbers of students enrolled in first-year courses always undergo a dramatic drop in year two, as the average 200-level classes only include between 20 and 25 students. In the teachers' opinion, this is due to the fact that most students' initial motivation to learn is based merely on positive attitudes towards Italy and its language and that without any strong personal or emotional relationship to the subject, the students' enthusiasm is short lived and easily quashed by adverse factors such as the realisation that Italian language might not be very useful, or the realisation of the cognitive demands of learning a second language.

> 19-year-old students go to university because they have to, they choose Italian because it is the language of love, art, food and wine, but then, when they realise that they need to study, they lose interest. But when they realise that like all language it requires study, they realise that they must study it seriously, or abandon it in favour of other subjects. (SA1)

Third-year classes are generally very small, with ten to 12 students enrolled, all of which are usually majoring in Italian. Students at this level tend to work very hard and to do well in terms of grades, even when faced with learning difficulties and/or onerous workloads. Again, most teachers tend to explain their behaviour in terms of the students' motivation and so to attribute their stamina and success to their strong emotional response to the language – they use the words *love*, *passion* and *enthusiastic* – which derives from the students' first hand experiences of Italy and its people:

> And then they also have personal reasons: many of the ones who carry on have actually been able to spend some time in Italy so they often have that real love for it. Especially the students who carry on, they are not doing it… It's not like they have some pragmatic reason, they are doing it because they really love it, and so they are really enthusiastic and fun and I have seen people who have really struggled but kept going. And I really admire that 'cause I think it is difficult here where you don't get many opportunities to speak it, you know you really have to work hard if you want it to work, so I really like that. (S1)

5.3.1 *Gli studenti Italiani*: The heritage language students

Finally, and most importantly, every year the programme sees the entrance of a small number of first year students with Italian ancestry. The programme coordinator estimates this group usually represents less than 10% of the total first-year student body (a maximum of 4 in each cohort of new students) however she also admits that, because of the size of first year-classes and the resulting limited opportunities to personally meet all students, often teachers can only become aware of the students' Italian ethnicity if they have an Italian surname.

In general, teachers have not noticed any recurring behavioural or motivational pattern that might differentiate the heritage students from their non-heritage colleagues in first-year classes. However two elements seem to crop up fairly regularly in the motivational make-up of students with Italian ancestry. The first has to do with studying Italian because they are being pressured by the family, as something that is expected of them:

Invece non tutti ma molti dei school-leavers italiani studiano l'italiano anche per dare soddisfazione alla famiglie, e dunque non so quanto siano motivati o quanto si sentano quasi obbligati a farlo. (C1)

Not all but many of the school-leavers of Italian ancestry study Italian partly to satisfy the wishes of their family, and so I can't be sure of whether they are really motivated or they feel obliged to do it. (C1)

And the second is an expectation that it will be easy:

A: Trovi differenze tra gli studenti italiani e gli altri?
C: In generale no. L'unica cosa, ci sono alcuni studenti con famiglie di origine italiana che hanno inizialmente un atteggiamento un po', che pensano di potercela fare senza studiare molto perche la lingua viene parlata a casa, perché sono stati esposti un po' alla lingua durante tutta la loro vita e dunque pensano di potercela fare senza un approccio sistematico allo studio. (C1)

A: Are there differences between the heritage students and the others?
C: In general I don't think so. The only thing I can think of is that there are some students from Italian families that initially behave as if they think they can make it without studying very much because the language is spoken at home, or because they have been exposed to the language at some stage of their lives and so they think they can make it even without a systematic approach to studying the language. (C1)

Often the differences between heritage and non-heritage may only become noticeable when the heritage student is also a mature student. According to some teachers in fact older students are more likely to want to study Italian in order to personally reconnect with their heritage, and this can represent a clear motivational advantage over the younger students, regardless of whether these students come from an Italian background:

Quelli maturi sono più motivati, perché vogliono recuperare il legame con le loro radici, vogliono riscoprire la loro cultura d'origine e cose così. (C1)

Mature heritage students are more motivated because they want to restore their connections to their roots, rediscover their culture of origin and things like that. (C1)

From year two, the positive influence of Italian heritage on the motivation and learning behaviour of students is much more evident, even leading some teachers to see Italian heritage as the key factor at the root of these students' passion for the language, and as a clear advantage to their learning:

> If anything for some of them it's the reason why they have a real feeling for it, and just… I think of Giulia for example and I think that family background is part of her motivation, the fact that she works very hard is because she feels this sort of connection, partly at least I am sure she likes it for other reasons too but my perception is that that is a factor. (S1)

> I think it can be an advantage in terms of motivation or passion for the language, but not necessarily and I think it depends too on the family's background, how much… What kind of connections they still have with Italy, what kind of emotional connections they have with Italy, do the parents regret that they didn't learn Italian or do the parents have some Italian and are encouraging the children to pass it on, so it does depend on how people feel about their background and how strongly. I think where there is a strong connection and a strong feeling of Italianness or of connection with Italy then it's definitely a help in terms of motivation. (S1)

Nevertheless, because most second and third-year students have chosen Italian as their major, they all tend to be very motivated regardless of their ethnicity. Thus for some teachers there are no noticeable differences between heritage and non-heritage students, or, in other words, their Italian background does not seem to translate in a difference in degree of interest and effort between heritage and non-heritage students:

> Tutti quelli che continuano al secondo e al terzo anno sono studenti molto motivati, deteminati, che spesso fanno italiano insieme ad altre materie, come legge, materie difficili e che dunque hanno una vera passione (...) Quelli Italiani che continuano e hanno successo hanno lo stesso atteggiamento verso lo studio degli altri, non vedo differenze. (C1)

> All students who continue in second and third year are very motivated, determined, who often study Italian at the same time as other subjects, like law, difficult subjects and that therefore show a real passion (…) The heritage students who continue and are successful have the same attitude towards studying as the others, I can't see any differences. (C1)

94

On the other hand, some teachers do believe that having an Italian background can come to influence the learning experience of heritage students by being the source of previous experiences of Italian language and culture, and of the various affective factors associated with the study of their ancestral language, which, depending on the individual, can represent both advantages and disadvantages. Having been exposed to Italian in the family or the community can be an advantage, but can also create problems:

> Da un lato, se hanno il vantaggio di conoscere un po' di vocabolario... Certe parole, hanno altri svantaggi, che derivano dal fatto che molto spesso vengono da famiglie in cui l'italiano che viene parlato non è l'italiano standard e dunque hanno assunto delle espressioni dialettali, che vanno anche bene, ma l'italiano che viene insegnato è l'italiano standard. (C1)

> On the one hand, if they have the advantage of knowing some of the vocabulary, they also have disadvantages deriving from the fact that often they come from families in which the Italian spoken is not standard Italian and that therefore they have learned some dialectal expressions, which are okay, but the language we teach is standard Italian. (C1)

Above all, there are the emotional challenges of learning a language that is often so closely associated to parts of one's identity as a person of Italian descent to create feelings of expectation and entitlement which can lead to frustration and disappointment:

> I have noticed that they put quite a bit of pressure on themselves, and that they feel that they sometimes get frustrated because they feel why I am not learning this faster? I don't know whether they feel that somehow they should, I don't know if that's the case but I would say that that is a problem I can think of. It might also be a personality thing but maybe their background could be one of the reasons they put more pressure on themselves. (S1)

5.3.2 The courses: Language vs. content courses

Wellesley University's Italian programme offers both language and content courses, where the latter usually involve the study of Italian literature or other language-based sources of Italian culture, such as film, theatre and history. Some examples of content courses offered by the programme during the main data collection period are 'Italy

through fiction and drama', 'Dante's Inferno', 'Italy through film' and 'Contemporary Italian literature'. At Wellesley University, students wanting to major in Italian must begin by completing two first-year Italian language courses (equivalent to a complete academic year) and can only enrol in content courses starting from year two. The formal requirements for the Italian major include satisfactory completion of a total of six language papers and at least two content papers. Within the Italian programme, as in all other foreign language programmes at Wellesley, the completion of content courses is seen as an integral part of the study of language, as it is through these courses that the students can complement their knowledge of the language with the historical and cultural knowledge necessary to be acquainted with contemporary Italy.

What follows is a selective description of some of the courses offered by the Italian programme at Wellesley University. Within it, language and content courses are treated separately on account of the obvious differences in their aims, content, materials and teaching tools. A detailed description of all the programme's courses would be too long and outside the scope of the present study; for this reason I have decided to focus the discussion on the courses completed by both the two case-study participants from this setting (Giulia and Livia) with particular attention to the courses they attended during the main data collection phase of the project and to the elements of these that are deemed relevant to the participants' motivational profiles.

5.3.2.1 *I corsi di lingua: The language courses*

The specific purposes of each of the language courses part of the Italian major vary slightly depending on the level of Italian taught, however the general aims of all of the language papers are the same: to develop the skills of reading, writing, oral comprehension and speaking of standard Italian and to present insights into various aspects of contemporary Italian society and culture. The specific objectives of the very last course, 'Italian language 3B', which is also the language requisite for the Italian major, can give us an idea of the of the language skills learners are expected to achieve by the end of their major:

> Upon completing the course successfully students will be able to:
> - read and comprehend a wide variety of authentic Italian texts;
> - have a grasp of current affairs and be able to read Italian newspapers with a good
>   degree of linguistic and contextual comprehension;
> - write with an increased degree of grammatical accuracy and a wide range of standard

96

vocabulary;
- comprehend standard Italian spoken at normal to fast speed;
- speak on a variety of topics confidently and with good pronunciation;
- translate from Italian into English with a good level of accuracy and speed. (W1web)

Interestingly, fluency in the language, which is often mentioned by the study's participants as a personal goal or a milestone against which to measure one's progress, is never mentioned in any of the official course materials produced by the university or by the teachers, even though some teachers believe that some of the students who complete the major can be rightfully considered fluent:

A: Qual'è il livello d'italiano degli studenti che finiscono il major?
C: Anche qui si varia tantissimo da studente a studente, ma generalmente è un livello buono: sono in grado di andare in Italia, e di lavorare in un ambiente Italiano, di cavarsela in un ambiente di studio Italiano... Penso che chi finisce il major è soddisfatto del livello che ha raggiunto. (C1)

A: What's the level of Italian of the students who complete the major?
C: It tends to vary a lot but generally it's a good level, they are able to travel to Italy and work in an Italian environment, manage in a study environment in Italy. I would say that the ones who finish the major have a good level (…) I think that the ones who complete the major are satisfied with the level they have achieved. (C1)

Generally all language classes, regardless of the level of Italian taught, have many elements in common. Among these the most obvious is the great amount of time and effort teachers in these courses devote to the explicit teaching of grammar. Virtually all of the grammar of Italian language is taught during the first two years of the major, while the third and final year is dedicated to reviewing the previously introduced grammar through a study of examples of authentic language from different printed sources, such as newspapers and magazines. Throughout the major, the teaching of grammar is supported by the use of three different textbooks, one for each year, containing all of the content and the exercises the learners will need to complete the courses.

Another recurrent feature is the structure of the learners' assessment, which is the same in all language courses and consists of two written in-class grammar tests, two *temi*

(written compositions), two in-class audio-visual tests, a weekly oral assessment and a final oral examination. Such an extensive and diversified assessment calendar is only possible in language courses because of the relatively large amount of weekly hours of class attendance this type course demands. Depending of the year and the level in fact, students are required to attend four to five hours of classes per week, which are divided in lectures, tutorials and audio-visual (AV hereafter) classes.

The typical lecture consists in the introduction of a section of the textbook, normally a text containing new vocabulary and/or the application of a specific grammatical rule or rules, followed by the teacher's explanation of the essential point(s) and the completion of one or more exercises from the textbook. Teachers do attempt to speak Italian as much as possible during lectures, especially for already familiar or recurring elements, such as the initial greetings and basic instructions.

> Buongiorno ragazzi, come state? Bene?
> Good morning guys, how are you, good?

> Allora, dove eravamo?
> So, where were we?

> Giulia, vuoi continuare tu a leggere?
> Giulia, would you like to continue reading?

> Hai capito Giulia? Mi sembri un po' perplessa.
> Have you understood, Giulia? You look a little unsure. (WL3obs)

Even so, they often need revert to English, especially when explaining technical points or when wanting to ensure beyond any doubt that students have understood, as for example when talking about the assessment, or when offering feedback. The lecture always ends with the assignments of the *compiti* or homework, and often the following lecture will begin with its correction in class. Soon after the end of each session, a detailed outline of the session, including a list of the textbook sections and exercises covered in class, is made available to students by posting it on Blackboard[11].

---

[11] *Blackboard* is an online environment that supports teaching and learning at Wellesley University by making course information, materials and learning activities available online via the Internet. Blackboard gives Web-based access to course content, assessment, communication and collaboration tools.

If during the lectures it is the teacher who does most of the talking, the weekly tutorials, especially those of first and second-year courses, are designed to encourage learners to practise their spoken Italian. For this reason during the tutorials students are often made to complete oral tasks and activities, sometime involving the use of talking prompts such as images, cards, games and songs. However in spite of the continuous encouragement from the tutors, most learners are still very reluctant to speak Italian in class and this makes the task of the tutors all the more difficult:

> It's like getting blood from a stone sometimes to get them to speak in tutorials; that is the thing they are most intimidated by, they are really resistant about that. And especially being in a big class like that, people feel really self-conscious. So we all work very hard at trying to make them feel comfortable and just to get their confidence up and to feel that it's not a problem for them to make a mistake and that ultimately the goal is to communicate with someone. (S1)

In order to create an Italian-speaking environment Italian tutors are specifically instructed to speak Italian in class, and in spite of the difficulties involved, they often do, reverting to English only rarely and briefly. An additional strategy put in place to induce learners to speak was the establishment of a weekly assessment of the students' participation in the tutorial tasks. However in the end, in spite of the tutors' best efforts, the above-mentioned difficulties persist, particularly in first and second-year tutorials, meaning that often the learners' contribution to the tutorial discussions is minimal, and that the tutor still ends up doing most of the talking.

Just as lectures and tutorials, AV classes follow a regular structure, which normally involves the showing of a video clip of a dialogue in Italian and the completion of a series of *esercizi orali di comprensione* (oral comprehension exercises) in class. The main source of clips for the AV classes is the DVD disks that are part of the students' textbooks. The exchanges in the video clips are usually short (15 to 30 seconds), scripted and performed by actors. They closely relate to the themes/situations found in the section(s) of the textbook covered during the lectures. Some examples of titles from one of the third-year courses are *Parliamo d'infanzia* (Let's talk about our childhood), *Il tempo libero degli Italiani* (What Italians do in their spare time) and *La famiglia Italiana: nuovi scenari* (The Italian family: a new scene). The pace of the exchanges is usually slow, the actors' pronunciation deliberately clear. The clips are shown many times, but even so most learners are reluctant to volunteer answers to the questions

posed by the tutors, so that also in this type of classes, much of the available time is spent by the tutor attempting to encourage the learners to speak.

Although the basic design of the three types of classes is generally the same throughout the three years of major, third year classes tend to be very different from those of previous years in many respects, and this is mainly due to the small numbers of students they include and the high level of Italian of the students. 'Italian Language 3B' is a good example of the distinctive nature of third year courses. In 2006 the course only counted nine students, all females, most of whom knew each other from attending the same courses in previous years. Together with Chiara, their teacher, they all sat around four desks put together, everyone facing everyone. With most of the class members being young mature students in their mid-twenties to early thirties, who had previously travelled or lived in Italy, the whole group shared more than the Italian class they were attending, they shared some parts of their identity, and this made for an informal, even intimate class atmosphere. Even the teacher, seemingly casually sitting among the students, could have easily passed for one of them, and someone even commented "*Chiara sembra una di noi*" or "Chiara looks like one of us".

All sessions took place in the same departmental lecture room and the sitting arrangements never changed. Perhaps this influenced the way I perceived all classes to be very similar, regardless of whether they were a lecture or a tutorial, or perhaps the differences between these lose much of their significance when teaching such a small and competent group. The constant use of Italian by the teacher, and, above all, the way in which most students seemed to understand it all, was impressive. Chiara still needed to encourage some learners to speak, but most volunteered answers and comments in Italian without any coaxing. The most extensive part of the lesson was in most cases the correction of the homework, which at times took up to half of the available time. Clearly this reflected the fact that, at this level, students are expected to put a lot more effort into their individual study, which should be easier now that the grammar studied is never completely new to them. The only students whose foreheads were furrowed were those for whom the previously studied rules had not yet become automatic, and that therefore seemed to struggle not only with the stylistic details of the authentic language considered, but first and foremost with the language itself.

5.3.2.2 *Letteratura e cultura: The content courses*

Considered an essential complement to the language courses in the Italian major, the programme's content courses are designed to explore some literary, historic and cultural aspects of Italy. Each of the courses investigate a different subject matter, but all classes are similar in that they revolve around a consideration of readings or video materials, their commentaries, and the discussion of various elements to do with their form and meanings. Except for two second-year offerings, content courses are normally 300-level papers; this is principally to ensure that students have the necessary language skills to understand a range of authentic language sources, even though all of the courses' lectures, in-class discussions and assessment are normally carried out in English. Just like the other courses in the programme, content courses also include lectures and tutorials; however the differences between the two types of session are minimal, if they exist at all.

Among the 2006 content offerings, a course that can serve as a good example of this type of paper is 'Contemporary Italian Literature'. This course covered the principal aspects of contemporary Italian fiction through a study of selected works by three prominent Italian authors: Dino Buzzati, Paola Capriolo and Antonio Tabucchi. According to the course outline available from the university's website, the aims of the course are:

1. To introduce students to a general overview of contemporary Italian fiction;
2. To extend students' ability to understand the many forms of fiction in the genres of the *racconto*[12] and of the *romanzo*[13];
3. To teach students basic critical theory and textual analysis skills and encourage them to express themselves critically (both orally and in writing) about the texts studied in the course. (W1web)

As I had a chance to observe in class, the distinction between lectures and tutorials did not apply in the slightest to the sessions of this course. Rather, classes were structured according to a series of fixed elements: an introductory lecture, a number of sessions devoted to the interpretation and discussion of parts of the writings, and a final review session. All of these elements were then repeated in the same order for each of the writers studied, with the middle stage covering a different number of sessions

---

[12] 'short story'
[13] 'novel'

according to the number and length of the works considered. Like most other third-year classes, also this one was very small, with only six students enrolled. The cosy Italian library room, chosen as the venue for all of the course's sessions, suited the small group perfectly, as students could gather around its central table with the teacher a *capotavola* (as the head of the table), in an arrangement more reminiscent of a family dinner than a lesson in literature.

The relationship between teacher and students was very informal. Paolo, the lecturer, opted for a very relaxed style of lecturing, in which the students were made active participants in the process of discovering relevant information about the authors and their writings rather than a one-way delivery of knowledge. Students' participation was maximised by making English the official language of the course, as the lecture/discussion reached all of the students, making it easy to ask questions and offer opinions. The teacher even sought the cooperation of the students in choosing the assignment topics, so to ensure the range of questions contained issues they would enjoy writing about. Such a relaxed approach to teaching can at times lead to a relaxed attitude towards study in the students, with potentially negative consequences on the effort expended and on the learning. However nothing of the sort was ever observed in this course. The students seemed to appreciate Paolo's style: they looked attentive; they often participated to the discussion and generally seemed to enjoy the material. In many cases, some arrived to the venue early and consulted each other on various aspects of the readings before the beginning of the lesson. Even during these impromptu study-group meetings, they seemed very focussed on their work and comments about the course and the teacher were always positive, the atmosphere always upbeat. The quality of some of the students' literary essays was so high that Paolo decided to submit parts of their writings to academic journals for publication. It is not surprising therefore to learn that in the end all students in the class completed the course with excellent results.

5.4 Summary and conclusions

As the Centro's president pointed out more than once during our meeting, the Centro Italiano is not a language school, but a social club that offers language courses as only one of its activities. Its first aim is to help its members learn about Italy and Italian culture by providing a friendly and easily accessible environment where they can cultivate their Italy-related interests and passions and socialise with similarly inclined people. The Centro takes pride in its nature as an institution open to all New Zealanders

regardless of their ancestry, and in the fact that its language courses are aimed at making Italian language available to as wide a range of students as possible. It is not surprising therefore to find that while the presence of members of Italian descent is acknowledged and even encouraged by the Centro's governing committee and teachers, the language courses the Centro offers are designed with the general public in mind and make no special arrangements for the heritage learners among their students.

In contrast to the Centro Italiano, where language courses are only one of many activities aimed at bringing people together, the teaching of Italian is the main priority for the Italian programme at Wellesley University, which offers a range of courses designed to develop both oral and written competence by focussing closely on the teaching of grammar. Also, differently from the Centro's, Wellesley's Italian courses are intensive: students are expected to attend many weekly hours of tuition, and to spend at least just as many hours studying on their own in order to pass the all of the assessment they need to proceed to successive stages. Another difference between the two institutions is the type of students they attract: clearly, learners who enrol in the university's courses are not just prospective tourists, but tend to be people who are focussed on learning the language in its many forms and uses. In view of this last point, one could speculate that these courses may perhaps be more suitable to heritage students, whose motivation often directs them to look for more than tourist phrases. And yet, the university courses are also designed to suit the majority of students in their classes, who tend to be foreign language learners with no familial ties to the language, meaning that, just like the courses at the Centro, they are generally aimed at achieving learning objectives that could potentially diverge from those of students of Italian descent.

In general, this chapter has painted a picture of the two institutions as learning settings that have much to offer to the participants to the study, both in terms of achieving the competence they aspire to and of joining Italian-related social networks that could support their learning and the development of their *Italianità*. Nonetheless, there are a number of potential difficulties inherent in the fact that all courses offered are strictly designed with foreign language learners in mind. The ways in which the participants will be able to take advantage of the opportunities and cope with difficulties they will face in the language classroom represent the core content of the individual learning stories presented in the five case studies that follow.

Chapter Six: Marianne

It's not just the language it's a whole combination of things: it's learning the recipes that my grandmother used to cook and all sorts of other things, but the language is the medium that takes you closer to all of those cultural things… If you think about it without language and without those other cultural pointers what makes me Italian? Nothing. I was born here. (M3)

6.1 Meet Marianne: The true Wellington-Italian

When I met Marianne for the first time in February 2006, I felt as though I already knew a great deal about her. Two years prior to our first meeting, I had the pleasure of interviewing Marianne's father for my first project involving the Wellington Italians. During that interview, I was welcomed into the house where Marianne grew up and I was shown a series of family heirlooms, among which a couple of framed black and white pictures hanging in the hallway: a stunning view of the Italian Amalfi coast as it must have looked a hundred years ago, and, right next to it, a panoramic take of Wellington's own Island Bay at about the same time. Marianne's father smiled as he pointed first at one picture and then at the other. "From here, to here", he said, and proceeded to tell me all about how his family – Marianne's ancestors – settled in the Bay with the hope of a "better life" in New Zealand, and eventually came to be one of the household names in the local Italian community.

So when Marianne began to tell me about the influences of her Italian surroundings on her childhood – her grandmother's descriptions of Venice, the animated conversations she used to have with her Italian neighbours, the monthly Italian Mass at the local Catholic church – I felt as though I somehow already knew her, not only because I had learned a little about her family, but also because I recognised in her the same fondness and enthusiasm for her own Italian roots that I had previously seen in her father.

My first contact with Marianne took the form of a series of emails in April 2004 and then, from February 2006 we began a series of five face-to-face interviews. Interviewing Marianne was an informal and pleasant experience I always looked forward to: Marianne is an intelligent, positive person with a truly wicked sense of humour, who

often had me laughing hard, both during our meetings and afterwards while reading her data.

But by far the most valuable aspect of Marianne's data is found in her perceptions of her own ethnic identity, consistently showing a level of clarity and depth which can only be the product of much reflection on the matter. This is partly due to the fact that sadly, Marianne's father passed away in 2005, just months before the two were scheduled to start learning Italian together; understandably the event had deep impact on Marianne's perspective on many aspects of her life, including her construction of her own Italian heritage and identity, and, as we will see, as a consequence, of her motivation to study Italian.

The poignant background to Marianne's story is the reason why her language learning experience illustrates the role that critical events in learners' lives can have in their construction of their heritage identity and so in turn in their motivation to learn their heritage language. This example supports a view of language learning motivation as stemming directly from the way a learner constructs or makes sense of the world around them.

At the same time, Marianne's story is interesting in terms of how she understands her own identity in relation to the communities of Italian speakers around her, and for its clear illustration of how such understanding actively drives her desire for participation or non-participation, with a direct impact on her motivation to learn Italian. In this sense, Marianne's experiences offer a clear view of the dynamic interaction between a learner's social context, their identity and their motivation.

6.2   The story of an Island Bay family

To tell the history of Marianne's Italian background is to trace a past that is in many ways common to the majority of today's Wellingtonians of Italian descent. Marianne's great-grandfather Antonio was a fisherman from Procida, a small island in the Gulf of Naples, who in his youth travelled around the world as a deckhand on a ship that once docked in Wellington harbour. Although eventually the adventurous youth returned home to Italy, where he then spent the rest of his life, one of his sons – Marianne's grandfather – inspired by Antonio's descriptions of the New Zealand coast, decided to make this exotic faraway land one of his destinations in his search for a better life abroad. After many a difficult year travelling to and fro between the two countries, he

finally settled in New Zealand for good with his Italian wife, where the two bought a house and had three children, the second of whom was Marianne's father.

The house Marianne's grandparents bought was in Island Bay, a suburb of Wellington where a large community of Italian immigrants was already well established. The familiar Italian environment made it easy for the young family to adjust to their new surroundings and for their children to retain their native Italian dialect while at the same time learning English at school. Some years later, when Marianne's father, Giuseppe, married his high-school sweetheart – a young Wellingtonian of Irish descent – they remained in Island Bay, and Marianne and her sister were born and raised in the same Italian neighbourhood that had already been the home of two generations of their family before them.

Today, much of Marianne's own sense of *Italianità* is inextricably tied to her childhood memories of growing up in Island Bay, where she was constantly surrounded by links to her Italian heritage: in the home, around the neighbourhood and even at school, where most of the other students were "Italian kids" like herself. But the most influential Italian figure in Marianne's formative years was her *nonna*[14], who through her stories, her traditions and her links to the community's social networks, constantly acted as a cultural broker between Marianne's own world and that of her Italian ancestors:

> My grandmother was still very much alive so we grew up with her Italian friends… And there were lots of Italians everywhere so they would speak Italian… Really all the time. As well, we used to go on Italian picnics and eat Italian food and celebrate. And we used to get dragged to Italian Mass. We were brought up Catholic so we went to Mass all the time; we used to go with my grandmother. (M1)

> My grandmother also continued to speak Italian throughout her life to her sons and so she would speak to my father in Italian, so we were constantly hearing it. She would also use Italian words with us when we were small and we used to stay there… I mean we used to go to *letto*[15] and have *latte*[16], a whole lot of things, so yeah we were exposed to it. (M1)

---

[14] grandmother
[15] 'bed'
[16] 'milk'

In spite of the pervasive nature of the Italian influences surrounding Marianne and her sister at this time in their lives, neither of them learned to speak Italian beyond some of the words and expressions their Italian grandmother used with them. This wasn't in any way due to lack of trying: Marianne for example remembers attending Italian Sunday school with her sister around the age of seven or eight, but she says that "it didn't last", partly because it wasn't particularly enjoyable and partly because classes were rather intermittent and eventually stopped, as they were a church-based initiative dependent on the availability of language teachers from the community itself. In spite of this, Marianne admits to having been "curious about Italian" all of her life and it's exactly this underlying curiosity that she sees at the basis of her desire to learn the language:

> I always wanted to learn Italian; I always had this thing, this desire. (…) My sister has never been interested, whereas I would talk to dad about it and we'd like… Dad also wanted to learn and we tested each other on words and things like that, and play games or talk Italian and things like that, we would translate Italian documents that had come from… I don't know, we just had an interest in the language. (M1)

Furthermore, as seen from the excerpt, Marianne's interest in Italian language was something she shared with her father, and that was clearly unique to their relationship. This fact is particularly significant in Marianne's story in that it adds another important affective dimension to her relationship with her ancestral language, which in her mind is not just the language of a faraway time and place, but an important element of many of her childhood memories, of her personal relationship with her *nonna*, but above all of that with her father, and this, as we will see, is to have important consequences both on her decision to learn the language and on the way she will approach her studies.

6.3   The last Italian standing: Marianne's initial motivation

Marianne's first experience of an Italian language class was in 2002, when she decided to take an Italian-for-travellers course at the local night school. The decision came as Marianne prepared herself for her first trip to Italy, which was to take place as part of a round-the-world tour the following year. Marianne knew that during her Italian holiday she would meet her relatives in Procida and she wanted to learn a few basic Italian words and expressions not so much to be able to communicate in Italian with them – she knew they spoke very good English – but to be able to "make an effort" in Italian as a sign of politeness. Above all, Marianne thought that having some degree of

control of Italian might help her optimise her experience of Italy, and perhaps even allow her to feel "more Italian" once she set foot on her ancestral homeland:

> I learned because I knew I was going to be visiting Italy. I wanted to be able to get by as a tourist and to connect somehow with the place when I visited and I felt that language would be a way for me to enjoy the trip more. (Memail1)

Marianne's wish to learn Italian in preparation for her Italian tour is a sign of the intensity of her desire to immerse herself in Italian life as well as to establish a good relationship with her Italian relatives. Clearly for Marianne this was much more than just a holiday: just as she had always had an interest in Italian language, she had also always dreamed of visiting Italy and had long imagined herself in the places that populated her grandmother's stories. In this sense, Marianne's expectations of Italy were loaded with the affective weight of her own Italian heritage:

> My *nonna* had always talked to me about her honeymoon in Venice, so I definitely had a romantic view of what it was going to be like and wanted to see many of the places I had seen in photograph or heard stories about. I expected Italy to be beautiful, full of history and rich in art and food, which it was. I expected to feel connected to the country and the places that were important to me. When I visited Procida I expected to feel a sense of belonging to the people and the place. (Memail1)

In the end, Marianne wasn't disappointed: the meeting with her Italian relatives turned out to be not only a very pleasant event, but also a deeply enriching experience during which she literally gained an Italian family and a home away from home. As a result, Marianne's own knowledge of and fondness for her own Italian heritage deepened, together with her feelings of belonging for the parts of the Italian territory associated with her family's history:

> In Procida I stayed with my dad's cousins and her family. The experience was amazing; they all gave me such a welcome and a sense of family that it was overwhelming. They helped me feel part of their life by sharing stories and experiences as well as family recipes, jokes and photographs. They really made me feel that Italy and Procida was as much my home as theirs and they wanted me to have a wonderful time and come back. (Memail1)

> Now that I have visited the home of my ancestors I definitely feel closer to my roots. I don't know that I feel more Italian but I know more and I understand Italy a little better. I

also learned a lot about my *nonna* and my family's experience and that made me feel closer to them. It also reinforced to me that Italians have a very strong sense of the importance of family and that they still felt that I belonged in Italy and that it was in some way home to me even though I grew up in NZ. (Memail1)

Marianne's experience of the Italy associated with her own heritage was made even more significant by the overall lack of enthusiasm Marianne felt toward the other Italian destinations she visited during her holiday, which she has no hesitation in describing collectively as "just another country": interesting and at times beautiful, but fundamentally lacking the deep emotional connection to the people and the land that she experienced in and around her relatives' village:

> It was exciting but it wasn't as I imagined. I think that I had expected to be much more of kind of this picturesque kind of Italy that you get on travel brochures and things like that, and it's not like that at all, well parts of it are, but… Well for example Naples is very very… It's Naples. I found Naples to be quite dirty and rough, which is not what I imagined it to be, and things like that, which is not how I imagined parts of Italy to be… I liked aspects of it, I don't, I am not in love with Italy, I love Procida, I think Procida is really beautiful, but I think that's a sense of people and home and it was a different experience from staying in an overpriced hotel in Venice, kind of thing. (M1)

The main significance of Marianne's first trip to Italy is the crucial role it played in defining her relationship not only with the country itself, but also with her Italian heritage and with Italian language. In Italy Marianne realises that although she had always thought of having a special connection with this country, the only real connection she has with it is through her personal relationships with the Italian people who are part of her family, and that in fact, even her appreciation of places as aesthetically beautiful as Procida for example, stems not from the beauty of the places themselves, but from the personal significance of the people who inhabit them. This shift in Marianne's idea of what Italy means to her necessarily extends to her view of Italian language, and what before she had considered just a means to enhance her travelling experience, becomes a tool for connecting to Italian people – in particular her relatives – for experiencing Italian life as one of the locals:

> I learned that language is the primary way to connect to a place because being able to speak the language allows you to better connect to people and feel part of the country.

> So next time I go back I would like to have better language skills, and also spend more time in one or two places and participate more in every day life a little bit. (Memail1)

This is, in a nutshell, the beginning of Marianne's motivation to learn her heritage language: hers is not an urgent need to gain absolute fluency and/or to construct an overtly Italian identity, but a simple desire to deepen her connection with her Italian relatives and to gain a better understanding of their ways.

With these objectives in mind, when Marianne returns to New Zealand, she resolves to find a way to learn her heritage language in Wellington, and remembering her father's desire to do the same, she proposes they begin learning together, to which Giuseppe promptly agrees. After a brief survey of the locally offered language courses, they decide that those provided by the Centro Italiano are the ones that best suit their learning needs, the only drawback being that these are year-long courses which have already begun and that therefore they will have to wait a few months to commence their studies.

Unfortunately, as spring unfolds, Giuseppe's health begins to decline, and after a few weeks of acute illness, he passes away. Some months later, when the Centro's courses are about to start, Marianne's name is on the roll and she eagerly awaits her first Italian lesson. Sadly, her father is not going to sit at the desk beside her, but in a way he will always be present in the classroom, because he has now become part of Marianne's motivation:

> I think I want to learn it – and this is an observation since my dad died – because I think that with every person in my family who I lose that had a strong connection via the language or the culture and so on, it makes me want to learn it more because it's an important connection to them, to my dad, to my nonna and to my own past and I think if I don't make an effort to embrace it somehow, then it's just going to dwindle out, and there is less of a chance that my children will have an appreciation of it and I think there is a real value to me to have experienced that, so I'd like my children to have a sense of where they came from as well, I don't want it to be just about the food (*laughs*), the food is an easy thing to carry on. (M1)

The excerpt illustrates how the loss of her father has brought about a change in Marianne's perspective of her Italian heritage and of her own Italian identity, which in turn has deeply affected her language learning motivation. In particular, Giuseppe's loss has highlighted the fact that with every generation of Marianne's Italian family that disappears, its connection to the Italian roots of her ancestors weakens, and as the oldest

living recipient of her family's Italian heritage, it is now up to her to preserve it for future generations. Consequently, Italian language, which she had previously considered primarily a tool to maintain her relationship with her living relatives in Italy, now assumes a more important – if also more symbolic – meaning as the emblem of her connection to the *Italianità* of her family and of her personal relationship with her father and grandmother. (We will come back to the motivational implications of Giuseppe's death in a later section of this chapter).

As a result of this shift in the meaning that Marianne assigns to her heritage language, her motivation receives a boost and she is now more than ever determined to go through with her plan to begin studying Italian at the Centro. However, while Marianne approaches the course with much enthusiasm, the principally symbolic value that she places on the language means that she is not aiming to achieve a specific level of proficiency, and so, while she is clear on the fact that she would like to learn enough to "have the confidence to have a conversation", the exact details of her goal (possible conversational settings, interlocutors, purposes, timeframe, etc.) are left unspecified:

> I actually this time I want to stick with learning Italian and if I enjoy it enough, I'd kind of like to learn the basics and then I'd like to, my end-goal is to be able to kind of, you know… Knowing enough so that I have the confidence to have a conversation would be really good, so that means I need to study it for a wee while and get to grips with it and so on. (M1)

This lack of specificity in Marianne's objectives does not imply a lack of motivation or commitment; on the contrary, it is a clue to her determination to take the learning of Italian very seriously and to make it a regular part of her life. In this sense, Marianne's focus is not on learning to speak Italian quickly and well, but on making the process as enriching, enjoyable and stress-free as possible so to be able "stick with it" for as long as it takes to "get to grips with it". A clear sign that Marianne expects to be "in it for the long haul" and, more importantly, that she is aware of the motivational challenges that this could entail, is the fact that she feels the need to enlists the services of her partner John to accompany her in her learning venture, a task that does not require much convincing, as John is a self-confessed italophile:

> He's Irish actually, well his family is really. No, but he loves Italy, he loves it more than I do, he loves the family, he loves Procida he just loves it; he's taken a real affinity to it. And since we travelled in Italy, we both had this interest in learning the language. (M1)

> I think it'll be nice for John and I to do something together, it's a shared thing… We do a lot of stuff separately too, but we've always had the odd thing that we do together, last year we used to go to the gym together and we always have something that we do together. It's kind of… a nice thing which will encourage us to keep up with it. Cause it's hard to kind of stick with something if you're alone, it's like doing a diet, or stopping smoking or… it's kind of like… the two of you doing it it's easier. (M1)

Marianne's motivational wisdom is evident in the way she constructs her language learning as both a personal endeavour associated with her own Italian heritage and a bonding activity to share with her partner, as by diversifying her investment in the venture, she maximises her interest and enjoyment and reduces her risk of demotivation. By doing so, Marianne already displays some clear signs of wanting to maintain an active role in managing her learning, and since autonomous learners are by definition motivated learners (Ushioda, 1996) this represent a significant advantage in the learning process. What Marianne cannot anticipate at this stage is that while certain learning settings encourage autonomy and so foster the development of the students' personal motivation, others do not, with potentially detrimental effects on their studies.

6.4 "A very bad start": The 'Beginners' One' course

With a healthy measure of enthusiasm, Marianne begins attending Italian classes in February 2006, expecting to enjoy the course from the very start. But her optimism is immediately challenged when the very first class proves to be "the ultimate anticlimax". The first hurdle Marianne encounters is her instant dislike of the teacher's manner, which she describes as "condescending", "abrupt", "rigid" and "not very pleasant". Marianne does recognise that first impressions can be misleading and is prepared to give herself some time to adjust to the teacher's unfamiliar ways, however as the first lesson unfolds and various aspects of the course are introduced, Marianne comes face to face with more complications:

> She started out by telling us that she wasn't going to teach us any grammar, and so that made me think how can you learn a language if you don't learn any basic grammar? (…). So I was already kind of disappointed, and then she also said that she's going to move us around constantly, like we are not going to be sitting next to the same person all the time. (M1)

Marianne's disappointment at the prospect of not receiving any explicit grammar teaching is due to the fact that this deviates from her expectations of the course. In particular, her feeling is that the exclusion of grammar might mean that the course is targeted not just at beginner learners, but at prospective tourists, who would prefer avoid having to understand the nuts and bolts of the language and settle for a range of simple words and set expressions that might come useful during their Italian holiday. Unfortunately for Marianne, her fears turn out to be well founded:

> And she very much taught us if she was teaching people so that they could go there. She always talks about 'when you go to Italy', as if people are going for a three week holiday and that wasn't what I expected from a course that is a whole year long. This is…. Kind of what I had done before, a six-week introduction to basic Italian. I am not interested in spending a lot of time to just learn rote… Parrot-kind of phrases, I mean I can parrot-phrase already, I can ask how much those shoes are… (M1)

The root of Marianne's discontent is the mismatch between her personal goals and the course objectives: having approached the study of Italian in order to gain a deeper understanding of the language and culture of her ancestors, and to satisfy her desire for self-realisation – rather than to "deal with Italian shop assistants" – she now fears that in this particular setting her personal learning needs might go unfulfilled. But the thing that alarms Marianne the most is the idea of not being able share the classroom activities with John, whose presence and support she had envisioned as an integral part of her learning experience. She is so disturbed by this prospect in fact that she decides to talk to the teacher about it, hoping to negotiate a solution that would better suit her needs. Unfortunately, her exchange with the tutor does not produce the desired results, and the incident only exacerbates Marianne's reservations about the course:

> …And so at the end of the class I asked her how much time are we going to be moved around, and said it kind of bothers me because my partner and I came to do this together like as a thing that we want to do together, and she said something like 'do me the courtesy of letting me teach how I want'. (*Shocked expression*) And I guess as an adult learner I am like… (*loudly*) Blow that! Teaching is a two-way thing, you know, if your students come in and say 'I don't want to…' or 'I'd like a balance' or 'I don't actually want to do that, or I'd rather do it that way' you should at least listen… And so I thought I am not going to spend a year not enjoying it, I am not going to learn if I am not enjoying it. So we got off to a very bad start. (M1)

The inflexibility showed by the instructor over this issue means that Marianne is not given the opportunity to satisfy her learning preferences and so is denied control of her learning, which is in itself a powerful source of demotivation. But the real deal-breaker for Marianne is the fact that the resulting set of circumstances will prevent her from enjoying learning the language, as she knows that without an intrinsic element of pleasure to be gained from attending the course, her motivation and therefore her learning will be fatally compromised. Marianne is disappointed but not yet ready to resign herself to the situation:

> I was very disappointed and so I talked to the president of the Centro and I kind of said 'Mmm I don't know about this...' I told her about the moving around and also I addressed the issue of grammar because I was really concerned about that. The president said not to worry about the grammar too much 'cause we will learn along the way and that's fine... and about the rest the president and I decided that we would do it again, that we would go to a second lesson and see how it went... (M1)

The Centro's president succeeds in placating some of Marianne's concerns by explaining that while grammatical rules are never explicitly explained or practiced in class, there will be opportunities for the students to acquire some elements of grammar "automatically" as they focus on other elements of the language such as pronunciation and vocabulary building. Marianne is also assured that this is a more user-friendly method of teaching which has proved to be very effective with the Centro's beginner students for a number of years, and that she will be able to satisfy her interest in Italian grammar once she moves on to the pre-intermediate level in a year or two. The president also suggests that Marianne attends a few more classes to familiarise herself to the instructor's style, which Marianne understands as a subtle assurance that the president will personally talk to the instructor about her wish to work with John. In view of these developments, Marianne decides to return to class and give the course another chance.

6.5 March-June 2006: Making the most of the less-than-perfect

In the end, Marianne's decision to voice her concerns pays off and during the following lessons she is pleased to see that the instructor seems to have abandoned her plan to continuously rotate the students' study partners allowing her to work with John on a permanent basis. The change brings great relief to Marianne and as a result her motivation is at least partially restored. As a result of this, as the course unfolds,

Marianne's attitudes undergo a gradual shift and she begins to feel more positive about the learning environment:

I am warming to her style a little bit more 'cause I kind of think we are learning a little bit, like I am actually finding myself learning a little bit, so maybe it works… I still don't like the instructor, but one thing that she is really good at is pronunciation: she spends quite a lot of time on that, so that's been really helpful, 'cause I found that some teachers just expect you to pick it up along the way, while she goes out of her way to drill it into you and it has made quite a difference. Like I realise now I naturally roll my Rs, and I have never done that before. (M1)

> We do speak Italian a lot in class. And that's one of the good things. She says it and then we say it, and then she says it and then we say it and again and again and again and then we have little conversations with the person next to us, so there is quite a focus on speaking together a lot, which is really good. But I can still only order a drink… (*laughs*) (M1)

While improving her Italian pronunciation was not one of Marianne's specific learning goals, she recognises that this as an important and often neglected element the lessons are indeed helping her improve. The course's focus on developing the students' oral skills is also a welcome feature, and although Marianne does realise that the range of language tools that are available to her is still rather limited ("I can still only order a drink"), she appreciates the opportunity of practicing her oral Italian and so gain some confidence in this aspect of the language. In sum, Marianne's comments suggest that she is finding the course content and activities somewhat valuable to her learning, a factor that helps sustain her motivation.

Nevertheless there are still some points of concern. The lack of explicit grammar teaching, for example, still bothers Marianne:

> (the grammar) it's in the back (of the textbook) but it's not really embedded into the things we do in class, so you're not learning some kind of structure… I find that I scribble in the front and the back of my book, like 'the', 'a', 'but', you know all the little bricks of language… and I find I struggle with that a bit 'cause it's fairly easy to remember the word for cable car or you know shoe or apple… That isn't difficult. But there is no point

to me knowing what the word for pear is if I can't make a sentence with it. It's like pointing at objects and go '*Pera*[17] !' (*laughs*) '*Pompelmo*[18] !' (*laughs*). (M2)

In Marianne's view, the main drawback of the no-grammar philosophy is that it restricts the range of language she is learning to produce. Also, Marianne is annoyed by the fact that while she has been made to believe this is a way to learn which benefits all beginner learners, it is clear from the teachers' comments in class that it is assumed that all students are prospective tourists. This is particularly disturbing to Marianne, not only because she does not believe that a no-grammar approach can lead to the kind of learning that she envisages for herself, but also because she resents the assumption made about her identity as a learner:

> I just think that she speaks as though people are going overseas, and she has all these funny little jokes about it and I find that really annoying because not everyone is learning Italian to go on holiday and I actually have other reasons…. I just find it annoying more that anything. (M2)

Nonetheless, even in spite of such reservations, Marianne continues attending the classes: the course might not be strictly tailored to her needs, nor the fastest route to learning, but it offers some important advantages for Marianne, in particular in terms of its manageability:

> It's only one hour a week which is good, because I feel that by the end of the hour I am starting to lose my attention and so I am quite enjoying that, it's just like a little taste every week, your are learning just enough to actually remember it instead of overloading and forgetting half of it so I am quite enjoying that. (M2)

> The homework is always easy, yeah it's no problem keeping up with it, I understand now why it's stretched out over the whole year 'cause it's not that intensive which is actually quite nice. (M2)

The non-intensive nature of the course is beneficial not only in terms of the ease of acquisition that derives from the small amount of material covered each week, but also motivationally, in that a less demanding study programme offers an increased chance of success, and feelings of success can increase self-confidence and therefore motivation.

---

[17] 'pear'
[18] 'grapefruit'

Of course, one of the possible downsides of an undemanding course is that progress can be very slow, but while Marianne admits that this is indeed the case, this does not seem to represents a deterrent to her motivation:

> I think I realised that it's going to be more of a long haul then I thought, like it's probably going to take years and years and years to be able to learn the language even at a basic level… But this has probably strengthened my resolve a little bit, cause now it's just something that I do, so it's just something like breathing or eating or… It's not a real commitment; it's kind of like going to the gym. (M2)

The reasons why Marianne seems to have such a relaxed attitude towards potentially demotivating elements of her language environment are to be found in the way she understands her commitment to learning her heritage language, and in particular in the fact that she is not working towards specific proficiency goals and/or within a strict time frame. As we have seen, Marianne's main objective is to "stick with it", or, in other words, to find a balance between effort and sense of progress that will sustain her motivation throughout the duration of her language learning, however long that might take. Marianne realises she could look for a faster, more intensive way to learn Italian, but the cost of that in terms of the time and effort she would have to expend on her studies would be counterproductive:

> A: Is there any advantage to this kind of learning?
> M: It's not particularly stressful, and it's short, it's not particularly demanding, it's easy to go for an hour and remain interested and not get bored and switch off, and I feel it suits my lifestyle at the moment, it does.
> A: So it's a compromise, you could be learning a lot more but you'd also have to do a lot more
> M: And I wouldn't want to do more. No, no. I guess the only way I could do would be to do extra study outside the normal… Which I am not keen to do, cause I sort of want to keep it in balance… (M4)

Marianne is not interested in rearranging her life around her language learning and although learning her heritage language is clearly a strong ambition for Marianne, she realises that she will have a greater chance of success by choosing to approach it in a way that makes no special demands on her time and energy and that does not upset her current lifestyle. Marianne's position can also be explained in terms of the multiple and opposing identity investments: her investment in realising a fuller Italian identity

through the learning of her heritage language needs to be balanced with her desire to maintain her current identity. In this sense, Marianne's motivation to learn her HL is clearly the product of her identity wishes.

6.6 The Italian escape: The gap between classroom and reality

When I next meet Marianne it is June and she has just returned from a short trip overseas, which included a five-day stay with her Italian relatives in Procida. Though the visit was little more than a brief stopover on the way to Marianne's final destination in the U.S., it represented Marianne's first visit to Italy since she began studying Italian, and offered her a rare opportunity to test her skills in an Italian-speaking environment. In view of the fact that she had only been formally learning the language for a few months, Marianne was realistic about the use she would be able to make of the little Italian she has learned, but she resolved to practise her skills as much as possible with overall good results:

> I could get around… Well I have been there before so I don't need much Italian when I am there but I try to use it as much as I can. My cousin's English is very very good so she speaks English. (…) I've used simple words with Anna, her little girl, it is quite funny actually because her Italian is better than mine and she's only two (*laughs*)… But I could actually say some words to her, and we could count or I could read simple books to her... (M3)

Marianne especially appreciates the fact that she can speak Italian during her interactions with the children in the family, as this is a sign that her language skills are helping her build a relationship with a new generation of Italian relatives. Marianne is also very pleased to discover signs that her study of the language is indeed bearing some results: she finds for example that her pronunciation of Italian words has markedly improved since her last trip to Italy, and this is having a favourable effect on how well Italians around her understand her speech. However the limits of her linguistic skills are very obvious, especially when the exchange does not adhere to one of the model dialogues presented in class:

> Some things would go terribly wrong though, cause I am quite limited, like I remember going into a shop and I asked the woman how much were a pair of sunglasses, and she answered me back straight like that in a whole blurb of Italian and so I could kind of get

what she was saying with the price, but I couldn't really continue the conversation in Italian because of my limitations. So it made me realise how little I knew, and it gave me more motivation to keep up with it, I realise I have to keep going otherwise I am going to be stuck at this level cause it's a few phrases and that's it. (M3)

But in spite of highlighting her linguistic shortcomings, Marianne's trip to Italy ultimately has a positive effect on her motivation to continue learning the language, because while she does realise that her Italian is still very limited, she also understands that the only way not to "get stuck at this level" is to persist in her study of it. As a result, when Marianne returns to class, she feels positively motivated to work hard in order to get up-to-date with what has been covered in her absence, only to find, to her surprise, that the group has actually progressed very little:

I was surprised at how little they had done, I was quite concerned on my first class that I was going to be way behind, but, no, (…) I've caught up with all the homework in the last couple of weeks and it wasn't that bad… I mean some people are still having trouble with basic pronunciation and things like that, so you know (…) which is fine, which is actually quite good, 'cause it wasn't… I think it would have been more difficult if I had been really far behind, because that would have been quite demotivating. (M3)

Still, the slow pace of the course does not bother Marianne, who is able to see the positive side of the situation, and is actually relieved at the fact that she did not have to expend any special amount of effort to get up to speed with the rest of the class. Once again, Marianne seems to be carefully weighing up her perception of language growth with the study effort required, and once again she seems satisfied with the balance the situation offers. Nonetheless, having recently experienced the linguistic challenges of conducting even a simple exchange with native speakers in Italy, Marianne's initial doubts about the course content resurface and she feels once again annoyed at the lack of grammatical tools provided by the lessons, which she believes lies at the root of her inability to understand naturally-occurring Italian speech:

This is what I find frustrating – and this was what I found frustrating at the beginning – we're not learning any sentence structure or anything, so I really am at the stage where I only know a few words and some travel phrases, and that does not help you understand Italian people, because when you are listening to them you can only pick up the odd word but that doesn't help at all. (M3)

Despite the frustration, Marianne never considers any alternatives to her current course of action:

> A: But you seem very patient.
>
> M: Well, I do enjoy it. And I do recognise that this is the beginners' class and also given the textbook I don't feel like I have been duped, so to say. (M3)

As already noted in a previous section, enjoyment is for Marianne one of the principal motivational factors and so it is not a coincidence to find that while she still enjoys attending Italian classes, her motivation is well supported. At the same time, her misgivings about the lack of explicit grammar explanations are also mitigated by her observation that the course seems to support the no-grammar method. Overall, in fact, Marianne's data seems to suggest that despite her doubts, she is prepared to trust the expertise of the instructor and of the Centro's president, and that her motivation is at least partly based on her conviction that despite the slow rate at which her Italian skills are developing, in time her persistence will be rewarded.

6.7   July-September 2006: The 'motivational auto-pilot'

When I meet Marianne again in September, it seems her motivation has reached what could be described as a comfortable plateau:

> A: Do you think your motivation has changed since the last time we spoke or since the beginning of the year?
>
> M: I am not excited about it anymore. I just kind of do it, and it's just something I do. And it is kind of a routine now; it's what we do on Wednesday… There is no resistance but no incredible enthusiasm. (M4)

The excerpt suggests a certain ambivalence in Marianne's attitudes toward her language learning: on the one hand there is a motivational advantage in having assimilated the weekly hour of Italian lessons into her normal routine, therefore minimising the amount of disturbance and effort it entails, while on the other the initial enthusiasm is beginning to wear off. The combination of these two elements means that Marianne is still motivated enough to attend class every week, but that she is doing so more out of habit rather than curiosity, interest or enthusiasm. The positive side of this state of affairs is that this is in a way what Marianne wanted – for language learning to become an automatic process ("like breathing or eating") requiring minimal effort and so

easily sustained for a long time. On the other hand, it seems the lessons tend to be rather repetitive and do not actively foster the students' natural interest and curiosity in the language, which is so important to maintain their motivation:

> The lessons are always pretty much the same. I think our teacher likes the sound of her own voice quite a lot, so she likes to read to us… And then she'll read again and she does this kind of 'repeat after me' in these two-word blocks and that can get a bit repetitive and boring and at this stage it can be helpful but she does go a bit too far… (M4)

In the current set of circumstances, Marianne admits it is at times difficult to feel enthusiastic about going to class – especially when more appealing alternatives are available – but that she is usually able to fend off demotivation by engaging in some motivating self-talk:

> There are definitely times when I think oh, I can't be bothered going but in saying that usually at the end of the class I am glad I went, so I just usually tell myself that I am committed to this and that I do want to do it. I'll feel better when I am there… That kind of thing really, to motivate myself, remind myself of the reasons I am doing it. And also the shortness of the classes, I have to say, to know that it's only one hour and it goes really quickly, so, it's a small ask. (M4)

It is interesting to notice that although Marianne's initial goals and reasons to learn her heritage language are indeed part of this motivating self-talk at difficult times, the main factor that ultimately allows her to overcome her temporary lack of motivation is the brief and undemanding nature of the classes, illustrating that in Marianne's case the maintenance of her executive motivation depends mainly on factors to do with the learning setting itself rather than on elements of initial motivation and or with identity issues. There is however an even more motivationally powerful factor which helps support Marianne's motivational states throughout her studies: John. Although he didn't feature prominently in Marianne's decision to begin her studies, his presence in the classroom and out is for Marianne an invaluable source of motivation:

> I think (without John) I probably would still have enrolled, but I think it really helped along the way, because these classes are quite a huge commitment, it's not like going six weeks for two hours (…) and it takes years and years… So I think it would have been

quite a significant thing to do without him, and it would have had an impact on our life if he wasn't doing it. (M4)

Again the data suggests that an important condition for the maintenance of Marianne's motivation is the successful assimilation of language learning into her everyday life, and that including John in her venture might have been a way to achieve this. Whether Marianne's decision to do so was indeed driven by a conscious motivational self-regulation or not, the choice is a wise one: sharing her language learning experience with John means that together they can keep focussing on the language outside the classroom, both by engaging in formal language practice and in less structured learning and by finding personal and playful ways weave the use of Italian in their day-to-day life:

> John and I do things together, like we do our homework together so that can be kind of fun, we'll kind of practise on each other… We try to make it funny, like I'll ring John at work and John will answer the phone in Italian and greet me in Italian… Just silly things like that like. John has got this fascination with answering the telephone at our house saying pronto, but so little things like that that make it quite nice. (M1)

Having John as a study partner is in fact is so motivationally significant for Marianne that she admits that at this stage if he decides to discontinue his study of Italian she would not want nor be able to continue the programme without him ("if he dropped out now, I think I'd seriously not continue").

6.8 One down, many to go: The year that was and those to come

In December Marianne and I meet for the very last time. By now the Centro's courses are finished and Marianne can reflect on the year that has been. When I ask her to evaluate her learning experience she begins by commenting on what she considers positive outcomes of the year she has spent learning Italian at the Centro. Among these she mentions that, especially during the last weeks of the course, the activities have been even more focussed on developing the students' speaking skills, and as a result she strongly feels that her pronunciation and her comprehension have improved:

> In the last month we've probably been doing more talking aloud and a lot more kind of talking in front of others and that's been quite good. She'd ask you questions and things like that, and usually the answers are one-word answers and so on, But recently she got us to through a dialogue and we would each read put one bit, so that was quite good,

122

because you realise how far you have come, and you actually sound OK and so I didn't even get picked up for anything so that was quite good. (M5)

However in terms of language production Marianne expresses a degree of disappointment as in particular she feels that even her rather conservative expectations of the degree of fluency she would achieve by the end of the year have not been met:

I would have thought I would be better (by now). We are at this stage now where you can read Italian and you can make it sound vaguely… You could be understood – by a patient Italian – (*laughs*) but you can't do a lot more… So in ten months that's quite… That's slow. I think we could have progressed a lot more. And I feel like I haven't learned anything that useful. I have learned tourist Italian and I mean, I don't see a lot of value in knowing how to get on a train… I don't know how to construct a sentence, so it's really been about learning words. I definitely progressed since the beginning of the year, my pronunciation is much better and my understanding is better, so no, I definitely come quite a long way but what I have learned – and this is my test – with what I have learned I could not go back home to Italy and conduct an everyday conversation. (M5)

Clearly Marianne also has reservations about the kind of language she has learned, which overall has done little to bring her closer to her initial objective to "have the confidence to have a conversation". In particular, remembering the argument put forward by the Centro's president at the beginning of the year, which meant to reassure her that she would learn grammar by osmosis with the rest of the course content, Marianne doubts that is indeed happening. This is disappointing; however the only solution to the problem, Marianne believes, would be to self-manage her study and invest more time studying the language outside the classroom, which Marianne is not prepared to do as this would clearly upset the delicate balance between effort, results and motivation that are at the basis of her learning experience:

I probably could have put in a lot more work on my own if I wanted to but then it defeats the purpose of going to lessons, and it's hard to be self-motivated outside the class. I think that's the only way you could overcome it. (M5)

Marianne's unwillingness to invest more of her time and energy in the pursuit of the language is understandable if we consider her focus on ensuring that learning Italian becomes a permanent part of her life (and identity), a focus that is clearly highlighted by the fact that for her the greatest achievement of the year was to complete the course, or

as she puts it "to stick with it". The value that Marianne places on this feat does not just derive from the sense of accomplishment she gains from it, but from its motivational value: she knows that her commitment to studying the language is inextricably tied to her perception of how much she has already invested in it, and that the longer she studies the more difficult it becomes to abandon the quest. Marianne's comment about the possibility of continuing her studies on her own confirms this:

> I think if John dropped out now, I would not continue on my own, but I think if I had put two or three years into it… Like if I had been doing it for two years, I probably would stick with it regardless, so I think it probably depends on how far I've come, before he pulled out. (M3)

To be able to "stick with it" is also particularly important for the first two years in that it represents a good motivational basis for continuing studying in the following years. This, in the end, might just be the reason why Marianne has been so eager to focus on the positive elements of the course and to downplay, ignore or explain away some of the potentially most demotivating aspects, such as the lack of focus on the grammar and the sometime less than stimulating nature of the lessons, all in an attempt to build up a motivational momentum which will allow her to continue learning for years to come. Thinking along this line, Marianne expects the second part of the Centro's beginners' programme, which she will be attending next year, to be simply "more of the same":

> I think I see next year now as I just have to get through it to see what is next. I mean I am expecting it to be exactly the same but with the second half of the book. I expect to still be there, stressing my Ts and rolling my Rs (*laughs*). Anyway it's not difficult to survive that class. It's not a big commitment, it's not anything really. (M5)

However it seems that despite the less that thrilling prospect, Marianne is prepared to invest another year in a very similar if not identical learning environment in order to be allowed to progress to the pre-intermediate level, which she has been told is run by a different teacher, and focuses on developing a wider range of language skills. With her sight fixed on what is to come, Marianne decides to commit herself to next year's course, in the understanding of course that John will again be at her side for the duration of the whole year.

6.9 *Italianità* and heritage language motivation

When we come to consider Marianne's construction of her own *Italianità*, we should first consider her view of the main factors that have a bearing on one's formation of ethnic identity, which Marianne identifies as "where you live your life and the culture of the place where you live it". In view of this statement, we can begin to understand the deep implications that growing up in Island Bay and in close contact with her Italian grandmother had on Marianne's sense of her own Italian identity. In the data, these are best illustrated by Marianne's telling of the belief in her own Italian identity which she held throughout her childhood; a belief so strong that it was to become the source of an uncomfortable sense of alienation from non-Italians when Marianne and her sister began attending a school outside Island Bay:

> I think it was because we had a different heritage and there… There were very New Zealand people and… For us it was kind of an overwhelming thing at first, but I think it was just the little things like having a name that wasn't Smith or Brown, having a non-Anglo-Saxon kind of name and things like that… (M1)

The "little things" that made Marianne feel different from her peers at school were a problem at first, but luckily Marianne's discomfort with her own "different heritage" did not last beyond the most delicate part of her teenage years, leading her to believe that although at the time she felt her *Italianità* was the core of her insecurity, it most likely was just her personal form of "teen angst" rather than a real problem in assimilating to the mainstream culture, a belief reinforced by the fact that as Marianne grew older her feelings towards her *Italianità* became much more positive:

> But over the last half of my life or into adulthood I have had more and more of an internal dialogue about being Italian and Italian identity… I think I have become more conscious of it. By the time I went to university I was fine. It was just a gradual thing and I think as I became older and I… Started to grow up and think about things, like I like having Italian cooking and as I started to become a better cook and moved away from my family I appreciated it more and travel and you know… (M1)

Travelling to Italy in her early twenties, in particular, dramatically enhanced Marianne's appreciation of her Italian heritage to the point that now she considers her Italian roots a real privilege, something that makes her life somewhat "richer" than the one she would have without it:

> While someone else might want to assimilate, I would say that I now feel the opposite, I actually appreciate the differences than just being an everyday plain New Zealander… (M1)

As much as Marianne now appreciates the *Italianità* that she feels is part of her, she does recognise that it is an element of her self-concept that finds little reflection in her social identity, or that, in other words, her *Italianità* does not derive from and/or find expression in actual exchanges with other Italians, neither in Wellington nor in Italy. The result of this is that while Marianne is confident in declaring she is, at least in part Italian, she does not fully identify with other Italians around her, nor feels part of any particular Italian community:

> I think the more your everyday life touches some aspects of what you believe is Italian, the more it feels like you are part of that and I don't really... I mean even my mother, probably not being Italian is more Italian than me because she talks with the Italian community in Island Bay every day, whereas I not so much… I don't live in that community all of the time so I am not seeing a lot of Italian people all of the time… And I mean even when I go to Italy, I don't feel Italian. I feel quite different to Italian people… I mean you get treated as a tourist. It would be nice to feel like an insider but I don't think so, it would be difficult. (M2)

In spite of this lack of outward performance of her Italian identity and the limited contacts she has with other Italians, the *Italianità* that is part of Marianne's self-concept is clearly something that is important to her and that she would like to preserve and cultivate; it is therefore not surprising to find that a great part of Marianne's initial impetus for learning Italian has to do with her appreciation of her own Italian heritage:

> A: You just said that John is perhaps not as motivated as you because he doesn't have the "Italian family thing", so do you think that having Italian heritage is a motivating factor for you?
>
> M: Oh, huge
>
> A: Huge?
>
> M: Huge motivator. In fact I don't think I would have done it if there weren't for that. I mean why would I learn Italian and not Spanish or French or Japanese, it would have to do with that… I am not interested in learning a language for the sake of learning a language, so yes, it is hugely motivating. (M3)

The motivational value Marianne expresses here is that of having Italian heritage as a primary cause of personal interest in the language, or, in other words, as a source of intrinsic motivation to learn her heritage language. However with the death of Giuseppe, Marianne's construction of her own Italian identity takes on a much more significant motivational role, as the event causes her to want to focus on the *Italianità* she has inherited not just because it is something she personally values ("there is a real value to me to have experienced that"), but also because she feels she has a responsibility to preserve it for future generations:

> If I don't make an effort to embrace it somehow, then it's just going to dwindle out, and there is less of a chance that my children will have an appreciation of it (…) I'd like my children and their children to have a sense of where they came from as well. (M1)

Giuseppe's death also has the effect of adding a sense of urgency to Marianne's desire to learn Italian as a way to counteract the intergenerational depletion of her family's Italian identity, which in Marianne's view is due to a gradual loss of cultural knowledge that includes – but is not limited to – a loss of heritage language skills. In this sense learning Italian becomes for Marianne a way to regain some of the linguistic and cultural knowledge that makes up her own and her family's *Italianità*:

> It's not just the language it's a whole combination of things: it's learning the recipes that my grandmother used to cook and all sorts of other things, but the language is the medium that takes you closer to all of those cultural things… If you think about it without language and without those other cultural pointers what makes me Italian? Nothing. I was born here. (M3)

Finally, following her father's death, Marianne realises the symbolic value that Italian language holds as an element of her personal relationship with both her father and her grandmother, and begins to see the learning of her heritage language as a sign of respect towards the memory of her ancestors and a way to fulfil their wishes:

> It's because my father has passed away and my grandmother that I owe them… It's a respect thing for them as well, it's a sign of respect to them, I know that they would like it and appreciate it, I know that was important to them so that's something that's important to me too… (M3)

In sum, while Marianne already had a long-standing interest in learning Italian, the passing of her father added some very compelling dimensions to her construction of her Italian identity – and of the role of language in it – which resulted in an intensification and change of direction of her motivation. In this sense, Marianne's experience offers a good illustration of the dynamic interaction between a learner's social context, their identity and their motivation through the incidence of critical events, and of the key role that a learner's own construction of their heritage identity can have on their motivation to learn their heritage language.

Interestingly, two aspects of Marianne's motivation remain constant throughout the changes brought about by Giuseppe's death: the first is her underlying idea that learning Italian will somewhat enhance her personal sense of her own *Italianità*, almost as if this were something that could be accrued in direct proportion to the linguistic and cultural knowledge she acquires in the classroom. The second is the lack of specific learning objectives, which in turn signals Marianne's minimal interest for engaging in language exchanges with other Italians. In fact, while Marianne expresses the desire to achieve some degree of conversational skills at the time of enrolment, which indicates that she is indeed thinking of learning Italian in order to communicate with Italian speakers ("enough so that I have the confidence to have a conversation"), the details of how exactly she wishes to do so are rather scant at this stage. It is only later, when I ask Marianne what she would do if she was to gain Italian fluency overnight, that she discloses some of her expectations with regard to the actual use of the language:

> I'd call family in Procida and have a conversation; that would be one of things I'd do. Maybe I'd read a book too, I would read my grandmother's Italian cookbook. (M1)

Also, while the excerpt does illustrate Marianne's desire to use Italian to talk with her Italian relatives, it also contains an example of a non-social use of the language (reading a book), which only reinforces the idea that Marianne tends to see language learning principally as a means to acquire personal and symbolic capital rather than to constructing or maintaining social relationships with Italian speakers, and that therefore her motivation can be explained as a striving for the development of the Italian elements of her self-concept through the knowledge of the language rather than through the social contacts which learning the language will afford her.

Of course Marianne's stance on this is partly due to her understanding of the social context surrounding her language learning, including the communities of Italian

speakers that are available to her. For example, the fact that speaking the language with her Italian relatives does not feature as one of Marianne's primary learning goals is probably due to her relatives' command of English, and that learning Italian is not key to maintain her contacts with them. Undoubtedly the fact that Marianne does not see learning Italian as necessary tools in developing her relationships with members of the local Italian community follows the same rationale:

> The connection with the community… I don't see it as a key reason (to learn Italian), but I think it is a quite important thing to do, 'cause with my grandmother gone and now my dad, who was that key link, pretty much now it's up to me and if I don't maintain any of those connections then that's it. 'Cause my mother knows all the old Italian ladies and stuff like that but once she goes too, I wouldn't know who half of them were or have any sense of… History or any of that kind of thing. But as language goes… If you think about it I could be having a conversation well in what I think is Italian but that is not their Italian, so that would be a huge obstacle. (M3)

Marianne would like to maintain her family's relationships with members of the Wellington Italian community as another way to preserve its *Italianità*, but this goal is clearly independent of her desire to learn Italian because she knows that English is commonly spoken among the community members, and while some of the members do speak Italian among themselves, the regional dialects they use are different from the standard variety taught in class, making learning Italian irrelevant to her contact with the community.

In conclusion, an analysis of Marianne's initial motivation reveals that she considers learning her heritage language as a way to substantiate her Italian self-concept, and that she feels a desire to maintain and develop her contacts with both her Italian relatives in Italy and the Wellington community. However, it is also clear that learning Italian is not part of a desire to identify with the members of either of the two groups. Marianne's position was already evident in her statement that being accepted as anything other than a tourist in Italy "would be difficult", and is reinforced by evidence suggesting that becoming a fully-fledged member of the local Italian community (through membership and participation in its main social institution the Club Italia) is clearly not part of Marianne's plans for the future:

> I feel like I wouldn't like my life to be Club Italia, and you know it's like you're either in it and putting all your time into it or you're not… Inevitably I know that over years and

years it would start being a burden. Just going to all the stuff, they have stuff on constantly! (*laughs*) They do, they really do! (*laughs*) They are, they have like shared lunches and bowls and things, and it's kind of like your whole social life could easily revolve around that. (M2)

All of this points to the fact that for Marianne the learning of Italian is indeed a tool for identity reconstruction, but that the end result of such reconstruction is not strictly modelled on any one archetype of Italian identity. Just as Marianne does not wish for the learning of Italian to impinge on her current lifestyle, she does not aim at constructing an Italian identity that dramatically differs from the one she currently holds. Instead, Marianne is including elements of *Italianità* from the Italian contexts she comes into contact with to forge a very personal Italian identity, one that is not specifically aimed at belonging to any particular Italian network, but at satisfying her own desire for self-realisation though achieving a degree of linguistic and cultural competence.

While developing/maintaining her relationships with the Italians around her is not a priority for Marianne, her sporadic contacts with other Italians in Wellington and in Italy do feature as a factor influencing the maintenance of her motivational states throughout her learning:

> A: Do you think that your Italian ancestry also helped or played a role throughout your studies in terms of inspiring you or motivating you?
>
> M: Definitely, it's totally motivational because little bits of it will encourage me to keep going, for example going to Italy this time to see family again and things like that, that's a motivation because is tied in with learning language, or when things happen overseas to my Italian family, like my dad's cousin died so being able to write a card in Italian and things like that… So it's a constant reminder… I'd take up an Italian cooking book you know, and my Italian will come in handy, I got a lot of my grandmother's cookbooks that are all in Italian… So no things like that happen all the time to me… And other things too, like John is playing soccer for the Italia Club on Labour weekend in October, so no we constantly have things that… Like those external things, like being involved with the club, or soccer or the Italian people here as well as family overseas. (M4)

It's important to note however that, for Marianne, the motivational significance of these social events does not always lie in the linguistic requirements that they present (as it might have happened when she needed to write a card for her Italian family), but that, in most cases, they simply act as reminders of Marianne's own *Italianità*. Because of

this, their motivational advantage can be explained in terms of their role in intensifying her awareness of her personal interest for the language and therefore of the intrinsic element of her motivation. In this sense the role of such instances of social use of language is not dissimilar to those of non-social events involving an Italian element, such as reading an Italian book or watching an Italian movie, as their value is not in the discursive creation or performance of an Italian identity but in their significance as symbols of Marianne's own Italian heritage.

6.10 Postscript

After my last meeting with Marianne in December 2006, she has continued attending the Centro's courses diligently. In November 2007 she completed the 'Beginners' Two' course and succeeded in passing the final written test, which meant she could enrol in the pre-intermediate course. Unfortunately in 2007 John's achievements did not match Marianne's, and having failed the entrance test he was not allowed to progress beyond the beginner level. Faced with having to decide whether to progress on her own or to repeat the second beginner course with John, Marianne chose the second option, and so spent another year at elementary level.

When I contacted Marianne again a year later, in November 2008, she had completed her second round of 'Beginners' Two' and had again passed the final test. John however had decided he would not continue his studies any further. This time however, she was looking forward to take her studies to the next level, even without John by her side:

> I'm a little disappointed that we're not doing it together any more, but I still want to go on and tackle the next stage – perhaps it will be better for me to study on my own? (Memail2)

In spite of a little apprehension in joining a new class with a new instructor, Marianne sounded very enthusiastic and seemed confident that a change of setting would boost her learning. In the same message, she declared herself happy with her results so far, but above all with the fact that she still enjoyed learning the language and that she still felt amply motivated to continue with her studies into her fourth year of Italian, which she considers in itself a great achievement.

Having proved to herself that she can 'last the distance', Marianne is now ready to allow the study of the language to have a bigger role in her life without fearing that the increased pressure might backfire on her motivation. Because of this she has begun

thinking of ways to intensify her learning, such as enrolling in a language school in Italy and studying the language through a month-long full-immersion course. While at this stage the plan is nothing more than an idea in Marianne's mind, the determination and optimism she has already shown in managing her language learning journey so far augur well for continuing to learn the language in the future.

Chapter Seven: Francesco

Francesco e' bravissimo, uno studente eccezionale, lui e' proprio eccezionale. E'
uno che e' passato dal livello elementare a quello intermedio nel giro di un paio
di mesi, e ha solo fatto qualche lezione privata. E' uno di quelli che veramente,
fossero tutti così (*ride*). Una volta che gli spieghi una cosa se la ricorda per
sempre. Per sempre. Gli rimane lì, in testa. (T1)

Francesco is very clever, an exceptional student, he's truly exceptional. He has gone
from the elementary level to the intermediate in a couple of months, and all he had were
a few private lessons. I wish they were all like that! (*laughs*). Once you have explained
something to him he remembers it forever. Forever. It just stays there, in his head. (T1)

7.1 Meet Francesco: The not-so-Italian Italian

My first meeting with Francesco took place in October 2005 at Clarks' Café on the
mezzanine floor of the Wellington City Library. Dressed in a formal, fashionably pin-
striped suit, Francesco had just finished his working day as a lawyer in the CBD and had
little time to spare before collecting his two young children from kindergarten;
nonetheless, he seemed happy to give me some of his precious time and met me with a
smile and an enthusiastic handshake.

As we sat down over a cup of coffee and Francesco began telling me about the Italian
course he was attending, I had time to observe him closely and noted something
interesting: not many would associate bright blue eyes, light complexion and blond hair
with the word 'Italian', even though these are common features of many northern
Italians, especially from the regions bordering Austria and Slovenia. As I learned more
about Francesco's heritage and childhood in Wellington, I discovered that the un-
stereotypical Italian features in his looks had some interesting parallels in other areas of
Francesco's life. The language he grew up with, for example, an Italian dialect that was
spoken in Italy hundreds of years before standard Italian, is completely unintelligible to
most Italian speakers. Also, the fact that Francesco' s family arrived in New Zealand on
a ship full of other Italian immigrants, all in pursuit of a better life, and yet they went on
to live, work, socialise and marry completely outside the networks of the so-called
Wellington Italian community. Finally, the fact that Francesco could say "Don't get me

wrong, but I am a Kiwi" – whilst devouring a tomato sauce-covered steak-and-kidney pie[19] – followed, not half a minute later, by the statement "I am Italian".

The fascinating contradictions inherent in Francesco's person and his relationship with his heritage language and culture would have been enough to single him out as the ideal case for the present study; however in the end it was the motivation he showed in learning Italian that won him a place on these pages; a motivation so closely linked to his sense of heritage identity and sustained by such well-orchestrated self-regulative mechanisms to make Francesco's body of data one of the most compelling in the whole project.

My interviews with Francesco took place between October 2005 and October 2006, a period that spans from the end of his first year as a beginner learner of Italian, to the end of his second year of studies. Throughout this time I met with Francesco six times in person, and we exchanged numerous emails. I also observed Francesco 'in action' during some of his second-year classes. Recently, I contacted Francesco again to learn the latest developments in his language learning adventure: the findings of my latest exchanges with Francesco represent a kind of 'happy ending' to his story and are reported as a postscript at the end of this chapter.

7.2   Growing up as an Italian outsider in Wellington

When Francesco's mother Anna returned to New Zealand after her short marriage with his father in Australia, she was welcomed back to her mother's house in Wellington, where Francesco's earliest memories were formed.   Francesco's grandmother in particular took a very active role in his upbringing and so had a powerful influence on his sense of Italian identity:

> I lived with my mother and my grandmother who was widowed very young, and my great grandmother who was a widow at that stage, but not when I was born, when I was very small, so Italian was a very strong connection with four generations in the house, two born in Italy, two not. (…) My grandmother only died a couple of years ago. She was very fiercely proud of her Italian background and everything to do with being born in Italy. (…) She spoke Italian at home, cooked Italian food, travelled to Italy so there was a constant connection. (F1)

---

[19] An iconic Kiwi specialty

Though at the time the Wellington Italian community was already well established, the bonds between most of its members were based on kinship relationships and/or common origin from a small number of southern Italian villages. Having come from the north and without any friends or relatives already in New Zealand, Francesco's grandmother felt she had little in common with most other Italian immigrants, and so the family was never connected to the wider Italian community. For Francesco this meant growing up feeling different from most Italians around him, and at school he often felt like an "outcast" among other children of Italian descent:

> I think the thing that was probably different is that we didn't seem to be at all connected with the wider Italian community, so quite an insulate environment. We had a few friends, but it wasn't like… When I went to school there were other Italians and they all knew each other in Island Bay and they all had emigrated from the same part of Italy, belonged to the Italia Club. So there wasn't this huge, wider bunch of Italian people that we associated with the family. (F1)

As a result of these circumstances, for Francesco the home was the only linguistic domain in which Italian was spoken. The variety used was *il dialetto Veneto*[20], which Francesco learned as his first language and spoke fluently throughout his early childhood until around the age of five, when English language took its place. Today, although Francesco regrets no longer being able to speak the dialect, he still has clear memories of using the language with his mother and grandparents and did retain some degree of familiarity with some elements of it:

> I spoke it, and I remember speaking it. (…) But now I don't speak it at all. (…) I have lost the ability to structure and come out with ideas, formulate phrases, but the accent is not unfamiliar to me at all. (F1)

> A: Do you remember any phrases or any words that you used to say?
> F: Oh yeah, definitely. And mostly little words, for… I guess personal things, you know like when you went to the toilet, or your private parts and things like that (…), and other things, quite different things like the old people were the *veci* – not with the hard sound – lots of… Bowl was the *scoella*, for my coffee in the morning – not *scodella* – so those kind of words I remember clearly, *cagata*, like going to the toilet, kids' words, that you would learn when you were a little child. (F1)

---

[20] The Italian dialect spoken in the Veneto region

Although Francesco has retained very little of his former fluency, Italian played an essential part in his early socialisation and identity formation. The fact that he can still remember some of his first words is indicative of the close mental association that exists between his heritage language and his early childhood experiences and relationships, and of the role that this language has in the very social and emotional foundations of his own self. Also, when Francesco stresses the discrepancies between the dialectal and standard versions of some of the terms he remembers (*veci* versus *vecchi*, *scoella* versus *scodella*), we are reminded that Francesco's personal connection is with the dialect, and not with standard Italian, a detail which will become more relevant to Francesco's motivational processes as he gradually realises the difference between the two varieties.

7.3   *Nonna*'s village in Italy: The seed of motivation

When Francesco reached adulthood and left the family home, his connection to his Italian heritage began to diminish, until, many years later, as part of a round-the-world holiday trip, he decided to stop by the Italian village from which his family had originated. As Francesco explains, the experience was to have an important influence on his motivation to learn Italian:

> A: Did that have any influence on your desire to learn the language?
>
> F: Yeah, it really did. I guess that was at a stage… It made me feel a bit guilty really, because… And a bit nostalgic, my grandmother was still alive then, but you know it really made me think you haven't followed up on this part of your heritage as much as you might, and so I felt a bit guilty and a bit nostalgic and yeah, a bit hopeless as you do with all of these people and half of them can speak English and Italian, but you know I got back to New Zealand and life is busy and working hard so I had all these reasons, I never said to myself I am going to learn, but yeah, but it was quite comforting being amongst these people that reminded me a lot of older people in my family. (F2)

The wording Francesco uses in the last excerpt is evidence of the emotional intensity of the experience and of the impression it left in his mind: remembering his Italian grandparents was "comforting", but it also triggered an acute sense of loss, and with it a combination of feelings commonly found in the narratives of heritage language learners–nostalgia, hopelessness and guilt (Miyahira & Petrucci, 2007). Clearly the experience had a significant effect on Francesco, but once back in New Zealand, his life resumed its

"busy" rhythm and these feelings subsided. However, from this point on, Francesco's desire to reconnect with that world lingered, albeit latent, in his mind, until a few years later, when a particular set of circumstances finally set off the process that would lead him to embark on his Italian studies. This is how Francesco explains the factors involved in his decision to learn Italian:

> A combination of things I think, my grandmother died a couple of years ago and mom doesn't have that many people to speak Italian to and she's been mentioning to me that she'd have to figure out a way… But I mean I am not doing it just as a personal favour to her. I have a connection that takes me back, something to do with my own childhood, and a culture that I guess is diminishing, and equally I have a bit more time on my hands because I am not working as much as last year, so all those things put together and the Centro was a very easy way to do it, one hour a week, you didn't have to commit to a lot, and so I thought I just see if I like it and I really enjoyed it. It's all those things happening together. (F1)

> Talk to my mother is the primary thing. She's not old, you know she's not seventy and so I hope there will be a few good years of conversation between us there, so that's the primary motive. (F1)

With the realisation that the last Italian-born generation in his family had now disappeared, Francesco is brought to an awareness that his heritage culture is "diminishing" and as a result, his desire to reconnect with it becomes more urgent. At the same time Anna's desire to continue speaking Italian provides Francesco with additional reason to learn the language, as well as an opportunity to practise the language while reconnecting with his family's past. Having formed the intention to learn Italian, all Francesco needs to act is the availability of the necessary start condition and means and resources (Dörnyei & Ottó 1998:49) which soon materialise in Francesco's life in the form of the Centro Italiano's Beginners' Course and the necessary spare time to dedicate to the language. One sign of the intensity of Francesco's motivation at this point is his enthusiasm for the idea of soon being able to use Italian with his mother; however his plan is met with reservations by Anna, whose first thoughts hinge on the differences between the dialect and the standard variety taught at the Centro:

> I started so that I could learn to be able to talk with her, and she said "well but I speak the dialect", and I said well why don't you come to the class, to explore and see. (…) See mum always got this view that she speaks the dialect and she doesn't really speak

Italian, but from what I have talked to people she is extremely fluent in it (…). She just lacks a bit of confidence. (F1)

Francesco's perspective in the above passage is understandable: without an awareness of the discrepancies between standard Italian and the dialect, he attributes Anna's hesitancy to her personal lack of confidence and insists they attend class together. Finally, in spite of her scepticism, Anna is persuaded and the pair begins taking lessons in February 2005.

7.4 A smooth start: The beginners' course

Initially both mother and son seem to enjoy the course, but soon Anna encounters some difficulties and decides to discontinue her studies. Francesco on the other hand, finds learning Italian easy and pleasurable and soon develops such an interest in the language and an eagerness to learn that he begins to think the Centro's course might not be enough to satiate his thirst for knowledge :

> I had all this time on my hands and I became enthusiastic and I sort of found that the class was going at a pace where I wasn't really challenged much. (F1)

In reality Francesco's dissatisfaction with the course is not limited to the class' pace, but also – and above all –with the nature of the course's contents, especially in view of how the teacher introduced the course during the first lesson:

> Gianna said at the beginning of our class 'in this class we are not studying the language, you will learn things but we won't go into the why and how or…' You know, it's just about learning some… You know she put it quite well, some tourist phrases and pronunciation which then allow you to go to something else. (F3)

> If you learn this kind of things sooner or later you reach a wall where you don't have the ability to expand, whereas if you have the building blocks - that are hard to get in the first place - then you really have no limitations. (F1)

The main problem facing Francesco is that the objectives of the course do not match his own. Theoretical work around the concepts of *task value* and *task attraction* shows that in order to sustain interest and appreciation in a task or series of tasks such as those involved in language learning, these need to be perceived as useful to the achievement of the learner's personal goals (Eccles & Wigfield, 1985). In Francesco's case, the "why

138

and how" of the language and "its building blocks" are exactly what he feels he needs to learn in order to use the language spontaneously in conversation, and that is exactly what he feels the course is not offering him.

And so towards the end of his first year as a second language learner, Francesco begins toying with the idea of studying Italian at university. At first he regards the thought as nothing more than a fantasy, something he could only afford to do in a distant future, when his family and work commitments will be less onerous. However as he becomes increasingly aware of the limitations of the Centro's courses Francesco finds himself thinking about the university option more often, until in September 2005 he decides to contact the Italian department of the local university for some detailed information on the courses offered. Following his conversation with one of the lecturers of the Italian programme, Francesco's motivation is ignited:

> They have a bit more time on their hands than the working people that come to class that have to go home to their family and maybe a little bit more open to after class having a cup of coffee and speak Italian, and I think the course is three lecture hours and one tutorial hour so I think there is going to be more time to role play or… Yeah. That kind of thing. (F1)

> One of the things up there is that you probably have a very strong chance to meet other people who are very motivated to talk it and to experiment with each other. (F2)

Suddenly the appeal of studying Italian at university is no longer limited to the course content, but it also extends to the amount of weekly contact hours and the variety of activities students can engage in. Above all, Francesco is excited by the idea of learning in such a stimulating environment and by the potential for meeting like-minded and motivated people with whom to practise speaking. In effect, from this moment on, the university class becomes for Francesco an imagined community (Anderson, 1991; Kanno & Norton, 2003) of students with attitudes and drives similar to his own. For Francesco, who has so far felt like an outsider in a course for prospective tourists to Italy, the idea of the 'university community' is very appealing, and, as we will see, motivationally very powerful.

In the meanwhile, Francesco will have to wait for next year's university timetable to be released in order to check it against his many other commitments. He also knows he will have to undergo an assessment to determine at which level he should begin his studies, but the prospect does not douse his enthusiasm in the slightest. On the contrary,

the thought of an entrance test is such a strong motivating factor in that in order to prepare for it, Francesco decides to improve his Italian skills: he hires Teresa – the tutor who teachers the Centro's intermediate and advanced courses – for some weekly one-on-one lessons:

> I thought If I want to be assessed I really need to give it my best shot and so I am having one hour a week with Teresa and you know she's fantastic. (…) What I am going to do is take my private lessons between now and Christmas, study hard and work really hard at it and then do the assessment. (F1)

The private lessons prove to be ideal for Francesco's needs at this stage of his learning. Teresa helps him extend his awareness of Italian grammar and validates all the knowledge he has gained by studying on his own, so that after only a few weeks of tuition, Francesco feels he has made great progress and as a result his confidence in his own abilities – and therefore his motivation to take on university study – is strong.

In January 2006 it is time for Francesco to make a decision as to whether to go to university, but as he weighs up his commitments for the incoming months, he realises he faces serious difficulties:

> I looked at the programme for the year and I think it's five hours a week and I was very interested and then I talked to my partner Sonja and then I got involved with a few things with the children and then those changed a little bit too and I just thought oh well… My main concern was to enrol in something that I couldn't carry on, and so I thought long and hard about it and I thought well, it's always going to be there it's better to wait and do it properly. (F2)

> I am working two days a week but I am finding that the place I work for is really busy, and so I am going in to do more and more, I am sort of getting dragged in (…) So it just didn't work out but I am still very strongly motivated to do some degree papers at some stage. (F2)

But even the strongest of intentions does not always translate into action: at this particular point in time, Francesco's intention to enrol at university is not accompanied by favourable circumstances; studying Italian at university, appealing as it might be, clashes with more important commitments, and so, at least for the moment, it is not to be.

Francesco's decision introduces a major theme in Francesco's experience, which has to do with "life getting in the way" of his studies, forcing him to act against the best interest of his learning in order to comply with the time, energy and financial requirements of being a father and a provider for his family. In particular, the situation highlights Francesco's priorities in terms of commitments and goals: maintaining the financial security of his family and to fulfil his role as a father and a provider seems to have a higher personal value than that of learning Italian. After all, Francesco reminds himself, at least for the moment, learning Italian is just a hobby:

> Family comes first, work has to come kind of ahead of it, but this is my hobby, I ride my bike, I go swimming and I do my Italian. (F5)

In spite of his decision against enrolling at university at this point in time, the idea is not completely discarded. The attraction of tertiary studies is still strong and in fact Francesco is already looking to the future for a possible opening in his schedule:

> In the back of my mind, it is still something that I would like to do (…) things are changing pretty quickly in terms of my work situation, and so even the second half of this year, I might see if there is something I can do. (F2)

7.5 The pre-intermediate course: First challenges

In February 2006, with the university option out of the question, Francesco's only choice is to go back to the Centro Italiano; yet remembering the limitations of the Beginners' Stage One course, Francesco is reluctant to join Beginners' Stage Two. The solution emerges during a conversation with Teresa, Francesco's private tutor who also happens to run the Centro's advanced courses:

> what I said to Teresa was I want to study, I want to push myself, and that and I wasn't sure that the course would do that for me and so I said you are the tutor at the Centro, you know where I am at from when you were tutoring me, and must have some thoughts about my level and whether if you think there is a place in a class that would be suitable so that I don't hold everyone up but that it also challenges me. (F2)

Having personally witnessed Francesco's Italian skills, Teresa shows no hesitation and fast-tracks Francesco's studies by granting him a space in her own pre-intermediate course. The prospect of joining a new and more advanced class fills Francesco with

excitement, pride and a little apprehension – an emotional mix which proves to be beneficial for his motivation:

> I felt as if it was a reward, you know you work hard and you get rewarded, and a bit of an ego-boost, and I gained a bit of confidence from it, but I guess it's like taking someone from some rugby… And say 'right, you're playing for the All Blacks', and you have to step up. (F3)

Francesco's first impression of the new class is very positive. When asked to comment on the state of his motivation at this stage of his journey, Francesco's answer reveals not only the way he feels, but also something of what he considers motivation to be:

> A: Do you think your motivation has changed since last year?
>
> F: I am not sure that it has. I don't think that my reasons for doing it are different. I am spending as much time now studying as before, not less, not more, you know and I kind of put it down to I understand more what it means to me to be studying it because when I first starting it was all new and… But now I understand more, I go to my classes, and I prepare and it feels good when I come home to spend an hour reading and then I pick the book up twice or three times during the week. So I got more into a habit about it. (F2)

The first element Francesco mentions is the reasons driving his learning, which in Francesco's case also include his goal to converse with his mother in Italian. However Francesco also comments on the resources he is prepared to dedicate to studying Italian in terms of time and effort, and the positive feelings he experiences when he studies. It is interesting to notice that up to this point, according to Francesco, all of these elements have remained fairly stable, as Francesco has not so far encountered any major obstacles to his motivation and his learning. However things are about to change.

Between February and June 2006, Francesco is generally satisfied with the way his studies are progressing. His decision to join Teresa's course in an attempt to find a more suitable learning setting has had the desired effect of affording him an environment that encourages him to use his Italian skills creatively and to find personal ways to express himself. One of the main outlets for this newly found linguistic freedom is the *compiti* (homework) Teresa assigns every week.

> The homework that we looked at last night was commenting on the film that we've seen, and it was quite open ended, and so I enjoyed that 'cause you can choose ideas and ways to express yourself that are personal, so I quite enjoy that. One night it was write a story about being on a deserted island using two past tenses that we know, so I quite enjoy that. (F3)

Contrary to the tasks of the previous course, Teresa's activities sustain Francesco's motivation because they hold high subjective task value (Eccles & Wigfield, 1985). The motivational advantage of such activities is twofold, as Francesco finds them both useful in relation to his personal goals, and highly interesting and enjoyable. Interest and enjoyment are also key elements in the definition of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which is universally recognised as a highly desirable state for any type of learning.

On the other hand, the ability to compose texts that reflect one's imagination comes at the price of acquiring what to even syntax-loving Francesco appears like an enormous amount of grammatical rules and particles. Verbs, in particular, and the various suffixes associated with the many Italian tenses, prove particularly taxing for Francesco, not only in cognitive terms (i.e. they need to be memorised) but also because the difficulties encountered in mastering the distinctions between their usages and their English counterparts drain Francesco's confidence in his own abilities and commitment, and lead him to doubt the attainability of his goals. It goes perhaps without saying that in such moments of frustration and uncertainty – which Francesco calls "lows" – his motivational state is less that optimal:

> I went through a bit of a patch like you know sometimes you get ...The more you know the more you realise you don't know sort of thing and went through this stage thinking I am never going to get all the tenses and all the idioms, it's just beyond me. I mean I could study this for fifteen years and I still wouldn't be able to talk with an Italian, you know, so I guess I went through a bit of that but now... I think I got to the stage where you suddenly realise you have actually built up a little store of information, not much but a little store and then you think well if can build that up then maybe in another six or eight month or a year there'll be something more there. (F3)

Confidence in his own linguistic abilities – and lack thereof – is another recurring theme in Francesco's data, and one that is closely associated his motivational fluctuations. The concept of *linguistic self-confidence* (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994) can be useful to understand Francesco's mental processes before and during his

"lows", as it describes the motivational consequences of an individual's own judgement of their linguistic abilities. Low self-confidence is linked to motivational impairment and likelihood to abandon a task, however it is clear that in Francesco's case this state has so far been temporary, as he has always been able to counteract his "lows" by focussing on the positive aspects of his learning, such as his own sense of progress and the enjoyment he gains from the learning process. In this sense Francesco shows good self-regulating abilities in that he can consciously shift his attention to powerful intrinsically motivating factors if and when the situation requires it:

> I felt oh gosh here I am, I have been studying it for a year and I know two tenses and my vocabulary is limited and it is so big ohhh that's gonna be hard, it wasn't that something had gone wrong, I realised the enormity of studying a language and I questioned whether I had to commitment to get to a level that is good, but then I thought well, I enjoy it, therefore, let's not worry about it. (F3)

However soon Francesco encounters a problem he just cannot seem to be able to overcome or to neutralise. A few weeks into the course, Teresa decides to make the viewing of non-subtitled Italian television programmes a weekly feature of her lessons, and so begins to close each lesson by showing thirty minutes of an Italian production on the life of Edda Mussolini, the famous daughter of the Italian dictator. The activity, which involves watching short sections of the programme interspersed with translation and discussion, was introduced as a way to help students improve their comprehension of naturally sounding Italian speech, but for Francesco, the weekly appointment with the programme is a recurring source of frustration:

> I really struggle to understand TV. At the beginning I could understand maybe five or ten percent and I thought it would get better but it hasn't, and you know I have become… Not depressed – it's not the right word – but become a little bit setback and it knocked my confidence a little bit. (F3)

Although triggered by this particular task, Francesco's discontent does not derive from the difficulty in understanding the actors on the screen, but in his assumption that this difficulty is the same he would experience when face to face with a native speaker of Italian. This leads him to conclude that his comprehension skills are so limited as to make any oral exchange with speakers of Italian impossible, therefore invalidating any feeling of confidence he might have previously experienced. In spite of this, Francesco's

144

tendency to react positively to challenges leads him to the conclusion he should intensify his studies and in particular his oral practice. However, in evaluating the potential of his current learning setting to help him achieve this, Francesco is once again brought face to face with some of the course's limitations, and in particular with the mismatch between his own learning needs and the content the course provides:

> The course is always going to be a compromise. (F3)

> I think I would probably focus it more on strictly language… I find it interesting but it's not my preferred thing… Like we have a lot of discussion about the culture and that's great, but if I could add more language content and have more language discussions at the expense of the cultural side I would. (…) My end of the game, my result if you like, would be that I could conduct a basic language exchange. That's what I want to achieve, and in order to do more I need to study more language and practice talking the language, and therefore anything that doesn't directly lead me there I would do without. (F3)

> If the Centro had more students, then you could have more like-minded students of the same ability and interest in the same class, you could say right who wants to study grammar and put them all in one class, who wants to have more of a cultural discussion… You know, so that's not a criticism… If you could have classes that focussed on particular students' interests more, specific interests more, that would be a fast track to learning. (F3)

It is at this stage that the thought of university studies makes a comeback in Francesco's data, as in his mind, the students populating the university Italian courses are the "like-minded people" he speaks of above, and the university is the learning environment that would best cater for his personal learning needs. It is for these reasons that at this stage Francesco expresses his intention to attempt to organise his work and family commitment in a way which will allow him to enrol at university in the second part of the year.

7.6 Highs and lows: Demotivation and motivational self-regulation

When I meet Francesco again in September 2006, I am somewhat surprised to find he has once again postponed his university enrolment and is still attending Teresa's course at the Centro.

> A: So working more, so the university option is out for the second part of the year…
> F: Yes, sadly it is

145

A: Is it still an option for next year?

F: Yeah, I will never put it out of my mind, ever. Now I have a job, and so there is this opportunity to have a bit of money coming in and so I am working hard, but you know next year, if I can still maintain only four days a week, my son will be at a different kindergarten and… So I might see if I can do it in the day that I am not working at the office, so yeah I still would like to try. (F4)

Once more, at the root of Francesco's decision lie the sparse amount of time and energy he could commit to the venture. Francesco is disappointed, but not without hope: he knows the strength of his own determination and he believes that if he holds on to his aspiration indefinitely, eventually his circumstances are bound to change for the better. For the moment however, the sudden increase of workload Francesco is experiencing is also negatively affecting his studies, and, above all, his motivation.

I am working a lot more, and it's kind of escalating, so it's a busy four days a week and the day that I have off is now the day that Sonja works, so I am busy on that day as well, not doing work, but anyway… So I have been spending less time with my Italian. (F4)

I am busy at work so I have less time to study. The next time I look at it, it looks harder, because it looks harder you think oh so where am I going with this anyway… Which one comes first? Maybe for me it's the work thing denies me time to study and then that starts it off, you know what I mean, but then it goes around in circles. (F5)

Francesco has understood that his motivation tends to decrease as the result of a chain of events and/or circumstances: lack of time leads to lack of study, which in turn causes the difficulty of the learning tasks to rise and his confidence and intrinsic motivation to fall. This demotivating cycle is another example of the negative influences of external factors on Francesco's motivation, or, as he calls it, of "life getting in the way". To make things worse for Francesco, his initial goal of using Italian to converse with Anna is beginning to lose its motivational drive:

We haven't seen each other as much, and when we have it's kind of been in big group situations, with Sonja's parents who clearly don't speak much Italian and things like that… Sadly actually, because my main motivation to speak has not been used as much as I would like. (…) That's one of the things that I think about when I have a down period… Oh why am I doing this? (F5)

Unable to "use" his main motivation to propel him along, Francesco finds himself without a valid reason to continue his studies or a concrete objective towards which to focus his efforts, and so at critical times when the intrinsic value of the tasks he is required to complete is at its lowest (i.e. when the interest/enjoyment factor is weak), Francesco's motivation is depleted. However, surprisingly, in spite of all of these motivational difficulties, Francesco perseveres: he has so far never missed a lesson, and continues to find the time – usually late at night, or on his way to and from work – not just to complete his weekly compiti, but also to engage with, practise and test himself on his Italian.

> Sometimes I go back and do revision. 'Cause that can be quite good for your confidence if your confidence is low. (…) You go back and, you should always revise, but equally you can think oh I have actually learned something so your confidence can be restored a bit. (…) Another thing that I do is I ride my bike a lot and when I am not on the road I often try to construct something (…) Just trying to figure out how to say what I am doing or where I have been today or what I am going to do tonight, and people probably think who is this mad person talking to himself (*laughs*). If you can do some of those things you're doing something that's constructive and it is confidence boosting at the same time. (F4)

> I'd sit down and say right, just write down all the verbs you know. A hundred verbs and I thought about it and then I thought about it some more and I had a hundred and fifty. So at the moment I am on a high (*laughs*). (F4)

Francesco's reaction to the demotivating effects of his circumstances displays some of the signs of what Edmondson calls the *Press On Regardless Syndrome* (2004, p. 12) and certainly the fact that Francesco is willing to engage in such self-directed learning tasks is indicative of his commitment to learning and of the pleasure he gets from the process; however the purpose of such behaviour goes beyond simple practice. Francesco has understood that his motivation depends on his confidence in his own abilities, and so he uses these activities as a means to test himself in ways he knows are likely to produce positive impressions of his abilities, therefore increasing his self-confidence and in turn his motivation. Behaviour such as this is a good example of motivational self-regulation as it stands out as a conscious attempt to increase the motivational drive behind one's actions and/or counteract or neutralise the effects of demotivating factors. Another way

to cope with a 'low' is to take a break until the some of the intrinsic value of the activity is restored:

> If I am really struggling I just put it out of my mind for a while and by the end of the day you might realise that if you have a commitment to do this today it might just be a bad day and tomorrow's a new day. It's not like I have to do it feed the kids or get home safely, you know, it's for my enjoyment, so if I am not enjoying it, I just put it aside and then have a go on a day when I might be enjoying more. I mean Italian is Italian right? My tutor is my tutor, the class is the class… The only thing that can vary from day to day is me. Okay, so if I am having a bad day then you know, I can't change any of the other things… The subject matter will still be there tomorrow so… That's the thing about hobbies, they are there to give you pleasure, not pain so… (F4)

Finally, some positive internal dialogue to remind oneself of past achievements can be used to gather up the motivation to engage in difficult, uninteresting or time-consuming tasks:

> Once in while for homework we get a lot of things you read and the translation takes forever…(…) Well basically it's just going back and say well in the past you got to this stage and you were able to do it, so it will come again. (F5)

Other times, for Francesco, opportunities to enhance his confidence and motivation come unexpectedly from external sources, and his ingenuity lies in his ability to recognise them and take advantage of them. For example: *Oggi* and *Bella Italia* are Italian magazines available for consultation to the members of the Centro Italiano. The articles they contain are a good source of authentic language and cultural material, however they are written for an Italian audience, and so they can be very challenging, especially for beginner learners. Francesco realises the learning potential of such sources, but feels discouraged by his difficulty in understanding them, and so he once again shows his awareness of his own learning needs and resourcefulness by undertaking a systematic search – mostly using the Internet – for printed sources of language to better suit his own skill level. In the process he finds online dictionaries, grammar references, and an Italian website which becomes one of Francesco's favourite resources:

> There is a website about the little area where my grandmother comes from and they have a newsletter which seems like it's written for people like me, cause I understand a

> lot more, so now instead of getting *Oggi* or other magazines – and there's some lovely magazines like *Bella Italia* and things like that – I now print this off and have a crack at reading this, 'cause it seems the language is a bit more… So that's a bit of a high, finding something that I feel I am 30 percent able to understand (*laughs*). (F4)

The "high" Francesco speaks of is the positive correspondent of the "low" he has previously mentioned, a time when he feels good about his abilities, satisfied with his progress, pleased with his performance and eager to engage in further learning; in other words a time during which his motivational state is most favourable. Unfortunately as it clear from Francesco's words, this state is not constant, but it alternates with periods of low motivation. It is exactly this alternation of "highs" and "lows" that makes Francesco liken his experience to 'an emotional rollercoaster' which he can mostly manage well but can at times feel rather bewildering:

> In terms of highs and lows about the course, some people think 'Oh this is hard' but they just keep at it. For me it's a bit more of a rollercoaster. Like you know some days I think this is really hard, why have I spent eighteen months and I still don't…? You know. (F4)

7.7 Old goals, new goals

As anticipated in the previous section, as the weeks go by and Francesco continues studying, his initial goal of being able to converse with Anna begins to lose its motivational steam. Initially Francesco had attributed this to the limited number of exchanges with his mother. However over time it has become clear that the main problem is not the number of exchanges that matter, but their quality. To understand why Francesco is finding it difficult to converse with Anna in Italian, we must realise that over the last eighteen months Francesco has learned much, not only about Italian language, but also about the process of language learning itself and his own learning style and preferences. In particular, he has developed a curiosity about how language works and a certain liking for the study of the more technical aspects of language, such as morphology and syntax. As a result of these maturing interests, his expectations of his exchanges with Anna have changed, and what before he had seen as a goal in itself and a way to reconnect to his cultural heritage, has now become a tool to understand the inner workings of the language and so a means to satisfy his own interest and curiosity. Unfortunately, it seems Anna is not willing and/or able to offer Francesco what he is seeking:

> We don't actually speak very much in Italian. Part of the problem with speaking with mum is that she's not interested in understanding… Interested is not the right word. She's got this thing that she's not capable of understanding the theory of it if you like or why things are like that, so we reaches this critical point where I ask her to explain why and we can't communicate, and her thing is well that's just how I always say it. (F4)

Of course at the root of the problem there is the fact that Anna is a dialect speaker with very little knowledge of the standard variety, but also that having acquired the language as her first language, she finds it difficult to isolate, analyse and explain elements of morphology, phonology and syntax the way Francesco would like her to.

At the beginning, Francesco struggles to understand Anna's difficulty in doing so, but then something happens to help him clarify his mother's position. When I meet Francesco in October, he has just returned from his yearly family holiday in Australia, where he had the opportunity to spend some time with an Italian aunt. Like Francesco's mother, his aunt is the dialect-speaking daughter of Italian immigrants, and although their encounter is brief, it leads Francesco to reflect on the differences between the dialect and standard Italian, and on the nature of Anna's linguistic abilities.

> She's the same as my mother; (…) she speaks more the dialect. I spoke to her in Italian but she wouldn't speak back to me, funny. But now I think too the dialect must be quite different, like my mother says to me you know I can sort of get what you are saying, but it's still quite hard and it's not as easy as I thought it would be to converse with them. (F5)

> I came to understand more about what it must be like for mum to never have studied it. She never went to any classes, not even school, just simply to hear it and so she is not grammatically… She doesn't have any objectivity about the language; it's just what comes out. (F5)

The first two lines of the first quote are very telling in terms of Francesco's expectations of his exchanges with his mother. Just as with his aunt, Francesco had thought he and Anna would be able to converse in Italian once he had gained some competence, and that her reticence in using her Italian with him and/or to discuss the technicality of the language depended mainly on her lack of confidence in her own abilities in using the standard variety. The encounter with someone with a similar linguistic background leads Francesco to become conscious of some of the linguistic complications inherent in his exchanges with Anna, and he begins to understand that the

"marvellous intricate conversations" that he had set as his main goal are in fact very unlikely to ever take place. The consequences on Francesco's motivation are inevitable:

> A: So do you feel like you are working towards any particular goal at this moment?
>
> F: That's one of the down parts; I mean, where am I going with this? My first goal to speak to my mother is not completely gone, but I realise that I probably need to get to a much higher level and that I sort of relied on her to help me through while in fact it's probably not something that she can help me with. Not that she doesn't care, but she just can't help me, and so I have to get to a stage where I can talk to her of my own volition. It will be a bit like a duck talking to a chicken, but at least the chicken won't have to help the duck.
>
> A: Great analogy! (*laughs*)
>
> F: Yeah… So I think I'd like to maybe long-term look at going to Italy and take some time touring around. (F5)

The thought of travelling to Italy is not completely new to Francesco, however it is the first time that it takes the shape of a potential goal. The shift in Francesco's objectives is even clearer when, in answering a question about goal visualisation, he discloses some unexpected information:

> A: Some people use images to motivate themselves. Do you ever do that?
>
> F: I was going to say no when you said that but probably no I have one of me in Italy talking Italian.
>
> A: So do you think that it's a bit strange that your initial motivation was to speak to the members of you family, especially your mother, but you use images to motivate yourself you see yourself talking to someone in Italy?
>
> F: Yeah I suppose it probably shows an unconscious shift in the goal post, doesn't it? But equally part of the thing I think is that I really want to take my mother back… so maybe not from a language perspective but that would be achieving something that I know she wants to do, and so maybe it's all mixed up in that
>
> A: You never talked about this before.
>
> F: Oh haven't I?
>
> A: Is that something that's come up just recently?
>
> F: It's always sort of been in the back of my mind, but with a young family to travel, to go all the way to Europe you know I would want to go for four or five weeks. My mother won't go on her own, which is fair enough and she doesn't really have any friends that… My father won't travel like that, so it's been in the back of my mind, but having small children… But it's still possible I mean my mother is still relatively young, she's not yet seventy, so you know, it's not like it's… Yeah. (F4)

Francesco has not forsaken his initial goal of conversing with Anna, but as his language skills improve, prospects that only a year ago seemed impossible are becoming more accessible. Among these, travelling to Italy with his mother to visit his ancestors' village and the remaining distant relatives emerges in Francesco's mind as an ingenious way to satisfy the aspirations that lead him to learning Italian in the beginning. In particular, a trip to Italy would give him a chance to practise and improve his Italian, help him reconnect to his cultural heritage, and satisfy Anna's desire to converse in the dialect. It would also serve as a kind of bonding exercise during which to deepen and develop his relationship to his mother in a way similar to that of talking to her in her native tongue. Although the tone Francesco uses is still very cautious, there is no doubt that the intention of travelling is a conscious one at last, and one that could be interpreted as another one of Francesco's self-regulating strategies: Francesco realises that without a goal towards which to direct his efforts, his motivation is compromised, and so the idea of travelling is used deliberately to supplement his original goal of conversing with Anna, which although not completely discarded, has now lost most of its motivational strength.

No sooner has Francesco glimpsed his new goal, than, in an almost serendipitous way, he is presented with the opportunity to connect with the language and culture of his Italian ancestors as a way to prepare for his future trip to Italy:

> F: I found a website for the little village where my grandmother came from
>
> A: You were saying, and you were getting newsletters from it?
>
> F: Yeah did I tell you about that? Well I communicated with the guy, he's so friendly. Well it's got a general non-specific email address so I wrote to him and said my grandmother came from the village, I am learning Italian, I have found this easy to read and interesting and so he wrote back and you see I wrote in Italian and he said oh no, you are doing ok, so that's been quite nice, but he said to me, a lot of the magazine is about migration and he said please tell me about your family cause I am very interested, plus I met one of his relatives, she was my grandmother's very good friend when they were very young girls, so I started to get together some dates and names from my family and some photos to show him who they were and so that's going out to him soon, and he's sending me the newsletter, apparently the title is in dialect but the text is in Italian, and it's written very simply, so I understand that well.

A: So have you ever thought of doing that before, to do some research on your own family, or is it something that came up accidentally?

F: Well I went to this village a long time ago and after that I thought well I'd like to, but again it's in the bottom of the pile, but I would like to take mom to Italy, she is Italian and she hasn't been, so part of that is I think to get the best values from the trip, with the internet these days, the more work you do before you go, the more preparation and information… You see in the old days you had to write to someone and they had to write back while now… So I am quite keen, I am sending him all the dates and the names and then I'll send him some photos… And he's a hell of a nice guy and he might be able to point me… And so the aim is in the next couple of years, I haven't told mom exactly yet, but I don't want to commit… But maybe just her and I will go alone without the rest of the family. (F5)

Francesco knows that travelling to Italy will require significant amounts of time and money – two things that for Francesco are not readily available – so he is not yet prepared to fully commit to it. Also, it must be noticed that although Francesco might think of travelling to Italy as an incentive to sustain his language learning efforts, he has not yet formulated any specific language goals. In spite of these limitations, the thought of visiting Italy does provide Francesco with some degree of inspiration, and as a result he soon begins directing his efforts towards the new objective, and as he does, his goal becomes more specific, and the website Francesco had originally consulted purely as a source of language, also becomes a source of information to plan his travels. The whole process can be viewed as involving a positive motivating cycle: Francesco's new goal to spend time in Italy requires him to use his knowledge of Italian language in order to engage with his local contact and main source of information; in turn, his exchanges with these offer him a chance to practise the language, which leaves him feeling good about his abilities – therefore feeding his motivation – while at the same time providing knowledge he can use to refine his goal and progress towards it.

But Francesco is also about to receive an additional motivational boost, this time from a more immediate source.

A: You were on a high last time

F: Was I? I am actually on another one at the moment. At the night of the (Centro's end-of-year) show there were many different people and there was a lady you know, Cecilia that owns that restaurant… Well she turned up and I was talking to her and it was very interesting. I mean she was obviously very

accommodating in the way she spoke, but I actually really felt we had a reasonably… You know we were both talking about the same thing for a little while, you know? (*laughs*) And so that was quite a high, and as I said she was being very sympathetic with me, but equally, we had a chat about all sorts of things… So I felt pretty good after that. (F5)

This time the "high" is due to Francesco's feelings of competence resulting from his conversation with a native speaker of Italian. For Francesco this is a completely new experience, as up to this point his "highs" have been the result of his achievements to do with cognitive aspects of language, such as memorising verbs or constructing sentences in his mind, whereas to successfully engage in an impromptu conversation with a native speaker calls upon all of his knowledge of the language, making the task much more challenging and the resulting "high" much more intense, particularly in view of the fact that holding a spontaneous conversation was Francesco's primary objective in learning the language.

However, no sooner has Francesco experienced the motivating effects of the encounter, than he realises how few opportunities he has to experience similar exchanges in his present learning environment, and it is not long before his resourceful nature prompts him to seek out ways to engage in conversation with Italian speakers:

I was talking to Teresa about it and I might write to the university and to the Embassy maybe and say look I am a student of Italian and I would like to meet some Italian people who are also students here or something and you know I have heard of people overseas doing that, where you take them out, buy them lunch, go to the museum… Pay their admission, you know and you say today I'd like to talk about, something and buy them lunch and give them ten, fifteen dollars, for an hour. And using it more. (F5)

One interesting aspect of Francesco's intentions at this point is that although the desire to find ways to maximise his use of the learning resources at his disposal has been a constant element of his learning journey, this is the very first time that he has thought of native speakers of Italian other than Anna as an important learning resource, pointing to the success in speaking with Cecilia as the primary motivational trigger for this shift. Most importantly, Francesco's desire to engage with Italians in Wellington and in Italy is a sign of the 'expanded view' of Italian language Francesco has come to adopt since the beginning of his studies: Italian for Francesco is no longer just the language of the past, family and fond childhood memories, but also, and above all, a rewarding personal

challenge and a potential link to other Italian speakers in Wellington and in Italy. In this sense, the expansion of Francesco's goals has to be understood as a natural consequence or symptom of the growing significance Italian is taking on in Francesco's life.

7.8 Pat yourself on the back for that: Self-evaluation

In December I meet Francesco for the last time. Since the end of the Centro's course in October, he has been taking weekly private lessons with Teresa, and is now looking forward to joining a few of his classmates in the Centro's Summer School, a short extension of the course running over the summer trimester. When I ask Francesco to think back to the year that has been, Francesco expresses a degree of satisfaction with many aspects of his learning over the last ten months:

> F: There was a point at which I thought yes, there is some progress. You know you kind of think I actually can say a sentence without thinking about it ten minutes. So yeah, overall there is a degree of confidence, backed up by a feeling of some competence, and progress.
>
> A: What do you think that is that due to?
>
> F: I'd like to think that it is due to time and effort, you know the more I look at this the more I think the more you do… Not necessarily the better you get but the more chances you have of getting better. (…) Eventually what I want to be able to to speak Italian and to use it with people, and if I feel that this is not being achieved then that demotivates me, but this year has been good because I have achieved more of that, and it's not that you take things for granted or get bored with them, but you know the classes have their ups and downs, and overall I am happy with them, but there are times you realise that everything in class is a compromise. But yeah, overall good. (…) And it's like anything, if I had more time, I could have done more, but no, I am not unhappy with my year's progress, in the context of my life and all the other things. (F6)

The two issues Francesco identifies as the primary obstacles to his learning are consistent with what has already emerged from the previous interviews, namely the constraints posed by the current learning environment and the lack of time and energy available for his studies. According to the principles of attribution theory (Weiner, 1992) the fact that Francesco tends to attribute what he perceives as shortcomings in his learning to external elements outside his immediate control – and not to his own abilities or effort – supports his motivation, as it suggests that his confidence in his abilities is not compromised and that any decline in his enthusiasm could be reversed in a more

favourable environment At the same time, Francesco's attribution does not mean that he is not willing to take responsibility for his learning, as throughout his studies he has asserted and proven his autonomy in many ways, including never relying on a particular course or teacher to satisfy all of his own learning needs and aspirations. In fact, his awareness of the need to take his learning into his own hands is now stronger than ever:

> I think I am more waking up to the fact that the class is only one of my tools to learn Italian, and therefore my self study, talking to people and all that, that's up to me. (F6)

Francesco's tendency towards autonomy is also evident in that, as the year draws to an end, he is already thinking about what he can do to maximise his learning in the year to come:

> One thing I have been thinking about is how to make next year better and at the moment that is the key I guess, and maybe getting some Italian… How can I put it? Pen pals or something like that over the internet. (F6)

> Next year I'd like to set myself more specific goals about competence. I was sitting down with the text book last night and we sort of worked through it with Teresa, but we skipped a few bits, and I said to myself over the holidays and by the end of next year I'd like to have this level of competence in the book up to the end. (F6)

> I think am going to say to myself by the end of next year, you want to be able to pick up any exercise out of this textbook and you want to have confidence that you could pass an exam on that book. In fact what I think I might try to do is to pick up one of the old exam papers at the university, and you know… And I still want to see if I can squeeze myself into the lectures. (F6)

The first element of Francesco's plan for next year is also the most pressing: he needs more practice, especially in speaking and comprehending the language. Secondly, Francesco needs to set specific language goals, as throughout the year he has discovered that the lack of specific objectives can be detrimental to his motivation. He has also learned that his goals need to be achievable and measurable, and so in this sense his choice to use the university textbook and the university's old exam questions is very appropriate. His choice also shows that Francesco is still thinking of studying Italian at university and that although his present circumstances do not allow him to make a

definite decision and set this as a goal, the mere possibility of it is a strong determining factor in the direction of his learning.

7.9 *Italianità* and heritage language motivation

When we consider the progression of Francesco's motivational processes throughout the first two years of his learning Italian, we can clearly see that elements to do with his Italian heritage have important roles to play in both the development and the maintenance of his motivational states. However in order to attempt an interpretation of the complex relationship between Francesco's heritage identity and his motivation, we must first consider Francesco's construction of his own *Italianità* and of its links to Italian language.

A first significant point to be taken into account in this regard is the fact that Francesco does not consider himself to be very Italian; he revealed this crucial piece of information while answering my request to place himself on an imaginary continuum between two points representing two opposite identities: Italian and non-Italian. In response to my question, Francesco picked up the pen and drew a dot very close to the non-Italian side of the continuum saying "Somewhere around here". When Francesco realised my surprise at his answer, he promptly offered an explanation:

> The kind of society that she (Teresa) describes is quite alien to the one that I was made to be aware of. The people in my family were poorly educated, poor, not very sophisticated in terms of their tastes… So most of the things you hear about Italian culture being about style… And some of it to be honest I don't really like… don't get me wrong but I am a kiwi, I am a kiwi in the sense that all my values, all my views and my history… But equally I am really… I know it is part of me, particularly through the huge influence of my grandmother. (F5)

> I mean I am very proud of my Italian roots, I am very clear about that, I don't have any type of embarrassment about that, but I don't… I fit into it like a fish out of water really. Even my mother who was born there, she said if we went back today she would not enjoy it, you know… We are more kiwi than anything else. (F5)

Francesco's answer is not surprising if we recall the isolation from other Italians he experienced as a child: with no available models of what it meant to be Italian other than the older members of his own family, Francesco's idea of *Italianità* takes its form from the linguistic and cultural practices of his grandparents, who considered themselves different from – and therefore did not associate with – other Italian migrants. As a result

Francesco inherits an ideology of Italianness limited by definite chronological, geographical and linguistic boundaries ("their Italianness is like a little bubble") which causes him to feel estranged from the dominant discourses of Italianness that are inherent to the courses and social functions of the Centro Italiano, which present an Italy that is too modern and sophisticated to have any resemblance with the humble origins of his ancestors. Viewed in this light, his choice to place himself so low on the Italian identity continuum is a reflection of his lack of identification with the type of *Italianità* presented at the Centro, but not a fair representation of his feelings for his own Italian heritage and identity, which Francesco describes as follows:

> My name's Italian, but the culture side not so much… Ah, it's complicated. And the thing is that I have Italian, which is my family, but then I have a view of Italian culture that is not that… Italian is not this big homogeneous thing to me, my family was poor, they emigrated her in the thirties... So when I look at Italian TV, Italian football, Italian politics, Italian society I don't really feel like I belong to that… But I still think of myself as a bit Italian, you know I am there on the scale… It's kind of contradictory because I put myself so low on that scale, but equally I think of myself as having a real Italian connection. It's a family thing rather than the classic Italian cultural thing. (F6)

In Francesco's experience, his "Italian connection" is also a family connection, and one that does not exist independently of his identity as a member of his family. Francesco knows that of this connection/identity is a somewhat permanent element of his own self-concept ("I know it is part of me") – particularly by virtue of the "huge influence" of his grandmother – but also that this element can be strengthened or weakened depending on the amount of attention and nurturing he is prepared to dedicate it. It is with this awareness that Francesco chooses to learn Italian language as a tool to reinforce the Italian element of his self-concept through strengthening his relationship with the previous generation (i.e. mother and uncle) and promoting the (re)discovery of elements of his own and the family's past:

> My main aim is to talk with my mother and so gain back something of my history. I wouldn't be that interested… I mean I said to my mother that I wouldn't start this if she wasn't around, it wouldn't be of any use to me if I could not use it, my main use of it is going to be family. (F1)

Clearly, this strengthening of Francesco's Italian self-concept does not involve a conscious attempt to transform his social identity as to increase his *Italianità* in the eyes

of other Italians, as, in Francesco's mind, learning Italian will not afford him elements of Italian identity that he does not currently possess or that he desires. To go back to the Italian identity continuum image:

> I am never going to put myself anywhere there (on the Italian side of the continuum), because I am never going to live there. And I mean it's not a goal. And it's not likelihood. I mean if something happened and I went there to live for a year… But even then I think it would be more likely that I'd feel like somebody that comes from the outside, who has some connection but not… (F5)

An obvious sign of the purely internal nature of Francesco's sense of *Italianità* is his disinterest in meeting and/or spending time with other Italians. Part of this is due to Francesco's awareness of the difficulties inherent in the insular nature of his Italianness, but above all to his belief that contacts with – in particular local – Italians would not take him any closer to his goal of reconnecting to his heritage, except perhaps by offering an opportunity to practise the language:

> I know I could join the Italian club, but I am not interested in going to play cards on a Sunday afternoon, you know. Not that I have a problem with it but I wouldn't feel comfortable going in there. The only thing that I think the club could offer me is giving me an outlet to try it, to try and speak it. (F4)

The evidence also points to the fact that Francesco's intentions in learning the language do not include a desire to belong to any specific community of Italian speakers and that the existence and strength of Francesco's Italian self-concept is not a function of its external validation by other Italians. Even in the later stages of his learning in fact, when Francesco realises the difficulties of conversing with Anna and begins seeking opportunities to interact with other Italian speakers, his efforts are entirely directed at practising his oral skills, and not at testing and/or asserting his Italian identity.

In this regard, the concepts of possible self and ideal self (Dörnyei, 2009; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989; Markus, 2006) can be useful to describe Francesco's motivation as stemming from the desire to realise an internal image of the self rather than an external social identity. Francesco's goal to reconnect to his heritage can also be viewed as a pursued ideal self, and in particular as a version of himself as a person who has satisfactorily (re)gained the personal connection with Italian language and culture he had as a child. Interestingly, Francesco does not seem to engage in the

creative imaginative processes that are at the heart of most possible/ideal self theories, even admitting at one point not to use any form of imagery to stimulate his own motivational states:

> I am not a very… You know how there are different kinds of people… Well I am not one that can picture things easily… I would not use that in my motivation. (F4)

In spite of this, and of Francesco's lack of concern for belonging to an external Italian community, one could not argue against the evidence that a strong sense of Italian heritage identity is at the basis of his motivation, or that the resulting motivation is weak or has little repercussions on Francesco's choices and actions. On the contrary, as we have seen, Francesco's desire to strengthen his connection to his heritage is not only the source of his motivational arousal, but also the basis of his decision to study and of his main goal to converse with Anna, which serves him as a powerful motivational source well into the second year.

Francesco's feelings of heritage identity also play an important role in directing and sustaining his motivation throughout his studies. To begin with, it is Francesco's unwavering focus on learning the building blocks of language – which in his mind will allow him to converse with Anna – that brings him to a realisation of his own learning needs, of the limitations of the courses he is attending and of the need to take control of his learning by seeking out more suitable learning settings and engaging in self-directed study. Secondly, Francesco's own perception of his heritage identity has a subtle but powerful role in sustaining his motivation:

> A: Do you think that having Italian ancestry also plays a role in keeping you motivated?
>
> F: Yeah, it is the key motivator.
>
> A: Would you say that that's had an influence just on your decision to take up Italian or that that is an influence on the whole process?
>
> F: The whole process, it's a form of motivation
>
> A: In the sense that it sustains your motivation?
>
> F: Oh yeah. I think if I wasn't Italian – and I still think of myself as a bit Italian – I wouldn't be here studying it. I would have no reason to go to Italy except for my family; I have no real connection with Italy except for my family… I mean I like Italian food, but I like a lot of different kinds of food, you know what I mean? So I think it does sustain me and it has sustained me through difficult times. It's not just a nice thing that you decide to do, it's actually something you grew up with.

A: Is that something that comes to mind during hard times?

F: Maybe not always directly, but it's an underlying thing, you know a connection… There is something up here (*points to his forehead*), and that is that when I was young I used to speak. That's something that for me… That has always been in my mind. I could speak a foreign language, I used to speak it, it was not exactly this language but it was the dialect of this language… And so that… I thought oh I have some connection with it. That was really… If I hadn't felt that, I don't think I would have started or continued. I grew up speaking dialect at home so that switches my button. (F6)

Unlike language learning goals, which can be used consciously to aid motivation, heritage identity constructed as a personal Italian/family connection is for Francesco a motivating factor that provides an indirect, "underlying" motivational support to the whole language learning process. Memories, beliefs and emotive states to do with Francesco's childhood, his grandparents and his early use of the dialect are a constant reminder of his personal link with his ancestral language and of his investment in it, even when they do not take the form of conscious thoughts. As with the formation of his initial intention and goals, the key to the motivational power of Francesco's Italian self-concept is again due to its association to his family ties, which gives it a strong emotional and personal value. Also, since the desire to learn the language is born of a need to nurture a part of Francesco's own self, it is not something that he can easily brush aside, especially when he has already experienced the powerful feelings of loss and guilt that resulted from neglecting it (see section 7.3). It seems in fact that part of the sustaining drive of Francesco's awareness of his own Italian heritage is a subtle sense of duty (to himself, but also to his family) to do his best to maintain the connection with his Italian heritage. In this sense, Francesco's heritage identity does sustain his motivation, not only by actively directing and driving his actions, but also by making it difficult for him to relinquish his goals.

Finally, as shown in the first part of this chapter, once the learning is underway, Francesco's heritage identity is no longer the main factor influencing his motivation, as elements to do with the learning setting (e.g. teacher, activities, in-class experiences) and the wider context ("life getting in the way") are mostly responsible for the strength and direction of Francesco's motivation. Above all, as we have seen, factors associated with the creation and maintenance of intrinsic motivation such as interest and enjoyment are vital at this point, and are the focus of Francesco's self-regulatory processes. Yet, even

in the thick of the motivational influences and processes at work at this stage of Francesco's experience, his heritage identity figures as a crucial element:

> A: Do you think that that was the main sustaining thing throughout, the fact that you enjoyed it?
>
> F: Mmm Yes. But equally, with the same level of enjoyment without the cultural link… I wouldn't have done it. (F6)

Significantly, here, Francesco seems to express the idea that his personal link to Italian is a motivational force comparable to, if not more powerful even than enjoyment. In this sense, it is reasonable to conclude that in Francesco's experience, his construction and awareness of his own heritage identity also acts as a source of intrinsic motivation which is essential to his persevering in his studies, as it represents the crucial *condicio sine qua non* of his engagement in the language learning process.

7.10 Postscript

Francesco began his university studies in March 2006 and completed the first of two second-year language papers in an Italian major. In July he enrolled for the second trimester, but was forced to abandon his studies because of work commitments. In terms of content and effort expected the courses Francesco did complete were all that he had envisioned: language focussed, very intensive and optimally challenging. However the age difference between him and the rest of the students, and the fact that he was not a full-time student made it difficult for Francesco to "hang out" with classroom colleagues and use Italian socially. Francesco has not been back to the Centro Italiano since October 2006, but he continues studying Italian by himself while waiting for the right circumstances to continue his university studies. In 2007 Francesco also began organising a trip to Italy to accompany his mother to visit the family's village and all of the remaining Italian relatives. In preparation for the tour, Francesco is currently working at improving his spoken Italian by scheduling weekly hours of conversation with an Italian acquaintance. For the same purpose, he has also become a member of the local Italian social club, though so far lack of time has prevented him from attending any of the club's social functions. Francesco's Italian exchanges with his mother are still very limited. He admits that the degree of Italian he has so far achieved has somewhat helped him reconnect to his heritage by allowing him to research his family's history and the places he will be visiting on his trip, but that he expects the completion of this

process to take place in Italy, when he will finally meet and spend time with his Italian relatives.

Chapter Eight: Esther

> Italian was just a seed then, a wee seed that suddenly sprouted out and became this big big tree, and now it has taken over my life, and that's what I do, and I know that's what I want to do. (E6)

8.1 Meet Esther: The born-again Italian

Esther was one of the first people I contacted when I first began working on this project. I expected that, as someone who had been identified by many as the key contact for the Centro Italiano, she could provide some useful information about the institution and perhaps the names of some of its students.

From the very beginning, Esther's fascination for Italian language and for the Centro Italiano was obvious: she talked at length about the institution and its courses – especially praising the work of its teachers – and she often commented on her love for everything to do with Italy and its culture, from the cobblestoned lanes of its medieval towns, to the way Italian parents dress their children ("so old fashion but so lovely"). It wasn't until the end of our first meeting that I realised Esther's ancestry was partly Italian, and that she had been one of the Centro's students for more than a decade.

Suddenly, Esther's enthusiasm took on a very interesting light and I could not help but wonder: when most learners struggle to sustain their motivation through years of formal language instruction, especially in the absence of significant opportunities to use the language outside the classroom, could Esther's Italian heritage be the key to her enduring motivation? I immediately asked her to join the project as one of the learner participants.

What I discovered during our following meetings confirmed my initial thoughts: Esther's sense of *Italianità* was indeed very strong and it seemed to lie at the very heart of her motivation to learn Italian. But as I learned about her past and the details of her long learning experience, it also became clear that, for Esther, the learning of her heritage language was a journey of self-discovery during which her Italian identity had developed hand in hand with her language skills, triggering a truly life-changing personal transformation.

The following chapter traces the course of Esther's language learning in an attempt to illustrate the pervasive and lasting effects that one's awareness of and personal

construction of their heritage identity can have on the motivational processes underlying the acquisition of a heritage language, even in the absence of previous proficiency in or exposure to such language. More specifically, Esther's story can help elucidate the role that self-concept, personal history, imagination and social context can assume at various stages of language learning, and some the ways in which the ongoing interplay of these elements is implicated in the arousal and maintenance of motivation.

Esther's data was collected during the period spanning from June 2005 and December 2006 mainly through five face-to-face interviews conducted at her house and at the Centro's venue. For the purposes of triangulation, I also observed Esther during her Italian lessons in two different occasions, talked with many of her student colleagues, interviewed her teacher Teresa and took extensive notes during our numerous telephone conversations – the last of which took place only one week ago and provided the contents of the postscript to be found at the end of this chapter.

In many ways, Esther represents the ideal participant for a qualitative study: she is exceedingly eloquent, very passionate about her learning and clearly loves to talk about it. Furthermore her influential position within the Centro and the Italian community proved to be an invaluable asset for the study, as it meant she could provide large amounts of information not only about her own learning experience but also about the institution and the community in general.

8.2 "A long way back": A family's forgotten *Italianità*

The Italian branch of Esther's family originated in the northern Italy of the mid-1800s:

> My great-grandfather was one of ten brothers and the whole lot of them left Italy because they didn't want to get involved in Italy's war, so they all went, and most of them went to America, one brother went to Australia. My great-grandfather went to America too, but then he wanted to go to Australia, but he got on the wrong ship and he ended up in New Zealand, so he started off the family name here in New Zealand. It was 1868; he was one of the first. (E1)

> My brother, who is very interested in the family tree, he's been back to the family's village in Italy. It's just out of the city, it's a little suburb, like Island Bay, and he went to the cemetery and found a lot of relatives there. He got my great-grandfather's baptism certificate which is really helpful, but we could not find any family, no other people with

that name, anymore, so I can only assume that because a whole generation went away, that was it. That was the end of the family name in Italy. (E3)

Unlike most Italians immigrants who arrived in New Zealand in the following years, Esther's great-grandfather decided to settle away from the capital, in a small coastal town with no other Italian inhabitants. There he had few opportunities to speak his native language, but he liked the place and decided to stay, and within a few years he owned the local whaling station and had started a family. His wife, a woman of Cornish origins, raised their children to speak English and so Esther's great-grandfather was the last of her ancestors to speak Italian. Many years later, Esther was born, but by then nothing remained of its Italian origins except for a few stories about her great-grandfather, who had died many years before, taking with him the language and culture he had brought from his native Italy.

Like many girls of her generation Esther moved to the city when still very young to find work and start a life on her own. In Wellington she found employment in a bank and found she liked the job very much. The next 30 years were spent building a career in banking:

> I have been so busy in my life with my career, you know. I never married, but my career was very important to me. It was a very stressful job that banking job, I had thirty-eight staff, and it was real stress there. But of course at that stage I didn't have any Italian and I always needed something in my life anyway, I have always been one of those people that need to have something to make life worthwhile, you known, some have a family, some have something else. I had my career. (E1)

As the year 1990 drew to its end, Esther felt she had achieved all she had ever wanted: a successful career, a job she loved, financial security. Life was good, and Esther was happy. Then 1991 began, and that year everything changed.

8.3   A hand from destiny: Motivation arousal

> I got made redundant. All of a sudden, there I was at 49, and I had nothing. Nothing to do. No job, nothing. I had put so much into my carrier and that was my life and when I got made redundant it just stopped. (E1)

> My career was all encompassing, I tell you, and when that went, there was a void. (E1)

166

Losing her job was very tough on Esther, as with it, she had to relinquish all the social contacts it had entailed, personal and professional, and, above all, the status and responsibilities afforded by her role as manager, which in her mind had come to symbolise her ultimate life-accomplishment. The "void" Esther experienced was left by the collapse of her own identity: suddenly Esther was not the same Esther she used to be, and she had no idea of how to fill the hiatus that losing her career had left in her life.

Facing such a personal upheaval would leave anybody stunned, but Esther did not waste any time feeling sorry for herself. She understood that she now had an opportunity to pause, reflect and choose what to do with her life, and she resolved to use that opportunity wisely:

> In hindsight I believe I did the right thing by taking a year off work completely, because I had never really had any length of time off work, I'd always worked, even when I was a child in my parents' business. But it was just nice to discover at that time what I wanted to do with my life, you know, from then on. (E2)

> I was lucky, because I had the money from the redundancy and I knew straight away when I got made redundant what I was going to do: I wanted to go to Europe. 'Cause that was the plan for when I retired anyway, it just came along earlier than I expected. (E5)

Esther planned her European trip for about six months. She decided she would be overseas for a total of four months, that she would base herself in London and visit all of the major European cities and tourist destinations. Special attention was paid in planning the Italian part of the tour, as Esther was particularly looking forward to visiting her ancestral homeland, even though at this stage Esther did not have any "strong feeling" about it:

> I always knew I had Italian blood of course, but until I went away overseas, I didn't really have any strong feeling about it, because at that stage of course I had not yet joined any class so… There was nothing there to motivate me really; I just knew I wanted to go to Italy, that was really my plan. (E5)

Esther began her trip with a 34-day guided tour of Europe. When this finished, she stopped in London for a few weeks before embarking on her tour of Italy, and it was here that a crucial event triggered her first thoughts on learning Italian:

167

> When I was in London, (…) this woman, she was Italian, she was trying to use the telephone and I knew that the area code in London had just changed. I didn't know any Italian, all I had was my handbook, I hadn't even been to Italy at that stage, and this woman she was so upset she couldn't use the telephone, and unfortunately she got to the stage where she had run out of change. It was one of those pay phones in a hotel, and I went to the desk and I said to them 'is there anybody here that can speak Italian?' but they said there was nobody there and I felt really bad like I should have known… To be able to help her… And that was the first time that I thought 'right, when I get back home I am going to do something about this'. (E4)

This episode is significant in terms of Esther's motivational development in that it marks her first ever emotional response at her lack of competence in Italian. Interestingly in fact, though Esther has always known about her "Italian blood," this is the first time her awareness is accompanied by the sense that she should be able to speak Italian. Esther feels this is by no means a fleeting emotion, and she immediately resolves to "do something about this", a decision that effectively marks the beginning of her motivational process.

With this episode still fresh in her mind, Esther heads to Italy where she comes into contact with the homeland, the culture and the language of her Italian ancestors, and is amazed by the strong feelings she experiences as she is brought to a heightened awareness of her own *Italianità*:

> I always say to people it was five hundred percent better that I expected. (E2)

> I felt like… I was just like a sponge, just so good for me, I felt like I was home, even though my grandparents never talked about Italy, it was just something there, it just felt right to be there. (E4)

> My trip to Italy was really my turning point because at that stage I had never been and it awakened everything in me, my family ties and just the love of… What I enjoyed being there and wanting to be able to speak to the Italians, so that was the most important part for me. So that's when everything was decided for me, what I wanted to do – what I needed to do – was to explore that side of my life. (E4)

In Italy, what previously was Esther's mere knowledge of having Italian ancestry turns into a strong sense of belonging, and as a result of this Esther begins to think of her heritage identity as an important part of herself that demands to be explored, developed and embraced.

The positive effects of visits to the ancestral homeland on learners' pride in and identification with their heritage culture are well-documented in the literature, as is the potential role of such visits in arousing an interest in the ancestral language (Baldassar, 2001; Feuerverger, 1991; Petrucci, 2007; Rubino, 2002). In this sense, travel to the ancestral homeland entirely fits the description of possible triggers to motivation arousal found in Williams and Burden's model of motivation (1997), and this is especially well illustrated by Esther's experience. However in Esther's case the timing of her travels is clearly also important, as given the recent events, Esther is, at this stage, even more susceptible to the ethnic identity-building effects of a visit to Italy, making her motivational arousal particularly strong.

8.4 Putting your mind to it: Goal setting and launching of action

As we have seen, for Esther the motivation to learn Italian originates as part of her need to embrace the *Italianità* that she feels is in her by virtue of her Italian ancestry. However for someone like Esther, who unlike Francesco or Livia, did not grow up in an Italian environment – Esther had never even met an Italian before travelling to Italy – the feat seems particularly challenging, as her idea of *Italianità* is practically non-existent.

One thing Esther does know at this stage is that "Italians speak Italian" and that is enough to spark her interest for the language. As we have already seen, she first realises the connection between Italian language and heritage identity in London before her Italian holiday; however Esther stresses that it was precisely her time in Italy that cemented her desire to learn the language:

> I think once you go to Italy, and you see where your family comes from it's just all of a sudden it makes you think 'gosh I wouldn't be able to talk to them even though I'm Italian'. Also I hadn't been to Italy when I was talking to the woman in the hotel in London, but I when I went to Italy I kept thinking back on that when I was in Italy, and I thought yeah, when I get back home I am definitely going to learn the language and of course the feeling got stronger and stronger as I got around. So that's why when I came back here I joined the Centro. (E1)

The opportunity to learn about Italians from Italians soon presents itself when, that same year, the Italia club of Wellington, previously a men-only club, opens its membership to women. Esther immediately enlists as one of the first female members,

driven by her desire to mingle with other Italians in the hope that this might help her form an idea of her Italian ancestors and ultimately of her own *Italianità*:

> It was a way to discover my roots really, and find out about other people that had done the same things as my family. I really wanted to get into learning about the family history. I was going to explore my roots and what the family had done. That was the motivating point really. (E8)

At this stage, joining the Italia club is also a way to practise the Italian she is learning at the Centro Italiano, but this expectation goes unfulfilled, because as Esther soon finds out, it is not standard Italian but Neapolitan dialect and other heavily accented varieties of Italian that are the norm in this environment:

> A: And when the club opened the doors to women and you went along, did you think that would be a good way to practice your Italian?
>
> E: I did initially, yes. But it's not really a possibility. Because all these old people that used to come in and talk to us, I knew they didn't sound the same as my tutor (…) at the beginning I thought this will be good, I'll be able to practice all the time, and then I found that unfortunately that wasn't the case. (E5)

Esther also discovers that because of the club's complex social structure, her status as a member – and in particular as a new member – does not necessarily afford her the opportunity to form the kind of personal relationships she is seeking; she understands that in order to gain the knowledge she needs she must to get to know the older members, who are more likely to have been born in Italy, and in particular the "elderly Italian ladies", whom Esther recognises as the main holders of historical and cultural knowledge in the community. In order to befriend them and hear their stories, Esther must be accepted as one of them, and so she devises a plan:

> Right from the beginning I thought 'right, the best thing to do with the Italia Club is to go in there and work in the kitchen when they had a function'. (…) 'Cause you see I was by myself, and it's not easy to break into that sort of club because it's very family orientated, and they are really sort of a little bit suspicious of strangers. I kept telling them you know my family were Italian, but I had to tell everybody virtually singularly… So that took quite a while. (E3)

Esther also uses the little Italian she knows to "break into" this Italian circle, and although at this stage she does not use the language as a means to assert her *Italianità*, it

does prove to be an important ice-breaker and a powerful symbol of solidarity between her and the other members:

> So I used to go out in the kitchen and I'd be right there with the elderly ladies and they'd talk in Italian, when I was in there they'd try to speak in Italian, if they were there by themselves they'd usually speak in dialect, and they used to talk to me just everyday stuff you know, *girare*[21] if I was stirring up something, or the *piatti*[22]… (…) and when they realised I was learning Italian they started to speak to me and help me with my Italian. (E2)

With her membership into the Italia Club, Esther effectively gains access to the Wellington Italian community and this is to have some important repercussions on her motivation. Though it will be a long time before Esther is able to use standard Italian to converse with other community members, from this moment on Italian language is no longer only a tool for self-discovery and self-(re)construction, but also the key to access to the Italian networks which will come to dominate Esther's social, professional and personal life for all the years to come.

Finally, though at this stage it is the Wellington Italians who are at the forefront of Esther's thoughts, the last of her initial goals has to do with travelling to Italy again and with her desire to communicate with the locals:

> What I wanted to do was to get myself in a position where I could go back again on holiday and be able to converse with people (…) Just even this courtesy thing, so please and thank you and hello, and goodbye and be able to say *arrivederLa*[23] instead of *arrivederci* or *ciao*, to say *ciao* to an older person – I never realised – that's really really bad, it's not nice and of course a lot of the older people that is what they think about tourists. It just makes such a difference to the way that you are received, you know, if you say to somebody *arrivederLa*, instead of ciao, they are going to look at you with a different pair of eyes. (E3)

> I was on one of my first tours (…) and this guy said to me 'you'd think they'd learn some English!' and I said 'for heaven's sake this is Italy, this is not Australia!' Anyway he carried on like that for a couple of days and I said to him 'actually I think you should know that my family are Italian' and he never brought it up again. (E2)

---

[21] 'to stir up'
[22] 'dishes'
[23] *ArrivederLa* is a formal leave-taking expression, to be used with older people and strangers as a sign of politeness. *Arrivederci* and *ciao* are the informal counterparts, to be used with friends and younger persons.

171

Esther's aspiration to learn the appropriate rules of politeness associated with the use of Italian has to do with the way she wishes to portray herself in interactions with Italian speakers in Italy. Essentially her need is born of the desire to conduct exchanges that are as pleasant and as respectful as possible, but is also clearly driven by her wish to avoid being perceived as an arrogant and ethnocentric tourist.

This last point is yet another indication of the self/identity construction which is inherent in the process Esther's learning of her heritage language, which began with the collapse of her old self/identity and the desire to include elements of her *Italianità* into a 'new' self/identity, and which is now continuing with her wish to avoid other elements instead. Quite clearly at this stage Esther's idea of what it means to be Italian is still at an embryonic stage, however in her mind she is quite clear about what she does not want to be: a patronising tourist with no respect for the inhabitants of the Italian destinations she will visit in the future. In this sense, we can begin to think of Esther's journey towards competence in Italian as the gradual construction of an ideal Italian-speaking self that is to be achieved by both the inclusion of desirable features and the avoidance of undesirable ones.

8.5   Gliding, stumbling and gritting your teeth

Clearly a mammoth task such as the construction of a new self cannot take place in a short time, and knowing this, Esther embarks on the learning of her heritage language with the awareness that this will be a long process. Indeed she is not proved wrong, as since enrolling in her first Italian course in 1992, at the time of writing this she is still learning, still diligently attending classes and doing her homework, as she has done, week after week, for the past 17 years.

Of course from our perspective, the most intriguing aspect of such an extraordinarily long learning journey is the maintenance of Esther' language learning motivation and the interplay of factors that have contributed to it. Unfortunately, having access to longitudinal data relating to only 18 months out of the 17 years of Esther's learning, we are not in a position to discuss all of the motivational influences with the amount of detail and complexity present in the analysis of the other case studies. However, Esther's recounting of her past learning is at times as detailed and vivid as those of her most recent experiences and count, in my opinion, as perfectly valid evidence of some of the factors which have shaped her motivation throughout her long learning experience.

Among these, the one influence that Esther considers to have been crucial to sustaining her motivation is the role of her many teachers. The list of these that Esther provides is remarkably long, and their descriptions paint a picture of a very diverse group of people, some young, some old, some native speakers of Italian and some not. The best ones, Esther explains, were those who gave their students "a passion" for the language and the culture, and one of these was Esther's first teacher:

> The first tutor I had is a very elderly man now, Jack. (…) Yeah he was great actually, he gave us a real passion for learning, he used to be so encouraging, and say 'oh yes you are doing really well'. (E4)

However when it comes to instil the "passion", for Esther no one will ever surpass her last and current teacher Teresa, whose virtues in and outside the classroom are so often enthusiastically reported by Esther:

> Jack was very elderly and he was in Italy during the last world war (…) so his perspective on Italy was very old. But then all of a sudden we get this person into our lives (Teresa), very vital, a fantastic teacher and she's got such interesting material, every time we have a class she gets you into something worth doing and it makes you want to learn more. That's what she does for you: you just can't wait to learn more. (E4)

> She is the most wonderful teacher, she's so passionate about grammar and she makes you really want to get into it, you know. I tell you, I just would not like to lose her; we'd do anything to keep her. And she gives us so much modern Italian, she records movies and programmes from *RAI*[24] and she always has lots of interesting materials that really make you want to learn. (E1)

If we consider the above data looking to isolate the elements of a teacher that Esther finds most valuable for her learning, we find that the "passion" Esther so often talks about is nothing more than another name for motivation, and that the ability to motivate students by making them "want to learn more" is indeed what Esther considers the key skill of a good teacher. Teresa, then, is in Esther's mind exceptionally good, in that she is not only able to transmit her own passion to the students, but she's also able to select

[24] RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana (known until 1954 as Radio Audizioni Italiane) is the Italian public service broadcaster. The Italia Club holds a private subscription to RAI International – the portion of RAI programming available for international via-satellite viewing.

and present learning materials and tasks so to maintain her students' interest and curiosity, or, in other words, to foster their intrinsic motivation. Another important quality Esther recognises in Teresa is the ability to tailor the course content to the skill-level of the students, and to provide the necessary scaffolding to support the students' learning. Most importantly, even when the materials seem too difficult, Teresa is able to negotiate the students' involvement with the course content so that this do not become a source of demotivation, and this is particularly true of some of the most complex grammatical constructions, like, for example, those involving the use of the congiuntivo (subjunctive):

> I would say that from the top of the year il congiuntivo has been the hardest… I found that quite difficult and when you get to this sort of… Like tonight, and you think 'oh, I am feeling tired already…' But Teresa is so good, she doesn't dwell on something if she knows that we are not… She can tell, as soon as she comes in the room, she is very perceptive. She knows when we are tired and she does just enough and then moves on. (E4)

Even with the support of skilful teachers, there have been times Esther has found the learning process difficult or when her motivation has been at risk of losing strength. One of the challenges facing Esther particularly during the last few years has been the coming to terms with the increased difficulty posed by her aging and its consequences on her mental acuity:

> Unfortunately once you get older your attention is not the same and you are not as sharp. Perhaps it's because the brain got full of stuff over the years (*laughs*). Sometimes I just sort of go blank, in class it's generally the normal problem, and of course two minutes later you think, oh… (E4)

> Also when you get older your energy does not keep up with your mental stimulus, you know. When I was at the bank, in my career at the bank I was very very dedicated to my job, everything ticked over, and I was very successful, but these days when I am not successful at this I get so irritated… (E4)

> The most difficult part for me is to accept that I don't find it easy. That really is the most difficult part. Everything else that I have ever learned has been easy to me, but not this, not anymore. (E5)

Perceptions of one's ability to succeed at a task and/or in achieving a goal are universally recognised as playing a central role in the cognitive regulation of motivation, because people tend to regulate the level and the distribution of effort they will expend in accordance with the effects they are expecting (Bandura, 1997). In particular, people with high self-efficacy in a task are more likely to expend more effort, and persist longer, than those with low self-efficacy (Schunk, 1990). In coming to terms with the fact that her own mental abilities are not what they used to be, Esther's sense of self-efficacy could be compromised, which in turn could lead to decreased motivation, especially in relation to the most cognitively challenging tasks, such as those involving the study and use of new and complex grammatical rules. However, even when experiencing these mental "blanks", Esther's motivation does not seem to be affected. Esther attributes this to her own "positive" and "tenacious" nature:

> A: But even if you have these blanks once in a while they don't affect your motivation?
>
> E: No, I am a very positive person
>
> A: So you see this as a challenge to be overcome, do they actually make you want to learn more?
>
> E: Yes they do, 'cause I am very positive you know, always have been. I know this is going to happen, one day it's going to happen. (E4)

> I have a very tenacious nature, if I want to do something I never give up, I don't give up, I hang on there I was always like that in my career, I like to follow things through and I like to be the best that I can at everything. If I think that there is still room for improvement, I'll hang in there indefinitely. I'll just keep going on and on and on. (E2)

Persistence and the ability to see the positive side of difficult situations are indeed very desirable qualities in language learning, in that they can be harnessed for the implementation of powerful self-regulating mechanisms to support the maintenance of motivational states even in the presence of potentially demotivating circumstances. This is particularly evident in Esther's case and is well exemplified by her description of a particularly difficult stage of her learning:

> He was a very intelligent person, but he couldn't teach, he had no Idea. He used to say to us 'I don't want to have to say this several times'. He would teach you the *imperfetto*,

the *passato remoto* and the *passato prossimo*[25] all in the same lesson! And the same with the pronomi[26], he would teach us the whole lot… No, it wasn't easy I tell you. We had him for two years. It was a nightmare. He used to come along and set us up with some Italian crosswords and I used to spend hours looking up all the words in the clues, I tell you it used to take me like… I don't think I would have spent anything less than like about ten hours on one class work. (E5)

The potentially demotivating consequences of this situation are made clear by Esther who explains that, in her case the risk for demotivation stemmed directly from the choices made by the teacher, which threatened to compromise her confidence in her own abilities:

A: Having a bad teacher can really affect your motivation…

E: Yes, because it makes you feel bad when you can't understand things. When you have the impression that you know, you have always managed to pick things up, and all of a sudden you get something like that… It can really put you off, there is no doubt about it.

A: So how did you keep motivated?

E: It was just that... I can't bear to be beaten! Nobody beats me.

A: (*laughs*)

E: Nothing will beat me, I tell you now. Nothing. (E5)

Esther's reaction is an example of what Edmondson (2004) has termed the *I.K.B (I Know Best) Syndrome*, a personal motivational disposition that can enable a learner to maintain a strong executive motivation even in spite of negative external conditions. An element of the syndrome which makes particularly suitable to describe Esther's experience is that it is rooted in the learner's self-confidence which may be fuelled by positive social acclaim in the past, which in Esther's case take the form of her past successes at school and at the bank.

In Esther's case, individual qualities such as determination and self-discipline hold a prominent role in her choices to do with her language learning and keeping demotivation at bay; however in her own opinion, neither her self-confidence nor her personality is the ultimate key to her motivation:

---

[25] Esther is referring here to the conjugations of three Italian tenses, the imperfect, the past and the preterite (historical past).

[26] 'personal pronouns'

> I don't think I have ever had any problems with motivation, because I love the clubs and
> I love everything that's Italian so that if something comes along that's Italian I am there.
> (E2)

This "love" for "everything that's Italian" which Esther considers to be the driving force behind her desire to engage in Italian-related activities, including language learning, is often referred to in motivational studies as intrinsic motivation. The discovery of such a strong intrinsic element in Esther's motivation at this stage of her learning strongly supports the previously stated suggestion that, for Esther, the learning of her heritage language is an internally driven endeavour which needs to be seen as part of a more comprehensive course of personal development. Furthermore, the finding confirms that Esther's strong feelings for her heritage language and culture not only act as a key element of her initial motivation, but also play a significant role in sustaining her executive motivation, a role that, as we will see, will persist even through the emergence of other, more socially-oriented and externally-regulated sources of motivation.

8.6 The new Esther: Aiming higher and higher

Much has changed in Esther's life since she lost her job at the bank many years ago, and the Esther of today is, in many ways, a different person, with a different job, different interests, and a different social life. Looking back now, Esther has no doubt that the one catalyst for all these changes was the beginning of her interest for Italy:

> Since I enrolled I got very involved in the Centro. The first year that I went to classes I
> became so involved with the committee that I thought I'd like to join them. By the end of
> that year I was secretary (*laughs*), so it just sort went from there: I got all the jobs in the
> committee and then six years ago I got my current job, so I have always been very
> involved. I found this other avenue to take my energy and so in the end what I decided
> to do was just work part time, and once I started doing that I thought 'this is so easy'. Of
> course the income was so little compared to what I used to make at the bank, but the
> lifestyle was nice and I decided to stick to it. (E2)

> And so Italian took the place of my career. My career finished and this passion for Italy
> just built and built and built, and that's really how it all happened. (E5)

Throughout the many years of her involvement with both the Centro and the Italia club, Esther has achieved the objectives that had originally drawn her towards the study

of her heritage language. To begin with, by learning about her family history and Italian culture in general, Esther has finally come to an understanding of her own Italian heritage:

> A: So do you think that you have achieved the goal of reconnecting to your roots?
> E: That part yes, I definitely have, I reached that some years ago
> A: So do you think studying Italian has given you some idea of what your family must have been like?
> E: Very much so, because it made me explore right back to the family history. (E2)

Undoubtedly part of Esther's reconnection with her heritage is achieved through the development of personal relationships with some of the members of the Italia club. Specifically, she has been accepted by the "the oldies", and is now proud to consider herself not just an associate of the club, but a bona fide member of the innermost circle of Italians at its very core:

> I feel like one of them. I just love them. I think some of those people are just… They have taken the place of my family, especially now I have lost both my parents. (E1)

Finally, through persistence and hard work, Esther has excelled at learning Italian, achieving such good results after only a few years of study to be chosen as the recipient of a Centro Italiano scholarship, which in 1996 allows her to travel to Italy to attend four weeks of intensive Italian language classes in a full-immersion environment. The experience boosts Esther's language skills and confidence and she feels at this point that she has achieved a satisfactory degree of competence, especially in view of the successful exchanges she has with the locals.:

> When I was at the school, I came away after a month and I travelled by train for three weeks, just travelling, and I would be waiting at the station and I would meet other people waiting for trains (…) so we'd talk about where I was from and what I was doing and felt I was very fluent by then.

> A: So did you feel at that time that you had reached your goal?
> E: Yes I felt that I had got where I wanted to be. Now when I am in Italy I always feel very good because it just comes out of me… (E4)

But having achieved all of her initial goals is not for Esther a licence to stop learning Italian, or even to relax her study schedule. On the contrary: during the last few years of her involvement in the Centro's courses, her language learning motivation has grown and now Esther spends virtually every spare moment in activities aimed at improving her Italian. What follows is just part of the self-directed learning she engages in outside the classroom:

E: I do a lot of revision

A: What kind of revision?

E: I play tapes of the Italian spoken language. No matter how simple it is, but dialogues, just to get myself familiar with the phrases. So our beginners' textbook, we just got that in CD form (…) and that is that is a very good thing for revision. Sometimes I study points of grammar of course, that has to be done. You have to keep it up otherwise that disappears from week to week. I also like translating, that's something that I have always enjoyed.

A: So you just take something and you try to translate it?

E: What I do is there might be something in *Oggi* or something that Teresa has given us, if she gives us something we often work through it in class, and then when I go home I translate it word for word. I like to translate things. (…) I underline expressions and I try to familiarise myself with the vocabulary. (…) And I read a lot, I read *Oggi* quite a lot. I don't read every article, but a lot of the articles are very interesting to me. (E4)

Our class finishes at eight o'clock, and we have the pre-intermediate in the big room (…) so I stay for an hour and I just study for an hour, and then I lock up. So that time is very precious to me because it's straight after the lesson, I can consolidate on anything I didn't understand by reading it through again. Teresa likes us to take notes and I just find them invaluable. I take every single thing down and then you can go over it later and consolidate that. (E3)

The energy and enthusiasm that Esther continues to pour into her learning of Italian is astounding, especially when we consider she has been learning for such a long time and she has already achieved so much. In part, the intensity of her motivation is explained by the fact that Esther has now set a new language learning goal for herself and that this goal is now driving her learning:

I still want to advance myself so that I can speak faster, that is another stepping stone now, is to be able to respond quickly. I can read and write really well and I can

179

understand generally most of what's been said, but not always on the television, so there is room for improvement there. (E2)

Differently from her initial goals, which were closely associated to her desire to reconnect with her cultural heritage, Esther's new goal is rooted in her role as an official spokesperson for the Centro and what she believes are its specific requirements:

A: Do you see that as a bit of a duty of your position?
E: I do. I feel very much that I should be able to speak Italian. (E5)

When I did my speech in Italian on National Day, that was a bit daunting, but I did it and it was so weird because the person from the (Italian) Embassy representing the ambassador, he did his speech in English and the president of the Italia club doesn't speak Italian, she speaks dialect (…) so she did her speech in English and I did mine in Italian, so a lot of the Italians came up to me afterwards and they basically said the same thing, 'complimenti[27], it was so nice to hear you speak in Italian'. And I think it was that I spoke in Italian and they thought that the other two should have as well, I would say. (E3)

Esther's new goal marks a definite change in the motives driving her learning. Initially, Esther's language learning had been aimed at constructing a personal sense of her own *Italianità* as part of a search for meaningful elements to be used for the reconstruction of her self-concept as a way to fill the identity "void" left by her redundancy. At that stage Esther's self-construction was principally an internal process of organising and coming to terms with the information she gathered from around her, and even her early contacts with the two clubs had more to do with her learning about her Italian heritage than constructing and/or asserting her Italian identity in interactions with other Italians (though this was a welcome by-product of her interactions with, for example, the "elderly Italian ladies" at the Italia club).

With her gradual involvement in the management of the Centro, Esther comes to assume an important official role within the community, which she believes carries the implicit expectation of fluency in Italian. From this moment on Esther's learning of her heritage language principally becomes a way to fulfil this expectation. This new objective is profoundly different from the previous one, in that it requires Esther to work mainly on her external persona by affirming her *Italianità* through her language skills

---

[27] 'compliments'

during interactions with other Italians. This last point is particularly evident when we consider the way Esther imagines her goal:

A: It's amazing to see someone so dedicated to it after so many years…

E: It's because I haven't reached my goal, that's why. I am very tenacious. I am very driven. I can't bear to be beaten. So I am still here, but I will reach it. (E4)

A: And your goal is…

E: I want to speak fluently to the Italian ambassador. Because now when I speak with the ambassador I speak in English and I feel a little bit embarrassed because I really feel that certainly in my position, I should be able to speak Italian. And so that is my ambition, the ambassador is really my focus. (E4)

But it's not just the ambassador; I suppose what I really mean is anybody that I know that speaks the language, even some of the people at the embassy. It's just that I know that when I can speak to the ambassador than I have actually reached the goal that I have set. You know I do speak to some of her staff but I am very slow. (E4)

The interaction with the ambassador Esther imagines is the key to understanding Esther's motivation at this stage of her learning. This goal that Esther has set for herself symbolises and encompasses at least two interconnected objectives she wishes to accomplish. One has to do with the level of fluency she is aiming for, a level so high to allow her to conduct a conversation with people who, in her mind, represent the ultimate in power, education and prestige within the Italian community she is a member of. However the language is only part of Esther's vision, as her goal also reflects her ambition to elevate her social identity to effectively match that of the most important and influential Italian officials she knows of. In this sense, speaking to the ambassador does not just symbolise a desired level of competence in the language, but also and above all the attainment of a particular social persona, of which fluency in Italian is a necessary element.

Clearly then, Esther's Italian learning is still a way to accomplish an Italian-speaking ideal self, but this is not the same ideal self for which Esther began her studies in the first place, but an advanced version of it, the idea of which has developed gradually in parallel with the ongoing changes of Esther's position within the Italian community. This 'new' ideal self diverges from the old one in three main aspects. Firstly, as already noted, it requires Esther to build not only an internal, personal sense of her own self, but also and above all an Italian identity to be performed outwardly. Secondly, its core

element is not the fulfilment of the *Italianità* she inherited from her grandfather, but of a particular type of *Italianità* – the *Italianità* of the educated, the prestigious and the influential. Finally, this new self is not spontaneously born of Esther's own self-developmental needs, but of what Esther perceives as a necessary requirement of the official role she has taken on, and as such, it is effectively imposed from the outside rather than created from within.

Some proponents of theories of possible and ideal selves have termed this type of externally imposed version of the self ought-to selves (Baumeister, 1998; Higgins, 1989; Markus & Nurius, 1986). In general, an ought-to self refers to a version of the ideal self imposed by others, or a person's internal desire to please others (Boyatzis, 1973). An ought-to self can be problematic if it clashes with a person's own ambitions or personal morals as it can result in reduced or annulled motivation. However it is also possible for an ought-to self to be aligned with the individual's own desires and dispositions to the point of being internalised and integrated into one's personal ideal self. In this case, the individual's personal and social identity are in harmony and the motivational impact of the ideal and ought-to self is enhanced (Dörnyei, 2009). This particular situation, which has interesting parallels with the integration of extrinsic motives described by self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) is indeed what seems to be happening in Esther's case; although Italian fluency is in a sense a requirement of her job, it continues an identity-building process already in progress and so is completely in line with her own desires and ambitions for the Italian ideal self she is already pursuing, and so it becomes an advantage to her motivation.

Another advantage to Esther's motivation comes from the fact that during her many years of study she has learned not only about Italian language and culture, but also about herself as a language learner, and as a result she has built up a range of personal ways to help sustain her own language learning motivation. She has discovered, for example, the motivational benefits of setting intermediate goals and of the feeling of self-achievement that comes from accomplishing them:

> E: Next year I want to do my National Day speech without any notes, or with notes but without… I don't normally read it anyway, but I suppose I would like to get away with a bit more…
>
> A: Improvisation?

E: Yeah, I'd like to get away from the notes a bit. Normally I practice it until I know it, I'd like to be able to add a few bits and pieces… I always have a slightly different goal, and I like to sort of keep things on the move.

A: So you set yourself little goals along the way

E: Yes I do, I think it's the way to do things really, so that you can check them off as you go. I don't think we should ever be complacent about anything to be honest. (E5)

The above excerpt is also significant in that, by showing the public nature of the tasks Esther adopts as her learning goals, it supports the idea that at the core of Esther's desire for fluency there is the fulfilment of her public role as a spokesperson of the club, which unlike her initial goal to feel reconnected with her Italian roots, also implies a public performance of her Italian identity. In particular, if we accept the view that Esther is motivated by the desire to achieve this Italian-speaking ideal self, it is easy to identify the main motivational influences in this stage of her learning, as these tend to be those factors that that foster the development and assertion of her ideal self in interaction with Italian speakers. In particular, since a large part of this ideal self is played out in club-related gatherings involving other Italian officials, any event of this kind becomes for Esther a major incentive to intensify her studies.

In this regard, 2006 proves to be an important year for Esther, as in June of this year she is awarded the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity, a prestigious decoration from the Italian Government for services to Italian language and culture. Of course the award is motivating in that Esther will have to deliver an acceptance speech in Italian in front of many influential Italians – which impel her to spend hours writing and rehearsing it – but also because it strengthens her resolve to become fluent:

This year I suppose really, the most important thing for me was getting the *Cavaliere*[28] … Because what it did was it actually meant to me that blimey, I could have made it… I have come a long way as far as the official side of things goes and that officially I have been accepted… So now I feel like I should match that with my own knowledge. I feel myself that I know a lot more about the culture, probably a lot more than a lot of people do… Even Italians. But it's just that the desire to be able to speak it properly that will always be there until I master it. So this year has been a very important year. (E5)

---

[28] Knighthood. The award of the Order for the Star of Italian Solidarity confers the title of *Cavaliere della Repubblica* or 'Knight of the Republic'.

A: Do you think that getting the *Cavaliere* made you stronger in your resolve to want to finish?

E: Oh yes, it has. It has made me realise that I have to do it now. I must do it. (E5)

To Esther the knighthood represents the ultimate public recognition of her accomplishments as a Centro official; however this does not stop her from still wanting to achieve the level of fluency she has set as a goal. On the contrary, the award only fuels Esther's motivation, as she feels that to be truly worthy of such recognition she must be able to speak Italian. Although the symbolic identity-conferring meaning that Esther places on Italian fluency is a crucial element in her motivation to learn the language, it is also important to note that Esther also sees speaking Italian as a necessary practical tool for the maintenance of healthy relationships with the community members, which she also perceives as her duty as a Centro official:

> I think it (learning Italian) is also necessary for me because when I need to speak in Italian with people, it's very important to be able to speak in Italian to the older people, a lot of them don't… They do speak English but they don't like it, when they are in the Club they actually want to speak in Italian, so that is another thing that motivates me strongly, is to be able to converse with them. (E2)

This point is also particularly telling in terms of how Esther's relationship with the community has changed throughout the years and with it, the drive behind learning Italian: from a tool to make contact with and learn from other Italians, to a symbol of solidarity useful for being accepted, to a necessary skill in maintain relationships that are key to Esther's role within the community.

Finally, part of the language learning wisdom Esther has gained throughout the years includes the realisation of the importance of formal classroom learning, especially in an environment where the opportunities to use the language are very limited. In this sense for Esther attending her weekly Italian class is not just a way to improve but also and above all to maintain her language skills:

> I definitely need to keep going. I don't think that as a New Zealander I can afford to (stop going to classes), I don't think any of us can actually; I think it's like anything that you learn… (…) unless I read it and talked to people constantly I would lose it, I am sure I would (…) It's definitely a maintenance thing. (E2)

Above all, Esther understands that attending classes is in itself motivating, in that it provides the structure and discipline that are not available to self-taught learners:

> In a way, if you got a teacher there you have got the discipline and that's what most of us need, the discipline… You've got somebody there to motivate you, to pull you up and I think most of us human beings are very much… When people ring me up sometimes and say on the phone… They want to know about the Centro so I talk to them about it and they say oh, I am going to teach myself, I say oh, look, forget it. And they say why, and I say look, everybody needs the discipline of a class. Even if it's just for the fact that you've actually got to go there, and you are thinking oh, it's raining, but you think, oh, no, no, I must go. But if you were teaching yourself and something interesting comes up on TV, you say oh, I'll do that tomorrow, and tomorrow never comes. You've got to have that discipline. (E3)

The "discipline" a language course provides is, for Esther, yet another word for motivation and one of the main reasons why she keeps on enrolling in the Centro's courses year after year.

8.7 Esther tomorrow: No time to rest

As 2006 draws to an end, I meet Esther for what is to be her last interview, and just when I thought the energy and determination Esther pours into her Italian studies was practically endless, I discover that, despite her best efforts, she is beginning to suffer the consequences of committing herself to an over-demanding schedule:

> E: I am still very enthusiastic, but I just get tired you know with so much to do. I get a bit frustrated because I don't always get much time to devote to my study. I want to be more diligent, but I find my time is divided up into little segments and it's all Italian but unfortunately it has more to do with the clubs and the Centro's administration, but I suppose I am probably as diligent as I can be.
>
> A: So would you say that in terms of the work that you do, your homework, you did more work before just because you are so busy now?
>
> E: No I don't think so; I've always tried to do the same. I try to keep a strict regime and go through it in the evenings. But all my study at the moment is done at night when I am half asleep, and it just goes into one eye out the other… It's actually quite hard because sometimes I am sitting there and I am writing away and I think 'oh God, what have I written there?' (E5)

What Esther is experiencing at this point is fatigue due to the demands of her many commitments, and in particular her job, the work she does for the clubs and her Italian

studies. To be fair to Esther however, her language learning motivation is, in essence, unchanged. Evidence of this is the "strict regime" of study she still adheres to even when she feels she should rest. There is no doubt that, in Esther's life, learning Italian takes precedence over everything else and this is particularly clear when we consider that learning Italian is the very focus of the changes Esther is planning to make in her life in the next few months:

> I have a plan. Once I have offloaded these jobs, I am going to just have two clients and I am going to do them both on the same day. So I'll have four days during the week and possibly the weekend to study. When I am not going to have to get up and rush off to go to work I am going to have a very strict study program in the mornings. I am going to study every morning for an hour and that is going to make a big difference, I am sure it is. (E4)

> I will do it. 'Cause I am very tough on myself and I am a bit tough on other people too I believe (…) You have to have discipline. (E4)

Esther believes that the one thing that would surely advance her Italian is to travel to Italy to attend an intensive course like she did in 1996, and although she would love to do this, Esther feels once she retires she will have to take great care in the management of her finances, and this might make it difficult for her to afford such an expensive trip.

But what Esther is sure of is that she will continue being involved with the Centro and doing all she can to keep learning for as long as she will be able to, and that is because, aside from her goal of fluency, learning Italian has become for her a way of life, something she just cannot imagine herself living without:

> There are other people like me there too, and we just enjoy the whole thing. I don't actually have many other interests now outside my Italian connections, Italia and the Centro, I mean I sort of have other friends but most of the time I am pretty focussed on Italian, it's just there all the time. (E2)

> See I don't have any family here, and I don't have a husband and children, so I think you'll find that a lot of single people they do have a very definite focus on one thing. I have got friends who play badminton and hockey and every night they've got something on, but I am not really like that, I am more single-minded I suppose. I found that luckily for me the Italia and the Centro are… Virtually for me my life is Italian, yes it is. (…). (E5)

It has given me a life. It has given me a very very important thing that I never had in my career: My life. It is my life. (E4)

8.8 *Italianità* and heritage language motivation

Offering a definite picture the motivational role of heritage identity in Esther's language learning experience is no easy feat. In proposing that the language learning motivation of heritage language learners can depend, among other factors, on the learners' own understanding of their own heritage identity, the personal significance they place on it and on the role it takes in their ambitions for self-development, Esther's story is a good illustration of the remarkably variable and multifaceted nature of all of these factors. The discerning element between Esther's story and that of other learners in the study is, of course, its sheer length, and the fact that during the 17 years of her active learning of Italian, Esther's own construction of her heritage identity has developed from virtually non-existent to an all-important and all-pervasive component of her personal and social life.

There exists, however, one significant constant which lies at the core of Esther's idea of her own *Italianità* – and therefore at the core of her motivation – and that is the importance she places on having "Italian blood":

> They accepted me because they know I have got the blood. (E5)

> The other people of course they don't have Italian blood, and I just sort of get the feeling that they are not quite as passionate. (E3)

> I have a little bit of Italian blood so that's probably why they wanted to know about my family. (E3)

> Many reasons, but that main reason is that you've got that blood and it's just a bond, really. (E3)

> If they are going to learn a language, why learn something else when you've got Italian blood? (E4)

The idea of ethnic identity as a genetic legacy symbolised by one's blood is by no means an idiosyncrasy of Esther's own thinking, but a key element of the way Italian identity is commonly conceptualised among Italians, especially in immigrant contexts. It is by *jus sanguinis* or 'right of blood' for example that Italian citizenship is determined

for Italians born outside Italy, and it is only by virtue of one's Italian blood that one can become a member of the Italia Club. Unfortunately for heritage language learners, blood is not a carrier of linguistic or cultural knowledge, and so it represents a basic, if essential part of the heritage identity many learners seek. Nonetheless, it is exactly the knowledge of having Italian blood, or in other words, a fundamental ancestral bond with her heritage culture, that represents the central element of Esther's construction of her own heritage identity, and as such, one of the key factors in her motivation. To her Italian blood Esther attributes for example the feeling of belonging she experiences during her first trip to Italy, which constitutes the direct antecedent of her initial drive to learn the language. Also, it is her own awareness of her lack of Italian language in spite of her Italian blood that brings her to the decision to "do something about it" and ultimately enrol in her first course of Italian. In this sense, heritage language learning begins for Esther as a response to her desire to fully realise the heritage identity she in part already possesses by virtue of her ancestry.

Of course, Esther's desire to fulfil her Italian identity is also heavily influenced by the circumstances surrounding her redundancy. Would Esther have felt the same urge to investigate her cultural heritage had she not experienced the effects of losing her career at the bank? Perhaps, after all it is not uncommon for individuals from ethnic minorities to become more interested in their heritage culture when they reach a mature age. On the other hand, I think we can safely conclude that, without an awareness of her own Italian blood, Esther would have never contemplated the possibility to study the language, effectively marking her awareness of her own Italian ancestry as the crucial factor in her motivation arousal.

Esther's initial goals are another aspect of her initial motivation which heavily feature her heritage identity, as learning Italian at this stage is mainly intended as a tool for the discovery of what it means to be Italian and to gain a satisfactory knowledge of the history and culture of the Italian ancestors which will then serve as a base for the construction of her own Italian identity.

When this is finally achieved, the first cycle of Esther's motivation ends, and a new one begins with the setting of new learning goals, which, just like the initial goals, are heavily influenced by Esther's immediate personal circumstances and social context. Heritage identity continues to be a key feature of Esther's new objective of speaking Italian to the ambassador, but only as one aspect of a complex and well-developed Italian ideal self which is no longer exclusively defined by the *Italianità* Esther inherited

from her grandfather, but especially by the responsibilities and relationships Esther now holds within the Italian community. Nevertheless, Italian identity – albeit a certain type of Italian identity – is still the target of Esther's efforts in learning her heritage language, as Italian becomes both a symbol of and a way to claim this 'new' Italian identity, as well as the element which symbolises its accomplishment in Esther's mind:

> A: So let's draw a line and let's say this side is completely Italian and this side is not Italian at all. Where would you place yourself on that line?
>
> E: Well I've got so little Italian, but for the way I feel about it I'd put it way up here somewhere.
>
> A: So way up here? So way up towards the Italian side. So where would you have placed yourself a few years ago when you didn't know so much Italian?
>
> E: I wouldn't have placed myself anywhere near there, 'cause I didn't know anything. Compared to what I know now.
>
> A: Oh I see. So five years ago would you have placed yourself more…
>
> E: Oh definitely towards the middle
>
> A: Okay, so if tomorrow morning you woke up and you were completely fluent in Italian, where would you place yourself? Right there? (*points to the Italian end of the continuum*)
>
> E: Yeah, there.
>
> A: So that's what you are missing
>
> E: That's that little gap there. (E4)

But by far the most powerful contribution of Esther's heritage identity on her executive motivation is the "passion for everything Italian" that according to Esther derives from being, at least partly, Italian. This is an overarching, non-teleological motivational influence which represents for Esther an essential source of intrinsic or internally-driven motivation:

> A: Do you think that your experience as a student with Italian heritage is different in anyway from that of the other students?
>
> E: It certainly does not help my language skills, but I think perhaps the feeling… I sort of have an affinity to everything Italian. I sort of feel myself that that's because I have got that ancestry. The other people of course they don't have Italian blood, and I just sort of get the feeling that they are not quite as passionate as I am.
>
> A: So in general would you say that having Italian ancestry is an advantage or a disadvantage in learning Italian?

> E: Oh, it's an advantage, because you've got the passion and you really want to do it. Many reasons, but that main reason is that you've got that blood and it's just a bond, really. (E4)

The "Italian blood" theme is once again central to Esther's thinking here, and this time the excerpt illustrates well what Esther means by it. Essentially for Esther, having Italian blood means having a "bond" or an underlying connection to the heritage language and culture, which is responsible for a special "affinity" which translates in the "passion" (or, in other words, the motivation) for learning the language. This is, in many ways, similar to the "special connection" felt by Francesco, with the only difference being that for Francesco it was associated with his Italian upbringings and his memories of speaking Italian as a child, while for Esther it is rooted in her knowledge of her Italian ancestry, or, in her words, her Italian blood. The motivational value of it, however, is identical, as in both cases the learner's knowledge of their own *Italianità* creates an emotional attachment to the heritage language and culture which sustains executive motivation.

The centrality of Esther's emotions in her motivation is particularly clear when she describes learning Italian as something she wants to do because of the way it makes her feel:

> A: You said that having Italian ancestry was really crucial to your decision to study Italian, but do you also think that this feeling Italian has also helped you throughout your studies?
>
> E: It has. That's the main driving point for me, that deep down I am Italian.
>
> A: So even after all these years the fact that you are partly Italian is still driving you
>
> E: Oh yes
>
> A: Because you see it as a duty?
>
> E: No, because it feels right; I just want to learn as much as a can
>
> A: So you just feel you need to?
>
> E: No, I want to, yeah, it feels right. (E5)

Ultimately for Esther, the main influence to her motivation is not found in the external pressures of knowing language learning is expected of her, for clearly she does not see this as a duty to herself or to others. In fact, the primary source of Esther's drive to learn Italian lies in her emotions, and in particular in the way learning her heritage language feels because of the Italian identity she believes she has by virtue of her Italian ancestry ("that's the main driving point for me, that I am Italian"). In this sense, Esther's

story offers an illustration of the significance of the emotional component of language learning motivation in the experience of heritage language learners, an element which will feature prominently in the next case study and which, I will argue, needs to receive more attention in motivational and heritage language learning research.

8.9 Postscript

In spite of Esther's seemingly definite plans for retirement, since our last meeting in December 2006 she has stayed true to her active disposition and instead has continued working. However this does not mean she has not fulfilled her plan to dedicate more time to her Italian studies; on the contrary, the last few months have been, in terms of Esther's language learning, some of the most gratifying yet.

Following the nomination by her Italian teacher Teresa, Esther was the 2007 recipient of the prestigious *Societa' Dante Alighieri* scholarship, which together with a special grant from the Centro Italiano allowed her to fulfil her dream of returning to Italy for another four weeks of intensive Italian learning, which this time around she decided to take in a Dante Alighieri school in Florence. Esther describes the experience as "the trip of a lifetime", during which she "immensely" improved her Italian and visited some of the "least known and most beautiful" Italian destinations – all without having to "dip into the retirement fund".

Now back in Wellington, Esther is also back to her regular routine, working in the morning and studying Italian at night. Unfortunately, just a few days before our last communication, Esther learned that Teresa would no longer be teaching Italian in the future, but in spite of the disappointing news, Esther renewed her intention to continue learning Italian for as long as she will be able to, even though, especially after her time in Italy, she feels she now could, given the opportunity, easily converse with the Italian ambassador. Retirement, she promises, is getting closer; but knowing Esther, I can't help but wonder whether she will ever allow herself the rest she deserves.

Chapter Nine: Livia

I actually can't stand people sometime they say 'I am Italian, I am Italian' and I say well can you even understand the language? It's at times like that that I think hey, I can understand the language, and I can speak it and I can cook like them, and I understand that sort of stuff so hey, I am more Italian than you are. (…) Some people would say 'I have got Italian blood in me' but hey, do you know anybody in Italy? Do you have family there? Does your family speak Italian, you know? (L4)

9.1 Meet Livia: The picture-perfect Italian

I first met Livia in 2005, when she was 20 years old and two and a half years into an Italian major at university. Her contact details had been given to me by one of her lecturers who, after mentioning Livia's surname, had immediately asked me whether I had heard it before. Indeed I had: Livia's paternal ancestors were among the founders of the Island Bay Italian community and so her surname had cropped up often in my conversations with other Wellington Italians. Livia's mother, I was told, was born in the same Italian village which Livia's paternal family had come from, meaning that unlike many New Zealand-Italians of her generation, Livia has Italian roots on both sides of the family, with one parent being a full-blooded Italian born and raised in Italy.

I reflected on what I knew of Livia's family history while I waited for her in the Italian library room we had chosen as the venue for our first meeting.

"With such a genetic make-up she will probably look very Italian", I speculated to myself. Just then the Italian class next door finished and a group of female students came into the room. Thinking Livia might be among them, I chose one in my mind, and not a second later, the same student turned towards me and smiled. I had picked right: it was Livia, and she did look Italian. With her long dark hair and luminous eyes, she reminded me of the peasant girls with handkerchiefs on their heads harvesting wheat on the *De Cecco* pasta packets.

Livia and I spent our first meeting talking about her family, her upbringing in Nelson – a beautiful, sunny, coastal town in the country's South Island – and her decision to learn Italian. On that first day she seemed very reserved, at times even disinterested; her answers were distant and succinct. This made for a rather awkward and tiresome interview, and I began doubting Livia would make a good participant in the study, and even that she would agree to meet me again.

Nevertheless, Livia did agree to another interview and another after that, and as time went on we both came to look forward to our meetings. I eventually found less awkward ways to prompt her responses and Livia relaxed her defensive behaviour, revealing herself as intelligent, strong-minded and witty, all qualities that I had failed to recognise in her on that uncomfortable first day.

What intrigued me the most about Livia from the very beginning was her clear lack of enthusiasm for the Italian courses she was taking. Nearing the middle of her third year at university in fact, Livia looked tired and fed up and kept rolling her eyes while talking about her Italian studies. Having learned about her strong feelings of *Italianità*, her close contacts with other Italians in New Zealand and Italy, and her reasons for learning the language, Livia's apparent lack of motivation was intriguing. Who and/or what was responsible for the dissipation of Livia's motivation since the commencement of her university studies?

This, in short, is the question that the present chapter will attempt to address by considering selected excerpts from Livia's data, which was collected through interviews and participant in-class observation over a period of eighteen months, from June 2005 to December 2006. Livia's story was chosen as a case study because of the interesting relationship between her Italian identity – particularly the strong Italian component in her self-concept – and her seemingly less-than-optimal motivation to learn Italian. Livia's case is not only an intriguing example of how having a strong Italian identity might not always be a motivational advantage in learning one's heritage language, but also a good illustration of how the already complex issues of identity faced by HL learners can entail major motivational challenges when their dialectal language skills and personal construction of *Italianità* prove to be of little use in the standard language classroom.

9.2 Livia's background: Life in the Wood

Livia was born in a family with strong Italian roots and spent the first nineteen years of her life living in what is known as 'the Wood', the locals' name for Nelson's Italian quarter.

Life in Nelson always had a distinctive Italian flavour for Livia. In addition to the many Italian traditions kept alive in the home by her mother, Livia's family has always been surrounded by the closely-knit Nelson Italian community, whose members are united by bonds of kinship as well as friendship, reinforced by frequent social events

often attended by virtually every Italian in town. Livia's family in particular holds special place in the community, not only by virtue of the historical prominence of her ancestors (who were among the first Italian settlers in Wellington and Nelson) but also because for a number of years Livia's father has served as the president of the local Italian club, a role that reflected his enthusiasm for his Italian cultural heritage and for its preservation within the community.

But the Italian influences on Livia's life are not limited to her hometown. To this day, Livia's maternal grandparents live in the southern Italian town of Massa Lubrense (where the family owns a house which eventually Livia and her brothers will inherit) and through the years Livia's family has often sojourned in Italy for extended periods of time.

Thanks to these social surroundings, Livia has been in constant contact with various varieties of Italian language throughout her whole life. Her parents speak to each other in the dialect of Massa Lubrense (a southern Italian dialect similar to Neapolitan), though, unlike Livia's mother, who also uses the dialect with Livia and her brothers, Livia's father has always spoken English with his children. Livia's brothers never acquired any Italian in the home, but Livia remembers a time in her childhood when she could speak the dialect fluently, especially to her grandparents in Italy. As she grew older, English replaced Italian in the home, yet Livia can still understand the dialect perfectly and even speak it when the situation requires it:

> A: Do you feel like you have the dialect in your head, and that you could speak it potentially?
>
> L: Oh yeah, I always speak it to mum and if we are… You know what it's like if you are in a shop or something and you don't want to say something in English (*laughs*), yeah I just say it to my mum in dialect. (L2)

In addition to speaking dialect to her children, Livia's mother also made repeated attempts to introduce them to standard Italian, albeit with little success:

> L: When she would say to us… Like try to give us Italian lessons when we were little 'cause we would start doing it at school kind of thing, with an Italian lady that used to come around and do it and she used to talk to us in Italian and we were like 'would you be quiet?' 'Cause it just didn't sound right her speaking in Italian, it sounded weird 'cause it like, the dialect is kind of slangy and words are kind of made up and here's this like really proper Italian that just didn't sound

194

right. (…) We used to tell her to be quiet (*laughs*). 'Shush' we'd say, 'it sounds
really stupid'.

A: So did she give up because of that?

L: Yeah (L3)

Bearing in mind all the above influences it is no surprise to find that Livia admits to feeling "very Italian". She attributes this to the way she was raised to value her *Italianità* as an important part of who she is, and to her family's role and involvement in the life of the Nelson's Italian community, which always made her feel comfortable with her own *Italianità*.

Little did Livia know when she left Nelson in 2003, that pursuing the learning of Italian language would lead her to becoming a member of a new Italian network, one within which her Italian identity would be challenged and her confidence in her own Italian self-concept shaken, with significant consequences for her language learning motivation.

9.3 "The only chance I've got": Initial motivation and year one

Livia was 19 when she moved to Wellington to begin her undergraduate studies at university. Following long years of music training and a string of music awards in high school, Livia had already decided to make music her major in a Bachelor of Arts degree, but when it came time to decide on some elective papers to complete her timetable, she found herself at a loss. Humanistic subjects held little interest for Livia, who never had a passion for literature and reading, and her low academic self-esteem kept preventing her from choosing any of the available social sciences papers, as she imagined they might prove too difficult. In the end, mere days before the closing of enrolments, Livia walked by chance into the university's Language Learning Centre and there came into contact with some of the resources available to students enrolled in the Italian programme. Inspired by what she saw, Livia decided to make Italian language her subject of choice for a second major in her degree. Later Livia would explain that although she had never envisaged studying Italian at university before that day, the visit to the Language Learning Centre sparked a mental process by which she came to realise she had some important reasons to study Italian:

I thought I'll go study music and then I thought, Italian…. I don't know why I think I went
down to the Language Learning Centre and I thought 'oh this is pretty cool'… I suppose
it was just for my family in Italy… I just felt bad, I think it was because my brothers can't

195

speak and if anyone is going to keep the contact… I mean mum and dad are eventually going to die or whatever and I don't want to lose my family over there as well. (L3)

I didn't (set specific goals), 'cause I was just thinking it would be nice to do the language so that I could keep in touch with the family over there in Italy. I just thought I was definitely going to finish it and I did think by the end of it I am going to speak fluently and I am going to go there and speak with my family. It was more like, if I don't do it… Well this is the only chance that I've got to take a good shot at learning the language, and that was pretty much it. (L2)

The language part wasn't just for points, that was about… Like I really need to learn the language kind of thing, and even then it wasn't enough motivation (*laughs*) but anyway… (L3)

Livia's recollection of her thoughts at the time of her decision to enrol is very telling in terms of how her motivation was aroused and her intention established. To begin with, it is clear that Livia's desire to learn Italian in order to maintain the contacts with her Italian relatives had existed in her mind for some time. Just as in Francesco's case, there is in Livia a feeling of latent fear and guilt at the thought of losing contact with her Italian relatives, which in Livia's case is made worse by a sense of duty associated with the fact that her brothers do not speak any dialect and are not interested in learning. In this sense, Livia's motivation arises from the desire to avoid the imagined consequence of not learning Italian. This type of negative motivation – also termed avoidance motivation (Elliott, 1999; Elliott & Covington, 2001) – is a crucial recurring element in the motivational dynamics underlying Livia's language learning, and one to which we will return in a later part of this chapter.

Another interesting point about Livia's initial motivation is that while she indeed has some important reasons for learning the language, it is the need to add some courses to her programme of study, and above all the visit to the Language Learning Centre that brings these to the forefront of her consciousness, effectively sparking the beginning of the motivational process. In this sense, Livia's experience is in line with Dörnyei and Ottó's temporal model of language learning motivation, which suggests that in some cases "the starting point of the motivated behavioural process is not the individual's fantasy land but rather an emerging opportunity" (1998, p. 48-49). The opportunity to learn Italian was the crucial catalyst to Livia's decision.

Also, although Livia does not formulate specific learning goals, she does intend to work towards the broad objective of learning the language, which is evident from her expectation to complete her Italian major and to be able to speak fluently by the end of it. While for Livia this expectation of fluency is not initially as motivationally significant as it was for other participants in the study (i.e. Giulia), it still represents an imagined landmark against which to measure her own progress. The motivational significance of this will become especially evident in her second and third year, when Livia will tend to attribute her lack of progress towards fluency to her own abilities and lack of effort rather than to the fact that fluency is not one of the objectives of the Italian major.

Finally, while Livia does not know the extent of the linguistic differences between her dialect and standard Italian, she knows the two are distinct languages and that competence in the dialect might not be enough to communicate with her Italian relatives in the future:

> A: But you have the dialect, though, so you would be able to communicate with your family…
>
> L: I think it's changed though, because even when mum was there the whole family would speak the dialect, like even the kids and stuff, but when we went back a few years ago, the kids don't speak it, it's like a foreign language to them, so the parents speak Italian to them and then like even my cousins don't speak the dialect anymore. (L4)

In this regard, one important aspect of Livia's initial motivation is the expectation that her Italian heritage, and in particular her dialectal knowledge, will be a definite advantage in learning standard Italian. In fact, remembering how Livia tended to shy away from demanding subjects and papers, it is not surprising to find that her decision to study the language is also strongly influenced by her confidence in the straightforward nature of the task, or, in other words, that she has chosen to learn Italian because she thought it would be easy. This belief – and therefore the resulting motivation – is incidentally reinforced by the Italian programme coordinator, who in view of Livia's Italian background, reassures her she will not fall behind even if she misses a few classes:

> A: Did you think when you started studying Italian that because you were Italian and could speak the dialect that would be an advantage for you?
>
> L: Yeah

A: You did?

L: Yeah. Also 'cause the actual first part of the year on my first year I couldn't actually go to all the classes and stuff and I was talking to Chiara about it and she's like oh it'll be alright, you don't need to be there too much you know you can just pick it up. (L2)

Shaped by all these factors and mental processes, Livia's initial motivation appears to be the result of a mix of powerful reasons, strengthened by a degree of confidence in the achievability of her goal. Encouraged by this motivational basis, Livia begins taking Italian lessons in February 2003 and immediately finds some of her expectations fulfilled in that her dialectal background proves to be an advantage in learning the language.

A: So did you find it easy?

L: Yeah I did

A: Did you then think that your background was an advantage in the first year?

L: It really was because we were doing the very basic stuff, which is pretty much the same as the dialect; most of them didn't really sound that new except for some bits and pieces that were easy to change in your mind. (L6)

The ease of comprehension and production Livia experiences during the first year at university makes for a very enjoyable and problem-free introduction to the language, and in the absence of any significant negative influences, Livia's motivation remains stable and strong from February to November, with its driving power being continually renewed in a positive motivational cycle involving ease of acquisition, good results/feedback and increased self-confidence.

9.4   Year two: The motivational slippery slope

Things take a turn for the worse at the beginning of the second year, when Livia's first 200-level Italian language class is welcomed by a new teacher, Ettore, whom the programme has employed to substitute for Chiara who is away on sabbatical. Ettore is an experienced Italian teacher with a long history of teaching in both the community and university settings. However, perhaps because of the differences in teaching styles between him and Chiara, his classes are not well received by Livia and the other students, who soon begin to experience an array of learning problems:

L: We just couldn't learn with him. He would not give us any examples and half the time we did not know what he was talking about. No one in our second year class could understand him. We were so used to Chiara putting up stuff on the PowerPoint and explaining things right through, where he kind of just read out of the book and didn't give us notes (…) We didn't really get him, we couldn't understand what he was trying to tell us.

A: Did he speak Italian all the time?

L: That might have been part of the problem, and then he just read out of the book which was all in Italian and read… Kind of bits of the story and kind of just translate, but I don't think we actually got any grammar teaching, until the test, and then we got all this grammar and we were like, but we haven't really done anything… But maybe we were supposed to do that ourselves, I am not too sure. And so we all got behind. (L1)

Soon the situation begins to take a toll on Livia's motivation:

A: Do you think you were more motivated when you started studying Italian?

L: Oh yeah. I couldn't even keep my attention up in class he was so boring. But a whole group of us would just sit at the back of the class and he wouldn't even ask us questions, but it was easy to fall asleep and he wouldn't have cared. Not that I was always asleep, but you know, I would just kind of sit there… (L6)

Yeah, and then it went down the more I stopped understanding I think, the less study I was doing the less I was understanding and they'd be like, you know they'd keep going and going and going learning more stuff and there I was, yeah, I didn't grasp the basics too well I don't think and that made it harder, yeah. (…) Everyone else they probably did of the study by themselves and I didn't do anything and during the holidays I wouldn't do any work on it. (L2)

The lack of understanding the students are experiencing is in itself demotivating, in that it raises the level of difficulty of the subject while reducing their sense of progress and self-efficacy for the tasks they are presented with. But it is particularly detrimental for Livia, as she reacts to it by "switching off" and not paying attention in class. As a result Livia soon enters a vicious cycle in which lack of understanding leads to demotivation which results in less effort and in turn to even less understanding.

In addition to the upsets brought about by the change of teachers, the contents of the 200-level language course proves to be much more challenging than those of the first year courses, with much of the teaching focusing on grammatical elements. At the same time, the advantage of being a dialect speaker, which had contributed to make Livia's

first year experience so positive, is drastically reduced in year two, when the language presented in class increasingly diverges from the dialect she is familiar with. Suddenly Livia finds herself having to acquire and apply new and complicated rules to produce the kind of language she used to be able to create instinctively, meaning that she now has to work much harder to maintain the results she achieved in her first year:

A: So when did you realise that it (the dialect) wasn't such an advantage?

L: Probably in second year more I think, first year was all just quite basic and I did get the gist of it and wasn't getting confused and stuff, but yeah in second year when things started to get a bit harder and there were so many exceptions to all the rules… (L2)

But Livia's dialectal knowledge does not just stop being an advantage; it actually becomes a hindrance to her learning and a powerful source of demotivation. In her words:

L: I think my main problem is that I used to get confused a lot between the words and the endings of words was where I really stuffed up because in the dialect it doesn't really matter about the ending (…) Even if I had memorised what I was going to say, If I went off track a bit, I remember I think I said excuse me and that was in the dialect you know just little thing like that and it just throws you out, I mean some of the words are completely different.

A: Do you think this problem made you insecure in speaking?

L: Yeah, that's why I was too scared to talk because I was scared of making a mistake, you know so that's probably why in class and stuff… (…) Because in first year I could speak, I mean I was quite fluent and now… like the language part, the oral classes and when I got to second year I started having doubts about it and third year I was just really quiet…(…) Yeah, and it was because I was too scared to make a mistake.

A: So do you think that the fact that you can speak the dialect was an obstacle to learning Italian?

L: Yeah, I think it was (L2)

While Livia rapidly realises she can no more call on her knowledge of the dialect to complete the language tasks she is faced with, she cannot stop herself from reverting to using the dialect when she is unsure of the correct standard form and in high-anxiety situations such as unexpected questions from the teachers and oral tests. This problem has far-reaching consequences for Livia's motivation, as in an attempt to avoid the

embarrassment of making mistakes (especially of the dialect-related kind) she becomes anxious and unwilling to speak in class, therefore self-limiting her opportunities to practise the oral elements of the language.

However, on closer inspection Livia's unwillingness to speak in class has deeper roots than simple fear of making mistakes. As year two unfolds and Livia becomes increasingly aware of the divide between her dialect and Italian and of her lack of competence in the standard variety, she also begins to perceive this latter as a possible missing element of the *Italianità* at the heart of her self-concept. The first signal of the doubts in Livia's mind are found in her reaction to the perceived expectations that teachers and other students seem to hold in relation to her linguistic competence:

> L: I think that's also what it was, like you feel… Don't know, kind of embarrassed almost because they are probably expecting you to know, you know you're Italian, you should be knowing this and you don't.
>
> A: Did you get that sense from your teachers sometimes?
>
> L: Yeah sometimes. Sometimes I think they expect more from me or something.
>
> A: How does that make you feel?
>
> L: Bad, because I am just at the same level as everyone else and it's kind of embarrassing saying 'oh I am Italian' and not speaking the language
>
> A: But you can speak the dialect
>
> L: Yeah I can speak the dialect but who's going to understand that? If I am put in a situation, even with you… You wouldn't understand what I am talking about.
>
> A: So you did ever get a sense that the Italian that you knew was not proper Italian?
>
> L: Oh yeah (L3)

This section of the data speaks volumes about the effects that learning Italian in this particular setting is having on Livia's self-concept, and in particular on her idea of what it means to be Italian, as within it we find the very first instance of Livia's embarrassment at her inability to speak standard Italian. This concern is new for Livia and is due to the fact that during her time at university she has come into contact with the discourse of *Italianità* that is prevalent in the university setting, namely one in which Italian identity is inextricably linked with fluency in standard Italian and that attributes little or no value to dialectal competence:

> A: Have you ever spoken about the dialect in class, talked about different dialects…

L: Yeah, I think we watched a video on some other region's dialect

A: Did you talk about it at all, or did the teachers ever ask you to contribute in any way as a speaker of dialect?

A: No, it only lasted ten minutes

L: How do you feel about that?

A: I was like… Why didn't they ask? I have never been pointed out and asked 'oh what do you think about this?' But they don't use it here, so… They don't care.

With the equation between standard Italian and Italian identity permeating every aspect of the language learning environment – the textbooks, the AV material, the very teachers in front of her – Livia quickly understands that in this setting, as a dialect speaker with little or no knowledge of standard Italian, her own claim to Italian identity is at risk of being rejected, or even worse, ridiculed, hence her reticence to speak in order to avoid showing her "embarrassing" lack of fluency, or using the dialect:

> Yeah, I am quiet in class though, because I am always scared of saying the wrong words, or breaking out into dialect. (L1)

The motivational challenges faced by Livia as a speaker of a non-standard variety in the standard language classroom are evident: for Livia, who had come to think of herself as fully Italian and to expect her Italian identity and dialectal knowledge to represent an advantage in her language learning, to feel that her *Italianità* falls short of the standards upheld around her must be deeply disturbing in itself. But the factor that triggers Livia's demotivation is the realisation that other, non-heritage students are progressing faster than her:

> In the classroom, probably what made me less motivated was seeing other people learning it quicker than me and thinking I should be learning it quicker that you because I have done… Because I am Italian. Yeah, it's a bad feeling. (L2)

From Livia's perspective, the current situation proves that in this setting her status as a heritage language learner is not only socially not understood and validated, but also that it is symbolically and pragmatically worthless. Faced with this reality, both Livia's self-concept and linguistic self-confidence are dramatically shaken and her motivation compromised. Due to the challenges discussed above, for Livia, year two marks the beginning of a motivational decline from which she will never again fully recover. Significantly, it is during this year that Livia loses sight of her desire to speak Italian

with her relatives in Italy – which in fact is never explicitly mentioned again and begins to focus instead on her more instrumental objective of completing her Italian major and her degree. This from now on becomes Livia's primary goal.

> A: What helps you through the very difficult moments? When you hit rock bottom what happens?
>
> L: Oh I just keep on thinking… 'Cause it started all in the second year and I was like I am only a few papers away from getting a degree, so there is no point in doing this much and not doing the rest of it, cause if I don't do the rest of it what have I got to show? (L4)

9.5   Year 3: The good, the bad, the grammar

Even with this limited motivation, Livia manages to pass all her second-year Italian papers and she can go on to enrol in the 300-level Italian courses, where, thanks to the return of Chiara and the introduction of a new tutor and AV class teacher, many of the problems associated with the learning environment are resolved. Once again Livia is able to follow the lessons and, as the discontent and pressure the students had been experiencing dissolve, everybody in class seems to have a new lease of energy and to increase their learning efforts, including Livia. Last but not least, Livia begins to enjoy her time in class:

> A: I was sitting outside while you were having the tutorial and I could hear you all laugh…
>
> L: Yeah (*laughs*) Yeah, Giacomo's[29] classes are always good, he always tries to make them a bit more exciting.
>
> A: So you enjoy yourself most of the time?
>
> L: Yeah, it's quite good (L1)
>
> In my third year I was quite good because everyone knew what they were doing and then I'd have to come to class prepared. That was good, I mean I am not sure if other people walked out feeling the same as me I don't know, I still didn't do as much work as I was supposed to but still got the gist of what I was meant to be doing. (L3)

With these improvements to the learning environment, Livia's motivation is at least partly restored. However some of the problems she had encountered in year two endure, and Livia continues to experience crippling speaking anxiety in class due to her fear of,

---

[29] Giacomo was the teacher in charge of the AV classes at this stage.

"breaking out in dialect", or making mistakes in general. This becomes particularly evident during the language classes taught by Chiara, who often encourages Livia to maximise her opportunities to practise by prompting her to speak in class:

> In class I am just too shy to say anything, 'cause with other people around you that speak quite fluently and stuff, I think if I get something wrong I'll feel like such a dick, 'cause they expect me to know everything cause I am Italian you know… (L4)

> She *(Chiara)* is really good and stuff but… I don't know. I think Chiara used to like if you said like… If it was right then she'd make you keep going and I'd get all like… While with Paolo[30] it was more like you'd answer the question and you were off the hook, and I'd actually work out which one was going to be my question and answer it before we got to it (*laughs*). (L3)

Of course part of Livia's speaking anxiety is still rooted in the identity issues previously discussed, but this year the situation is worsened by Livia's awareness of having failed to master a substantial part of the content of the language courses of the previous year. As the learning materials become more and more advanced, Livia, for whom even basic Italian elements have not yet become automatic, begins to doubt the usefulness of studying elaborate syntactic constructions such as, for example, the rules relating to the *periodo ipotetico[31]*:

> When it got into third year and stuff it was just getting too into I don't know the grammar and all these exceptions and stuff and I was just like I don't know if I am ever going to use this, when I am speaking to people you know deciding which tense I am meant to be using… Like if it's a… Like the past and stuff, I am not going to think of that when I am speaking, but yeah and they were trying to say and we had to identify which was the subjunctive and what was this and whatever, and I was like… I don't think this is going to help me… (L3)

As the above data illustrates, at this stage of Livia's studies the two main challenges to her motivation are her continuing low self-confidence and the increasingly low value she places on learning the course content and on the tasks she is required to complete. The combination of these elements causes Livia to feel anxious and demotivated, quite possibly the two most motivationally detrimental states of mind language learners can

---

[30] The teacher who taught the second-year courses that Livia attended
[31] The Italian conditional or hypothetical constructions

experience. Surprisingly, in spite of this, Livia manages to pass all her courses and, as her fourth year at university dawns, she finds herself two papers away from completing her Italian major.

9.6   The last year: Light at the end of the tunnel

Having passed all the compulsory language courses, Livia must now pass two Italian literature papers in order to complete her Italian major. Within the Italian programme the study of literature is meant to enhance the students' competence in the language by offering opportunities to experience the language and culture of Italy through different media such as fiction, poetry and theatre; Livia however, sees the two remaining literature courses purely as a means to complete her Italian studies:

> L: I have two papers to go, two papers for another degree, so I might as well do it. I don't really want to do them, I am just doing them because, you know, I have to.
> A: Does it really matter if you pass them with good marks or if you just pass them?
> L: Mmm. I just want to pass them.
> A: You want to finish
> L: Yeah, that's why I've left them for the last minute kind of thing. The language ones I didn't really mind doing because you kind of felt like it was helping you and you're improving and whatever but now I am like am I really going to need this in the future? (L2)

The excerpt illustrates that in Livia's mind these papers are different from the language courses she has taken so far in that they will not take her closer to her objective of learning Italian, and so, put simply, she does not care whether she acquires the content and/or obtains good grades. She is still motivated by the thought of having to pass them to finish the degree; however this kind of motivation leads Livia to expend as little effort as possible on her Italian studies to concentrate mostly on her music courses:

> I am putting more effort into the music, definitely and like Italian… I don't really read any Italian anymore at all, apart from I am doing the course 'Italy through fiction and drama' and that's the only Italian I am doing and even then I don't do much study for that as well. (L2)

Livia's admission of doing very little work, and her feelings of guilt at knowing that she could do more, are by no means new in her data, as throughout her studies Livia has

frequently commented on how her results would probably improve if only she was willing to spend some more time studying, often attributing her own lack of enthusiasm and unwillingness to study exclusively to her own laziness. Having come across these comments many times, and having seen Livia's motivation plummet over the last few months, I had imagined her grades to be somewhat unimpressive. However when we touched on this subject during one of our conversation I was quite surprised to learn that Livia had never been awarded any grade lower than a B and even scored a number of A passes. Livia explained:

> I always pulled something out. I mean I never leave things to the last moment, like the latest I've started is the week before, and I'd still have it done two days before it's due kind of thing… (L3)

> I think I am actually scared to leave things to the last minute, and I am scared to just not do things. I think it's because of my mum because I used to get scared if I didn't do things for her or whatever like the way she brought me up or something I don't know, and if we didn't do our homework after school she'd get mad, I think that's why (*laughs*). (L3)

> But even if I am not motivated I still do the work, like I don't have the motivation to do it in advance, but if I have to do it I sort of realise it at the last minute oh my god I have an essay due next week… Then I'll do it. (L6)

> 'Cause I think I have to do it now, so I have to find all the information, I cannot stuff around. That's the thing. If I have too much time I just think oh I should really start that, and I mean I do start it but I won't take it seriously, and if I do research or something, it will all be pointless until the last week when I think, okay we need to find something good now, yeah. (L6)

The section shines new light on the nature of Livia's motivation throughout her studies. Livia explains that even without any "motivation in advance", she always feels motivated to do the work when deadlines approach, pressured by her fear of "leaving things to the last minute" and to "just not do things". Livia's elucidation raises some interesting points.

Firstly, when it comes to work on pieces of assessment for her Italian papers Livia's motivation is primarily of the extrinsic kind, as her motivational impetus is born of the desire to avoid negative consequences such as failing or obtaining a low grade.

Secondly, that this type of extrinsic motivation, sometime termed avoidance motivation, is a part of a regular motivational pattern for Livia. For example, in remembering her initial motives for learning Italian, we find that these centred on her wish to avoid losing contact with her relatives in Italy, and later on the data shows that her main motive for persisting in her studies in the face of the numerous difficulties is to finish her degree to avoid having "nothing to show for it". It seems in fact Livia has a tendency to motivate herself into action by focussing on the negative consequences of not acting, a tendency that began during her school years and that has since become her main motivational mechanism. The most intriguing part of this mechanism is that a result of this motivational inclination, Livia feels more motivated when her feelings of fear are more acute – for example when a deadline is approaching – and that it is only then that she feels the urge to spring into action.

Although extrinsic motivation has been traditionally characterised as a "pale and impoverished" form of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55) and fear of avoidance motives as a quick-starting but short-lived form of motivation (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006, p. 626), for Livia this mechanism seems to be working well in taking her closer to her final objective of finishing her degree. The advantage of this motivational system is that Livia still has a reserve of motivation that prompts her to do the work even in the absence of any source of enjoyment or interest, making her particularly resilient in the face of opposing circumstances to do with the course content, learning tasks and learning environment.

Livia's avoidance motivational system proves to be particularly useful in year four, which Livia recognises as the most challenging to her motivation:

> It's alright. But it's just so boring! I just sit back and think I can't wait to get out of this class, it's that bad. (L5)

> It usually goes overtime, you know over fifty minutes, and he (the teacher) just keeps talking and talking and talking, and half the time I don't even get it anyway cause you have to be quite imaginative, like open to other ideas, but I am not a creative thinker. (L4)

Having saved the literature papers for last because she thought they would be less challenging than the studying the language, Livia is now surprised to find the workload is more burdensome than she had anticipated, in that she not only has to work hard to

keep up with readings assigned, but to do so in a learning environment which is less than ideal, and on a subject for which she feels she has no interest or aptitude. Moreover, Livia needs to do this in addition to her piano performance studies, which at this level are becoming very demanding.

> A: So do you think your motivation has stayed pretty much the same since last time we talked?
>
> L: No I feel the same. But the thing is with this paper you actually have to do the work, you have to read the stories, and I have been reading. I read for ages and then I get frustrated, I read it, even if I don't get it I still read it… It took me just over two hours the other night just to read through… Oh my gosh, like the first twenty pages not very well, circling like half of the words pretty much. There are too many words that I don't know. The best I can do is one word in two lines and it just annoys me. 'Cause then you have to think about it and go, okay, now I go back to the start of the book and start reading it again so that I sort of understand it. (…) So it's hard to get the flow of reading (…) I just get so frustrated… (L4)

> A: So how do you feel?
>
> L: Oh I am so over it now I can't wait for it to be over. I have my days when I just can't be bothered anymore. Yesterday I did a performance at 12 and I came home and I was like can't be bothered anymore. I got like an essay and study to do but…Yeah. (L5)

But the most interesting thing about this stage of Livia's journey is that with all the current obstacles to her motivation and progress, now that she is no longer taking language classes as such, her desire to study the language returns:

> The longer I don't do any language part, the more I feel am losing it, that's what I found, so I really should… I think because I am not doing many Italian papers I want to do more, but if I was I'd be like oh… That's what I was like at the end of last year, I'd just had enough of it, but I do kind of miss…That side of it. Like next year when I got more time I hope to go over all of my stuff. (L5)

Once again, her motivation is of the negative type, as her desire to continue learning Italian stems from her fear that, without constant study and practice, the competence she has previously achieved will dissipate. Also, motivationally, things take an interesting turn when Livia receives an unexpected telephone call from Italy:

L: Last time I was at home I was at home by myself and one of dad's cousins from Genova called, and I managed to talk to them for about ten minutes on the phone just blah blah blah, like it was really good and yeah she was saying how good I was at speaking Italian and I was like oh sweet…

A: How did that feel?

L: Yeah it felt good because they don't speak dialect so I didn't have a choice, I had to speak Italian. Anyway they kind of got what I was meaning and I spoke to my auntie there she's quite old and she knew what I was talking about… So it felt real good. (L3)

For what is probably the first time since the beginning of her courses, Livia is able to bypass her self-consciousness and to successfully carry out an entire exchange with a speaker of standard Italian, even receiving compliments for her fluency. The successful interaction restores Livia's confidence in her own abilities and as a result she renews her commitment to learning Italian, however this time she resolves to do it in a way which she feels better suits her learning needs, namely by travelling to Italy and learning to speak by total immersion:

That's why I need to go there, and be just put in a situation where no people can speak English, not even my parents or anyone and then I'd just speak it. (L3)

I am going pack up and go; yeah I am dying to go over there. (L4)

Yeah that's why I want to go, without mum, so I'll be forced to do it, 'cause I am just so lazy. (L4)

I can't wait to go to there. (L4)

I still really want to go there and like without my mum even because I know that if she's there I'll just rely on her to speak in the standard, I need to be quite in a situation where I have to do it. (L2)

Livia's decision is not accidental: the way Livia has coped with the phone call has made her realise she finds it easier to speak Italian when she is free from the constraints she has been experiencing in the classroom and, above all, in a situation where she has "no choice" but to speak Italian. The above section of the data illustrates that Livia is

now aware of her own learning style and motivational preferences and is using this knowledge to make decisions about her future language learning.

9.7 The end of an era: Regrets and resolutions

When I meet Livia for the last time in December 2006, she looks infinitely more relaxed than she did at our previous meeting in October. Her last semester of Italian studies has ended well, and she has been awarded an A grade for her last literature paper. As part of the data collection process, I show Livia the diagram I have constructed representing a summary of the information I have received from her during the last eighteen months and ask her to reflect on and/or evaluate her journey and her progress. In general Livia feels that she has come a long way with her Italian since she started her studies nearly four years ago, but that to her the fact that she's not able to speak fluently shows she could have "done more":

> L: I have improved a lot, but I think I could have done more, I am tempted to go back through my books and read over the stuff that I have learned and stuff and see if I can pick up anymore myself.
> A: So you still want to keep it up and learn it.
> L: Yeah, otherwise I feel like it's been a waste of time. Oh yeah, I have got a degree in Italian but I can't even speak it, that's pretty pathetic.
> A: So you haven't lost the will to do it.
> L: No, no, I mean if I could go back and do first year again and get more work done I would do it, but I'd probably look quite silly going back to do first year again
> A: You are not going to do honours?
> L: No, I can't see myself doing it. It would be quite cool, but to do literature at honours level? I don't think so. (L6)

Reading Livia's thoughts at this time there is a clear sense she thinks her learning is incomplete, but far from showing any bitterness about it, Livia reasserts her desire to learn Italian "properly", perhaps when her Piano Performance studies are over. Two significant points emerge from this section of data. Firstly, that in spite of the difficulties encountered during her studies at university and her resulting unwillingness to continue her studies in this setting, Livia's wish to one day be able to speak Italian is still present in her mind, a clear sign that even her sometime challenging learning experience has not changed her attitude towards the language. Secondly, that once again Livia is motivated not by a goal or set of goals, but by the thought of what would happen if she doesn't,

namely that she will forget what Italian she has learned and all her work would have been "a waste of time". Finally, although the interest Livia still holds for the language is indeed genuine – we even discuss the possibility of joining one of the Italian courses offered by the Centro Italiano and taking private lessons – it is clear that Livia wishes to take a break from studying Italian and that she is not yet ready to commit to any particular learning plan for the future.

9.8 Livia's *Italianità*: Motivational friend or foe?

Having considered the main influential factors in the progression of Livia's motivation to learn Italian for the duration of her four years at university, we now turn to examine the motivational role of Livia's heritage identity on her motivational states. The first step in this direction is of course to try to obtain a clear picture of Livia's construction of her own *Italianità* and of its relationship to the variety of Italian she is learning. In this regard, a first significant observation is that Livia considers herself to be Italian:

> A: Do you feel Italian?
> L: Yeah
> A: You do?
> L: Yeah. I actually can't stand people sometime they say 'I am Italian, I am Italian' and I say well can you even understand the language? It's at times like that that I think hey, I can understand the language, and I can speak it and I can cook like them, and I understand that sort of stuff so hey, I am more Italian than you are. I have been there, 'cause you know I got family there. Some people would say 'I have got Italian blood in me' but hey, do you know anybody in Italy? Do you have family there? Does your family speak Italian, you know? (L4)

> A: On a scale between Italian and non-Italian where would you place yourself?
> L: Oh like down that end. Oh, probably not right on the end cause I am not full blooded, but close. (L5)

The reasons for Livia's self-positioning are perhaps obvious when we consider the pervasive Italian influences on her childhood in Nelson and her family's strong connection to her relatives in Italy. As has been noted, "perceptions of one's own and others ethnicity are closely linked to socialisation processes" (Talbot, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 2003, p. 260), so growing up in such a distinctively Italian family and community must have significantly contributed to Livia's construction of her own ethnic

identity. However in reading Livia's data one gets a sense that the *Italianità* she places at the heart of her self-concept is not only strong, but also very stable. Livia's conviction in her own *Italianità* has never been questioned, by herself or by others, and so it has never wavered, even during her early school-years and her adolescence, when individuals from ethnic minorities can experience what's been termed Ethnic Ambivalence/Evasion (EAE), a phase of lack of interest in or concern with ethnicity (Phinney, 2003) and/or "active distancing from or rejection of their ethnic culture" (Tse, 1996, p. 187) . Perhaps in part because of this stability, Livia never expresses any concern for the possibility that her *Italianità* might be diminishing, or under threat, or of a desire to actively defend it or preserve it – although these perceptions are common in the narratives of heritage language learners (cf. Francesco and Marianne). Instead, Livia shows pride in being "more Italian" than other self-professed Italians around her and in the fact that the fullness of her *Italianità* is only minimally compromised by the inescapable fact that not all of her "blood" is Italian.

It is also clear from Livia's data that her Italian self-concept and social identity are rooted in her knowledge, however passive, of the dialect of Massa Lubrense, which is a powerful symbol of ethnic identity within the Italian social networks Livia is a member of. Standard Italian, by contrast, has never had a prominent place in Livia's life. Up to the beginning of her university studies in fact, Livia's contacts with the standard variety and its speakers have been very scarce, and the contacts she did have – such as her mother's attempts to speak it in the home – left her with a rather negative impression of the language:

> I guess the reason we thought it was stupid when she was trying, it was that it just sounded so posh compared to how she used to speak to us in dialect and we were like oh you sound stupid, you know. (L5)

As a result of all these factors, before moving to Wellington, Livia has never considered fluency in the standard variety a crucial element of her Italian identity, and so she has never felt the need to learn it in order to complete her *Italianità*, either in terms of her own self-concept, her relationships with other Italians, or as a link to her cultural heritage.

> A: Did you ever felt that way before you started university that something was lacking?

212

L: No, I mean when I was younger the dialect was the standard for me so I didn't know about that. (L5)

Although it is not uncommon for members of minority groups to want to study their heritage language, considering Livia's background and the virtually non-existent role of standard Italian in it, her choice is quite surprising, and what is most surprising about it is the fact that part of her initial motivation to learn is indeed rooted in her feelings of a heritage identity, a heritage identity which was however never associated with the standard variety.

In short, Livia wants to learn Italian in order to maintain the contacts with her relatives in Italy, for whom standard Italian is quickly replacing the dialect as their main language. Her motivation is then closely associated with the importance she places on her relationship with her Italian family, her construction of her own identity as a member of it, what she perceives as her responsibility in preserving both. Even so, there is no real sense of urgency in Livia's need to learn Italian: her family's contacts with Italy are as strong as ever, and it is going to be many years before the responsibility to maintain them will fall exclusively on her. For Livia – whose motivation tends to stem from fear of the consequences of not acting – the prospect of "losing" her family in Italy if she does not learn Italian is certainly a source of apprehension, but its motivational power is mitigated by its lack of immediacy. An indication of this is that Livia seems to realise her need to learn the Italian only when the opportunity presents itself, suggesting that although she might have thought about it before, it was never constructed as an urgent priority.

We also ought to remember that aside from maintaining the contacts with Italy, Livia has other reasons for deciding to study Italian, as the need to add credits to her degree and the expectation that Italian will be an easy subject must also have been a strong incentive. Because of this it is difficult to gauge the weight of the heritage component on Livia's initial motivation, as it clearly is not the only factor at play.

It is not uncommon for studies of heritage language learners to mention or discuss the role that issues of ethnic identity (often in the form of integrative motivation) have on the overall language learning motivation of this particular kind of learner; it is often seen as a powerful element, which can differentiate heritage language learners from other learners (Geisherik, 2004; Kagan & Dillon, 2001; Noels, 2005). In fact, if we take an integrative orientation to reflect the "individual's willingness to and interest in social

213

interaction with members of other groups" (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, p. 159) or the "positive feelings towards the community that speaks the language" (Gardner, 1985, pp. 82-83) it is clear that a significant part of this element also plays a major part in the formation of Livia's initial motivation.

However when we consider that the integratively-oriented learner is also often described as someone who learns a language in order to become like (or identify with) the members of the TL community the concept begins to lose its usefulness, as Livia already considers herself a bona fide member of such group. In this sense for Livia learning Italian takes on a more pragmatic purpose, namely that of maintaining contacts that already exist with a community she already identifies with, and this might indeed be one of the reasons why we do not find, in Livia's motivation, the strong emotional content to do with learning the language in order to realise or develop one's heritage identity which is often witnessed in the narratives of heritage language learners (King, 2000; Syed, 2001).

A possible interpretation of Livia's experience comes from Geisheriks's suggestion that the intensity of the integrative element of heritage language learners is directly proportional to the intensity of their perceived integration into their heritage community (2004, p. 21), which incidentally echoes the key tenet of self-discrepancy theory proposed by Higgins (1987), which states that people are motivated to reach a condition where their current self-concept matches their projected target-self. According to both these frameworks, Livia can be seen as someone whose target identity (a standard Italian-speaking Livia) only minimally diverges from her current one, making her motivation relatively weak.

A sign – and perhaps cause – of this weakness is Livia's lack of specific language learning goals. Goal setting theory has long advocated the close relationship between the stipulation of specific goals and the intensity of one's motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990). In more recent conceptualisations of language learning goals as possible or ideal language selves (Dörnyei, 2009), the lack of motivation associated with the lack of specific learning goals is explained in terms of the insufficient "elaborateness and vividness" (p. 48) of the learner's visualisation of the desired self image. The result of a vague or non-existent ideal language self is seen as conducive to a less-than-optimal motivational make-up, which often cannot withstand the challenges of the long and arduous process of becoming competent in a second/foreign language. This seems to apply particularly well to Livia, whose data never features any proof of her use of

imagination to picture the end result of her studies, even in response to questions especially targeted at investigating this element of her learning experience.

Unfortunately for Livia, this is also the extent of the motivational benefits that her feelings of *Italianità* lend to her endeavour to learn Italian, as once her first year courses start, her motivation is essentially sustained by her sense of progress and self-efficacy which stem from the good results she is achieving thanks to her knowledge of the dialect. Even if strong, this motivational underpinning begins to fail in year two, when, because of the challenges to Livia's own *Italianità* in the classroom, and above all to her increased awareness of the linguistic divide between the dialect and the standard variety, Livia's perception of her personal connection with the language she is learning begins to fade.

The social context within which Livia operates outside the classroom has a significant bearing on her increasing alienation from Italian, and this is mainly due to Livia's realisation that although all the main social networks she is part of can be thought of as Italian, the standard variety is never spoken within them, making the Italian department the only setting in which to use the language, and incidentally one in which she is not comfortable speaking Italian:

> A: If you woke up tomorrow and you could speak fluent Italian, and I mean perfect, what would be the first thing you would do?
>
> L: Then I'd probably come to school, cause I don't think I'd be able to go anywhere else, just come to school and like just babble on to someone that knows how to speak Italian (*laughs*) (L2)

Even using Italian to speak to her mother, whom Livia had originally imagined as a potential conversation partner to practise with, proves to be very difficult:

> A: Have you ever used or thought of using your mum as a practice buddy for your Italian?
>
> L: Yeah, and she always says to me 'speak to me' and it's like, I feel uncomfortable speaking to her cause she'd speak to me in Italian and it's not normal, I am used to her speaking to me in dialect, so it feels kind of awkward, and she always says to me you have to speak to me in Italian, and so do some of our friends in Nelson and stuff, and I'm like no but you guys speak the dialect this is not normal. (L3)

Livia feels also feels uneasy speaking Italian with other members of the Nelson community because she finds it difficult to substitute the dialect she would normally use with the standard variety, even when encouraged to do so by her interlocutors. This is because for Livia the dialect is not just a code, but the symbol of an Italian identity which is at the very heart of her relationship with these people, and without it, the familiarity that is proper in her exchanges with them – which would normally help the interaction – is substituted by a feeling of discomfort which instead hinders the communication. The same is true for her attempt to use Italian with her grandmother in Italy:

> It feels weird because when I was talking to my grandmother last time she started speaking to me in proper Italian and I didn't like it cause I knew that she just spoke dialect, so I wanted her to speak to me in dialect and make me respond in proper Italian, but yeah, it just didn't feel right. (L3)

The difficulty in finding outlets for the use of Italian outside the classroom even within the circles Livia had originally thought would one day necessarily require it (i.e. her family in Italy), work against Livia's motivation in that they prove to her that Italian is not as necessary or important as she had imagined. On the other hand, the dialect-speaking Italian identity Livia currently holds is proving to be a very valuable asset in Wellington, where as a direct result of it Livia finds a home (through Italian family friends), employment (in an Italian pizzeria), and even friends and a partner within a network of young Wellington Italians, all descendants from families from Massa Lubrense and Sorrento, and all with various levels of competence of the same Italian dialect.

This last point is particularly significant because although English is the language of choice between Livia and her friends and work colleagues, the Massa Lubrense dialect is still a powerful symbol of Italian identity which brings them together and distinguishes them from the non-Italians around them, at times even becoming a kind of secret language with which to poke fun at unsuspecting outsiders:

> If we are in a group or something and you see someone walking past and you don't want them to hear what you say (*laughs*) yeah you say it in Italian. But mostly it's not proper Italian, it's more dialect. Just like 'oh my god what is she wearing' or 'my god what is she thinking about' you know, her hair or maybe she should go to the gym (*laughs*) things like that. (L4)

216

One night we were out clubbing with a group of us Italian people and a couple of older ones as well, and we were standing in the queue to get into a night club and we thought this is so boring we have to do something to entertain ourselves so all just started speaking Italian, pretending that we were from Italy and there were people behind us and we were speaking in Italian accent as well and they said oh well where do you come from and we were like 'oh we are from Naples', it was so funny (*laughs*). (L4)

In view of this constant validation of Livia's Italian identity outside the classroom and of the cultural capital that the dialect holds for Livia in virtually all of the social networks she is a member of, it is not difficult to understand why Livia might not be strongly motivated to learn Italian. To use Norton's (2000) conceptualisation of language learning motivation as investment in the social identity associated with competence in the target language, Livia's lack of motivation can be interpreted as a lack of investment in a standard-speaking Italian identity. In fact, considering that Livia already feels fully Italian, her investment would be in the language only, and even then, the "hitherto unattainable resources" (2000, p. 10) that competence in Italian will afford her (i.e. speaking to her family in Italy) are not enticing as to grant the establishment and maintenance of a big investment in learning the language.

In reviewing the previous sections it seems reasonable to conclude that Livia's feelings of heritage identity do have an important – though not exclusive – role in her decision to learn Italian, but that this sharply declines once the learning begins. It could even be argued in fact that the same Italian identity that represented a useful motivational source in the initial stages of Livia's learning becomes a trigger for demotivation later on. This seemingly negative relationship between Livia's strong *Italianità* and her motivation raises an interesting point. It could be argued that because of Livia's dialectal background, her main ethnic affiliation is, in actual fact, with dialect-speaking communities of Italians and that in this sense, Livia must be considered a 'kind of foreign language learner' of standard Italian, whose dialectal Italian identity is not relevant to her motivation to learn the language.

However, much of what we know about Livia does support the idea that standard Italian is much more than a foreign language to her: it was her mother's main language before coming to New Zealand, and while many of Livia's relatives can still use the dialect, all of them can and do speak the standard variety every day. Finally, Livia herself does not conceive of two different Italian identities (a dialect identity and a

standard Italian identity) and even though she realises that some competence in the standard variety might well be expected of her at university, she never equates her lack of language with lack of identity.

In view of the above, I would argue that Livia must indeed be considered a heritage language learner, albeit one that illustrates a motivational pattern not often described in heritage language literature. Livia's case allows us to look beyond fixed conceptualisations of ethnolinguistic affiliation to find that when it comes to the role of heritage identity in a learners' motivation, it is not only the learner's self-positioning that counts, but their own complex construction of their identity, which includes, among other things, the reasons for such positioning, the personal value associated with it and the symbolic and cultural capital it represents. For Livia, what happens outside the classroom is crucial to how she constructs her own Italian identity, and this in turn influences her attitudes towards what happens inside the classroom. Indeed in some cases, a strong sense of ethnic identity can for some learners translate into strong language learning motivation. However for Livia the sustained validation of her Italian identity outside the classroom translates into a lack of investment in Italian, which in turn leads to a weakening of her motivation.

9.9 Postscript

At the time of writing this Livia is still living in Wellington. She graduated in May 2008, leaving university with a degree in Music Performance (Piano) and a Bachelor of Arts (Italian). Despite her desire to continue studying Italian, Livia has not "touched a book" since the end of her Italian major in 2006.

Livia's social networks continue to include members of the Wellington Italian community and her *Italianità* continues to be a precious resource. Since she finished her studies, Livia has begun teaching piano in a primary school at the heart of the Wellington Italian neighbourhood, and taken up a job in a small catering company run by an Italian family. Her social surroundings continue to provide plenty of opportunities to speak her dialect with family, friends and work colleagues.

In the end, Livia admits, learning Italian did not make any difference in her immediate life: it did not open doors in terms of her career and certainly did not bring about any changes to her social life. Yet Livia is glad she now has at least a rudimentary knowledge of the language, because even if at the moment she does not have many

opportunities to speak it, she now knows that when the situation requires it, she will be able to use it.

So far Livia's intention to travel to Italy and perfect her Italian by immersing herself in the language and culture has gone unfulfilled, but Livia knows it is only a matter of time. Since I last saw her in fact, Livia has found a partner who "might just be the one" and plans to move back to Nelson in 2010 to "settle down and have a family". Her next trip to Italy, she writes excitedly, might be on the occasion of her honeymoon.

Chapter Ten: Giulia

Italy fits me, I fit in it. I feel more at home in Italy than I do in my birth country New Zealand. New pieces of information come to me when I am there, about how to live, what to do, how to behave and incite not the standard travel reaction of 'oh, interesting!' but an "aha!" moment, a feeling that I did know that, somewhere, already. (GJp.27)

10.1 Meet Giulia: An Italian in exile

Love makes us do crazy things.

For the love of Italy, Giulia, a 32-year-old Auckland communication consultant, left behind her career, her salary and her friends, and moved to Wellington to be a full-time student of Italian. She did so because of her "Italian dream", a plan to be able, one day soon, to escape to her ancestral homeland and to build herself a new life in the midst of her favourite people, immersed in her favourite culture.

Admittedly, to dream of a fresh start in a faraway exotic land is not actually that uncommon. However after considering the effort, the changes and the risks involved in such an endeavour, most people would be satisfied to live their enchanted life in their mind's eye. But clearly Giulia is not 'most people': she is an exceedingly intelligent, articulate, assertive young woman who has travelled around the world, run her own business, got married, divorced and travelled around the world again, all by the time she was thirty-five, while at the same time affirming herself as an actor, a travel writer, a playwright, a poet and – just recently – a scholar.

The string of achievements in her short life are a testimony to the fact that Giulia's choices are not, in any way, crazy: they might just seem crazy to the more cautious among us because in spite of the consideration that they entail, in the end, they are usually "made with the heart", or, in other words, based on feelings, which, in Giulia's eloquent writings are described as "plucked from an improvised place, darkly lit and with many tunnels. Not to be trusted". It was exactly this great abundance of emotive content in Giulia's recounting of her language learning experience that first attracted me to her story: the highs and lows she experiences throughout her love-affair with Italian and the exquisite ways in which she expresses them have a dramatic appeal that is hard to resist for an epic-novel lover such as me. But the real value of Giulia's story for the present study is the motivational influence that these emotive states have on her

language learning behaviour: sometimes prompting, driving, and inspiring, at other times hindering, blocking, even paralysing.

Still, it would be unfair to Giulia to imply that her language learning motivation is based on emotional impulses only, since, as already signalled, her decisions also come at the end of lengthy reflections, so much so in fact that one could even say that Giulia has a tendency to over-rationalise things. Her decision to move to Wellington, for instance, is a good example of a careful weighing of all the pros and the cons in which Giulia's desire to learn Italian is best understood as the product of a multiplicity of conscious investments: in constructing a new life and identity, understanding her own Italian heritage, gaining a university degree and finally proving her worth as a student despite a lifetime of low academic self-esteem. Her decision, as we will see, is far from irrational, and yet, it is the way her Italian dream feels, that gives Giulia the final nudge. It is indeed this captivating mixture of heart and mind in influencing Giulia's motivation that makes her story particularly compelling and it is chiefly for this reason that I have chosen to include it in this study.

Giulia's data was collected over a period of fifteen months, between September 2006 and December 2007. The bulk of the information included in the following pages came from interviews and classroom observations. Throughout the data-collecting stage Giulia proved to be a highly involved participant in the study, who would often ask me about the research and lend encouragement and support whenever possible. The fact that Giulia admittedly appreciated the opportunity to talk to me as a way of reflecting on her situations and sometimes venting her frustrations, together with her ease of expression and her keen awareness of her thoughts and emotions always made the interviewing process pleasant and stimulating.

In addition to the interviews, extra data was also sourced in personal emails and phone calls and, thanks to Giulia's love of creative writing, in various essays, journal entries and poems. Though my original plan had been to include in this chapter samples from each of these media, writing the final draft this proved to be highly impractical and so I have often paraphrased Giulia's elegant thoughts in my own words. As a rare exception to this necessary practice the postscript to her story featuring at the end of this chapter has been preserved in its original version as a testimony to writing skills of its author.

10.2 Meatballs, accordions and dancing WOGs

Giulia was born in Hamilton the youngest of three children of a family of Italian-Irish descent. Giulia's Italian lineage originated in her maternal grandfather, who came from Udine, in the north-east of Italy, and her grandmother, who was an Australian-born Italian from a family that emigrated from Sicily. The two met in Australia in the 1930s, married, and moved to New Zealand, where they joined the young Hamilton Italian community, which was then numerically very small, but destined to grow significantly in the decades to follow, also thanks to the help that Giulia's grandparents offered to many new Italian immigrants:

> When my grandfather and grandmother were initially here there was a lot of Italians coming around the same time. They had a lot of boarders, they would take families, or usually the man first who would come, work and save up enough before going back and getting his wife or brought the family over, so he would stay with them and board cheaply for a year or something before they would get and buy their own home. Those friendships were particularly strong, they were all very close as a close knit community, especially in a place like Hamilton which is extremely conservative and there was nothing there. (G1)

By the time Giulia was born in the mid-seventies, the Hamilton Italian community was thriving and her grandmother's kitchen seemed to be right at the heart of it. Giulia's personal sense of her own *Italianità* began to take shape here, amidst the vivacious Italian characters populating the many get-togethers her grandmother organised:

> There was a lot of Italian influences in my life based around the kitchen table of my grandmother: it was always full of people, food, cultural activities, dancing, Italian music, festivals, celebrating occasions, that sort of things, she was always cooking meatballs, we would be making pasta, there was always an accordion played, birthdays, Christmas, whatever. I can remember all of that, and it had an impact on my life, it wasn't just that I had had some far-off relatives in a far-off land, but it was very real for me… What Italians were and how I was related to that. (G1)

Within such a highly convivial environment, Giulia grew up being exposed to Italian language and as a result she can still remember a number of Italian words and expressions she had learned as child. Counting to ten in Italian, for example, was an achievement that used to earn her great praise when she was seven, and expressions such

as *ti spacco la testa* and *ti spacco il culo*[32] were frequently heard and used around the home. Giulia and her brothers, however, never fully acquired the language of their Italian grandparents:

> My mother does not speak fluent Italian so it was never spoken in the house. I didn't hear my *nonni*[33] speak Italian between themselves at home and I presume that is probably a habit from when they had kids in the house, and when Italian wasn't fashionable and that's another reason why my mother wouldn't have learned or been encouraged to learn Italian, 'cause back then it was something to be ashamed of, you were a WOG and a dirty Italian and a smelly garlic eating… you know, she tells these stories from her generation… Now we can joke about it – you dirty WOG! (*laughs*) (G1)

Fortunately by the late-seventies, the negative attitudes towards Italian immigrants, which until then had been widespread in New Zealand, had mostly subsided, and Giulia was never subjected to the discriminatory mind-set her mother had to suffer when she was younger. As a result, Giulia never felt negatively about her Italian ancestry, even at times when the peculiar cultural practices of her Italian family clearly singled her out as different from other people around her:

> I can recall even when I was at school, the times when kids would come in to my grandmother's house with me after school and she would… I remember my friend's name was Louise and my grandmother insisted in calling her Luisa. Things like that. At the fact that it was three in the afternoon and she was making meatballs and my friend would go why….it's not tea-time. And I was like she's always cooking… And that wasn't a thing that was groovy and fashionable like it is now… It was still quite uncool then. So there was definitely a sense of having an odd background. (G1)

Unlike many children from ethnic minority backgrounds, Giulia never rejected her *Italianità*, however she has always believed the Italian element in her socialisation greatly contributed to a subtle sense of alienation from Kiwi culture in its most typical manifestations and from most people around her. Different from her mother, father and brothers, Giulia describes herself as "loud, dramatic and emotional", all qualities that she believes are directly connected to the Italian influence in her upbringing. This direct link between Giulia's Italian heritage and elements of her self-concept is crucial in

---

[32] Lit. '(I am going to) break your head', '(I am going to) break your arse'. Colloquial Italian expressions used as playful threats.
[33] 'grandparents'

understanding the way she constructs her relationship with Italy, Italians and their culture, and so it represents, as we will see in the following sections, the very foundation of her motivation to learn her heritage language.

10.3 Experiencing the real homeland: Motivation arousal

Giulia's interest in Italian language began when, as a teenager, she started planning her Big OE[34]. Having included Italy in her travel plan, Giulia thought it wise to prepare by enrolling in an Italian language course at the local night school. The chance of an extended working holiday in Italy came shortly after while Giulia was in London, and it was during this first visit to Italy that her passion for Italy and its culture was first ignited. In spite of a less-than-ideal working situation, Giulia loved her time in Italy and the strange feeling of familiarity that the places and the people inspired in her:

> That feeling, at 19, of being on the streets of Rome and feeling this weird feeling that I had never been there before but that I had always been there. A feeling like I couldn't communicate with anyone but I felt completely accepted and I felt like I was home, really. (G1)

Above all Giulia marvelled at the energy that Italian people seemed to pour in their every activity, and at the expressiveness, loudness, and enthusiasm that she witnessed in people everywhere she went:

> People were enthusiastic, about selling a tomato or directing traffic or selling a newspaper, whatever it was they were into it and I loved it, this is the antithesis of the NZ apathy, or, 'she'll be right', 'whatever', 'cool', 'laid back', so I immediately plugged in to that energy, just at a really basic level, I loved it. (G1)

> It affected me quite a lot because I felt finally like I fitted in somewhere after 19 or 20 years of being in New Zealand. In Italy, and it was completely unexpected, I felt completely normal and comfortable. (G1)

The effects of experiencing Italy for the first time are momentous for Giulia, who so unexpectedly feels at ease in this country where people seem to think and behave in

---

[34] Short for 'Big overseas experience'. A New Zealand term for an extended working holiday abroad which normally occurs during the late teens to late twenties and which can be considered a rite of passage in Kiwi culture. The OE is often described in New Zealand as a way to broaden one's experience in life and to connect with other cultures, including those of one's own immigrant ancestors.

224

ways so similar to her own. This feeling of "finally fitting in somewhere", opposite to the slight but ever-present sense of estrangement she felt in New Zealand, leads Giulia to rationalise her sense of belonging to Italy and its culture as a direct consequence of the latent *Italianità* which she believes is part of her by virtue of her Italian ancestry. This realisation marks the beginning of Giulia's construction of her Italian heritage as the source of a partially Italian identity that, while at times at odds with her New Zealand surroundings, finds its perfect expression and ideal social setting in her idea of Italian society.

From this moment on, the appeal of Italy is so strong for Giulia that in the two years she spends away from New Zealand, she travels there for four more visits, each time discovering new dimensions to her personal attachment to the country and the people in it. At this stage however, Giulia's knowledge of Italian language is still very rudimentary and with each sojourn she becomes more conscious of this as an obstacle to making her experience of Italy as fulfilling as possible, hence Giulia's first thoughts on learning the language:

> In Italy I really found something that I could connect with, but the biggest and most immediate barrier is of course the language. And for someone who likes talking and is social and outgoing and wants to meet and talk to people and get their ideas it was disturbing. So that was probably when that idea of it would be great to speak Italian was cemented, just because of the reaction I had at the time. So for quite a while, basically from then it (learning Italian) has been bubbling on the back of my mind as a real passion. (G1)

While Giulia sees the time she spends in Italy as an opportunity for her partly Italian self-concept to truly manifest itself and thrive, she recognises this will never be fully realised unless she is fluent in Italian, as she believes that only when she can speak the language fluently that she will be able to transpose all aspects of her identity – including and above all her most talkative side – from the New Zealand to the Italian context, and so be able to function fully as herself during her future visits to Italy.

With this in mind and also in an attempt to maintain some link to Italy even in the absence of immediate plans to travel there, once back in New Zealand in 1998, Giulia completes one introductory Italian language course at Auckland University, at the end of which she feels she has made great progress in acquiring the language. However her intention to continue studying is soon thwarted by developments in her professional and

personal life, which relegate her desire to learn Italian to the back of her mind for the next three years.

The trigger for Giulia's next visit to Italy and for the beginning, in earnest, of her language learning journey, is a combination of life changes. In 2002, at the end of a very traumatic year that sees among other things a change of career and a divorce, Giulia longs for a trip to Italy as a much-needed therapeutic getaway and a way to reconnect to herself:

> I hatched a plan that included getting a job at the local Council to save money for the trip (motivationally assisted by pinning my 1.5 metre map of Italy on the wall), starting private lessons once a week and writing to the Italian embassy in Wellington to see if I could get an Italian passport or working visa. I also wanted to see where my grandmother's people were from, Sicily, a tiny island off Sicily. (GJp.19)

After months of financial, linguistic and psychological preparation, at the end of 2003 Giulia is finally able to spend a month in Italy. Unlike her other visits, this one stems from a desire not only to explore the place and the culture, but also to understand the strange feelings of belonging that Italy inspires in her. With this purpose in mind Giulia visits for the first time some relatives in Udine, adding yet another dimension to her already strong personal links to the country. The experience in itself is crucial not only for Giulia's own construction of her own *Italianità*, but also because it is at this point that Giulia's thought of living in Italy first takes shape and with it, the consciousness of her need to master the language:

> I thought I really want to spend some time here, live here, I want to be fluent, I don't want to come back and just pick grapes for a year. (G1)

> In my dream I am working and living and I have a great job in Italy and I have perfect comprehension and I can express myself perfectly, not just adequately, in the way that I have control over the English language, I can do that in Italy with Italian . So I see myself doing that and interacting with people, in a restaurant or in the street, going up the apartment stairs and *ciao signora*[35]! And it being easy, me being easy in that world, in that place, not being oh! Emh…Eh? *Scusa*[36]? What? What? (*laughs*). (G1)

---

[35] 'hello ma'm!'
[36] 'Excuse me?'

This is, in a nutshell, the form of Giulia's initial motivation to learn her heritage language: to translate her English-speaking self into its Italian equivalent – an Italian-speaking ideal self – with the aim of constructing a coherent social identity in Italy, where she feels in complete harmony with her surroundings. In Giulia's vision, language is no longer a mere travel accessory: it is the key element for her contacts with and acceptance into an imagined Italian neighbourhood and therefore the prime necessity for the achievement of a new and successful life in Italy.

The motivational power of such a detailed, vivid and emotionally-loaded vision is such that in order to pursue it, in 2005, Giulia makes a decision which will radically transform her whole life: she resolves to leave her job, her friends and the city where she has lived for over ten years to move to Wellington, apply for a student loan and begin her studies towards a Bachelor of Arts and a major in Italian. Clearly, her desire to learn the language in order to one day live in Italy is at the root of her decision, however, a deeper look at Giulia's reasons for relocating south and pursuing a university degree reveals that her investment in this venture is much more complex.

To begin with, it is clear that Giulia's move to Wellington is part of a wider plan to break with the past and rebuild her life after the radical changes brought about by the end of her marriage. Evidence for this is the fact that the thought of studying Italian in Wellington has been in her mind ever since she separated from her ex-husband and found herself having to make alternative plans for her future:

> Probably from 2001 I started to think about my new future, which wasn't in Auckland, with Noel, babies, picket fences, all of that, and very slowly, in a very subconscious way started to think of what an alternate future could be, if it was just me, if I had every choice. I started dreaming of going back to Italy to live. Way back then I started to make some inquiries and found out that you could only do Italian in Auckland and Wellington, and Noel was still in Auckland, so I think that fact swayed me here. (G5)

But studying towards a university degree has for Giulia its own appeal which stems from her long-standing desire to obtain such a qualification and to prove to herself and to others that she indeed is "bright enough for university":

> G: The BA was a chip on my shoulder and then I was like, I am going to address that and do it, but actually I would be able to kill two birds with one stone, I'd be able to really progress with my Italian and get this bloody degree, that I've got a bloody chip on my shoulder about…(…) Because I had never had the

227

opportunity to do it (…) everyone else got one, and I didn't have a degree and I never had the opportunity to do it and I supposed I wasn't very bright blah blah blah…

A: Who told you you were not very bright?

G: Oh mum and dad

A: Really?

G: Yeah. It just wasn't an option in our family to do tertiary study; it wasn't what my family did. So the BA has been a bit of bugbear for a long time. (G5)

Though not directly linked to her ambition of Italian fluency, Giulia's idea of obtaining a degree as a means to demonstrate her academic worth is also to have important repercussions on her motivation throughout her studies, representing, as we will see, sometime a powerful incentive to achieve good results, while at other times a detrimental source of anxiety and demotivation.

Despite the strong initial motivation arousal, Giulia's plan to become a full-time student takes some time to take shape in her mind, and even when a full picture of it emerges, it takes her a while to gather the courage to implement it. This is understandable: at this stage Giulia has a successful career, which provides her with a secure salary and a comfortable lifestyle and at the age of thirty-two, she is well aware she is about to set out on the less-travelled road:

I didn't know whether to keep working… And all my friends are having babies and mortgages and are couples and should I be getting a student loan and all that… I didn't have a partner or husband to support me, so, I was also moving to Wellington with very few contacts here, no promise of work, no job, no savings. (G1)

Giulia's choice is made even more difficult by the lack of support shown by her family and friends who struggle to understand her decision:

I had quite a lot of… From friends and family, at 32, to be giving up a salary to be a student to something that… I could have done a masters in communications and possibly that would have earned me more money, so there was some of me having to defend my position and my choice, because it's Italian language, not French, or Spanish which are far more useful – don't you know. So there were comments like "that's all very well but what are you going to do to support yourself? What's that going to achieve?" (G1)

In the end however the opposition of family and peers does not succeed in dissuading Giulia from her resolve; on the contrary, the pressure she feels to conform to an externally imposed model of what her life should be like (or ought-to self) leads Giulia to realise that this is exactly what she has been doing up to this moment and that this might be the only chance she will ever have to construct the life she truly desires, which is well encapsulated in the image of her Italian-speaking ideal self describes. However the thought that more than all others helps Giulia "jump on in" is the certainty that not pursuing her "Italian dream" or at least attempting to learn her heritage language would eventually fill her with regrets similar to those she can see in her mother:

> I think having seen my mother doing that… She's sixty one now and having done that up and down, never really progressing with fluency cause she's only done night courses, you know three night course a year, so that desire of looking back and say that's just what I have done in the last ten years, while I could have somehow made that concerted effort, so that desire… (…) I didn't want to spend my whole life just being able to say *buongiorno, come stai, bene grazie e tu, e lei*[37]… And yeah, I still feel that, that that would be a real regret. (G5)

In the end, it is the interplay of all of these influences that brings Giulia to act. Her drive to actively pursue the fulfilment of her ideal self is certainly vital to her final decision, but at least equally influential is her wish to avoid, on one side, an externally imposed ought-to self reflecting someone else's idea of what her life should be like, and on the other a feared self (Markus & Nurius, 1986) associated with the regrets of not seizing this opportunity. In this sense, Giulia's initial motivation appears as a complex array of factors, which include aspirations to be accomplished, but also elements to be neutralised or circumvented. It also goes perhaps without saying that, especially considering the sacrifices that Giulia is willing to make and the risks she is willing to run in making this life changing decision, her investment in this language learning venture is enormous and very complex, but Giulia embarks on this adventure with good will and confidence, both in herself and in the learning context she is about to join.

10.4 What's in an A grade? Smooth but doubtful beginnings

Giulia begins attending Italian classes at university in February 2005. Because of her previous studies at Auckland University she is allowed to skip the two first year

---

[37] 'Good morning, how are you, good thanks, and you?'

introductory courses and can begin with 200-level courses. At this stage Giulia's primary goal in learning her heritage language is very clear and very specific: she intends to become fluent in Italian so that she can travel to Italy and live there for an extended period of time. Giulia expects to attain fluency by the end of her degree in two years' time, and to be able to leave for Italy shortly afterwards.

Giulia's first year at university goes altogether well: she finds the courses interesting, thinks highly of her teachers, and enjoys learning the language. As a direct result of these positive circumstances, throughout the year Giulia feels very motivated; however by far the most powerful incentive to focus a great deal of effort on her Italian studies is the strong desire to prove to herself that she can do well at university, and, above all, the associated fear that she might fail to do so:

> I worked hard, in fact I overworked, so basically everything I did through the year I did too much work for, so for the essays I got thirty books out, and had to go read them when everyone else got two, because I was just in such a panic that I would get D's or fail, not do it right or not research enough. (G2)

Giulia's efforts do not go unnoticed and she begins to collect 'A' grades for all of her courses, but despite the great satisfaction she gains from these results, Giulia also begins to worry about the slow pace at which her language skills are developing. The cause of this, Giulia believes, lies in the type of learning tasks and activities she and her fellow students are made to work on in class, which, in her opinion, do not foster the communicative development of oral Italian as much as they could:

> I am happy with the courses, but I am quite disappointed in what little progress I feel I am making at the moment and it's quite a different teaching structure from what my first year was, so I think my expectations were based on that first year (…) (G1)

> We very rarely speak Italian. It's mostly passive learning, and we don't do things like exercises in class where you just work though the textbook or you pair up or you play games or you make up conversations or anything like that. I think the theory is coming along OK, but I feel I have not practised it at all. (G1)

Feeling that despite her high grades she is making little progress towards the fluency she is pursuing, Giulia also begins having doubts on the validity of the grades she is being awarded and in particular on whether these can be taken as an accurate measure of her actual learning:

So far I got A's for Italian which is good but I am a bit circumspect about what we got tested on, so I think next year when we have someone else it will be interesting to see how I do, so that's great and I am really pleased but I don't think it's a reflection of my Italian at all. (G2)

Some of the students just want an A, but my goal is to be fluent. So I think I always had this in the back of my mind if I was in Italy tomorrow, how would I do. Now where I am now versus where I was in 2003 when I had that one-on-one tuition I actually feel I have gone backwards. (G2)

At the heart of Giulia's concern there is the disconcerting thought that the ultimate objectives of the Italian major towards which she is working might not be aligned with her own personal learning goals, meaning that despite her excellent results on paper, the sluggish development of her – especially oral – linguistic skills might ultimately undermine her plan to achieve fluency by the completion of her degree. This prospect is made even more disturbing by the great investment Giulia has in studying Italian in this particular setting, an investment which she is now beginning to suspect might never deliver the desired linguistic payoff, leaving her to ponder whether she should look for an alternative course of action:

I have given up a lot to be here and it's all great and it's lovely and everyone is great, however, I really feel I am not getting any closer to my goals, and what I am really tempted to do right now is to leave university and just pay for a tutor and go back to working enough to pay for a tutor and spend five thousand dollars a year for a tutor and I think I'd make progress like this, you know. (G2)

Unsure as to what she should do, Giulia decides to ask for the advice of her Italian teachers, whom she hopes will understand her concerns and offer support and/or useful suggestions on the direction her language learning should take. Unfortunately however this move does not produce the expected outcome:

She said you feel like you're not making any progress but you are, it's just how it feels to you, that you are not… She said I can always go to her out of class time and ask her about things but I think that's just… I mean I know she's really busy. (G2)

> The goal of wanting to be fluent in Italian is my goal, not wanting to get A's, but the conversation that I had with Paolo about it he seemed very focused… 'but you got an A, you should be delighted…' (G2)

Indeed Giulia appreciates that both teachers mean well in trying to reassure her, but without a full understanding of her investment in the language – of which Giulia herself might have withheld some details – their words of encouragement do not have the desired effect, and in fact only contribute to Giulia feeling misunderstood and in a learning environment that does not suit her particular learning needs. Increasingly disheartened, Giulia decides to speak to Rebecca, one of the university's lecturers in Spanish. Giulia knows that Rebecca has learned Spanish as a second language, and hopes she might be able to understand her situation from a learner's point of view and so give her some useful advice. Similarly to Giulia's teachers, Rebecca begins by reassuring Giulia that the lack of progress she worries about is more apparent than real and that her feelings are common for second year students, however unlike the others she also resets Giulia's expectations of fluency:

> G: She said university it's not going to make you fluent, university does not do that, and you are not going to be fluent after a degree, whoever your teacher is or you know, so that was a real reality check about my expectations of fluency.
> A: It put things into perspective
> G: It did. It made me understand that even if I get through this and third year I am still going to be a beginner speaker of Italian, it is still elementary, and unless I go and live there for seven years that fluency dream is going to be kind of long one. (G2)

Naturally, Rebecca's message is difficult for Giulia to accept and it triggers an array of negative emotions to do with the realisation that the fluency she thought was now just out of reach could still take years to be achieved, and that therefore her investment in university study would not afford her the language proficiency she had hoped for. In spite of this, after some reflection on her circumstances and Rebecca's advice, Giulia decides to continue with her studies to complete the degree she has begun:

> G: So I said thank you, *grazie mille*[38] and went away and thought about it and thought, I think she's probably right, in fact I know she's right. I just felt like, you

---

[38] 'many thanks'.

know really tired, really disappointed, and feeling really flat… But in the end that was actually really good because it shook me up and spurred me on and so I thought yeah, I'll go back for third year. I will try to stop whining and just try and get on with it.

A: Hold on… So you came to the conclusion that you should carry on regardless?

G: Yeah (*laughs*). I know it sounds crazy.

A: So that was actually a motivation boost after all?

G: Yeah, definitely, yes. (G2)

Giulia's decision to continue studying even when she knows the degree will not afford her the fluency she seeks is a good indication of the complexity of her investment in this particular learning setting. In her mind, Giulia has effectively sacrificed her old identity in exchange for an opportunity to construct a new one, many elements of which she imagines to be directly associated with her ability to speak Italian; in this sense, for Giulia, fluency in Italian is crucial for the realisation of the ideal self she holds in her mind. However we must also remember that Giulia's plan to move to Wellington to study was also partly rooted in her desire to break with the past and to finally gain the university qualification that she has always longed for, which, regardless of the language proficiency gained, Giulia recognises could still represent a precious asset:

I have given up a really good salary and I have to move into a tiny flat and make really big sacrifices and I am single, so I am supporting myself and getting a student loan, all to be fluent in Italian. So I am carrying this quite big expectation and feeling like, well, actually, for much less money, I could have been paying someone to have one-on-one tuition. However I recognise that if I ever make it to the end, I would have a BA and a major in Italian and this might help me at some stage in my future, it might be in twenty years time… I recognise that. (G1)

But most importantly, as we have seen, there is in Giulia a burning desire to demonstrate her worth as a student and to prove that she can excel at university in spite of the fact she has been made to believe she lacks any kind of academic disposition. In this sense the high grades she has been collecting throughout the year represent a major vindication for Giulia and the realisation of another, secondary ideal self she is pursuing, a kind of 'academically successful self', of which the emotional appeal is clear in Giulia's recounting of the day she collected her final results for the year:

> I looked at the exam and it was like 19/20, 19/20, 19/20, it was like ohhhh, oh my god! And then I picked up the project and it was an A+ and the marker had written something like '*bravissima*[39]', a model presentation for any student' or something like that, ohhhh, and then the third thing was either an A or an A+ and just all together I think it was a bit overwhelming, I couldn't believe it… After years and years of you are probably not bright enough to go to university, that's not something that you'll do, you know, I think it was all that very old heavy stuff that it was a very strong visual thing of 19/20, 19/20, A+, *bravissima*, I mean I can still see that… That was pretty amazing. (G2)

Giulia's reaction illustrates well the significance that obtaining positive feedback has for her self-concept, and shows the strong affective payout that her involvement in this particular learning context is offering. This, in the end, may well be key reason why, regardless of her disappointment with other aspects of the learning environment, Giulia is unwilling to abandon her quest for a university degree.

10.5 Inches from giving up: Opposing influences and the ghost of failure

Spurred on by Rebecca's words and by her newly found confidence as a student, Giulia begins her second and final year at university anticipating a challenging but rewarding journey to the end. The challenges however do not wait long to manifest, as from her very first language lessons Giulia finds herself confronted with a new set of problems related to the class environment. The first setback Giulia faces is the emotionally unsettling realisation that most of her fellow students' language skills are much more advanced than her own:

> A: Did you find it hard to come back?
>
> G: Yes, especially because there is only about eight of us in the class and probably five of those people did the scholarship, so most people had a month in Italy and so they are very very fluent… So I am quite challenged… And feeling like everyone else is ahead of me cause they're all been talking in Italy for a month non stop and going to class and living there and stuff so yeah, but that's fine I am sure I will catch up slowly but right now I feel I little bit lost… (G3)

---

[39] Lit. 'very clever, very skilled'. Italian term commonly used to praise a student whose work is outstanding.

Despite Giulia's good will, things are not about to get better anytime soon and in fact after only a few sessions, her motivation begins to be affected. The demotivating power of witnessing other people's fluency compared to her own lack of linguistic skills lies in the detrimental effects that such comparison has on Giulia's self-concept, and in particular on her linguistic self-confidence, which, in turn prevents her from speaking out in class and asking the clarifications she needs in order to protect her self-image. Giulia's explanation of what happens in class is a good illustration of this:

> I feel very self-conscious, and usually I don't, but it's because everyone else is better than me, I am very am self-conscious of that, and so I haven't really, you know I don't really stop and ask questions when something is not clear, 'cause I am the only one in the class doing that, so I don't always be the one saying '*non ho capito, non ho capito, non ho capito… ancora per favore*[40]'… Because everyone else has got it… (G4)

In this already isolating environment, Giulia's believes the divide between herself and the other students is made even worse by her goal of fluency, which she feels is not shared by her peers, making it difficult for her to relate to and communicate with them. The fact that she is older than most other students and that she has an intimate personal connection to the language due to her own Italian heritage (and therefore her status as a heritage versus foreign language learner) are also posited as crucial factors in the loneliness Giulia is experiencing in class:

> I don't think they want to be fluent, you know some of them are doing modern languages, they just want to get their prerequisites Arianna, which is quite different to wanting to be fluent. I haven't heard anyone use that expression except me. They are all very focussed on university and finishing university and getting a job and marks and so that's kind of a worldview thing and an age thing and possibly that Italian thing and that I am there for a different reason. (G3)

But the problems do not stop here. Because of the generally high level of language proficiency within the group of students Giulia is part of, the language teacher tends to cover some of the course contents rather quickly and to count on the students' self-management skills to navigate their way through the least challenging material. For Giulia however the accelerated teaching rhythm and perceived lack of support are a significant disadvantage:

---

[40] 'I haven't understood, I haven't understood, I haven't understood, can you repeat that please'.

> The teacher said that she would be going much slower, normally but she said I have to move through, move through, 'cause otherwise the others would just get bored, so…(G4)

> I find it very difficult… Say we do the *si passivante*[41] in class: we spend twenty-five minutes on it, then we do an exercise in class and we mark it in class, so as an example, that would take a one-hour lecture. I only get some of what she's trying to describe, I get all of my in-class answers wrong, and then I go home and try to do my homework, which I can't mark, so I have to wait until we come back to class and I also get that all wrong. Then we are onto the next topic. (G4)

The excerpt illustrates well how the current class dynamics make it difficult for Giulia to cope with the rate at which new material is introduced, but also it offers a first glimpse of Giulia's emerging belief in her own powerless position with regard to managing her learning. It is at this point in fact that Giulia's data begins to reflect her belief that there is nothing she can do to improve, modify, or even resist the set of negative circumstances that she is facing, a belief that is to become stronger in the weeks to come, with significant repercussions on her motivation.

With learning Italian made difficult by the way the term is unfolding, it is not long before Giulia's grades begin to reflect the problems she is experiencing, and although this does not come as a surprise for Giulia, she is still emotionally shaken by it:

> I am getting bad marks. I only got fifty percent, the lowest mark I ever got, in my life, for anything, ever, in the history of me, for the Audio/Visual test with Giacomo, which was watching a clip from a film all in Italian and then answering questions about it… so I got fifty percent and I was very upset. (G4)

> That was my first mark that wasn't an A at university and I was mortified, but there were two things that upset me… I wanted to prove to myself that I was actually an intelligent student and that wasn't working, and the second thing was really feeling like I was making no progress at all and that was proof that I wasn't making any progress. I just hated it at that stage. (G7)

Giulia herself identifies two ways in which the slump in her grades negatively affects her motivation at this stage of her learning. The first one has to do with the lack of

---

[41] The term *si passivante* refers to the Italian pronoun *si* when it is used as part of a passive clause.

progress in learning the language which had already been a major concern for Giulia during her first year at university; however whereas previously she had taken comfort in her results and trusted others' opinions that it might only be her perception, this time her plummeting results seem to confirm the fact that her journey to fluency has come to a standstill, therefore reopening the question of whether this learning context will lead her to her goals or whether she should abandon her current course of studies.

The second problem has to do with the fact that so far Giulia has largely depended on her grades to sustain her belief in her worth as a student and so to a certain extent her motivation. Within this mindset, the worsening of her grades for Giulia do not just reflect the quality of her learning, but also her own general academic skills and so it is not surprising to find that when her grades begin to decline, Giulia's confidence in her abilities soon follows, and that her old fear of not being "bright enough for university" resurfaces:

> I am way behind where I should be, I can't even read a sentence of a chapter in a textbook, let alone these eighteen books I got out of the library about, *fascismo*[42]. All these great resources that I can't access because I am such a crap student (G3)

The thought of not being "university material" is obviously in itself demotivating in that it affects Giulia's self-confidence but in the particular state of affairs Giulia finds herself, it also contributes to Giulia's conviction that even her best efforts will not help her improve her situation:

> I can't understand the questions, I have no idea what's going on, and there's nothing I can do about it, I can't work any harder, if I work any harder I am still not going to understand... (G4)

> The further along I go, the more I feel like I haven't understood, and can't possibly catch up, because we are just motoring along, so... (G4)

The above excerpts illustrate well that Giulia believes she is not in control of her learning, or, in technical terms, that the locus of control of her learning is external, and this is significant for her motivation in that an external locus of control is generally associated with lower levels of sustained motivation (Williams & Burden, 1997:128). The reasons for this are easily imagined: the belief that one cannot do anything about a

---

[42] 'fascism'

situation is often a self-fulfilling prophecy that leads to passivity and non-engagement. This feeling of not being in control of her learning is for Giulia particularly strong during the Audio Visual sessions, where the nature of the oral activities leaves the students little time to reflect on and prepare the answers they are required to contribute. It is mostly during the AV sessions that Giulia feels she is not given the time she needs to process the information that is coming to her and to produce appropriate responses. As a result Giulia always ends the session feeling she has not been given the opportunity to perform at her best, as well as generally demoralised about her language skills. One critical event in particular further exacerbates Giulia's aversion for the AV sessions and her conviction of being 'beyond hope':

> I get very upset usually in the AV sessions, I hate them because they remind me how much of a beginner I am. But also the teacher… Yesterday, in the AV I put my hand up to ask a question and I asked it in Italian and he said '*non ho capito niente*[43] and just carried on. It was like… He didn't even ask me to repeat it, as if it was so bad it wasn't even worth considering… (G4)

As a result of this event, not only is Giulia's self-efficacy towards speaking out in class devastated, but also her general self-confidence is deeply affected and she begins to approach all of her language learning with a defeatist attitude which reflects her belief that she is bound to fail in all that she undertakes. 'Impossible' becomes a very common word in Giulia's data:

> Everything that I try and do seems almost impossible, or that I could spend five hours on a piece of homework, and it's just out of all proportions, it feels impossible, it feels too hard… (G4)

> I am trying to work out how to keep my head above water and how to get to the end of the year, which feels like an impossible thing. (G4)

One significant element that clearly emerges from Giulia's data at this stage of her learning is the emotional weight of everything to do with her studies. *Frustrating*, *hate*, *loathing*, *stressed*, *panic*, *sick feeling* are only some of the expressions used by Giulia that reflect the negative emotions forming the affective basis underlying all of her learning, and this is not only clear from her data, but also from her demeanour in class,

---

[43] 'I didn't understand any of that'

where both her verbal and non-verbal behaviour clearly mark her as uncomfortable, withdrawn, often confused and generally exhausted. Giulia's emotions also flare up during our interviews in this period, during which she often finds herself on the verge of tears.

In fact, to say that Giulia's emotions also play an important role in her motivation to learn Italian would be an understatement. Giulia is by her own admission a highly emotional personal whose feelings can be so overwhelming to lead her to do things others would consider rash and irrational. Most importantly, Giulia thinks that emotions cannot – and in most cases should not – be resisted or controlled, but only obeyed, as she believes that the decisions made "with the heart" are ultimately the best. A good illustration of this is the emotional basis of Giulia's choice to pursue her Italian dream:

> My lawyer husband used to plead with me "just because you feel something doesn't make it so!" All I could say was how I feel about a country. "If you cannot control your feelings, who can?" He would say. This is all very well and good until my feet land in Italy, when I talk to my relatives and we eat a meal and we laugh and it feels so right to be home, where no-one notices me because I am not too loud, too dramatic, too emotional. (GJp.13)

It was indeed her feelings for Italy that lead Giulia to learn her heritage language and set her on the road she finds herself now. However unfortunately, the events developed in such a way that Giulia is now experiencing the downside of her emotional nature: adverse circumstances are filling her with negative affective states, which risk forcing her to abandon the language learning quest she has embarked on.

What Giulia is experiencing at this stage of her learning are the demotivating consequences of her own lack of emotional self-regulation or emotion control, which can generally be defined as the range of cognitive and behavioural processes deliberately employed to manage disruptive emotional states and/or to generate or maintain emotions that are conducive to implementing one's intentions (Tseng, Dörnyei, & Schmitt, 2006). In other words, Giulia's self-admitted predisposition to let her emotions run wild means that she now finds herself unable to minimise the damage of negative affective experiences and to maximise the effects of the positive ones, which makes Giulia's emotional reactions to situational factors particularly volatile and leave her vulnerable to the demotivating effects of adverse factors to do with her language learning.

239

Perhaps subconsciously aware of her disinclination towards regulating her own affective states and of her resulting need for external regulation, Giulia admits to her desperate need for encouragement and emotional support, two elements that in her current situation are difficult to come by. The lack of personal encouragement from her teachers for example, has been for Giulia one of the major shortcomings of the courses she is taking, and one of the reasons why she believes university study is not the ideal setting for her:

> I was thinking about it last week, I think I am someone who needs quite a bit of encouragement as well and you don't actually get that. (G5)

> For me, I need some encouragement you don't get that at all from the lecturers or the tutors. And I mean it's not really the teachers' fault cause they're not really there to be your personal mentor, but… Yeah. (G5)

But Giulia also finds herself isolated from her family and friends who would potentially be an ideal source of encouragement and support, but that because they either do not approve of her decision to study, or because they do not understand how difficult it turned out to be for Giulia, they are not prepared to lend her the kind of emotional support she desperately need at this stage of her journey:

> That's why university is so isolating for the mature student, because I can't talk about with anyone because no one understands. Because my friends went to university at 19 and didn't go to lectures, they got drunk and did drugs and had lots of sex for three years and so they think well Giulia doesn't probably have to get up until 11, she'll probably have a lecture, then she'll smoke a joint, and yes, she's probably having a great time. (…) I tried to put the flag out that you know I am stressed and now it's the time for hugs and support, but people don't… I just don't think they equate that with the sort of stress they have in their lives, pay the mortgage and have to be at work. Because it's university. (G4)

> My parents think it's mad, because I could be earning seventy thousand dollars and instead I am earning very little and getting a student loan and going backwards financially, so they are supportive in a sort of theoretical way, 'cause they love me and I am their daughter but… Yeah. (G4)

The result is, once again, a worsening of Giulia's feelings of isolation and so yet another contribution to her general desolation. Considering this, and all of the other

negative influences on Giulia's motivation, it is not surprising to find that the thought of discontinuing her Italian at university has long lurked in the back of her mind, even emerging as a real possibility at times of particular emotional turmoil. When I talk to Giulia in May/June she is closer than ever before to abandoning her plan for an Italian major and the main cause for her lack of motivation is her belief that even her best efforts will not help her avoid failing the two remaining compulsory courses. In particular, she is very concerned about 'Contemporary Italian Fiction':

G: I am very very nervous about it, because we will be reading novels in Italian, answering questions in Italian, writing essays in Italian, and given that I am almost failing now I don't even see how that's possible for me to succeed at that… There is just no way I can… I can't even read Italian, let alone produce an answer of an essay, and what am I going to do in the exam? So the only thing that I could do now is to change my major to a European major, and drop Italian.

A: That would be a shame…

G: (*suddenly angry tone*) Well I don't know what else… (*calmer*) Nothing is going to change, me working any harder is not going to make a difference it's no one's fault, and it's just the way it is… (G4)

What has happened, one might wonder, to Giulia's goal of fluency, her Italian dream which had initially seemed so motivationally powerful? Of course learning from Rebecca that her expectations of fluency were misguided might have dampened Giulia's enthusiasm, but it also seems that in her frantic attempt to "keep her head above water" and to manage the day-by-day requirements and challenges posed by of her courses, her dream to live in Italy has taken a secondary place in her list of priorities, therefore losing most of its motivational power, of which we find evidence in a later comment by Giulia to do with the difficulty of maintaining the motivational power of her dream while feeling so removed from everything that excites her passion for Italy and its culture:

If I had been able to get to Italy once a year for the last couple of years I think that would have helped enormously. To be there and to feel like I fit there… And just to top up and reignite those feelings… I think for me that would have been huge. (G7)

However there are also logistic issues with her plan to travel to Italy soon after graduation; Giulia is becoming increasingly aware of these, and although she is not quite ready to give up on her dream, she has begun having doubts about the viability of her original plan:

241

The reality of the situation me being 33 living and working there is really not… Without lots of money and contacts… So even though I guess what I said would be a best case scenario I am realistic and it's not really something I expect (…) I am also realistic about my Italian at the end of this year, I will still not be proficient enough I think from the people I have talked to who have tried to do similar things to work in a business environment or do sort of translation or anything like that. (G4)

By September Giulia thinks that the only way she will be able to spend time in Italy in the foreseeable future is by moving to London and travelling there as a tourist, or as a student enrolled in a full-immersion Italian course. This is indeed a significant change in Giulia's original plans, and one that clearly reflects a major shift in her expectations of the time and challenges involved in the process of developing her *Italianità* to assimilate to life in Italy. In fact, although Giulia cannot quite bring herself to say so, she now holds very little hope that her dream of an Italian life will ever actualise in the form she had initially envisioned.

With both her main initial goals challenged by adverse circumstances and seeming increasingly unachievable, Giulia is forced to reconsider not only her plans for the future but also to re-evaluate the importance that learning Italian still holds in her life. Her reflections on this crucial matter, incidentally sparked by an issue we touched on during the June interview, bring Giulia to the realisation that beneath her desire to live in Italy and speak the language there is a longing for a deeper understanding of her Italian heritage:

That was just something I was thinking about after we talked last time, 'cause I can't remember what I said, but I thought it was something like I want to be fluent in Italian so that I can live and work in Italy then and I got home and I thought it's not actually that, because I do feel very at home in Italy, and comfortable there and the language is a big barrier, but it is, on another level, simply about really understanding what it is to be Italian as much as a migrant or a second language speaker ever can, that so much of culture is embedded in language and art and literature and history and writing that not be able to access that means that you cannot possibly ever really get to grips with that culture properly and therefore understanding my ancestors, be able to read original letters if I got them, be able to read some of the papers from when they left in 1929 or do some research in Sicily or… All that sort of practical stuff but also being able to just get a sense of what it's like to be Italian, because you can pick up so much idiomatic stuff and expressions north and south and regional things, and to able to get more of a sense of

242

that and therefore understand more of myself coming from that place, I don't mean the actual place, but metaphorical space, more. (G5)

What the data seems to suggest here is a significant change in Giulia's motivation, from seeking fluency in the language in order to reconstruct her identity and her life in Italy, to seeking language acquisition – and not necessarily fluency – as a gateway to a level of cultural knowledge which will allow her to understand the *Italianità* of her ancestors and therefore her own, and so in sum as a tool of self-discovery. This diametrical shift from perceiving language as the tool for 'reaching out' into a social context in a physically defined Italian space, to an interpretive lens through which to 'look inside' towards the metaphorical Italian space of Giulia's own *Italianità* would not have taken place without the multiple constraints posed by the learning environment and the wider social context in which Giulia operates and hence it represents a good illustration of the interdependence of the learner' internal world (thoughts, feelings, aspirations, perceptions, etc.) and of the learning and social setting in shaping and re-shaping of investments in the language. For Giulia, the limits to her imagination posed by her immediate reality forces the shift by prompting her to look beyond the most instrumental uses of her heritage language to discover its more intrinsic and more intimately poignant value.

10.6 *Tre mesi all'alba[44]*: Emotional healing and motivation rebound

At the my next meeting with Giulia I am somewhat surprised to find that despite all of her anxiety about her grades she has passed all of the papers she was enrolled in, that she has not modified her programme of studies, and that she has instead decided to complete the two remaining papers in her Italian major. My speculation was that perhaps the motivational shift described in the previous section has had the effect of resetting Giulia's learning needs and expectations, therefore lessening her perception of the unsuitability of her programme of studies. However Giulia simply explains that she has come to this decision after allowing herself some much needed time off the books during the study break, during which she was able to relax, "see things more clearly" and remind herself of some very good reasons why she should see things through:

---

[44] Lit. 'Three months to dawn'. Italian soldiers used this expression to indicate how long they had left on their 12-month compulsory army service. I once used this expression and explained its meaning to Giulia, who thought that the analogy between her language learning experience and army service was rather fitting.

I am living where I am living, everything is set up for me to finish this and if I don't, or if I don't even give it a go I am going to regret it. (G5)

I am not going to give up very easily. I mean it's been ten years that I've been trying to get here so I am not just going to curl up and go away. (G5)

Well I just thought I have to give it a go. You know I got through to third year and I know I am a good student; I am getting A and A+ in all my other courses, except Italian. (G6)

The motivational self-talk Giulia engages at this point illustrates that some of the thoughts that inspired her in the first place still represent a valid source of motivation, but that their motivational force is only fully operational at times when Giulia is relatively clear minded and away from the day-to-day preoccupations of her courses, such as during the study break. Nonetheless, when the new term begins and Giulia goes back to class, her determination is rewarded by a set of new and favourable circumstances, which immediately has a deep effect on her state of mind and therefore her motivation. To begin with, Giulia receives some very good news about the compulsory Italian literature paper she is taking:

I had thought that I should do all the exams assignments and presentations in Italian and I had just worked myself up to such a lather about it… And it wasn't that I couldn't get an A, I could not see how I would pass something like that. So in our first lecture – there is only five of us in the class – I just checked with the teacher that it would be in Italian and he was like 'oh no no no, this is a literature course, not a language course: you have to read the texts in Italian, but we talk about them in English, or whatever you want to do, if you want to do it in Italian, we'll do them in Italian, but you don't have to…'. (…) So it's good. (G5)

This moment marks an emotional turning point for Giulia: learning that she will be able to do her work for this paper in English reassures her that she has an excellent chance to complete the course, effectively transforming Giulia's crippling anxiety into confidence in her abilities. As a result Giulia begins the course with much energy and enthusiasm, and soon discovers she thoroughly enjoys the literature texts she is made to study and that she is able to discuss them with ease and even a little flair, earning her the praise of her literature teacher:

'

> For the essay I got an A+ and Paolo said "you could just add a couple of more references in and then you could submit it to a journal'. Fantastic. 'You couldn't have done any better and you make some really strong arguments'. Fantastic. And then my oral presentation which was to that class for an hour, he said 'I am going to send this to the author and say this is what our students are doing in New Zealand'. And he gave me 100 percent. But the good thing was that it was more then the mark, Arianna. You are meant to get feedback like that, for me that stuff is just so important, and I think that's just linked to all that childhood stuff of being told you are not bright, you are not good enough, blah blah blah… It's just a very personal thing for me that was wonderful. (G5)

Given the externally regulated nature of Giulia's emotions, this is indeed the kind of qualitative feedback she needs to counteract the negativity she has been experiencing so far and to feel good about herself and her studies. The consequences of it on her self-concept are tremendous, and deeply alter her perspective, not only on this particular course, but on her whole university experience. The last Italian language compulsory course, in particular, presents Giulia with much the same challenges as its second-year counterpart; however Giulia's newly found confidence in her abilities finally releases her from the paralysing emotional fog of the last term, and prompts her to take action. In particular Giulia realises that if she is to complete the paper and the major, she must get to grips with the course content she is not learning in class, and since she knows she cannot do this by herself, she decides to hire a private tutor. The main advantage of one-on-one tuition is that Giulia is finally given the opportunity to manage the pace of her learning:

> I am able to work at the right pace. Just that thing of her being patient and just having the time for her to listen and wait… 'No I am not going to help you out and I am not going to finish your sentence'. And I get there, I just needed someone to give me that extra thirty seconds to think it through, and sometimes I'd just close my eyes and go… And then I'd say it and it would be perfect, but in class, I could never do that, 'cause someone else would have already cut in or… I was never allowed to get there So that was fantastic and it gave me confidence that I could get there, I just needed a little bit more time… Whereas in class I never felt like I could do it (G6)

The most significant effect the private sessions have on Giulia is a confidence boost deriving from the realisation that given sufficient time and support, she can understand the concepts covered in class and achieve good results. The second, equally important consequence is that Giulia finally feels she is making progress and that, however slowly,

her oral Italian is improving. Furthermore, for the first time in months, she has concrete proof that her learning efforts are indeed reflected in her results, which since the beginning of her private lessons have began to recover:

> I did much better in the test and much better in my last assignment, I got an A in the test and an A- in the assignment. In the AV I still struggle, but the other results were much better and I think that's directly linked to Stefania. (G5)

Also during the private lessons Giulia can take control of her learning, dictating not only the pace, but also the kind of activities she would like to engage in. In practical terms this means that her opportunities to practise speaking Italian are maximised and Giulia is given the chance to initiate, take part in and direct "real conversations" about personally relevant subjects, a process from which Giulia takes immense pleasure:

> It felt really natural, I wasn't even thinking oh my god I am speaking Italian! And she seemed to understand what I was saying (*laughs*). So that was probably a highlight or a punctuation mark for the whole two years of some kind of small proof, nothing to do with marks or exams or assessments or essays, that signified to me that I must have made some progress… because she is Italian, and we have been talking for over five minutes! And it's not about a latte or a panini! I just loved it. (G6)

But above all, unlike the university's lecturers, Giulia's private tutor is able to give her detailed and personalised feedback and the kind of personal encouragement that Giulia has been craving throughout her studies:

> The feedback was unexpected but wonderful. She'd go it's okay, you are coming along really good, even from three weeks ago when you first came I have noticed an improvement. And part of me would not believe her at all, but part of me actually responded to that. (G6)

> And so this whole time, it wasn't until here that I truly realised that I needed that, and I know that university isn't set up for that, but if I had had someone saying… Or outside, in my personal life saying oh my god I heard you talking the other day, you made so much improvement! But I had no one… I only had my own perspective, which was that I was very bad, you know a very bad speaker… (G5)

It is only now in fact that Giulia fully realises the power that such feedback has on her self-concept and motivation, and that most of the anxiety and fear of failure that she

experienced during her time at university could have been avoided had she been in an environment that afforded her this kind of personally tailored learning. Giulia finally comes to the conclusion her problems have stemmed not from her lack of academic skills, but from the unsuitability of this learning setting. The shift in attitude this causes is massive and very evident in Giulia's demeanour during our September interview, where she talks about the problems she is still experiencing in the language classes – and especially during the AV sessions – in a very matter-of fact way, showing no sign of emotional disquiet. What motivates her now, Giulia explains, is the thought of being so close to the completion of her studies:

> G: I guess I feel like I am on the homeward stretch now.
> A: Is that what keeps you motivated?
> G: Totally. I think that is near to the end, it will all be over soon. (G6)

10.7 Looking back, but not in anger: Reflections and resolutions

In December I meet Giulia for the last time. The university year is over and Giulia is back to her normal self: relaxed, talkative, funny. Her positive state of mind is perfectly captured by a glorious summer morning in Wellington, which we enjoy over a cappuccino with the ocean in front of us.

We begin our conversation on the subject of Giulia's initial expectations of fluency and Giulia smiles at what she recognises as her own naiveté in equating an Italian major with fluency in the language, and admits that, at least initially, her unrealistic expectation of the learning experience and results university would provide played a major part in starting off the demotivational cycle she found herself in soon after beginning her studies. Having known in advance that today she would still be possibly years away from being able to speak Italian fluently might have indeed stirred her away from choosing to study Italian at university; however Giulia does not harbour any regret about her journey, as in the end she considers the experience as a successful one:

> A: Looking back at the whole thing, what do you think was your biggest success in studying Italian at University?
> G: Sticking with it. And perhaps making progress despite it not being an environment in which I thrive in to learn a language. Improving my Italian despite an environment that is not particularly suited to me. That was a success. (G7)

Having personally experienced the complications and challenges associated with an inappropriate learning environment and tools, the importance of finding ways to learn that fully suit her personal needs is now paramount for Giulia. However she also admits that without her university experience she might never have discovered the details of her particular needs and learning style:

> It's taught me about how I learn, so when I continue learning Italian in the future I think I will seek out ways that are more effective for me, and also doing something that naturally suits me. I am a talker, I love talking about life, politics, love, religion, sex, boys, gender stuff, feminism… If I can get in an environment where someone asks me my opinion and I have to try and say that, that is a huge motivation for me because my personality is that I am a talker. But I have also learned how I cope with pressure, my expectations of myself, how hard I am on myself, how I best learn a language. So hopefully I'll be able to employ that fruitfully going forward. (G7)

Giulia's reflections at the end of her studies show that what she has been through during the last two years has meant much more than a way to gain a qualification and improve her Italian; it has been a true journey of self-discovery, during which the most important lessons learned have been about herself and have armed her with precious information which will come useful in approaching not only her future language learning, but anything that life might throw at her in the years to come. It is also clear that Giulia has not given up on her desire to one day be fluent in Italian, as she described her university experience as "a stepping stone rather than the thing itself, a bridge to the next stage". However for the moment Giulia admits not to be ready – in practical, but also in psychological terms – to leave New Zealand for a life in Italy. The last two years have been very intense and Giulia's present intention is to enjoy a much-needed rest, and to dedicate the summer months to cultivating the relationship with her new partner, which she also identified as a possible reason why her urge to "escape to Italy" is no longer as strong as it used to be. Travelling to Italy is still, without question, one of Giulia's key aspirations for the future, however on this brilliant Wellington morning, Giulia is clearly not in a hurry to pack her luggage just yet.

10.8 Italian Heritage vs. learning context: Opposing forces

Like in most other stories in this study, Giulia's construction of her own *Italianità* begins with her exposure to elements of Italian language and culture during her childhood and particularly through the influence of her Italian grandmother. Giulia's

memories of this stage of her life and of the *Italianità* that inhabits it are at the root of the "very Italian" part of Giulia's self-concept:

> A: Do you feel Italian?
>
> G: Yeah, I don't feel an Italian, but I feel that part of me is very Italian, I think a lot of it has to do with the Italian socialisation I was exposed to… Always having Italians people in the house, always having Italian food, always making pasta… (G6)

The identification of childhood experiences as the chief source of her *Italianità* makes Giulia's experience similar to that of Francesco, who, like Giulia, talked about his Italian grandmother as the most crucial Italian influence in his life. However while Francesco's motivation centred on his memories of speaking Italian to his grandparents and his desire to recover a connection with his family, his cultural heritage and his own past, the fact that Giulia never learned to speak Italian as a child, and that her own *Italianità* stemmed from her immersion in a lively Italian community gives her motivation a rather different character. To begin with, Giulia's *Italianità* is not strictly tied to her personal relationship with her *nonna* or other members of her family, but rather with a wider sense of Italian culture and language, and in particular with the elements of these that are highlighted during communal celebrations, such as preparing and sharing food and generally enjoying people's company, as well as the performance of music and storytelling – all activities for which Giulia continues to have a penchant in adulthood, and that she recognises as a living inheritance of those Italian influences. Furthermore, the Italian culture that Giulia is exposed to as a child is that of many Italians from many different regions, coming together to speak Standard Italian and/or English as a lingua franca, and this contributes to an idea of her own *Italianità* as a non-regionally-bound entity which makes it easy for Giulia to develop a desire to travel to Italy and an affinity with Italian people and culture in general rather than with a particular region or province.

This brings us to the second element of Giulia's Italian identity influencing her desire to learn her heritage language, namely her need to communicate with the inhabitants of a country that she considers in many ways her real homeland:

> I feel part of me is very Italian also because of the way I feel when I am there, that feels… It's very difficult to describe but it feels like I am home, like I have been there all

along, and it's very strange to have that feeling and not being able to communicate with people around me… (G6)

Giulia's rationalisation of the deep sense of belonging she feels in Italy as a direct consequence of her Italian heritage is perhaps the most obvious way in which her Italian ancestry and self-concept influences her language learning motivation. While this manifests initially as the desire to communicate with Italians while holidaying there, it takes an even more significant place in Giulia's plans for the future when she decides to live in Italy on a permanent basis, as it is only at this point that Giulia realises the necessity to construct an Italian identity which will allow her to be accepted as a bona fide Italian, and not simply as a foreigner living in Italy:

> When I am in Italy, however, I never fit completely, because I am still more out than in. While my feet may feel at home here, I am viewed as a foreigner, my faltering Italian, my strange clothes and ways, and the simple fact that wasn't born here, mark me out as *stranieri*[45], a stranger. (GJp.29)

The excerpt shows that the "very Italian" part of Giulia's self-concept, which is enough to make her feel at home in Italy, is not enough to convince other Italians that she belongs among them. For Giulia then, learning Italian language becomes a tool to bring her Italian self-concept and social identity into balance, beginning her pursuit of Italian fluency for the social capital that this will afford her in Italy, thus reflecting Giulia's investment in a future Italian identity.

But there is also another heritage-related dimension to Giulia's motivation to learn Italian, and namely the more 'typical' desire of heritage language learners to establish a connection with her living Italian relatives and to investigate the history of her family in order to learn about her own *Italianità*:

> Part of that fantasy picture is also chatting to my relatives in Italy, part of that dream of living there is spending time with my relatives, being able to do research, like go to Sicily and research about my family in the library and ask for information easily. (G5)

What is most interesting in Giulia's case is that while she could easily pursue these ends from New Zealand and with little Italian, both these intentions become enmeshed

---

[45] The Italian word *straniero* is commonly mistranslated as 'stranger', however its meaning is more accurately that of 'foreigner'. The Italian word for 'stranger' is *sconosciuto*.

with her bigger plan to one day live in Italy and therefore with her desire to become fluent in the language, hence adding another dimension to her "fantasy picture" and contributing to the strength of her initial motivation. It's perhaps not surprising therefore to find that when Giulia becomes aware of the unrealistic nature of her plan to build a new life in Italy, this most basic need to understand her own *Italianità* becomes her main language learning goal:

> I think that this stuff is much more fundamental to me doing this whole thing rather than I want to live and work in Italy. if I was able to read Italian books and novels and poetry... The papers... Online stuff, then I think I probably would feel more Italian, and that comes in as a motivating factor I think I said to you as wanting to see the world and experience it through Italian eyes. (G7)

The switch between pursuing the language as a way to create a coherent social presence in Italy, to recognising its symbolic value in the construction of a personal sense of ethnic identity is motivationally very significant for Giulia's journey, not only because it marks a shift between social to symbolic and personal capital in Giulia's investment, but also because it frees Giulia from much of the expectation-related anxiety she has previously experienced, allowing her to adopt a more relaxed and matter-of-fact attitude which will ultimately help her navigate her way through the last few weeks of her university experience.

In general, however,when it comes to sustaining motivation in the face of the actual day-to-day learning of the language, Giulia's own construction of her own *Italianità*, the way she feels in Italy and even her desire to "see the world through Italian eyes" do not come to be of any particular assistance; on the contrary, some of the challenges Giulia experiences in the classroom are directly related to her Italian background. For example, Giulia's personal connection to Italian culture and her resulting goal of fluency isolate her from the rest of the class, contributing to her emotional turmoil and the negative effects it has on her motivation and the learning process. Also, the very nature of Giulia's *Italianità* is posited as the basis of problems with learning the language:

> I think it would be different if I had grown up with Italians speaking, if mum had spoken it, I would have heard it a lot more, then I would sort of feel like oh this is easy, it's not too difficult for me because this is who I am, but I just have the feelings associated with it and not the knowledge, like linguistically, and that makes it harder. (G7)

251

The "feelings associated with it" are, in Giulia's mind, all of the personal and affective connections she has with her ancestral culture which ultimately lie at the base of her motivation to learn Italian. To have such strong personal and emotional links to the culture (especially when this is not accompanied by a matching linguistic knowledge) is for Giulia a "blessing in disguise" in that it can mean a strong affective base to her motivation, but also to crippling negative emotions when the results are not what she had hoped for:

> It makes me quite intense and serious when other students go 'hey, fifty percent, who cares, we are going to the pub on Friday night'. And Giulia's going 'oh my god, I really care 'cause I really want to be fluent and how am I going to be fluent if I only get fifty percent in the test, oh my god this is a disaster, I am such a failure. 'Cause I want this so much and I am not getting there'. Whereas for those people it's more of a 'oh well. Still got a pass'. (G6)

Giulia does recognises that having Italian heritage can represent a strong motivational force, in particular by virtue of the certainty that one "will have some ongoing relationship with Italy"; unfortunately, this does not apply to her particular situation, and the reason for this is to be found in the nature of the learning environment within which she operates:

> A: But you think that your Italian heritage is actually a disadvantage?
> G: (*laughs*) I think that's true in my case but only because of the way it is taught at university. If I had found another way to do this, then no, it wouldn't have been a disadvantage; it would have been a great driving motivational energy and force. It's just that that has not, unfortunately, been my experience. In university I keep coming up against walls when it turns back on itself and quickly I become frustrated, depressed, you know and not making progress, all that stuff. (G5)

The excerpt expresses well something that already been suggested, and in particular that while having Italian heritage or feeling at least in part Italian, is, for Giulia, a powerful source of inspiration in pursuing fluency in her heritage language, its actual motivational influence on the day-to-day sustenance and management of her learning efforts is lessened by the negative effects that elements of the learning environment have on Giulia's affective states. In Giulia's mind it is as if her heritage-related motivation, however powerful, is never allowed to manifest itself through overtly motivated behaviour, as it is forced to remain in its potential form by the restrictive practical, and

252

above all affective boundaries ("keeps coming up against walls") drawn by the learning context in which Giulia finds herself. It is only during the last few weeks of her courses that some of the "walls" begin to give way and Giulia is allowed the mental and emotional space to regulate her own motivation by using motivational self-talk. It is interesting to notice, however that this does not include any reference to her own Italian heritage or indeed to the Italian dream that had been so influential at the beginning of her studies. This fact could perhaps suggest that in the face of the continuous opposing forces presented by the learning setting, the influence of these has been eroded and they have been instead been replaced with more immediate motivational thoughts ("it will all be over soon"), which, together with the general improvement of Giulia's affective states we witness in the last stages of her studies, is enough to prompt her to put forth one final burst of effort and finish the year with good results.

10.9 Postscript

Cara[46] Arianna

All is well with me.

I graduated in May 07 and in June took off for a spot of budget travelling with Jeff, which included Tokyo, Munich, London for 3 months, Greece, Milan, Como, Rezzonico, Bellagio, Menaggio, Austria, Berlin, New York and Los Angeles. Some tough times but some great times too.

I REVELLED in my Italian language and culture being back there, albeit in a slightly surreal German-super-rich environment of Lake Como. Our host, a 3rd generation pizza maker of lakeside hamlet Rezzonico brought me back to earth though, showing me that beer and football (with the occasional pizza) and cigarettes can sustain a happy life.

He liked us I think and took us up into the mountains, showing us boar prints in the mud, his stone house he lives in summer and the neighbours who are the local mushroom picking experts. Unfortunately his accent and speed and unbelievable impatience, combined with my rudimentary and out of use ears, made our conversation somewhat ugly to witness I'm sure, but we had lots of fun.

Ahhhhh Arianna - you don't know how frustrating it is to feel SO CLOSE to a culture and a people and a way of thinking and being and living, and yet to still have this wall (perhaps it is only paper now and not bricks?) between 'it' and me. I hope it will not be a lifelong task to get through this and wish wish wish, I could legally live and work in Italy for a year or two to really accomplish a leap ahead.

Still, it was a surprise to get to Italy and I did well, considering no preparation, nor dictionary!

---

[46] 'dear'

I am searching for a Skype buddy in Italy that I can practise with.

PS I just visited my *nonna* who is 92 and in a rest home. She has severe dementia and does not recognise me, but when I fed her lunch, and said *'come stai nonna*?[47], She replied, '*bene*[48], - from nowhere - amazing what is in there! (Gemail1)

---

[47] 'how are you, grandma?'
[48] 'good'

Chapter Eleven: Discussion

11.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to deepen our understanding of the participants' experiences that were presented in the individual case studies by discussing several insights that have emerged from findings relating to the influence of the learners' *Italianità* on their motivation to learn their heritage language.

Reflecting the structure of motivation as a process including three main phases, the following discussion is organised around three main sections, each availing itself of points of comparison and contrast between the experiences of the five study participants in relation to the motivational influence of their sense of *Italianità* on each stage of the motivation process. The ultimate aim of the chapter is to highlight both general trends and examples of individuality in the ways the participants' motivation is aroused and sustained throughout their learning by means of cognitive, affective and social processes that have at their heart the learner's own construction of their Italian identity, in a focussed attempt to come to some definitive conclusion with regard to three main research questions.

A summary of the conclusions drawn from the following discussion will constitute the focus of the next chapter, which will also bring the project to a close with a final consideration of the study's main implications.

11.2 *Italianità* and reasons for learning Italian

In the context of Williams and Burden's (1997) definition of L2 learning motivation as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, the beginning of the motivational process coincides with the emergence of a learner's thoughts and feelings reflecting their curiosity and/or interest towards the L2. As previously highlighted (see section 3.4) numerous studies of HLL motivation have focused on the learners' reasons for studying their HL, but have neglected what comes before the formation of goals, including the personal history and construction of the learners' own connection to their heritage and the arousal of their interest in their ancestral language. The nature of these initial thoughts and feelings is crucial in terms of the evolution of motivation, as it may eventually lead to the formation of desires, wishes, and goals that represent the direct antecedents of the decision to engage in language learning, ultimately influencing the

direction and intensity of the learner's motivation in subsequent stages of the process. In the case of heritage language learners, a consideration of this pre-decisional stage of motivation is particularly important, as it is only a close examination of the origins of one's interest in their heritage language that reveals the fundamental role that the construction of their heritage identity plays in this and following stages of the motivational process.

Examples of this first phase of the motivational process are found in all of the participants' stories, where the development of a personal interest in the ancestral language always takes place before – sometimes years before – any definitive decision to pursue language learning. Marianne for example, speaks of her curiosity for Italian as something that has been with her since childhood when she says "I always wanted to learn Italian; I always had this thing, this desire" (M1). She sees her interest in the language as stemming from the Italian influences on her upbringings, and as developing through her relationship with her father, with whom she shared a passion for their cultural and linguistic heritage. Francesco's interest in the language of his Italian ancestors is also rooted in his early years and in particular in his memories of speaking the dialect to his grandparents. His awareness of the deep sense of connection with his Italian heritage that he possessed as a child assumes an increasingly significant motivational role later in life, but it is something that he admits has always existed in his mind:

> Than is something that for me… That is and has always been in my mind. I have some connection with it. If I hadn't felt that, I don't think I would have started (…). I grew up speaking dialect at home, so that switches my button. (F6)

Giulia, too, was fascinated by Italian language at a young age, and though she has scant memories of her own relatives speaking the language, she remembers the feelings of curiosity and excitement she experienced as a child when listening to her grandmothers' Italian friends singing traditional songs during the many get-togethers organised by the local Italian community.

It is easy to see that a certain degree of emotional arousal associated with the language existed in these learners long before their actual decision to learn it, and that a personal sense of Italian identity was implicated in these learners' motivational arousal, as clearly the source of their interest in the language had its roots in their socialisation as members of Italian groups around them, and in their emotionally-laden memories of

Italian speakers in the early years of their lives. In this sense, one could argue, the seed of HLL motivation has been with these learners for as long as they have been conscious of their Italian ancestry, hence co-existing with their sense of *Italianità* from its very beginning.

For the other two participants, Livia and Esther, though there was always an awareness of their Italian ancestry, this did not correlate with an interest in the language until later in life, and only as a result of particular sets of circumstances that acted as motivational catalysts. In the case of Livia, she had never imagined learning Italian before going to university, while for Esther it was a trip to Italy at the age of 50 that awoke her desire to learn the language. Still, the significance of these learners' sense of Italian identity for their motivational arousal is undeniable: for Livia, this is reflected in her desire to learn the language to keep in close contact with her family in Italy, while for Esther learning Italian is a way to discover and develop the *Italianità* that she feels is in her by virtue of her ancestry.

The significance of a personal sense of Italian identity for the arousal of motivation is explicitly recognised by the participants themselves when they declare that without it, they would never have approached the study of Italian:

> If I wasn't Italian… I would not be here studying it. (F6)

> I don't think I would have done if it weren't for that. (M3)

> That's the main driving point for me, that I am Italian. (E5)

On closer inspection however, it is clear that the significance the participants' sense of their own *Italianità* extends well beyond the emergence of their interest in the language, as a qualitative analysis of each individual's construction of their Italian identity is reflected in the motivational process that underlie different stages of the learning process, starting with the decision to commit to language learning and the setting of learning goals.

11.3 *Italianità* and deciding to study Italian

While it is clear that each individual's construction of their personal connection with their heritage language is crucial to motivational arousal and so in turn to the decision to pursue language learning, the participants stories' show that even high degrees of

interest, curiosity and emotional appeal for the HL are not the only antecedents to the decision to commit to a language course, hence supporting the idea that "an individual might have strong reasons for doing something, but not actually decide to do it" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 121). In fact, the participants' data reveal that in all cases the decision to study Italian comes as result of particular initial circumstances which in turn have their origin in the interplay of the learners' internal drives (personal attitudes, wishes and desires) and their construction of external factors such as specific events, people and situations. Among the latter, common to all of the learners' final decision to commit to language study, is the influence of a critical event, which ultimately triggers the learners' decision by modifying and/or enhancing their previous construction of *Italianità* and of the role of Italian language in it to bring about an increased desire and/or a sense of urgency about learning their ancestral language.

For both Marianne and Francesco such a trigger was the death of their closest Italian relative. In the case of Marianne, while she already had a long-standing interest in learning Italian, her father's passing brought her to face the intergenerational depletion of her family's Italian identity, and intensified the sense of urgency and duty that comes from being one of the last two living descendants of her Italian ancestors. This added some compelling dimensions to Marianne's construction of her *Italianità* – and of the role of language in it – that resulted in a strengthening and change of direction of her motivation. Similarly, for Francesco, his grandmother's death had the effect of intensifying the emotional connection to his ancestry and heritage language, ultimately bringing to a head his long-standing desire to recover the feeling of connectedness to his family and to his Italian roots that characterised the first years of his life, when he could speak Italian fluently.

For Giulia and Esther the decision to pursue the study of their HL was triggered by their experiences of travelling to Italy and experiencing Italian life first-hand. For Giulia, the emotional response was a feeling of "finally fitting in somewhere" (G1), which she constructed as a direct consequence of the latent *Italianità* she believed was part of her by virtue of her Italian ancestry. This realisation marked the beginning of Giulia's construction of her Italian heritage as the source of a partially Italian identity that could only find its full expression in Italy, which in the end leads her to the resolution to become fluent in her heritage language. Esther's first trip to Italy was also crucial to her decision to study Italian in that during such trip, Esther's mere knowledge of having Italian ancestry turned into a strong sense of belonging, as a result of which

she began to think of her heritage identity as an important part of herself that demanded to be explored, developed and embraced.

Finally for Livia, who was moved to join the Italian programme by a visit to the university's Language Centre, the emotional response was perhaps not as dramatic as for the other learners; nonetheless, the same process of heightening of awareness in one's Italian identity applied.

In reviewing the participants' experiences with regard to the specific events that lead to the decision to commit to the study of their HL, two points are particularly worth noting. The first is that while the influence of a single identifiable trigger is evident in each of the participant's stories, there are differences in the ways these trigger operates: for some it brings about very dramatic and sudden changes in the participants' sense of their own *Italianità* which then lead to major changes to the learners' lives (e.g. Giulia, Esther), while for others its effects are much more subdued (e.g. Marianne, Francesco, Livia). The second point is that while we can identify a trigger that can be seen as the main influence, decisions are rarely just the product of one event but involve other factors that have to do with the incidence of specific opportunities, resources, and circumstances. Independently from the individual manifestation of the trigger and the specific circumstances leading to action, what is always true is that the process of deciding to pursue one's heritage language highlights both the constructive nature of *Italianità* and that of motivation, offering a good illustration of the dynamic interplay between a learner's internal world, their social context, their identity and their motivation.

11.3.1 *Italianità* and initial goals

The participants' common goal – to gain a certain degree of competence in their heritage language – reflects their acknowledgment and appreciation of their Italian heritage and a desire to take ownership of and/or develop their own sense of *Italianità*. At this basic, common motivational level it is easy to see how the learners' perception of their own Italian identity is implicated in the formation of learning goals, as a central desire to reconnect to one's Italian roots lies at the basis of the primary objective of all of the participants.

A deeper level of interpretation is instead revealed when we consider the details of the specific situations each of the learners imagine themselves in once they have achieved the linguistic competence they seek. In fact, the exploration of how each of the

learners imagines the end result of their learning is a productive exercise that can help us understand what they expect to gain from learning their heritage language in terms of symbolic, social and material resources, providing significant insights into how their personal construction of *Italianità* is implicated in this initial stage of motivation. While all learners seem to share a general desire of reconnecting to their Italian roots, for each of them the attainment of this achievement seems to take a slightly different form. Francesco, for example, sees learning Italian is a means to gain back something of his own history, which he believes will only be fully achieved when he will be able to have "marvellous intricate conversations" (F5) with his mother. On the other hand, Giulia seeks fluency in her heritage language to live and work in Italy in order to feel "completely plugged in" the culture that surrounds her. The end result is again different for Marianne, whose language learning is aimed at making Italian culture an integral part of her life, and to finally be able to recreate the traditional Italian dishes described in her grandmother's cookbook.

In considering these representations of goals, it is not difficult to see how they reflect elements of the learners' construction of their own Italian heritage and identity, as they often even include people, places and objects from the learners' own histories and backgrounds as symbols or clues of the types and aspects of *Italianità* to which they aspire through the learning of their heritage language. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the fact that in spite of similarities in some of the learners' backgrounds and experiences, learning goals ultimately tend to take very diverse and highly personal forms, highlighting well how the complex and idiosyncratic nature of personal intention is already evident in the early stages of the motivational process. When we consider Marianne's and Francesco's stories, for example, we notice how, for both these learners, a long-standing interest in the language which is later made more acute by the death of a close Italian family member, how they are both moved by the feeling that their connection to their ancestral culture is diminishing, and they both aspire to a level of fluency that will allow them to conduct a 'normal conversation'. On closer inspection, however, we discover that Marianne's main concern is learning her heritage language as "the medium that takes you closer to all of those cultural things" (M3) that in her view represent her own and her family's *Italianità*. Her desire to one day be able to read and put into practice the advice found in her grandmother's cookbook perfectly reflects her construction of her *Italianità* and her feelings towards it. A different picture emerges when we consider the case of Francesco, whose quest for Italian competence is a way to

gain a more introspective type of *Italianità* as the personal feeling of belonging he experienced as a child, and can be only retrieved through the recreation of his ability to speak Italian to his own family members.

Individuality is also highlighted in the fact that though all of the participants seem to have some literal visualisastion of their ultimate goal, there are differences with regard to how vivid these mental representations are. This is not surprising: some people's imagination is naturally more active, giving them the ability to create very detailed mental depictions of what they are aiming for (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). By far the most imaginative amongst the participants is Giulia, whose "Italian dream" is a highly detailed sensory projection of her ambitions:

> In my dream (…) I have a great job in Italy and I have perfect comprehension and I can express myself perfectly, not just adequately, in the way that I have control over the English language, I can do that in Italy with Italian. So I see myself doing that and interacting with people, in a restaurant or in the street, going up the apartment stairs and *ciao signora*! And it being easy, me being easy in that world, in that place. (G1)

Though not quite as detailed as Giulia's visualisation, Esther's mental picture of herself holding a perfectly fluent conversation with the Italian ambassador is also a good example of the ability to envision learning goals clearly, and one that illustrates well how, in most cases, the participants' imaginary representations of their ultimate goals do not simply reflect their ambitions with regard to a particular level of linguistic competence, but it is the result of their mental construction of an ideal version of themselves of which competence in Italian is a crucial element. In this sense, the notion of a personal ideal language self (Dörnyei, 2009) and of learners' imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003) can be useful for an interpretation of the participants' goals that goes beyond the traditional categories of instrumental and integrative motivation to explain simultaneously both what the learner wants to do and who they want to be by means of the ideal heritage language speaker they intend to become. An interpretation of learners' goals as reflecting the learners' own ideal language selves and their desire to belong to communities of Italian speakers was particularly useful for the current enquiry: ideal selves are, after all, personal constructions of future or desired identity, and so a study of the aspects of *Italianità* that they include (including the nature of the Italian communities one wishes to be part of) can reveal much about the motivational role of the learners' sense of their own Italian identity on this stage of the process. The

following section attempts to provide such an interpretation through a discussion of the participants' ambitions of self/identity, and of the role that heritage language learning is seen to play in them as a means of self-discovery and identity reconstruction.

11.3.2 Identity reconstruction

In reviewing the findings relating to the role identity ambitions play in the participants' initial drive to learn their heritage language, two major trends are clearly recognisable. The first is illustrated by stories of Francesco, Marianne and Livia, where the initial drive to learn one's heritage language is accompanied by limited identity ambitions, as language learning is not expected to bring about dramatic changes to the participants' identity. In general, these learners approach the study of their HL with already very well defined personal and social identities and a clear sense of their own *Italianità*, but without the hope or the expectation that competence in their heritage language might dramatically change who they are or what they do. In Francesco's opinion, for example, learning Italian will not afford him elements of *Italianità* that he does not currently possess or that he desires:

> I am never going to put myself anywhere there (on the Italian side of the continuum), because I am never going to live there. And I mean it's not a goal. And it's not likelihood. I mean if something happened and I went there to live for a year… but even then I think it would be more likely that I'd feel like somebody that comes from the outside, who has some connection but not… (F5)

The same point is made by Marianne, for whom the attainment of a "full Italian identity" is clearly not a realistic option, and hence not a goal:

> I don't live in that community all of the time so I am not seeing a lot of Italian people all of the time… And I mean even when I go to Italy, I don't feel Italian. I feel quite different to Italian people… I mean you get treated as a tourist. It would be nice to feel like an insider but I don't think so, it would be difficult. (M2)

For both Francesco and Marianne, language learning is oriented towards an ideal version of themselves which is more in touch with Italian heritage and which is partly defined by their relationships with Italian speakers around them (i.e. family members), but the identity developments they pursue through the learning of their HL are not aimed at the construction of an outwardly recognisable Italian identity to be tested or

performed in exchanges with Italian speakers. In other words, these learners wish to learn the language mainly because of its symbolic and personal capital, rather than for the social advantages that it might entail. In this sense, the concept of ideal language self (Dörnyei, 2009) can be useful to interpret these learners' motivation, which does not appear to stem from a desire to integrate into any actual, metaphorical or imagined community of Italian speakers, but from a more "basic identification process within their individual self-concept" (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002, p 456). In this regard Livia represents an extreme case of this trend: for her the anticipated identity transformation is virtually non-existent, as she already considers herself fully Italian and is clearly not intentionally aimed at developing this aspect of her self-concept or identity.

The second trend is best exemplified by Giulia and Esther's stories. For Giulia, learning Italian is also inspired by her perception of its symbolic value and a desire to deepen her sense of connection to her ancestral culture, but also and above all by a very specific intention to relocate her whole life to Italy. In view of this last point, the notions of imagined community (Kanno & Norton, 2003) and investment (Norton, 2000) apply particularly well to Giulia's case, as her investment in learning her heritage language is also an investment in a full Italian identity which will grant her access to Italian society. Hence for Giulia Italian holds not only personal and emotional value, but is also and above all associated with a degree of a social capital, which she expects to be the key to access her new life in Italy. The construction of one's heritage language as a source of social capital is also found at the root of Esther's goal to speak with the Italian ambassador. Like Giulia, Esther's investment in learning the language reflects more than a desire to connect with her ancestral culture, as it is principally fuelled by her desire to optimise her social standing within a particular community of Italian speakers.

Independent of whether the participants' goals can be read as involving elements of observable identity reconstruction or as a mere deepening of the *Italianità* that is part of their self-concept, the origins of all of them are to be found in the learners' own emotional attachment to elements of their Italian ancestry, including aspects of their personal familial background and experiences involving speakers of the language. This social element of the origin of language learning goals is in fact evident in all of the participants' goals, thus strongly supporting the notion that, like other aspects of motivation, the process of goals setting is both internally driven and socially constructed.

11.3.3 Complex goals, complex identities

Another important observation that applies to all of the participants' stories is that while their idea of *Italianità* plays a crucial role in the formation of goals, it does so by interacting with other aspects of the learners' complex identities. This is found to be consistent with the notion that language learners are not just learners of a language, they are people with complex identities, a unique history and background operating within specific contexts and fluid systems of social relations (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001): their learning goals are complex, multilayered, and sometimes contrasting because the identity positions they hold and those they desire are also complex, multilayered and at times contrasting. Perceptions of one's *Italianità* are indeed important for this stage of motivation, but reflect only one facet of the participants' identities. These learners are also parents, workers, university students, artists, professionals, community leaders, New Zealanders: it would be unreasonable to think that all of these aspects of their complex identities are put on hold while they decide how to pursue the learning of Italian. In fact, it is plain that all of these other identities are interwoven with their sense of *Italianità* in forming the basis of their personal learning goals. We have already seen how this works for Francesco and Marianne, whose 'other identities' keep their ambitions of *Italianità* in check by limiting the range of *Italianità* to which they aspire (section 6.5 and 7.4). But ambitions of *Italianità* can also work in harmony with other aspects of the learners' complex identities to construct complex goals reflecting multiple identity ambitions. Giulia's goals are a good illustration of this as they reflect her desire to fulfil multiple identity ambitions through a process of identity reconstruction that for her comes to be symbolised by her attainment of Italian fluency. For Esther too, ambitions of *Italianità* are in harmony with her ambitions to achieve an identity as a community leader and Italian official and work in synergy with these in forming her goal of holding a fluent conversation with the ambassador.

While the interaction of *Italianità* and other facets of the learners' complex identities is already present in the initial stage of motivation in the formation of learning goals, it will become even more evident in the following one, where the learners must attempt to maintain their positive motivational state throughout their learning, often in spite of the difficulties emerging from being committed to multiple and at times divergent identity ambitions.

11.4 *Italianità* and sustaining motivation

Individual differences in how *Italianità* influences motivation become even more apparent once the courses begin and the participants start engaging with the language, as at this point their motivational states begin to be influenced by their ongoing contacts with elements of the learning setting. Once this process begins, the range of factors that can potentially influence the learners' motivation tends to grow exponentially and a fresh range of contextual elements come to interact with their internal dispositions to guide their decisions and behaviours in ways that make it very difficult to find significant points of comparison or contrast. In saying this, some interesting observations can be made by focussing on the portions of the participants' stories that contain examples of dramatic changes in the intensity and/or quality of their motivation, which are reflected in drastic changes in the participants' levels of enthusiasm or interest, or by more or less sudden changes in their learning goals, desires or plans of actions to do with their learning. In reviewing single examples of such occurrences in the respondents' accounts one finds that often changes in motivation are found in correspondence with critical events, experiences or realisations that are somehow related to the learners' own sense of their *Italianità* and/or to the identity ambitions associated with the learning of their heritage language. I will begin our review of such incidents by commenting on episodes containing examples of demotivation.

11.5 *Italianità* and demotivation

In considering the study's findings with regard to learners' demotivation, I conclude that, in general, these are consistent with previous research in showing that the a decline in motivation is common when a learner's initial enthusiasm begins to decline, and that elements of the learning setting hold a primary position among the main sources of learner demotivation (see section 2.2.4.2). For example, one common cause of demotivation in the participants' accounts are classroom activities or tasks that are perceived as too difficult or too demanding in terms of the time and effort they require, as these are often found to negatively affect some learners' sense of their own self-efficacy and self-confidence. This is illustrated, for example, by the drop in Francesco's confidence caused by the weekly in-class viewing of Italian television programmes (see section 7.5) and by the paralysing feelings of anxiety and confusion experienced by Giulia during the Audio Visual sessions (see section 10.5). The instructor's personality and teaching style is another common cause of learner discontent leading to

demotivation, which in the study is best exemplified by the experiences of Marianne, Livia and Esther, who all reported on the demotivating effects of various aspects of their teachers' behaviour.

But particularly interesting from the point of view of our enquiry are those occurrences of demotivation originating from elements of the learners' context that come to negatively affect motivational states not only because they represent cognitive and/or affective obstacles to the learning of the language, but because they also come to be perceived as threats or hindrances to the identity ambitions that are associated with it. In view of this last point, the following sections will discuss individual elements of the learning setting that are associated with the occurrence of demotivation because they represent a challenge to the learners' current and desired sense of *Italianità*. These are mainly to do with course objectives, aspects of teacher's behaviour and exchanges and relationships with peers.

11.5.1 Course Objectives

By far the greatest challenge some of the participants' face in maintaining their motivation throughout their learning is the realisation that the ultimate objectives of the courses to which they have committed are at odds with the specific learning goals they have set for themselves. A good illustration of this is found in the experiences of Marianne and Francesco, who on their very first lesson are welcomed into a 'grammarless' course. For both these participants, learning Italian grammar is one of the things they consider crucial to achieving their goal of holding a normal conversation, so to find that the language programme they have chosen will not specifically help them do that is, from their point of view, surprising and unsettling, especially when the study of grammar seems like such an important and common sense part of learning a language. The resulting demotivation is evident in how they describe their reaction to their circumstances:

> But if you learn this kind of things sooner or later you reach a wall where you don't have the ability to expand. (F3)

> Quite frankly, (…) the beginners' class could not take me where I wanted to go. (F5)

> She started out by telling us that she wasn't going to teach us any grammar, and so that made me think how can you learn a language if you don't learn any basic grammar? (…). So I was already kind of disappointed. (M1)

At the root of the instructor's decision not to teach grammar is the fact that the course is targeted not just at beginner learners of Italian, but at prospective tourists to Italy, who would prefer avoid having to understand the nuts and bolts of the language and would rather settle for a range of simple words and set expressions that might come useful during their Italian holiday. This is particularly disappointing for Marianne, as she realises that a no-grammar approach will not help her achieve the competence that she had envisaged for herself, but also because she resents the assumption made about her motivation and her learner identity:

> I find that really annoying because not everyone is learning Italian to go on holiday and I actually have other reasons…. I just find it annoying more than anything. (M2)

Most importantly, what emerges from Marianne's comments above is that the cause of her demotivation is not limited to issues to do with purely linguistic goals. For all of these learners, HL motivation is tied to their construction of their own *Italianità* and their own identity ambitions associated with language learning. The demotivation they are experiencing derives from the mismatch between their personal identity ambitions (personal goals) and what is afforded by their learning context (pedagogical goals), making this a good illustration of demotivation as the lack of a "happy fusion between internal and external forces, but a negative tension where the latter dominate, at the expense of the former…. Individual motivation becomes controlled, suppressed and distorted by external forces" (Ushioda, 2003, p. 94).

Indeed, episodes such as this seem to corroborate the idea that in general foreign language classes do not support the motivation of heritage language learners (see section 3.2.3) by highlighting their unsuitability for the particular needs of this class of learners. However, in view of the vast differences that can exist between the constructions and ambitions of *Italianità* shaping the motivation of heritage language learners, to assume the universality of this notion would be a gross generalisation. For example, shortly after joining the Centro's pre-intermediate course, Francesco expressed his appreciation for the fact that he was finally given the opportunity to learn Italian grammar, but he pointed out that, given the choice, he would have preferred this course to be even more focussed on the study of the language and less to on the exploration of cultural issues. Such a view might be surprising: heritage language learners are often assumed to be particularly interested in learning about their heritage culture as a way to reconnect with their roots.

267

Nonetheless at a close examination, Francesco's preference appears to be completely in line with his personal goal and his construction of his own *Italianità*. As previously discussed, Francesco's *Italianità* is deeply linked to that of his immigrant ancestors, whose humble origins make it difficult for him to relate to the discourses of *Italianità* at the Centro, rendering the course's cultural content largely irrelevant to his identity ambitions, and ultimately leading him to think that the courses offered by the university might be more appropriate for his own needs. Interestingly, the same cultural content that is for Francesco a source of demotivation, for Esther represents the most important and favourite part of her learning. Again, this is explainable in terms of the *Italianità* she is pursuing, as for Esther, knowledge of and interest in the ways of modern Italians is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of the identity as an official spokesperson for the Centro and her position as a community leader.

The above examples seem to suggest that while foreign language courses that are closely tailored to the needs of specific types of foreign language learners (i.e. prospective tourists) might be not be in line with those of some heritage language learners, a learner's reaction to specific elements of a course, and whether these represent a motivational help or a hindrance largely depend on their personal construction of their goals and of the identity ambitions embedded in them. The commonly held assumption that all heritage language learners are moved by a desire to reconnect to their cultural roots (Lacorte & Canabal, 2003) might indeed contain a grain of truth and hence be useful, in some cases, in informing course design in terms of content as suggested by Kagan (2005) however, the idiosyncratic and personal nature of the context-dependant conceptualisation of *Italianità* held by each of the participants means that, as Francesco himself realises (see section 7.5), the courses they attend will always be "a compromise", which will require them to negotiate their personal preferences against those of everybody else, with no assurance that their own specific learning needs will be fully satisfied.

11.5.2 Fluency

Issues of demotivation linked to a lack of harmony between personal goals and course objectives are particularly evident in Giulia's account of her time at university in pursuit of the perfect fluency in Italian that she originally expected to achieve by the end of her three-year degree. For Giulia, demotivation occurs as a reaction to her realisation that "university is not going to make you fluent" (G2), so in a way her experience in this

regard is similar to that of Francesco and Marianne described above. However in Giulia's case the plunge in her motivation takes on a much more dramatic quality because of the magnitude of her investment in the language: before and throughout her learning Giulia has taken risks, made sacrifices, challenged the opinions of family and friends, solely to achieve an identity as a fluent speaker of Italian in order to make her Italian dream a reality. The collapse of her motivation (which is evident in her thoughts to abandon her Italian major), corresponds with the realisation that no matter how hard she works, such investment will never pay off. Giulia's case clearly illustrates how demotivation can originate from the divergence between a learner's personal identity ambitions and what is afforded by the learning context, providing support for a view of demotivation as 'negative motivation' which, exactly like its positive counterpart, emerges from the learners' own understanding of the learning opportunities and identity affordances offered by the surrounding learning context, or, in other words, from the relationship between human agency and social constraints (Sealey & Carter, 2004).

11.5.3 Teachers and *Italianità*

Though examples of the demotivating aspects of teacher's behaviour are commonly found in the participants' accounts, only a very few directly involve the participants' sense of their own *Italianità*. Among these, the most significant has to be Livia's reaction to the perceived expectations that her teachers seem to hold in relation to her linguistic competence (see section 9.4), which leads her to think that her *Italianità* falls short of the standards upheld around her and that her identity as a dialect speaker is not particularly well acknowledged or valued within this learning setting. As a result, both her sense of her own *Italianità* and her linguistic self-confidence are shaken and her motivation takes a plunge: she begins to refrain from speaking Italian in class in an attempt to avoid making mistakes ("breaking into dialect") which she is afraid might appear even more foolish because of her Italian background, causing the others to doubt or even ridicule her Italian identity. Livia's story illustrates how at the basis of demotivation of heritage language learners we often find language-related challenges to identity that they face in the language classroom, and how at the basis of such challenges there are exchanges and relationships with other members of the context. Indeed this is not surprising, not only because it echoes the already mentioned findings by Potowski (2001), but also because it is a well accepted notion that social exchanges and

relationships are the places where identities are formed and negotiated, making them a prime potential site for falls in motivation caused by identity struggles.

11.5.4 Peers and *Italianità*

Another social element that is found to be very significant for the maintenance of the learner's motivational states is the nature of their interactions with the other students in their classes. It has often been suggested that a feeling of belonging to the social unit of the language classroom is instrumental in developing and supporting the motivation of the individual (Ushioda, 2003) however in the participants' stories we often find evidence of a certain difficulty in developing positive relationships with peers, a difficulty that stems from a peculiar sense of isolation experienced by some of the participants as a direct result their construction of their Italian identity and heritage motivation as elements that set them apart from the other students around them. This sense of isolation is present for example in both Marianne's and Francesco's story; however it is only in the experiences of Giulia and Livia that it comes to take the form of a definite motivational challenge.

For Giulia, the main problem is the feeling of separation from her peers which she explains as the direct consequence of her unique relationship with the language and of her distinctive desire to attain fluency, two elements that in her mind are inherently linked with her construction of her own *Italianità*. The main consequence of this sense of separation is emotional, as Giulia feels none of the others understand or care about her personal struggle, leaving her feeling lonely and in dire need of moral support throughout a very difficult stage of her learning journey.

Another obstacle to the development of Giulia's healthy relationships with her peers is her perception of the differences in linguistic competence between herself and the other students in her classes. On the one hand, Giulia realises that she cannot keep up with the quick progress of the others, which negatively impacts her self-confidence and her learning; on the other, the realisation that her *Italianità* does not represent an advantage to her learning is deeply upsetting and it leads her to wonder whether her belief that a part of her is Italian is a form of self-delusion. A similar challenge is experienced by Livia, who expresses the same disappointment when she comments:

> In the classroom, probably what made me less motivated was seeing other people learning it quicker than me and thinking I should be learning it quicker that you because I have done… Because I am Italian. Yeah, it's a bad feeling. (L2)

270

A review of the findings to do with the learners' relationships with their peers seem to suggest that heritage language students in foreign classrooms might experience certain difficulties when it comes to constructing positive bonds with their student colleagues because of the separation they experience by virtue of their feelings of identity. When this happens, heritage language learners cannot take advantage of the motivational benefits of feeling part of a group united by a common interest in the language and similar goals, and might instead find they are having to face the additional motivational challenges arising from doubting one's own heritage identity.

11.6 Positive motivational changes

Having discussed evidence suggesting that the participants' construction of their own *Italianità* are deeply implicated in some of the cognitive, affective and social processes that can result in demotivation, I now turn to a consideration of processes through which learners' motivation is intensified, to discover that in the majority of cases, these are sparked by critical events involving the learners' contacts with Italian speakers. The involvement of the learners' construction of *Italianità* in the motivational changes caused by such events is perhaps obvious when we consider the role that interactions and relationships with speakers of Italian play in the linguistic and identity ambitions of the participants, as well as the dramatic results that such exchanges can have for the participants' understanding and development of their own Italian identity.

11.6.1 Contacts with speakers

An example of one such event is found in Francesco's story, when he makes the acquaintance of Cecilia, a recent Italian immigrant to New Zealand. During the exchange that follows, Francesco makes a conscious decision to continue speaking Italian to Cecilia even though he knows they could use English instead. This decision proves to be important for Francesco's perception of his own Italian skills, and ultimately leads him to experience one of the emotional 'highs' that he considers at the basis of his continuing motivation. Because of the exchange, Francesco realises that his use of Italian does not need to be limited to the classroom or to his attempts to speak to his mother, and suggests new venues for the performance and development of his *Italianità*. Ultimately, the event has a significant effect on Francesco's motivation by broadening his understanding of the social uses of his heritage language and injecting a much needed dose of enthusiasm in his language learning, even leading him to take

active steps in finding more speakers of Italian with whom to practise his newly discovered language skills (see section 7.7).

Livia experiences a similar motivational boost when she receives an unexpected phone call from Italy and is forced to use her Italian to communicate with a relative who cannot speak English or the dialect. The way Livia is able to cope with the phone call leads her to realise that she finds it easier to speak Italian when she is free from the constraints she has been experiencing in the classroom and, above all, in a situation where she has "no choice" but to speak Italian. The successful interaction restores Livia's confidence in her own abilities at a time when her motivation is waning and as a result she renews her commitment to learning Italian by promising herself to soon travel to Italy and force herself to learn by full immersion.

For Esther, a significant renewal of her commitment to learn Italian also comes as the result of a critical event, namely the award of a decoration from the Italian government for services to Italian language and culture. Receiving the award is motivating in that Esther will have to deliver an acceptance speech in Italian in front of many high-ranking Italian officials from the new Zealand Italian embassy as well as a number of influential community members – which impels her to spend hours writing and rehearsing it – but also because it strengthens her resolve to achieve her ultimate learning goal. The award also fuels Esther motivation by formally conferring on her an identity as an official spokesperson of the local Italian community, which in Esther's mind is necessarily accompanied by the duty to improve her Italian skills to match such a position.

However not all the motivationally significant contacts with Italian speakers we find in the participants' stories involve one-time momentous events. For some learners important motivational sources are found embedded in their ongoing relationships with the communities of Italian speakers around them. For Esther, for example, her daily contacts with members of the Wellington Italian community and the two Italian clubs with which she is involved represent a motivational constant which encourages her to continue learning the language as a crucial means to the maintenance of those relationships that she perceives so central to her role as a community leader and spokesperson. Similarly for Marianne the ability to use her heritage language in her everyday life represents an ongoing form of motivational support, as each contact with other Italians around her acts as a reminder of her own *Italianità*, thus strengthening her connection to her heritage and her resolve to develop such connection though her learning of the language (see section 6.9)

272

Particularly interesting is that, as in the case of Marianne, often the motivational significance of the participants' contacts with Italians and/or speakers of Italian around them does not lie in the linguistic requirements that these present. In some cases, such exchanges simply act as opportunities to develop one's *Italianità* through positive interactions with other Italians, and hence to strengthen the personal sense of Italian identity which lays at the basis of their motivation. These examples show that if the single unexpected opportunities to negotiate one's *Italianità* can and have dramatic repercussions on one's motivation, motivational benefits can also result from repeated (though not necessarily Italian language-based) interactions and ongoing relationships with Italians and/or Italian speakers which over time come to mould and reinforce the learners' Italian identity through constant positive reinforcement.

11.6.2 Changing identities, changing motivations

By illustrating changes in the intensity of the learners' motivation that occur throughout their learning as the result of various experiences, the previous sections have introduced the motivation as a dynamic form of emotional and cognitive arousal that rises and falls in response to events and social exchanges that have an influence of the learners' own sense of *Italianità*. However, a sole discussion of the quantitative changes in the participants' motivation would be rather limiting, as it is obvious that throughout the learning process various factors can also cause motivation to change in a qualitative sense. The participants' goals, for example, change and evolve throughout the learning process as a result of the learners' experiences inside and outside the classroom, as through their ongoing language learning and use, their engagement with the language and with speakers of it shape and reshape their understanding of their own *Italianità*, of the identity opportunities they are offered and hence of their ambitions and goals.

Esther's goals for example undergo dramatic changes throughout her learning, as she includes more and more aspects of *Italianità* in her complex identity, and she moves from being an outsider to a full member and finally an official representative of the local community of Italian speakers. With each 'notch' of *Italianità* she reaches, her linguistic and identity objectives become more ambitious, until she finds herself aiming for the fulfilment of an Italian identity which requires the utmost knowledge and control of the language, which she promptly adopts as her ultimate goal.

Unfortunately not all of the participants can afford to consistently upgrade their goals throughout their learning. For some, the linguistic and identity challenges they face in

and out of the classroom are so great to lead them to think that their initial goals might be too ambitious or unrealistic, and so to force them to 'downgrade' them to more easily achievable objectives. This is indeed reflected in the experience of Giulia, whose initial investment in the language is gradually modified as a result of the lack of learning and identity affordances inherent in her learning context (see section 10.5).

Finally, it is important to remember that while *Italianità* is the aspect of the participants' identity which is most crucial for the arousal and maintenance of motivation, more often than not it is found to be inextricably linked to other facets of the learners' complex identities, and it is usually only one of a range of identities that learners are prepared to invest in at any one time. In this regard the previous sections have already highlighted cases in which identity investments to do with *Italianità* and the learning of Italian are found to be in harmony with and even be reinforced by investments in other identities. At the same time, participants might, at some stage of their learning, discover that their investment in the language and in developing their own *Italianità* comes to clash with other identity investments, resulting in decreased motivation. This happens to Francesco, for example, when he is prevented from pursuing his plan to study Italian at university by unexpected work commitments. At this point of his learning Francesco has to choose whether to invest in his ambitions of *Italianità*, or in an identity as a good provider for his family. His choice to delay his university studies reveals Francesco's personal priorities in terms of identities, also providing a good illustration of how the motivation to learn one's heritage language can be compromised by a learner's need to attend to aspects of their identities other the *Italianità* they are trying to develop through the learning of the language. In this sense it is reasonable to view motivation as the result of the complex interplay of multiple and sometimes contrasting identity investments which ultimately have their origins in the learner's mind but which are continuously shaped and reshaped by the learners' own construction of the context around them and of their positions within it. Motivation therefore is never a uniform, unitary entity, but a highly dynamic and idiosyncratic creation that cannot be studied in isolation from the social processes from which it originates.

11.6.3 *Italianità*, motivational support and motivational self-regulation

The most interesting finding to do with motivational maintenance throughout the learning process is revealed when the participants describe the ongoing motivational support they receive from their personal sense of connection with their ancestral language and culture. In essence, this involves the same affective response to one's own sense of *Italianità* that we already observed in the pre-decisional phase of motivation, where it was found to be a source of motivational arousal even before the learners set specific goals and began their studies. The interesting point here is that the same affective response is also identified by most of the respondents as one of the – if not the – main factor sustaining their motivation during their learning. In considering the learners' own accounts of how their personal connection to their Italian heritage and *Italianità* act to support their motivation throughout their studies, we again notice that there is great variation in how the participants understand this connection and its motivational power.

For Francesco, the importance of it lies in its association with his family ties, which gives it a strong emotional and personal value and make it an indirect, underlying motivational support to the whole language learning process.

> So I think it does sustain me and it has sustained me through difficult times. It's not just a nice thing that you decide to do, it's actually something you grew up with. (F6)

The motivational value of one's affective connection with their Italian heritage is also stressed by Esther, for whom the central theme is one of *Italianità* as "Italian blood" (see section 8.8): essentially for Esther, having Italian blood means having a "bond" or an underlying connection to the heritage language and culture, which is responsible for a special "affinity to everything Italian" (E3) which can translate in a passion that sustains language learning. This "bond" (E3) is in a way similar to the "special connection" (F5) felt by Francesco, as in both cases the learner's knowledge of their own *Italianità* creates an emotional attachment to the heritage language and culture which sustains motivation throughout their learning.

Considering the intensity of the motivational power that the learners attribute to their underlying connection to their heritage culture and language, it is perhaps surprising to find that feelings of *Italianità* do not prominently feature as part of the learners' attempts to self-regulate their motivation, or in other words, that, while the participants are aware

of the motivational role of their feelings towards their Italian heritage, they do not use them consciously to boost their motivation. In fact, in reviewing the participants' stories, we find that Marianne is the only one that seems to be doing this when, in realising her enthusiasm for attending Italian class is waning, she reminds herself of the reasons why she is learning Italian (see section 6.7). Although we do find evidence of motivational self-regulative behaviours in the accounts of the other participants (Francesco's attempts to boost his confidence in his own Italian skills, Giulia's and Livia's self-reminders that the end of their studies is near, Esther's construction of obstacles as challenges to be overcome), no other examples of self-regulative strategies are found to have strong or direct links to the participant's own construction of *Italianità*. This observation might gain significance if we consider that learners normally employ self-regulative mechanisms in full awareness of the cognitive and affective advantages they will bring and so tend to choose the strategies that they deem most effective for their own particular case. The low incidence of Italian identity-related self-regulative strategies might therefore suggest that while the learners' sense of their own *Italianità* is an important underlying influence to their motivation, when it comes to motivational self-regulation, the participants tend to favour more powerful and more immediate ways to spark one's interest and curiosity in the language. The reason for this might ultimately lie in the essentially social foundations of the learners' feelings of *Italianità* and in the fact that such feelings only reach a motivationally significant level of intensity when sustained by elements of the learner's sociocultural context that enable, encourage and offer opportunities for the positive development of the learners' identity ambitions. Since, as we have seen, such conditions are rather rare in the participants' stories, and tend to arise quite unpredictably as a result of one-time critical events (such as chance encounters with speakers of Italian), they are perhaps not easily included in conscious attempts for self-regulation, which instead tend to centre around more stable and more predictable influences on the learners' motivation.

11.7 Summary

The previous sections have attempted to provide an extended reading of the participants' stories by highlighting interesting points of comparison and contrast in the way *Italianità* has been observed to influence the motivation underlying their learning experiences. The resulting discussion, organised around arousal, decision-making and persistence as the three phases of language learning motivation, has particularly

emphasised the individual nature of the complex and dynamic processes at its basis, and the highly personal and contextualised ways in which issues of Italian identity come to play a major role in the participants' motivation to learn their heritage language. The many insights drawn from the discussion will be summarised in more detail in the next chapter, where they will constitute the focus of a final consideration of the research questions and of the study's main theoretical, pedagogical and methodological implications.

Chapter Twelve: Conclusions

12.1 Final thoughts on research questions

From its conception, three questions served to guide and shape the development of this enquiry. This concluding chapter will begin with a final review of each of these; I will then move to a consideration of the study's implications, followed by a final summary and a few closing remarks on the study's contributions to the related fields.

12.1.1 Research question one

What is the motivational role of the learners' construction of their own Italianità in their reasons for studying Italian as their heritage language?

The study clearly identifies the learners' personal constructions of their own *Italianità* as the crucial element in the arousal of their interest for their heritage language, even in cases where awareness of their own Italian identity precedes by many years the actual decision to learn the language. For most participants, *Italianità* is seen as a deeply personal emotional connection with their Italian heritage, a connection which in most cases has developed throughout their lifetime as a direct result of contacts and relationships with speakers of Italian language within their own families and/or the associated Italian communities, and which is at the basis of their feelings of identification with and/or belonging to such groups, and of their sense of their own Italian identity. Despite wide differences in the specific forms and meanings that *Italianità* takes in the mind of each learner, for all of them the initial motivation to study their heritage language is associated with strong feelings of connection to particular elements of their Italian heritage, and to their desire to preserve and cultivate such a connection as an essential part of who they are and of who they would like to be in the future, both in terms of their self-concept and of the positions they hold within the systems of social relations they see themselves belonging to.

12.1.2 Research question two

What is the motivational role of the learners' construction of their own Italianità on deciding to study Italian as their heritage language?

The study confirms that while the learners' personal construction of their own *Italianità* is at the very basis of their initial interest in the language, the actual decision to pursue the learning of it only comes as a result of particular events and circumstances that have the effect of intensifying and modifying their original perception of their own Italian identity – and of the role of Italian language within it – leading them to take action. It is only through the impact of such 'triggers' in fact, that the participants' definitive intention to learn their heritage language arises, mostly in reaction to their perceived need for a concerted effort towards the (re)building of aspects of their *Italianità* that they consider too precious or important to be neglected, lost or forgotten. The resulting learning objectives the participants set for themselves continue to reflect the highly personal nature of their initial construction of *Italianità* by including linguistic goals that are specific to their own history and background, such as speaking to particular family members or researching the family's roots in Italy. Most significantly however, they illustrate that more often than not the participants aspire to more than simple linguistic competence as their goals also reflect different ways of developing their *Italianità*. In fact, from the fulfilment of deeply introspective or emotional needs to the creation of specific social personas, all but one learners' language learning journey are aimed at the development of certain Italian aspects of their complex identity.

12.1.3 Research question three

What is the motivational role of the learners' construction of their own Italianità on the maintenance and development of their motivational states while studying Italian as their heritage language?

The study shows that as previously postulated (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 280) once language learning begins, students' motivation is mainly influenced by elements of the learning setting (course, teacher, group dynamics), but that in the case of the heritage language learners in our study, major fluctuations in motivational states can be observed in relation to those elements of the setting that come to be perceived as threats or hindrances to the ambitions of *Italianità* that are associated with their personal learning goals. Among these, a major source of demotivation is the learners' realisation of a mismatch between their own individual interests and needs and the objectives and values entailed by the courses they are attending, as this invariably leads learners to the conclusion that their current line of action will not help them realise their own specific

goals and desired identities. As the participants' accounts illustrate, while some are able to renegotiate their investments in the language in ways that justify their continuing engagement with their chosen courses, for others such realisation leads them to the decision to abandon their current course of action to find alternative ways to satisfy their needs, while a third group opt to continue with their current line of action but with compromised motivation. In each of these cases, the significance of the learners' ambitions of *Italianità* in relation to the course objectives is obvious. On a more positive note, significant motivational support is provided by the learners' occasional and/or ongoing contacts with speakers of Italian around them, which are often at the basis of the intensification of the learners' determination to continue learning. For all of the participants in fact, increased motivation often comes as a result of positive social exchanges involving the language and/or other significant events positively reinforcing their perception of their own Italian identity or of their rights to it. Throughout their learning, the participants' goals tend to change and evolve in parallel with developments in and challenges to their constructions of *Italianità* that come about as a result of their interactions with their learning and social contexts. For some, their initial expectations of the learning opportunities and identity objectives to be afforded by their chosen learning setting are left unfulfilled, often resulting in disappointment and ultimately to a reconsideration of one's goals. More rarely, some learners are able to achieve incrementally ambitious goals both in terms of linguistic competence and *Italianità* resulting in highly satisfactory learning trajectories and achievements. For most of them initial goals continue to shift and evolve as they make sense of what goes on around them, responding to their perceptions of opportunities and challenges and of identity

12.2 Implications for theory

12.2.1 Motivation

While the study did not set out to investigate L2 motivation *per se*, the findings highlighted a number of noteworthy insights, which I will now briefly discuss. The first has to do with the multifaceted nature of L2 motivation, which as a "state of cognitive and emotional arousal" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 120) can indeed be observed and perhaps even measured at any one time, but that when considered longitudinally is clearly shown to develop according to distinctive stages, hence simultaneously fitting both the definitions of *state* and *process*. In considering motivation as a state, its

complex nature is again highlighted by evidence suggesting that while motivation is something that is clearly *internal* to the learner, its very existence depends on the influence of factors that are at least initially *external* to the learner, such as, for example, the influence of teachers and peers or that of unexpected critical events. Such factors however only become motivationally significant once they have been internalised by the learner, or, in other words once the learner has come to understand them and judge their value according to their own personal meaning-making parameters. This *constructive nature* of L2 motivation is what makes it so personal and idiosyncratic, explaining why, for example, among learners who are exposed to the same experience (e.g. same teacher, same course, same learning task), some will find these motivating, while others demotivating. Clearly, throughout this process, the language learner emerges as much more than a mere vessel at the mercy of a rolling sea of circumstances, but as an active agent intensely involved in the process of constructing such circumstances both mentally (through personal meaning-making), and experientially (by taking action within them). As a result, motivation cannot be considered something that just 'happens' as a direct result of external influences: while the opportunities and constraints placed on the individual by their context indeed have the potential to encourage and challenge one's motivation, their role is only a mediating one. The contextually-mediated rather than contextually-determined nature of motivation makes it difficult to predict the effects of influences on L2 motivation, largely invalidating any attempt to generalise the motivational role of any one factor or combination of factors, and any attempt to comment on the L2 motivation of groups of people rather than that of individual learners.

A view of motivation as a highly personal, context-mediated process also highlights the difficulty faced by researchers in having to choose from among the many theoretical frameworks in existence to find the one that best explains the L2 motivation of different language learners. In fact, as with the personal accounts considered in the study, different theoretical models and concepts are often found to suit the personal experiences of certain learners (or even certain parts of their experiences) better than others. This leads me to conclude that in the absence of a unified theory of L2 motivation that can account for the astonishing variety of complex psychological, emotional, social and cultural processes at work in the various stages of motivation, the discussion of individual motivational cases could instead avail itself of different (though not

necessarily incongruent) theoretical perspectives, which incidentally is exactly what the current study has endeavoured to do.

12.2.2 Heritage language learning

As previously mentioned, there is an ongoing discussion in the field of heritage language education concerning what types of learners should be included under the heritage language label, with most researchers and educators now agreeing that proficiency in the HL should be used as a discerning criterion. The restrictive nature of the resulting definition is motivated mostly by practical and pedagogical considerations: it is widely accepted that the linguistic skills of heritage language learners who have been exposed to the language as it was spoken in the home are sufficiently different from those of second or foreign language students to warrant their placement in language classes that provide specialised instruction. While this classification has led to concerted research and teaching efforts to fulfil the specific learning needs of this particular class of language learners, the field has largely neglected those learners who, while having limited or no exposure to the language spoken by their parents and grandparents, nevertheless wish to reclaim it for themselves as part of a personal process of identity development. Linguistically excluded from a definition of HLL, such learners are often seen as "the most obvious candidates for traditional FL classrooms" (Weger-Guntharp, 2006, p. 33) together with students who have no ancestral ties to the language.

The study's findings challenge this view by offering evidence that even without any linguistic exposure or skill in the heritage language, the impact of these students' sense of heritage identity on their learning is such as to make their experience potentially very different from that of students with no heritage language ancestry. In particular, even without a focussed study of the motivational differences between HLLs and non-HLLs, the study provides evidence for the fact that, independently from their HL skills, learners' awareness of their own ethnic heritage has deep implications for their self-definition and their emotional response to the HL language and its speakers. In essence, such evidence casts doubts on more restrictive proficiency-based definitions of HLLs, suggesting instead that in classifying heritage and non-heritage learners on the basis of their linguistic skills, crucial consideration should be given to the learners' personal construction of their heritage identity and hence to their own agency in defining themselves as HLLs. This is in accord to what Hornberger and Wang (2008) call an ecological view of HLL identity, which defines HLLs as "individuals with familial or

ancestral ties to a language other than English who exert their agency in determining if they are HLLs of that language" (p. 6).

Admittedly, the inclusion of low-exposure learners in a definition of HLL would entail a dramatic widening of the range of learners found under this label, ultimately limiting its practical value as the sole basis for the development of specific teaching guidelines. However it would also entail a widening of our knowledge of the full horizon of HLL journeys and experiences, helping researchers and teachers become aware of the range of identities and identity ambitions that can exist among HLLs, thus representing a first step towards the recognition of HLL diversity as a critical element of HL learning, and one that deserves be addressed through appropriate pedagogy.

12.3 Implications for teaching practice

The study has shown how the typical foreign language class can present HLLs with a range of challenges, all fundamentally stemming from the fact that foreign language teaching tends to show little concern for notions of heritage identity that are so important to the motivation of these learners. As we have seen, demotivation is common when course objectives and content presented in class are not in line with the HLLs' individual goals and identity ambitions and when the behaviours and attitudes of teachers are perceived to be identity-threatening. This indeed corroborates previous research suggesting that teachers/course designers often play a role in the motivational lapses that are so common in the experiences of language learners (see section 2.2.4.2), but also that the positive managing of critical problem-areas lies within the power of the teachers/course designers, and that even within the constraints of a foreign language curriculum, some steps can be taken to support the motivation of HLLs in foreign language classrooms. In fact, while some foreign language course teachers/designers might work under the assumption that catering for the needs of these learners as well as those of the FL learning majorities in their classes would prove highly impractical and/or not cost effective, I here instead suggest that a few small but effective strategies could be employed to successfully accommodate and support the motivational needs of HLLs in foreign language classes.

As a starting point, teachers should take measures to become aware of their students' motivation: Oxford and Shearin (1994) remind us that optimal teaching can only happen when the teachers understand why their students want to learn and how proficient they want to become, and that such knowledge can be easily gained through a simple survey

of the students' initial motivation administered at the beginning of the course. In considering the students' responses, the idea would be to select course objectives and activities that are in line with the motivation of both heritage and non-heritage learners and to encourage the whole class to work towards goals that are significant to both types of students, a task that should not very prove difficult in absolute beginners' classes where most students would have had no or very limited previous exposure to the language. Of course in order to do this, a certain curricular flexibility would be crucial, if not always easy to achieve. Fortunately, as has become clear from the participants' responses in the study, HLLs tend to join foreign language courses in full awareness that their status as HLLs will not grant them any special consideration or treatment, and are therefore inclined to be gracious about having to adapt to less-than-ideal learning situations. However, even where teachers feel that the needs of the foreign language learning majority should take precedence in setting the general aims and content of the course, HLLs need not be penalised. Where their needs and those of their FL peers are too incongruent to grant a satisfying common curriculum, HLLs could benefit for example from teachers' suggestion for additional readings, resources and activities that could be more suitable to their own particular needs. HLLs tend to have a motivational advantage in their personal connection with their heritage language and culture, and in the fact that their goals are often very specific and very vivid. Often this translates in a more autonomous approach to learning that only needs to be nurtured and encouraged to bear positive results. All too often HLLs become demotivated when they feel that the course has 'got away' on them, and that they are no longer in control of their learning. The main aim for teachers in these cases is not to provide ongoing individualised teaching, but to find ways to encourage HLLs to develop a sense of ownership of their learning experience, supporting them in gaining the confidence to pursue their own interests, and encourage the use of the existing FL course as a support structure for their own individual learning rather than an all-included package.

With regard to HLLs, the study also suggested that a strong, continuing sense of their own heritage identity is the most important factor in supporting their motivation, and that demotivation arises when the process of identity development that is implied in learning one's heritage language is not successfully mediated or facilitated by elements of the learning setting, and especially by the attitudes and behaviours of teachers and peers. Because of this, validating a learner's claims to the heritage identity and offering recognition of their special relationship to the language that lies at the basis of their

motivation should be an important prerogative of the supportive teacher, and one that could easily be achieved by making this the occasional focus of positive attention and feedback. Fear of making mistakes can be particularly problematic for HLLs, for whom competence in the HL is often consciously associated with their heritage identity. As suggested by Carreira (2004), HLL linguistic errors can be parlayed into opportunities for showcasing their familiarity with other important features of the language, such as pronunciation or vocabulary (p.16). Any linguistic knowledge (even of non-standard varieties) on the learner's part could be used for example as an opportunity to discuss the nature of linguistic variation of the language taught in class. In other cases, depending on their background, HLLs could be called upon for their perspectives on issues of their heritage culture and folklore, or as key liaisors with communities of speakers of the language. The ultimate aim of these measures would be to create an environment where HLLs see themselves and are seen by others as a valuable resource, and as an integral – if unique – member of the community of learners. This would help them develop a sense of "social relatedness" (Deci, 1996), or, in other words, of a sense of belonging to the social unit of the classroom, which has been consistently shown to be instrumental in developing and supporting the motivation of the individual learner (Kohonen, 2001; Ushioda, 2003).

12.4 Implications for heritage language learners

Among the factors that the study highlighted as potentially motivating for individual HLLs, one that deserves particular mention is the social contacts with speakers of Italian outside the classroom, which the study consistently showed as playing a significant role in sustaining the participants' motivation throughout their learning. In general terms, the motivational benefits of such contacts are that they offer an opportunity to perform and assert their Italian identity and to gain linguistic confidence at the same time. For some participants in the study, the necessity to speak Italian outside the classroom offered a chance to be free of the constraints of their learning setting and to use the language on their own terms, while for others, it helped them explore new and exciting communicative situations and to feel in control of their language learning and skills. Always it seems, the inspiration and enthusiasm that resulted from even fortuitous encounters with Italian speakers represented momentous events that helped the learners validate and reinforce their sense of *Italianità* and so positively impacted their

motivation, often leading to a fresh wave of interest in the language and to the beginning of a new phase of their learning.

The main implication drawn from such findings is that all heritage language learners could potentially benefit from consciously attempting to maximise their contacts with speakers of their heritage language and with these their opportunities to use the language outside the classroom. Of course this is often more easily said than done, as access to heritage language speakers might be limited by many factors that lie outside the learners' control: HL-speaking relations might not exist, or be too far removed to represent a real chance to speak the language. A local community of speakers may not be a reality, or if it is, the process of joining it to find potential interlocutors might be too intimidating, time consuming or otherwise problematic to even attempt. Even in cases where potential contacts might be available through family and/or community networks, these might prove to be unsuitable for various reasons: they might speak varieties of the heritage language that are different from the one learned in class, or might be unwilling to speak the language.

When contacts with local heritage language speakers are not available, it might be possible for learners to access virtual communities of speakers using various online tools, from pre-structured online learning facilities such as tandem-learning and other learner-matching systems, to more adventurous (but potentially very rewarding) participation in discussion forums, chat rooms and blogs in the heritage language. In the study, experimenting with virtual Italian worlds proved motivationally beneficial for Francesco and Giulia, whose contacts with local speakers of Italian were limited by various circumstances. The main advantage of virtual contacts with heritage language speakers is that they tend to bypass the practical inconveniences and the potential face-threatening situations that direct contact might entail, hence representing, in many ways, an easier, more learner-centred and self-directed way to reap the motivational benefits of practising the language in social exchanges with more experienced speakers.

12.5 Methodological implications

The uniqueness that has been shown to permeate every aspect of the participants' motivational journeys is also found reflected in the highly individualised nature of the relationships that as a researcher I was able to construct with each of the participants throughout the course of the study. Methodologically this point becomes particularly relevant when we consider that interviews with different participants often required

different interactional styles, which were largely based on the different role(s) and/or identity(s) that the participants and I came to play during each of the exchanges. Fortunately for me, a certain degree of consistency seemed to lie at the basis of the interactional styles to be used in all interviews with the same participants. My exchanges with Giulia, for example, were certainly influenced by the fact that we considered each other as equals in many respects, and so were characterised by much informality and a certain freedom of expression on both sides, while during those with Esther, I felt her need to emphasise her role as an older person and as a high-ranking Italian official placed a certain distance between us and demanded certain adjustments on my part, ultimately giving our exchanges a rather formal feel. The way interviews unfolded, however, was also influenced by situational and contextual elements, such as the place where the exchange was taking place (in a noisy coffee shop as opposed to an empty classroom, for example), the general mood of the exchange, and the events that had taken place before or that would have taken place after.

One important observation that I feel must be made in view of these points is that while it is not uncommon for literature on research methodology to provide discussions of the role of the researcher, this is most often described as a consistent one: interviewers are advised to be guided in their behaviour by the ultimate necessity to portray themselves as objective and professional, and to be in control of managing the distance between themselves and the interviewee to avoid the dangers of excessive intimacy or remoteness (see section 4.4.1). While such advice is indeed valuable, especially for first-time researchers, it ultimately neglects the inherently dynamic nature of the role of the researcher and particularly the fact that relationships with different participants, as well as contextual and situational elements might require the researcher/interviewer to take on different roles at different times. Ultimately, researchers should be warned that while a certain focus on professionalism and respect should underlie all of their interviewing practices, cultivating empathy, flexibility and responsiveness should be their main concern in approaching any exchange with the participants of a study, and that failure to show adaptability to the basic social requirements of such exchanges could jeopardise their outcome and ultimately compromise the quality of the data produced.

12.6 Strengths and limitations of the study

Perhaps obvious among the limitations of the study are those derived from basing the enquiry on input from only five main participants, including the fact that since

participation was the result of a voluntary decision to commit to the study, the views and experiences of other heritage language learners are not represented. In particular, especially given the wide range of diversity that, as we have seen, can exist among HLLs, the fact that all participants had not been extensively exposed to the variety of their heritage language taught in the classroom automatically marked them out as a particular sub-group, and limited opportunities to discuss the motivational implications of possessing more extensive heritage language skills. Nonetheless, as representatives of a great number of third and fourth generation New Zealand-Italians descendants from dialect-speaking immigrant ancestors, the participants' experiences can be assumed to find some resonance with those of many other learners of Italian as a heritage language in New Zealand today, giving the account of their language learning experiences and motivation significance even beyond their immediate contexts.

Another limitation of the study could be seen in the fact that for the most part the information discussed is based on the participants' own perceptions and their own accounts of critical events and experiences, and not on the researcher's direct observation of these. In adopting a definition of identity as discursively negotiated and of motivation as socially mediated, a more extensively observation and discourse-based enquiry would have made a desirable alternative or addition to the project. However from its conception my main interest in this study was in the participants' personal constructions of *Italianità* and in the ways their own perceptions of the realities around them constituted the basis for their understanding of their place within them and for the creation of their *Italianità* as part of their self-concept. In this sense, only an emic perspective such as that warranted by considering mainly the participants' own accounts of their experiences could have achieved such an objective.

The process of interpreting the participants' own stories provided not only rich personal portraits of the Italian identities they held and the ones they sought, but also a close account of how these developed through a series of stages, where their own evolving understanding of what surrounded them led to new insights and to motivational changes that lay at the basis of further stages. In attempting to paint a picture of such rich and complex processes, the strengths of a longitudinal approach to research (see section 4.3) were certainly confirmed, while the inherent difficulty of collecting and analysing the large quantities of rich data such an approach produced was somewhat reduced by limiting the number of case studies to only five.

The longitudinal approach also made possible the development and establishment of researcher-participant relationships based on mutual respect and trust, which in turn facilitated the in-depth self-disclosure of at times rather sensitive information from the participants. Finally, one last strength of the research process is that through the self-reflective process inherent to disclosing their own stories, the participants themselves were able to reap the benefits of such a process as it unfolded. Presenting the participants with my interpretation of their language learning journey through the individualised diagrams that I produced towards the end the study was, in this sense, particularly appreciated, as it gave the learners an opportunity to realise some of the previously unnoticed dynamics of their motivation and their learning, thus helping them become more conscious of their role as language learners, and so hopefully assisting them in the pursuit of their personal goals.

12.7   A final word

The findings of the study are significant for they lead to the conclusion that central to all the motivational processes at the basis of learning Italian as a heritage language there is the learners' construction of their own *Italianità*. Such construction is strictly personal, born out of the learners' interaction with the world around them and their own understanding of their place in it. It represents the starting point for the formation of identity wishes and desires that accompany the arousal of motivation, as well as an important feeling of connection to the target language and culture that serves to support the learners' motivation once the learning has begun. Central to the study's main argument is the role that significant people in the learner's life can play in supporting the individual's motivation by enabling and encouraging their individual identity ambitions and sense of control over their learning, a role that that all language teachers and course designers would do well to explore and embrace in the interest of the heritage language learners in their classes.

By providing a close account of the learning experiences of students of Italian as a heritage language the study has contributed to the knowledge of the opportunities and challenges presented to heritage language learners within the New Zealand context, where lack of specialised language courses for learners of Italian ancestry forces these learners to join traditional foreign language classes. In drawing on the learners' personal accounts of their experiences, the study has enhanced our understanding of the highly personal nature of the issues of identity and motivational processes at play, and thus of

the importance to consider diversity (of background, of linguistic skills, of ethnolinguistic affiliation, of motivation) as a crucial element in the design and implementation of effective guidelines for the teaching of this particular class of learners.

Finally, the study has made a methodological contribution of value to the study of L2 motivation, firstly by emphasising the necessity of studying language learning motivation longitudinally as both a dynamic state and a process, and secondly by highlighting the value of using qualitative case studies of HLLs as an effective tool to explore the complex and highly idiosyncratic nature of the psychological, emotional and identity processes at work in the arousal and maintenance of L2 motivation. In the end, the choice of adopting less than traditional research tools for the examination of the participants' motivation proved very successful, allowing the study to explore questions and to follow avenues of enquiry that would have otherwise been inaccessible, thus also contributing to the establishment of qualitative and longitudinal case study research as a viable and effective methodological option for the investigation of L2 motivation.

Appendix 1: Notes on data presentation

Data sources

Throughout the thesis I often use quotes from the data that I have collected to support the points I make. The data used this way was gathered from a range of sources:

- interviews with the learner participants, their teachers, the administrators of the courses/programmes they attended,
- written documents and other materials relating to the institutions, courses and activities the participants were involved with,
- other written materials from the participants themselves, such as journal pages and emails,
- my own classroom observation notes.

Wherever data quotes are included, these are marked with a code (e.g. M1, G4, WL3obs) that identifies the source. These codes are presented in Appendix 2.

Names

All names of people used in the thesis are pseudonyms. These were chosen to reflect the ethnic origins of the real names, so that if the real name is an Italian name, the pseudonym is too. This also applies to the names of the institutions and associations mentioned throughout the thesis.

Expressing the participants' voices

Although I have attempted to manipulate data quotes as little as possible, in some cases these have been edited for normal non-fluency (short repetitions, false starts, hesitations and fillers) to assist in the reading. When more substantial editing was necessary, this is marked on the text by means of three dots within brackets (…). Indication of laughter and other behaviours or emotions deemed relevant to the quote are included in italics between brackets, e.g. (*laughs*).

Appendix 2: Data collection schedule with reference codes

Participants' data

Participant	Type	Code	Date obtained
Francesco	Interview 1	F1	October 2005
	Interview 2	F2	February 2006
	Interview 3	F3	June 2006
	Interview 4	F4	September 2006
	Interview 5	F5	October 2006
	Interview 6	F6	Dec 2006

Participant	Type	Code	Date obtained
Giulia	Interview 1	G1	September 2005
	Interview 2	G2	December 2005
	Interview 3	G3	February 2006
	Interview 4	G4	May 2006
	Interview 5	G5	August 2006
	Interview 6	G6	September 2006
	Interview 7	G7	December 2006
	Journal	GJ	June 2006
	Email	Gemail	September 2008

Participant	Type	Code	Date obtained
Livia	Interview 1	L1	September 2005
	Interview 2	L2	March 2006
	Interview 3	L3	June 2006
	Interview 4	L4	August 2006
	Interview 5	L5	September 2006
	Interview 6	L6	December 2006

Participant	Type	Code	Date obtained
Esther	Interview 1	E1	June 2005
	Interview 2	E2	March 2005
	Interview 3	E3	June 2006
	Interview 4	E4	September 2006
	Interview 5	E5	December 2006

	Type	Code	Date obtained
Marianne	Interview 1	M1	March 2006
	Interview 2	M2	June 2006
	Interview 3	M3	August 2006
	Interview 4	M4	September 2006
	Interview 5	M5	December 2006
	Email 1	Memail1	September 2005
	Email 2	Memail2	November 2008

Teacher's data

Teacher	Type	Code	Date obtained
Chiara	Interview	C1	February 2006
Sabrina	Interview	SA1	March 2006
Gianna	Interview	GA1	March 2006
Teresa	Interview	T1	July 2006
Sandra	Interview	S1	August 2006

Other interview data

Participant	Data source	Code	Date Obtained
Centro's president	Interview	P1	May 2006

Observation data

Institution	Setting	Code	Date observed
Centro Italiano	Beginners' One course	CB1obs	June 2006
Wellesley University	300-level language course	WL3obs	July 2006

Other data

Institution	Type	Code	Date obtained
Centro Italiano	Institution's website	CIweb	November 2008
Wellesley University	Institution's website	W1web	November 2008

Appendix 3: Acronyms used

AV   Audio Visual

FL   Foreign Language

HL   Heritage Language

HLL   Heritage Language Learner

L2   Second Language

SLA   Second Language Acquisition

TL   Target Language

Appendix 4: MUHEC documentation

Massey University

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT
TO THE VICE-CHANCELLOR
(ETHICS & EQUITY)
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North
New Zealand
T 64 6 350 5573
F 64 6 350 5622
humanethics@massey.ac.nz
www.massey.ac.nz

20 October 2004

Arianna Berardi-Wiltshire
270 Albert Street
PALMERSTON NORTH

Dear Arianna

Re: **Learning the heritage language as a foreign language:** **Case studies from the Wellington Italian community**

Thank you for the Low Risk Notification that was received on 20 October 2004.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Massey University Human Ethics Committee Annual Report.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by a campus human ethics committee.

Please ensure that the following statement is used on Information Sheets:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics & Equity), telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz".

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority, or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to a Campus Human Ethics committee. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair
Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics & Equity)

cc   A/Prof Cynthia White   Dr Martin Paviour-Smith
        School of Language Studies   School of Language Studies
        PN231   PN231

        Prof Warwick Slinn
        Acting HoS
        School of Language Studies
        PN231

Appendix 5: Information sheet

Massey University
College of Humanities &Social Sciences

INFORMATION SHEET

1. My name is Arianna Berardi-Wiltshire and I am a doctoral student at Massey University. My study into the learning experiences of students of Italian of Italian ancestry is supervised by Assoc. Prof. Cynthia White and Dr. Martin Paviour-Smith at the School of Language Studies.

2. Your contact details have been given to me by a representative of the institution offering the Italian language course in which you are currently enrolled, who assured me you consented to be contacted by me.

3. As a learner of Italian with Italian heritage, your story, experiences and opinions are very important for this study. I would like to schedule a series of 4-6 meetings with you over the course of 2006 to ask you about your Italian background, your motivation in studying Italian, your experiences with the language inside and outside the classroom and your language learning plans for the future.

4. The meetings will take the form of informal conversations during which I will mainly prompt you talk freely about issues relating to your language use, learning experiences and ethnicity. I would like our meetings to be pleasant, friendly and relaxed, and I would like you to feel free to express anything you want at any time.

5. We will organise the times and places of the meetings well in advance to best suit your requirements.

6. You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:
   - Decline to answer any particular question
   - Withdraw from the study at anytime
   - Ask any question about the study during participation
   - Ask for the recording to be stopped at anytime during the interview

7. Everything you say will be confidential information and you will remain anonymous (your name will not be used). Our conversations will be taped and the recordings kept in a safe place. I undertake to be the only person with access to the information you will divulge.

8. The findings of this study will be written up in a final report (thesis). I will provide a summary for the participants in the study if requested.

9. Finally, if you have any questions you can contact me at work (06 356 9099 x 2405) or at home (06 359 0359).

Appendix 6: Consent form

Massey University
College of Humanities &Social Sciences

Issues of motivation and investment in learning Italian as a heritage language in Wellington

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five years

I have read the Information Sheet and the details of the study were explained to me. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If I don't want to answer a question I have the right to decline.

I agree to give information to the researcher but my name will not be used without my permission.

I agree that the conversations with the researcher are tape-recorded.

I agree that the tape recordings are kept by the researcher.

I agree that any transcripts of the taped conversations are kept by the researcher.

I understand I can ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time.

I agree to take part in the study under the conditions described in the Information Sheet.

Signed: ……………………………………..

Name: ……………………………………..

Date: ……………………………………...

THANK YOU

References

Ames, C. (1992). Classrooms: Goals, structures, and student motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 84*, 261-271.

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London; New York: Verso.

Auer, P. (1991). Italian in Toronto: A preliminary comparative study on language use and language maintenance. *Multilingua, 10*(4), 403-440.

Baker, C., & Jones, S. P. (1998). *Encyclopedia of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Baldassar, L. (2001). Tornare al paese: Territorio e identità nel processo migratorio. *Altreitalie, 23*, 9-38.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman.

Barnard, R., & Glynn, T. (Eds.). (2003). *Bilingual children's language and literacy development*. Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.

Bauersfeld, H. (1995). The structuring of the structures: Development and function of mathematizing as a social practice. In L. P. Steffe & J. Gale (Eds.), *Constructivism in education* (pp. 137-158). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Baumeister, R. F. (1998). The self. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology*. (pp. 680-740). Boston, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Bettoni, C. (1985a). Italian language attrition: A Sydney case study. In M. Clyne (Ed.), *Australia: Meeting place of languages* (pp. 63-79). Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.

Bettoni, C. (1985b). *Tra lingua dialetto e Inglese*. Sydney: Filef Publications.

Bettoni, C., & Gibbons, J. (1988a). *Linguistic purism and language shift: A guise-voice study of the Italian community in Sydney*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Bettoni, C., & Gibbons, J. (1988b). *Linguistic purism and language shift: a guise-voice study of the Italian community in Sydney* (Vol. 72). Berlin: De Gruyter.

Bettoni, C., & Rubino, A. (1996). *Emigrazione e comportamento linguistico: Un'indagine sul trilinguismo dei siciliani e dei veneti in Australia*. Galatina, Lecce: Congedo Editore.

Block, D. (2003). *The social turn in second language acquisition*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1973). Affiliation motivation: A review and a new perspective. In D. McClelland & R. Steele (Eds.), *Human motivation: A book of readings* (pp. 252-276). Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press.

Boyatzis, R. E., & Akrivou, K. (2006a). The ideal self as the driver of intentional change. *Journal of Management Development, 25*(7), 624-642.

Boyatzis, R. E., & Akrivou, K. (2006b). The ideal self as the driver of intentional change. *Journal of Management Development, 25*(7), 624-642.

Bruffee, K. A. (1986). Social construction, language and the authority of knowledge: A bibliographical essay. *College English, 48*(8), 773-780.

Bruner, J. S. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Butler, R. (1988). Enhancing and undermining intrinsic motivation: The effects of the task-involving and ego-involving evaluation on interest and performance. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 58*, 1-14.

Carreira, M. (2001). Professional opportunities for heritage language speakers. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard & S. McGinnis (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource* (pp. 109-142). McHenry, IL: The Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems Co.

Carreira, M. (2004). Seeking explanatory adequacy: A dual approach to understanding the term "Heritage Language Learner". *Heritage Language Learner, 2*(1), retrieved 7 May, 2009 from http://www.heritagelanguages.org.

Castles, S. (1992). Italian migration and settlement since 1945. In S. Castles, G. Rando & E. Vasta (Eds.), *Australia's Italians: Culture and community in a changing society*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Chambers, G. N. (1999). *Motivating language learners*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 509-536). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chinen, K. (2005). Heritage language development: Understanding the roles of ethnic identity and Saturday school participation. *Heritage Language Journal, 3*(1), Retrieved 7 May, 2009 from http://www.heritagelanguages.org.

Chiro, G., & Smolicz, J. (1993). Is Italian language a core value of Italian culture in Australia? A study of second-generation Italian-Australians. *Studi Emigrazione, 30*(110), 311-343.

Chiro, G., & Smolicz, J. (1994). Has the language time clock run down for Italian in Australia? A study of tertiary students of Italian ancestry. In A. Bivona (Ed.), *Italian towards 2000. The role of Italian studies in Australian universities. Prospect for the future*. Melbourne: Victoria University of technology.

Cho, G. (2000). The role of heritage language in social interaction and relationships: Reflections from a language minority group. *Bilingual Research Journal, 24*(4), 333-348.

Cho, G., Cho, K., & Tse, L. (1997). Why ethnic minorities want to develop their heritage language: The case of Korean Americans. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum, 10*(2), 106-112.

Clément, R. (1980). Ethnicity, contact and communicative competence in a second language. In H. Giles, W. P. Robinson & P. M. Smith (Eds.), *Language: Social psychological perspectives* (pp. 147-154). Oxford: Pergamon.

Clément, R., Dörnyei, Z., & Noels, K. (1994). Motivation, self-confidence and group cohesion in the foreign language classroom. *Language Learning, 44*, 417-448.

Clément, R., & Noels, K. (1992). Towards a situated approach to ethnolinguistic identity: The effects of status on individuals and groups. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 11*, 203-232.

Clyne, M. (1991). *Community languages: The Australian experience*. Cambridge: CUP.

Clyne, M., & Kipp, S. (1996). Language maintenance and language shift in Australia, 1991. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, 19*(1), 1-19.

Clyne, M., & Kipp, S. (1997). Trends and changes in home language use and shift in Australia, 1986-1996. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 18*, 451-473.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). London; New York: Routledge.

Coupland, N., & Nussbaum, J. F. (1993). *Discourse and lifespan identity*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Crawford, J. (1999). *Heritage languages in America: Tapping a "hidden" resource*. Retrieved 7 May 2009, from http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/HL.htm

Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Danesi, M. (1984). Canadian Italian: A case in point of how language adapts to environment. *Poliphony, 7*, 100-113.

Danesi, M. (1986). *Teaching a heritage language to dialect-speaking students*. Toronto: OISE Press.

Danesi, M. (1987). Ethnic koines and the verbal structuring of reality: Psycholinguistic observations on canadesi. *Italian Canadiana, 3*, 113-123.

Deci, E., & Flaste, R. (1995). *Why we do what we do: Understanding self-motivation*. New York: Penguin.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Touchstone.

Di Biase, B. (1989). Italian in Australian schools and universities. In C. Bettoni & J. Lo Bianco (Eds.), *Understanding Italy. Language, culture, commerce: An Australian perspective*. Sydney: University of Sydney, Frederick May Foundation.

Di Sciullo, A., van Amerigen, A., Cedergren, H., & Pupier, P. (1976). Étude de l'interaction verbale chez des Montréalais d'origine italienne. *Cahiers de Linguistique, 6*, 127-153.

Dörnyei, Z. (1994a). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal, 78*(3), 273-284.

Dörnyei, Z. (1994b). Understanding L2 motivation: On with the challenge! *The Modern Language Journal, 78*(4).

Dörnyei, Z. (2000). Motivation in action: Towards a process-oriented conceptualization of student motivation. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 70*, 519-538.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. New York: Longman.

Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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: Multilingual Matters.

Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (2002). Some dynamics of language attitudes and motivation: Results of a longitudinal nationwide survey. *Applied Linguistics, 23*, 421-462.

Dörnyei, Z., & Ottó , I. (1998). Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation. *Working Papers in Applied Linguistics, Thames Valley University, 4*, 43-69.

Draper, J. B., & Hicks, H. (2000). Where we've been; What we've learned. In R. B. Webb & E. R. Miller (Eds.), *Teaching heritage language learners: Voices from the classroom* (pp. 15-37). Yonkers, NY: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Duff, P. (2008). *Case study research in applied linguistics*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Eccles, J., & Wigfield, A. (1985). Teacher expectancies and student motivation. In J. B. Dusek (Ed.), *Teacher expectancies* (pp. 185-226). Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum.

Edmondson, W. (2004). Individual motivational profiles: The interaction between external and internal Factors. *Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht, 9*(2), 21.

Elliott, A. J. (1999). Approach and avoidance motivation and achievement goals. *Educational Psychologist, 34*(3), 169-189.

Elliott, A. J., & Covington, M. V. (2001). Approach and avoidance motivation. *Educational Psychologist, 13*(2), 73-92.

Elliott, E. S., & Dweck, C. S. (1988). Goals: An approach to motivation and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*, 5-12.

Ely, C. (1986a). An analysis of discomfort, risktaking, sociability, and motivation in the L2 classroom. *Language Learning, 36*, 238-244.

Ely, C. (1986b). Language learning motivation: A descriptive and causal analysis. *Modern Language Journal, 70*(1), 28-35.

Erickson, F., & Shultz, J. (1982). *The counselor as gatekeeper: Social interaction in interviews*. New York: Academic Press.

Feuerverger, G. (1989). Ethnolinguistic vitality of Italo-Canadian students in integrated and non-integrated heritage langauge programs in Toronto. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 46*(1), 51-72.

Feuerverger, G. (1991). University students' perceptions of heritage language learning and ethnic identity maintenance. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 47*(4), 660-677.

Fishman, J. (2001). 300-plus years of heritage language education in the United States. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard & S. McGinnis (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource* (pp. 81-97). Washington DC: Centre for Applied Linguistics & Delta Systems.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The interview. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 695-727). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Galloway, D. M., Rogers, C., Armstrong, D., & Leo, E. L. (1998). *Motivating the difficult to teach*. Addison Wesley: Longman.

Gardner, R., & Lambert, W. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitude and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.

Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1993). A student's contribution to second language learning. Part II: Affective variables. *Language Teaching, 26*, 1-11.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Geisherik, A. (2004). The role of motivation among heritage and non-heritage learners of Russian. *Canadian Slavonic Papers, 46*(1-2), 9-22.

Giampapa, F. (2004). The politics of identity, representation and the discourses of identification: Negotiating the periphery and the centre. In A. Pavlenko & A. Blackledge (Eds.), *Negotiating identity in multilingual contexts* (pp. 192-218). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Gibbons, J., & Ashcroft, L. (1995). Multiculturalism and language shift: A subjective vitality questionnaire study of Sydney's Italians. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 16*(4), 281-299.

Giles, H., & Byrne, J. L. (1982). An intergroup approach to second language acquisition. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 1*, 17-40.

Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Gold, R. (1958). Roles in sociological field observation. *Social Forces, 36*, 217-213.

Gomm, R. (2003). *Social research methodology: A critical introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

He, A. W. (2006). Toward an identity theory of the development of Chinese as a heritage language. *Heritage Language Journal, 4*(1).

Heller, M. (1982). Negotiation of language choice in Montreal. In J. J. Gumperz (Ed.), *Language and social identity*. (pp. 108-118). Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review, 94*, 319-340.

Higgins, E. T. (1989). Self-discrepancy theory: What patterns of self-belief cause people to suffer? In L. Berkovitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 22, pp. 93-136). New York: Academic Press.

Hirsh, W. (Ed.). (1987). *Living languages: Bilingualism and community languages in New Zealand*. Auckland, NZ: Heinemann (in association with the Office of The Race Relations Conciliator).

Holmes, J., & Harlow, R. (Eds.). (1991). *Threads in the New Zealand tapestry of language*. Auckland N.Z.: Linguistic Society of New Zealand.

Hornberger, N. H. (2005). Heritage/community language education: U.S. and Australian perspectives. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 8*(2&3), 101-108.

Hornberger, N. H., & Wang, S. C. (2008). Who are our heritage language learners? Identity and biliteracy in heritage language education in the United States. In D. M. Brinton, O. Kagan & S. Bauckus (Eds.), *Heritage language education: A new field emerging* (pp. 3-35). New York: Routledge.

Johnson, M. (2004). *A philosophy of second language acquisition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Josselson, R. (2007). The ethical attitude in narrative research: Principles and practicalities. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 537-556). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kagan, O. (2005). In support of a proficiency-based definition of heritage language learners: The case of Russian. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 8*(2&3), 213-221.

Kagan, O., & Dillon, K. (2001). A new perspective on teaching Russian: Focus on the heritage learner. *Slavic and East European Journal, 45*(3), 507-518.

Kanno, Y. (2000). Bilingualism and identity: The stories of Japanese returnees. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 3*(1), 1-18.

Kanno, Y., & Norton, B. (2003). Imagined communities and educational possibilities: Introduction. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 2*(4), 241-249.

Kincheloe, J. L., & Steinberg, S. R. (1997). *Changing multiculturalism*. Bristol, PA: Open University Press.

King, K. A. (2000). Language ideologies and heritage language education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 3*(3), 167-184.

Kinginger, C. (2003). Alice does not live here anymore: Foreign language learning and identity reconstruction. In A. Pavlenko & A. Blackledge (Eds.), *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts* (pp. 219-242). Clevedon; Buffalo: Multilingual Matters.

Kohonen, V. (2001). Towards experiential foreign language education. In V. Kohonen, R. Jaatinen, P. Kaikkonen & J. Lehtovaara (Eds.), *Experiential learning in foreign language education* (pp. 8-60). London: Pearson Education.

Koizumi, R., & Matsuo, K. (1993). A longitudinal study of attitudes and motivation in learning English among Japanese seventh-grade students. *Japanese Psychological Research, 35*(1), 1-11.

Kondo-Brown, K. (2001). Heritage language students of Japanese in traditional foreign language classes: A preliminary empirical study. *Japanese Language and Literature, 35*(2), 157-179.

Kondo-Brown, K. (2003). Heritage language instruction for post-secondary students from immigrant backgrounds. *Heritage Language Journal, 1*, 1-25.

Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Labrie, N. (1989). Les comportements multilingues des italophones de Montréal: Communication inter ou intraculturelle ? *Bulletin de l'ACLA/Bulletin of the CAAL, 11*(2), 73-83.

Labrie, N. (1990). *L'alternance entre l'italien, le francais et l'anglais chez les italophones de Montréal*. Actes du Colloque International des Langues Polynomiques: Université de Corse.

Labrie, N. (1999). *Choix linguistiques, changements et alternances de langue: Les comportments multilingues des Italophones de Montréal*. Québéc: Centre International de Recherche en

Aménagement Linguistique.

Labrie, N., & Deshaies, D. (1989). Diglossie et alternance de code: Un examen des concepts en fonction des comportements bilingues. *Revue Québécoise de Linguistique Théorique et Appliquée, 8*(2), 57-72.

Lacorte, M., & Canabal, E. (2003). *Interaction with heritage learners in foreign language classrooms*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Lantolf, J., & Pavlenko, A. (2001). (S)second (L)anguage (A)ctivity Theory: Understanding second language learners as people. In M. P. Breen (Ed.), *Learners contributions to language learning* (pp. 141-158). Harlow, UK; New York: Longman.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, J. (2006). Motivational profiles of Korean language learners. *Academic Exchange Quarterly, 10*(2), 248-254.

Lee, J. S. (2002). The Korean language in America: The role of cultural identity in heritage language learning. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum, 15*(2), 117-133.

Lee, J. S., & Kim, H. (2007). Heritage language learners' attitudes, motivations, and instructional needs: The case of postsecondary Korean language learners. In K. Kondo-Brown & J. D. Brown (Eds.), *Teaching Chinese, Japanese, and Korean heritage students: Curriculum needs, materials, and assessment* (pp. 159-185). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Little, D. (1999). Developing learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: A social-interactive view of learning and three fundamental pedagogical principles. *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses, 38*, 77-88.

Little, D., Ridley, J., & Ushioda, E. (2002). *Towards greater autonomy in foreign language learning*. Dublin: Autentik.

Locke, E. A. (1996). Motivation through conscious goal setting. *Applied & Preventive Psychology, 5*, 117-124.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). *A theory of goal setting & task performance*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1994). Goal setting theory. In H. F. O'Neil & M. Drillings (Eds.), *Motivation: Theory and research* (pp. 1-13). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum.

Lynch, A. (2003). The relationship between second and heritage language acquisition: Notes on research and theory building. *Heritage Language Journal, 1*(1).

Marcos, K. (1999). *Are we wasting our nation's language resources? Heritage languages in America*. Retrieved 7 May 2009, from http://www.cal.org/resources/archive/langlink/1099.html

Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist, 41*, 954-969.

Markus, H., & Ruvolo, A. (1989). Possible selves: Personalized representations of goals. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Goal concepts in personality and social psychology* (pp. 211-241). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Markus, H. R. (2006). Foreword. In C. Dunkel & J. Kerpelman (Eds.), *Possible selves: Theory, research and applications* (pp. xi-xiv). New York: Nova Science.

Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulation? *Educational Researcher, 17*, 13-17.

Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide*. London: Falmer Press.

McCombs, B. L. (1994). Strategies for assessing and enhancing motivation: Keys to promoting self-regulated learning and performance. In H. F. O'Neil & M. Drillings (Eds.), *Motivation: Theory and research* (pp. 49-69). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

McCracken, G. D. (1988). *The long interview*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. M. (1998). *Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Migliorino, P. (2000). I left my heart in Norton Street. In P. Genovesi (Ed.), *In search of the Italian Australian into the new millennium*. Melbourne: Gro-Set.

Miller, S. M. (1952). The participant observer and over-rapport. *American Sociological Review, 17*(1), 97–99.

Miranda, G. (2001). *Gli atteggiamenti verso l'Italia e la lingua italiana dei figli di Italiani (di eta' compresa tra i 20 e i 60 anni) nati e residenti in Nuova Zelanda.* Unpublished PhD thesis, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.

Miyahira, K., & Petrucci, P. R. (2007). Going home to Okinawa: Perspectives of heritage language speakers studying in the ancestral homeland. In M. Mantero

(Ed.), *Identity and second language learning: Culture, inquiry and dialogic activity in educational contexts*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Murphey, T., Jin, C., & Li-Chi, C. (2005). Learners' constructions of identities and imagined communities. In P. B. D. Nunan (Ed.), *Learners' stories: Difference and diversity in language learning* (pp. 83-100). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nakata, Y. (2006). *Motivation and experience in foreign language learning*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Nikolov, M. (2001). A study of unsuccessful language learners. In Z. Dörnyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 149-170). Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Centre, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Noels, K. (2005). Orientations to learning German: Heritage language learning and motivational substrates. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 62*(2), 285-312.

Noels, K., & Clément, R. (1996). Communication across cultures: Social determinants and acculturative consequences. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 28*, 214-228.

Noels, K., Pon, G., & Clément, R. (1996). Language identity and adjustment: The role of linguistic self-confident in the acculturation process. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 13*(3), 246-264.

Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. London: Longman.

Norton , B., & Kanno, Y. (2003). Imagined communities and educational possibilities: Introduction. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education, 4*(2), 241-249.

Norton Peirce, B. (1995). Social identity, investment and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*(1).

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. New York: Newbury House.

Oxford, R., & Shearin, J. (1994). Language learning motivation: Expanding the theoretical framework. *The Modern Language Journal, 78*(1).

Oxford, R., & Shearin, J. (1996). Language learning motivation in a new key. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning motivation: Pathways to the new century* (pp. 121-144). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Pavlenko, A. (2002). Poststructuralist approaches to the study of social factors in second language learning and use. In V. Cook (Ed.), *Portraits of the L2 user* (pp. 277-302). Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.

Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (2003). New theoretical approaches to the study of negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts. In A. Pavlenko & A. Blackledge (Eds.), *Negotiating identities in multilingual contexts* (pp. 1-33). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Pavlenko, A., & Lantolf, J. P. (2000). Second language learning as participation and the (re)construction of selves. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 155-178). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Peddie, R. (2003). Languages in New Zealand: Population, politics and policy. In R. Barnard & T. Glynn (Eds.), *Bilingual children's language and literacy development*. Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.

Petrucci, P. (2007). Heritage scholars in the ancestral homeland: An overlooked identity in study abroad research. *Sociolinguistic Studies, 1*(2).

Phinney, J. S. (2003). Ethnic identity and acculturation. In K. Chun, P. B. Organista & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research.* (pp. 63-81). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Piaget, J. (1966). *The origins of intelligence in children*. New York: International Universities Press.

Piaget, J. (1972). *The principles of genetic epistemology*. New York: Basic Books.

Piaget, J. (1974). *To understand is to invent*. New York: Viking Press.

Pietropaolo, D. (1974). Aspects of English interference on Italian language in Toronto. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 30*(3), 234-241.

Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. H. (1996). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill.

Plimmer, C. (1994). Language maintenance and shift in the Italian community in Wellington. *Wellington Working Papers in Linguistics, 6*, 83-105.

Potowski, K. (2001). Educating foreign language teachers to work with heritage Spanish speakers. In B. Johnston & S. Irujo (Eds.), *Research and practice: Voices from the field* (pp. 99-113). Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rogoff, B. (1982). Integrating context and cognitive development. In M. E. Lamb & A. L. Brown (Eds.), *Advances in developmental psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 125-170). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum.

Ruane, J. M. (2004). *Essentials of research methods: A guide to social science research.* Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Rubino, A. (2002). *Italian in Australia: Past and new trends.* Paper presented at the Innovations in Italian Teaching Workshop, Brisbane. Retrieved 7 may, 2009 from http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/italian/content_1_rubino.html

Rueda, R., & Moll, L. C. (1994). A sociocultural perspective on motivation. In H. F. O'Neil & M. Drillings (Eds.), *Motivation: Theory and research.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum.

Ruvolo, A., & Markus, H. (1992). Possible selves and performance: The power of self-relevant imagery. *Social Cognition, 10*(1), 95-124.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 35*, 54-67.

Ryu Yang, J. S. (2003). Motivation orientation of Korean leraners and ethnic identity development of heritage learners. *The Korean Language in America, 8*, 295-314.

Scalera, D. (2003). The invisible learner: Unlocking the heritage language treasure. *Language Association Journal, 55*(2).

Scarcella, R. C., & Oxford, R. L. (1992). *The tapestry of language learning: The individual in the communicative classroom.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Schumann, J. (1978). The acculturation model for second language acquisition. In R. Gingras (Ed.), *Second language acquisition and foreign language teaching.* Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Schunk, D. H. (1990). Goal setting and self-efficacy during self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist, 25*(1), 71 - 86.

Schunk, D. H. (1996). Goal and self-evaluative influences during children's cognitive skill learning. *American Educational Research Journal, 91*(2), 251-260.

Sealey, A., & Carter, B. (2004). *Applied linguistics as social science.* London: Continuum.

Seifert, T. L. (1997). Academic goals and emotions: Results of a structural equation model and a cluster analysis. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 67*, 232-338.

Sfard, A. (1998). On two metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one. *Educational Researcher, 27*(2), 4-13.

Shuell, T. J. (1996). Teaching and learning in a classroom context. In D. C. Berliner & R. C. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 726-764). New York: MacMillan.

Silvestri, E. (1990). Choix de langues et rôles discursifs dans une conversation familiale italo-canadienne. *Plurilinguismes, 1*(75-90).

Sivan, E. (1986). Motivation in social constructivist theory. *Educational Psychologist, 21*(3), 209-233.

Skyrme, G. (2008). *Expectations, emerging issues and change for Chinese international students in a New Zealand university.* Unpublished doctoral thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Smolicz, J. (1981). Core values and cultural identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 4*(1), 75-90.

Spolsky, B. (1985). Formulating a theory of second language learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 269-288.

Stake, R. E. (1988). Case study methods in educational research: Making sweet water. In R. M. Jaegar (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (pp. 253-265). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Stake, R. E. (1994). Case study. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 220-235). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Statistics Canada. (2001). *2001 Canadian Census*. Retrieved 7 May, 2009 from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html

Stevens, R. (1996). *Understanding the self*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sutherland, P. (1992). *Cognitive development today: Piaget and his critics*. London: Falmer.

Syed, Z. (2001). Notions of self in foreign language learning: A qualitative analysis. In Z. Dörnyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 127-148). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.

Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual Review of Psychology, 33*, 1-39.

Talbot, M. M., Atkinson, K., & Atkinson, D. (2003). *Language and power in the modern world*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Tellis, W. (1997). Introduction to case study. *The Qualitative Report, 3*(2).

Tosi, A. (1984a). *Immigration and bilingual education: A case study of movement of population, language change and education within the EEC*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Tosi, A. (1984b). The maintenance of the mother tongue and culture. In *Immigration and bilingual education* (pp. 161-184). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Tosi, A. (1991). *L'italiano d'oltremare: La lingua delle comunità italiane nei paesi anglofoni*. Firenze: Giunti.

Tremblay, P. F., & Gardner, R. C. (1995). Expanding the motivation construct in language learning. *The Modern Language Journal, 79*(4), 505-518.

Tse, L. (1996). *The effects of ethnic identity formation on attitudes toward ethnic language development.* Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 8-12 April, 1996, New York.

Tse, L. (2000a). The effects of ethnic identity formation on bilingual maintenace and development: An analysis of Asian American narratives. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 3*(3), 185-200.

Tse, L. (2000b). Student perceptions of foreign language study: A qualitative analysis of foreign language autobiographies. *Modern Language Journal, 84*(1), 69-84.

Tseng, W., Dörnyei, Z., & Schmitt, N. (2006). A new approach to assessing strategic learning: The case of self regulation in vocabulary acquisition. *Applied Linguistics, 27*(1), 78-102.

Ushioda, E. (1996). *The role of motivation*. Dublin: Autentik.

Ushioda, E. (1998). Effective motivational thinking: A cognitive theoretical approach to the study of langauge learning motivation. In E. A. Soler & V. C. Espurz (Eds.), *Current issues in English language methodology* (pp. 77-89). Universitat Jaume I: Castello de la Plana, Spain.

Ushioda, E. (2001). Language learning at university: Exploring the role of motivational thinking. In Z. Dörnyei & Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language learning acquisition*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Ushioda, E. (2003). Motivation as a socially mediated process. In D. Little, J. Ridley & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: Teacher, learner, curriculum and assessment* (pp. 90–102). Dublin: Authentik.

Ushioda, E. (2007). Motivation, autonomy and sociocultural theory. In P. Benson (Ed.), *Learner autonomy 8 - Teacher and learner perspectives*. Dublin: Autentik.

Ushioda, E. (2009). A person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation, self and identity. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 289-310). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Valdés, G. (2001). Heritage language students: Profiles and possibilities. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard & S. McGinnis (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource*. Washington, DC; McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics & Delta Systems.

Valdés, G. (2005). Bilingualism, heritage language learners, and SLA research: Opportunities lost or seized? *The Modern Language Journal, 89*, 410-426.

van Deusen-Scholl, N. (2003). Towards a definition of heritage language: Sociopolitical and pedagogical considerations. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education, 2*(3), 211-230.

van Lier, L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy, and authenticity*. London: Longman.

Vizmuller-Zocco, J. (1987). *Politeness and language in contact: Italians in Toronto.* Paper presented at the Paper presented at the 20th annual conference of the American Italian Historical Association, Chicago, Illinois.

von Glasersfeld, E. (1987). Learning as a constructive activity. In C. Janvier (Ed.), *Problems of representation in the teaching and learning of mathematics* (pp. 3-17). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walker, U. G. (2004). *Language, migration and continuity of being: Notions of migrant language proficiency and self-concept among multilingual migrants in Aotearoa-New Zealand.* Unpublished doctoral thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Weger-Guntharp, H. (2006). Voices from the margin: Developing a profile of Chinese heritage language leraners in the FL classroom. *Heritage Language Journal, 4*(1), 29-46.

Weiner, B. (1992). *Human motivation: Metaphors, theories, and research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Wen, X. (1997). Motivation and language learning with students of Chinese. *Foreign Language Annals, 30*(2), 235-245.

Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wiley, T. G. (2001). On defining heritage languages and their speakers. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard & S. McGinnis (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource* (pp. 29-36). Washington, DC & McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics & Delta Systems.

Wiley, T. G. (2005). Discontinuities in heritage and community language education: Challenges for educational language policies. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 8*(2&3), 222-229.

Wiley, T. G., & Valdés, G. (2000). Heritage language instruction in the United States: A time for renewal. *Bilingual Research Journal, 24*(4).

Williams, F. (2004). Motivation in foreign language learning. In M. Baynham, A. Deignan & G. White (Eds.), *Applied Linguistics at the interface* (pp. 167-180). London: British Association for Applied Linguistics.

Williams, F., & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, F., Burden, R., & Lanvers, U. (2002). "French is the language of love and stuff": Student perceptions of issues related to motivation in learning a foreign language. *British Educational Research Journal, 28*(4), 503-528.

Williams, M., & Burden, R. (1999). Students' developing conceptions of themselves as language learners. *The Modern Language Journal, 83*, 193-201.

Wolters, C. (2003). Regulation of motivation: Evaluating the underemphasized aspect of self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist, 34*(4), 189-205.

Yin, R. K. (2002). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

You, B. (2005). Children negotiating Korean American ethnic identity thorugh their heritage language. *Bilingual Research Journal, 29*(3), 711-721.

Zuengler, J., & Miller, E. R. (2006). Cognitive and sociocultural perspectives: Two parallel SLA worlds? *TESOL Quarterly, 40*(1), 35-58.