

# How to keep the current flowing? Factors contributing to the longevity of directed motivational currents

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**ABSTRACT:** Directed motivational currents (DMCs) depict long-term, heightened engagement in pursuit of a highly desired future identity. While the core theoretical underpinnings of the construct are well-established and it is possible to observe a growing research interest in inducing real-time currents, especially in foreign language (FL) contexts, little is known regarding the specific factors contributing to the untypical longevity of DMCs, as the currents are believed to cover timescales of months or even years. The present study is therefore an attempt to fill the void in the DMC-related research. Following the initial phase of the investigation, which sought to identify prospective DMC cases amongst 247 students of a foreign language at private language schools, thematic analysis was applied to scrutinise the exact nature of DMC experiences identified. The investigation showed that the flow of motivational energy within the DMC superstructure might be occasionally obstructed by both mental and physical exhaustion and, thus, re-triggering mechanisms are required to maintain the intensity of motivational surges. Two primary factors contributing to the longevity of DMCs were identified, namely the growth of learners' agency and the re-emergence of one's superordinate goal.

**Key words:** directed motivational currents, motivation, vision, re-triggering mechanisms, autonomy

**¿Cómo mantener la continuidad de una corriente? Factores que contribuyen a la longevidad de las corrientes motivacionales dirigidas**

**RESUMEN:** Las corrientes motivacionales dirigidas describen un compromiso intensificado a largo plazo en busca de una identidad futura altamente deseada. Si bien los fundamentos teóricos del constructo están bien establecidos y es posible observar un creciente interés de la investigación en la inducción de corrientes en tiempo real, especialmente en el contexto de las lenguas extranjeras (FL), se sabe poco respecto a los factores específicos que contribuyen a la atípica longevidad de las DMC, ya que se cree que las corrientes abarcan escalas de tiempo de meses o incluso años. Este estudio de método mixto es, por tanto, un intento de llenar el vacío existente en la investigación sobre las DMC. Una vez realizada la fase inicial de la investigación, que buscaba identificar casos prospectivos de DMC entre 247 estudiantes como lengua extranjera en escuelas de idiomas privadas, se aplicó el análisis temático para examinar la naturaleza exacta de las experiencias de DMC identificadas. Se identificaron dos factores primarios que contribuyen a la longevidad de las DMC, a saber, el crecimiento de la

autonomía de los estudiantes y la reaparición del objetivo propio de las DMC.

**Palabras clave:** corrientes motivacionales dirigidas, motivación, visión, mecanismos de reactivación, autonomía

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Dörnyei, Ibrahim, and Muir (2015, p.95) explained that Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs) are nothing less than “motivational surges that are caused by the integration of personal, temporal, and contextual factors, creating momentum to pursue a highly desired and emotionally rewarding future identity”. This auspicious alignment of factors is believed to aid an individual in harnessing the daily turmoil of motivation and, consequently, helps a person channel one’s actions towards the favourable direction. The construct holds a link to clearly visualised, personally meaningful objectives (such as improving one’s language proficiency to meet demands of a study-abroad programme or seize a job-related opportunity) and, while the experience lasts, structural properties of the current (including goal-related routines and proximal targets) support an individual in remaining goal-oriented. Although the motivational superstructure coined by Dörnyei and his associates comprises several elements which advocate for its enormous practical potential, the currents are highly unique, and the intensity of individual experiences may vary substantially. There exist, however, certain core constituents of a DMC, with the tripartite model encompassing the following elements: vision-orientedness, salient facilitative structure, and positive emotionality.

### 1.1. Vision-orientedness

Individuals pursuing personally relevant objectives are bound to experience plateaus, temporary distractions, and setbacks. Logically, more long-haul and complicated undertakings, such as attaining mastery of a foreign language, would inevitably trigger more challenges en route to accomplishing one’s desired target. The recent studies into the nature of human engagement suggest that those individuals whose pursuits are imbued with the sensory element of vision are more inclined to activate images of goal achievement and, consequently, are more likely to endure in the vicinity of challenges (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Pietluch, 2018; Henry, 2019). However, having a well-anchored desire or a firmly defined goal may not suffice in inspiring action to accomplish the very objective. Human engagement is a chaotic, ever-evolving process and harnessing this turmoil requires something more than a goal one would strive for. What distinguishes a motivational current from a standard case of motivated behaviour is that, while experiencing a DMC, individuals navigate through the path leading towards their personally significant vision (Muir, 2016). Henry (2019, p.146) alleged that “a vision of sufficient strength will always be potentially relevant and always potentially activatable”. Considering the remote nature of goals within the DMC framework, a clear vision of future identity provides cohesion for one’s efforts and supports a person in sustaining dedication over significant periods of time.

### 1.2. A salient facilitative structure

Each DMC must be explicitly launched, and the intensity of the motivational phenomenon is, by large, credited to the outburst of motivational energy at the DMC birth. The emergence of the current may be compared to an awakening; a DMC-ready individual notices a favourable alignment of personal, contextual, and temporal factors to pursue a highly desired future identity and this readiness is reflected in unceasing engagement, which is not otherwise observable (Dörnyei et al., 2015). As human motivation is ever-changing, motivational properties of a DMC are believed to aid an individual in temporarily conquering this chaotic environment through the inclusion of a set of regular behavioural routines. Specific actions conducive to a desired accomplishment enter a person's daily action repertoire to the extent that the lack of possibility to perform them may evoke feelings of discomfort or guilt (Pietluch, 2021). This leads those affected by DMC to select goal-directed behaviours and avoid all non-relevant activities that could hinder the likelihood of goal attainment. As objectives pursued by those affected by the phenomenon are typically remote, it seems warranted to assume that a person would require some affirmative reinforcement en route to one's desired accomplishment. Within the DMC framework, this is accomplished through setting frequent and varied sub-goals which offer tangible feedback of progress (Safdari & Maftoon, 2017). Not only do proximal targets divide lengthy and strenuous endeavours into more convenient and digestible chunks, but also once a minor target is accomplished, the motivational system is cyclically boosted with some of the positive emotionality that would emerge once a sought-after objective is attained.

### 1.3. Positive emotionality

The third defining component of a DMC is the overall positive emotionality that permeates the structure. The enjoyment of functioning within the DMC zone is, in fact, so conspicuous that even those not familiar with the construct can notice a goal-directed, behavioural change in those affected by the current. Muir and Gümüş (2020, p.504) accentuated that "positive emotionality extends to all tasks in the DMC pathway, even those that, when completed in contexts other than that of a DMC, may not be perceived as intrinsically enjoyable". By transforming often mundane activities into pursuits conducive to one's vision, a DMC provides cohesion to one's actions and enables an individual to endure temporary setbacks by evoking positive affect reaction. This extraordinary emotional stimulation may take two primary forms, namely positive anticipatory emotions, with individuals experiencing the rewarding consequences of future attainment, and eudaimonic well-being, that is, happiness achieved through having a sense of purpose and self-actualisation (Ibrahim, 2020).

## 2. RESEARCH RATIONALE

In the past few years, more emphasis has been laid on the dynamic and long-term aspect of motivation (Dörnyei, Henry, & Muir, 2016). Whilst the field remains dominated by large-scale research projects seeking to validate psychological approaches towards motivation

or investigating the factors responsible for the initiation of motivational momentum, there is also a plethora of research endeavours focusing on a few individual cases in the hope of synthesising insights into how people feel and act in personally relevant circumstances (Dörnyei, 2016). The latter are of exceptional importance for corroborating recent conceptualisations of motivation, as studies delving into the true nature of a phenomenon must typically precede any endeavour that aims to put forward context-specific implications. The proponents of the Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs) theory embraced a similar route. Although the notion was proposed in the field of foreign language (FL) learning motivation less than a decade ago, it has provided the much-needed impulse to scrutinise motivation through the lens of a longitudinal process rather than a momentary peak in a person's engagement.

The initial empirical studies on motivational currents focused on generating data to support the validity of DMC constituents by examining experiences of adult individuals from diverse language learning backgrounds, including migrant learners (Henry, Davydenko, & Dörnyei, 2015) or trainee English teachers (Zarrinabadi & Tavakoli, 2017). Other research projects scrutinised aspects such as the role of affect in DMCs (Ibrahim, 2016; Ibrahim, 2020), shifts in motivational patterns of undergraduate students (Selcuk & Erten, 2017; Sak, 2020), and the influence of sociodemographic factors (such as age, gender, or nationality) on motivational currents (Muir, 2016; Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2017). In the past three years, it is possible to observe a specific shift in DMC-related inquiry, with more attention being devoted to the impact of individual variables, such as autonomy and willingness to communicate (Zarrinabadi, Ketabi, & Tavakoli, 2019), or self-efficacy (Pietluch, 2018; Pietluch, 2021) on the emergence and intensity of DMC experiences. Li, Tang, and Zhang (2021) pointed out that there still exists a paucity of empirical studies that would aid those concerned with the quality of FL instruction to induce real-time DMCs, although it is possible to observe some investigative effort in this regard. Watkins (2016) attempted inducing motivational currents amongst 25 Japanese undergraduates through designing the language teaching curriculum that targeted the core constituents of a DMC. Although the nature of individual experiences was not discussed in detail, the outcomes of the study seem to lend some support to the claim that a carefully honed language teaching curriculum may foster DMC-like engagement. Similarly, the intervention research carried out by Garcia-Pinar (2020) on four undergraduates showed that clearly defined and personally fulfilling group projects can generate motivational currents. Another study conducted by Pietluch (2021) on 16 adult FL learners yielded confirmatory evidence for the assumption that enhancing a DMC-oriented language teaching curriculum with efficacy building techniques may contribute towards the emergence of prospective DMCs.

As DMC represents a novel motivational construct, some facets of the experience remain understudied. Among such aspects, the most promising line of inquiry pertains to the specifics of DMC sustainability, as no study to date has delved into specific factors contributing to the longevity of the currents following motivational dropdowns. It was originally theorised that due to its structural properties and positive emotionality associated with a future identity, DMCs override all other inclinations and temptations which may potentially distract an individual from pursuing a vision-led objective. However, those caught up in the flow are still prone to temporary motivational fluctuations due to fatigue, unsatisfactory results, or boredom. Thus, DMCs require re-triggering in the vicinity of distractions (Ibrahim, 2020; Muir & Gümüş, 2020). As the construct offers enormous practical potential for implementation in

virtually any setting, the awareness of reinvigorating factors could aid those concerned with the quality of language instruction in successfully inducing DMCs in a natural classroom environment. Therefore, the present study represents the first direct attempt to identify the factors contributing to longevity and permanence typical for a DMC experience. To this end, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: What factors contribute towards the permanence of motivational currents?

RQ2: Are all re-triggering mechanisms linked to the structural properties of DMC?

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1. Setting, participants, and sampling

To increase the odds of capturing different FL DMC experiences, adult individuals from different backgrounds were targeted to compose the initial research body for the present investigation. Convenience sampling was used, and the research group was composed of volunteer respondents who had, in the past five years, been attending a foreign language course in a private language school in Rzeszow, Poland. During the study, demographic data were collected from the participants. In total, 247 submissions were received (Female: 135, 54,66%; Male: 112, 45,34%), and the respondents ranged in age from 23 to 49 ( $M=24.20$ ;  $SD=2.32$ ). In terms of nationality, 194 participants came from Poland (78,54%), 41 (16,60%) from Ukraine, 5 (2,02%) from Germany, 4 (1,62%) from Russia, and 3 (1,22%) from Slovakia. On top of having at least three years of foreign language learning experience, to qualify for the study, potential respondents had to specify that they use a foreign language on a daily basis. In terms of the former factor, 67 respondents (27,12%) reported that they have been studying English for three to five years, 92 (37,25%) for six to ten years, and 88 (35,63%) for over ten years. Most respondents indicated English as their desired L2 ( $n=228$ , 92,31%). The remaining participants have been learning either Polish ( $n=12$ , 4,86%) or German ( $n=7$ , 2,83%).

The questionnaire data were collected in person between May and September 2021 using the *DMC Disposition Scale* developed by Muir (2016) (see below). The respondents were familiarised with the methodology of the study and were requested to sign a written consent form. The principal aims of the study were explained and, while responding to the questions, the respondents were requested to focus on the periods of intense motivational investment while learning a foreign language. An account of such experience was shared with the participants (a person who developed communicative proficiency in Spanish over a short period of time to participate in a work-related training programme). The background information on the concept of DMC was limited, as the researcher did not want to narrow the respondents' responses to describing occurrences that would imitate a motivational current. Following the collection phase, the data were subjected to an initial screening procedure to identify the instances of fully-fledged DMCs, according to the theoretical model proposed by Dörnyei et al. (2015). More specifically, such an account had to display all core features of a DMC experience, including the presence of a personally meaningful vision, proximal targets, behavioural routines, and positive emotionality. Out of 247 submissions, 23 (Female: 13, 56,52%; male: 10, 43,48%) DMC accounts were identified, confirming that a true motivational surge is indeed rare a phenomenon.

Moving on to the qualitative phase, all 23 participants were interviewed in person on three separate occasions between June and November 2021. The interviews were conducted in English and lasted 35 minutes on average. The sessions with the participants were audio-recorded and then, transcribed verbatim. To verify whether the description provided by the researcher was concise and factual, the respondents were provided with written summaries of their accounts.

### **3.2. Instruments**

#### *3.2.1. DMC Disposition Scale*

In the present study, the *DMC Disposition Scale* developed by Muir (2016) was used solely to identify prospective DMC cases for further qualitative analysis. The tool captures different aspects of a DMC experience, including the presence of a superordinate goal, positive emotionality permeating the experience, and a self-supporting motivational framework steering those caught up in a DMC towards an auspicious direction. The responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert continuum, with the possible answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To better understand the nature of individual experiences, open-end questions are also included in the questionnaire. Despite being a relatively new instrument, the questionnaire offers high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.84. As the scale was adopted for use in a new context in the current study, the internal consistency of the instrument was assessed and rendered a score of 0.87.

#### *3.2.2. Motivational graphs*

Given the retrospective nature of the present investigation, motivational graphs were used to capture the motivational trajectories of participants. Such an approach has been previously used in several studies (Henry et al., 2015; Zarrinabadi & Khajeh, 2021). Not only does such a tool encourage participants to reflect on their motivational experiences, but it also allows a researcher to identify dropdowns and peaks in motivated energy (Henry et al., 2015). Prior to the first interview, the respondents selected for the second phase of the analysis were requested to plot a graph showing any potential fluctuations in their motivation level throughout their DMC experiences. More specifically, the participants were asked to indicate their level of motivation (on a scale ranging from 0 to 100) for each month of their experience.

#### *3.2.3. Semi-structured interviews*

Considering that the factors responsible for the re-triggering of DMCs remain relatively unknown, most of the data for the present study was collected through a semi-structured interview protocol designed specifically for the present study. Instead of requesting the respondents to elaborate on a specific aspect of a motivational episode, qualitative interviews, through induction and analysis, generate in-depth insights about the true nature of a phenomenon under scrutiny. During the interview, the participants were requested to share accounts of atypically long and intense motivational experiences in the FL learning context.

On top of the questions incorporated in the interview protocol (see Appendix A), as several statements were somewhat ambiguous, follow-up questions were asked to elicit the essence of each experience. The additional questions were primarily related to the emotional aspects of consistent motivational episodes, such as negative rumination or confidence levels throughout an experience and the steadiness of motivation. Several probing questions were incorporated to counteract any tension or anxiety stemming from participation in an interview.

### 3.3. Procedure

As the primary focus of the study was to elaborate on the longevity of motivational currents in the context of L2 learning, the interview data from the 23 participants were screened once again to exclude the accounts which were only seemingly related to developing L2 proficiency (i.e., accounts where learning or teaching a foreign language were not in the centre of a motivational experience). On this basis, five accounts qualified for the next phase of the analysis (Female: four, 80%; male: one, 20%).

Several different measures were undertaken to ensure the validity of the research project. Given the focus of the present endeavour and the fact that the still-novel nature of the DMC phenomenon necessitates more elaborate interpretations, the decision was made to apply inductive thematic analysis. Instead of approaching the data with some preconceived themes, in such an approach, themes are determined by the dataset (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

In the first stage of the analysis, the recorded interviews were transcribed, and the entire dataset was read repeatedly so that a better comprehension of individual experiences could be developed. Then, a descriptive account of each experience was produced. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.80) indicated that once a researcher is familiar with the dataset, “it would be desirable to organise the data through developing a set of labels”. Thus, the essential sections of the text were highlighted using different colours, each corresponding to a different code. Such an approach supplies a researcher with an overview of common meanings present in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The extract below illustrates the procedure:

*Table 1. Codes-sample*

INTERVIEW EXTRACT:	CODES:
<p><i>Our teacher provided us with a short report listing all the things we do well and the things we should improve. This was the first time in weeks that I felt like I knew what to do! In the beginning, it was an experiment. Later on, we were supposed to make such lists bi-weekly as our homework. At first, I would consult him every two weeks. He would emphasise how capable I am of monitoring my progress and, eventually, I started doing the checklists on my own. I've never been more satisfied and prouder of myself!</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sense of direction</li> <li>• new routine</li> <li>• growing agency</li> </ul>

In the next phase, the researcher reviewed the previously generated labels to identify prevalent patterns. The codes which were overlapping or were assessed as too vague were discarded. The table below illustrates how the codes were merged into themes.

*Table 2. Merging codes into themes*

THEMES:	CODES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners' agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of direction</li> <li>• New learning routine</li> <li>• Growing agency</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-emergence of a DMC trigger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting someone with a mutual goal</li> <li>• Temporary lack of ability to pursue one's objective</li> </ul>

The themes were once again reviewed, and extra attention was paid to ensure that they represented what was dominant in the data (Ibrahim, 2017). To enhance the credibility of the study, the principles of data triangulation were applied. On top of using several data collection tools, the veracity of the researcher's interpretations was confirmed by the participants (written summaries). Additionally, an external researcher, who is an expert in the literature and research methodology, was requested to verify the accuracy of the procedure and interpretations. The results of both coding procedures were primarily coincidental (with inter-rater reliability of 80%). The minor disagreements and a number of alternations to code names proposed by the expert were discussed and then implemented by the author.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The section below presents the discussion of the participants' experiences by considering their self-plotted motivational trajectories and the data stemming from the interviews. To address the research questions set out for the present project, thematic analysis was applied, and two major themes were identified. In the first theme, the sustainability of the participants' DMCs was linked to the gradual growth in their agency as learners, which enabled them to monitor their progress from a positive perspective and evoked a sense of autonomy in their actions. The latter, on the other hand, comprised experiences of the individuals whose motivational surges were re-triggered due to the re-emergence of their superordinate goal, stemming from a temporary lack of ability to pursue their DMC objectives or sharing their goals with another person. Additionally, the analysis revealed that not all re-triggering mechanisms may be linked to DMC makeup.

### 4.1. Learners' agency

Much of the facilitative power of the current is credited to the fact that the decision to embark on a motivational pathway is fully autonomous, giving rise to feelings of self-concordance, unremitting happiness, and growth. Thus, it seems warranted to assume that well-anchored agency may facilitate the emergence of DMCs (Pietluch, 2018; Pietluch, 2021).



Whereas this might be the case, the accounts shared by the study respondents indicate that sense of agency may also be linked to the untypical longevity of their DMC experiences. Take, for instance, the case of Martha (female, 42, Polish), whose long-time goal was to improve her command of English. The respondent's DMC emerged once she enrolled on a language course and, initially, she was confident that she had found the place where her language abilities would flourish.

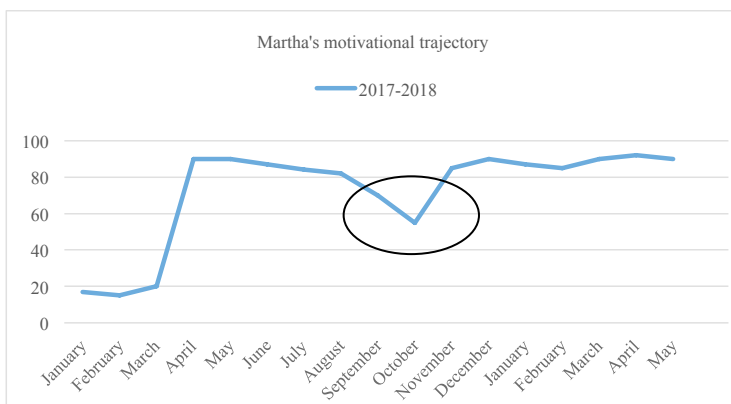


Figure 1. Martha's motivational graph

When asked about the period of lower enthusiasm, Martha recalled:

*Martha: I had been getting good grades but is that the point of learning? There was always something missing on tests. It was completely demotivating, and I considered taking a break.*

*Interviewer: So, what made you change your mind?*

*Martha: Our teacher provided us with a short report listing all the things we do well and the things we should improve. This was the first time in weeks that I felt like I knew what to do! It started as an experiment, but it quickly became our classroom routine. The teacher would encourage us to make such lists bi-weekly as our homework.*

*Interviewer: Did you consult him?*

*Martha: In the beginning, yes. But then he would emphasise how capable I was of monitoring my progress and, eventually, I started making them on my own. It felt fantastic! I have never been more satisfied and prouder of myself! I was in full control, you know.*

At first glance, it would appear that the respondent's motivation was reinvigorated through the incorporation of a novel progress verification routine. Several independent studies researching DMCs in the FL learning context provided confirmatory evidence for the claim that the adoption of certain instructional choices, such as the way in which feedback is presented (Zarrinabadi et al., 2019), improving classroom climate (Sak, 2019), or increasing students' engagement in the content creation process (Watkins, 2016; Sak, 2019), may have a bearing on whether DMCs are promoted or inhibited. A closer examination of the account in question reveals, however, that the teacher's proposal was so-much-more than a supplementary learning procedure. Considering DMCs are most typically longitudinal in

their nature, following the period of increased engagement, factors such as the lack of satisfactory results or exhaustion may temporarily obstruct motivational flow. For a DMC to thrive, those affected need to feel ensured they are on the right path towards their desired accomplishment (Ibrahim, 2016; Zarrinabadi & Tavakoli, 2017). The new learning habit provided cohesion to the participant’s efforts by supplying the much-needed feedback on her progress and directing her efforts towards specific aspects of the studied language. This allowed Martha to regain ownership of her learning process and fuelled her motivational experience.

The account shared by Yana (female, 27, Russian) is yet another example of how a growing sense of agency influences the longevity of DMCs. The respondent’s DMC emerged while pursuing a master’s degree in English as becoming an inspiring English teacher was her lifelong goal. Originally, the respondent linked her motivational momentum to the influence of her thesis supervisor, who was, in her opinion, an example of academic excellence. Although the encouragement supplied by Yana’s supervisor was indeed supporting her dedication, it was not the primary factor contributing to the sustainability of her DMC.

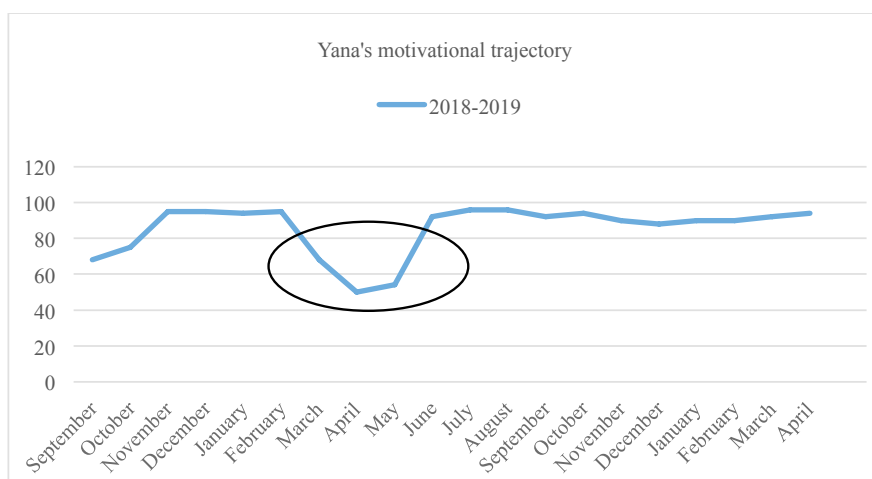


Figure 2. Yana’s motivational graph

When asked about the steadiness of her motivation, she commented:

*Yana: It was tough at times. I had a really hard time working with some kids. When I look back, I think it was after the sessions with my supervisor that I would feel inspired again. He would often say that I was made to be a teacher, and I kept getting better and better, I could tell he genuinely believed in me. Interviewer: What did he do to help you with the lack of motivation?*

*Yana: He made me realise that it takes time to become a competent teacher, as it does not happen overnight. He encouraged me to analyse my lessons, think about what could be improved and how to improve it, about the language I use, try different teaching methods, etc. We would discuss my ideas and observations regularly.*

Even though she was passionate about teaching and sharing her knowledge of the language, while doing so, the respondent was merely replicating the teaching patterns she observed at school as a student. The lack of effective methods gradually rendered the enjoyment stemming from being a teacher dormant, leading to a motivational dropdown. What truly aided the participant in renewing the intensity of her current was the work of the supervisor that aimed at inciting Yana’s agency and guiding her towards being more self-reflective. Several studies have confirmed that the feeling of autonomy in one’s actions is an essential component of any DMC experience (Ibrahim, 2016; Zarrinabadi et al., 2019). By inspiring the respondent with new teaching procedures, the supervisor not only expanded her teaching toolkit but, more importantly, encouraged Yana to take responsibility for what kind of teacher she would become in the future. This newly acquired sense of being in control boosted the respondent’s agency and allowed her DMC to prosper.

Yet another peculiar example emerges once we analyse the account of Ewa (female, 31, Polish). Due to the nature of her work, the respondent uses English daily, primarily in written form. She enrolled on the language course to overcome her fear of speaking. As she recalled:

*Ewa: A few years back, I would struggle with simple things like asking for directions or asking questions while shopping. I was always scared of speaking, I think. The fear was gone after a few weeks of the language course. We had a great teacher, and every now and then, he would say something like “Do you remember how difficult it was for you a few weeks ago?”. I found this motivating, so I think at some point, I became obsessed with checking whether I made any progress.*

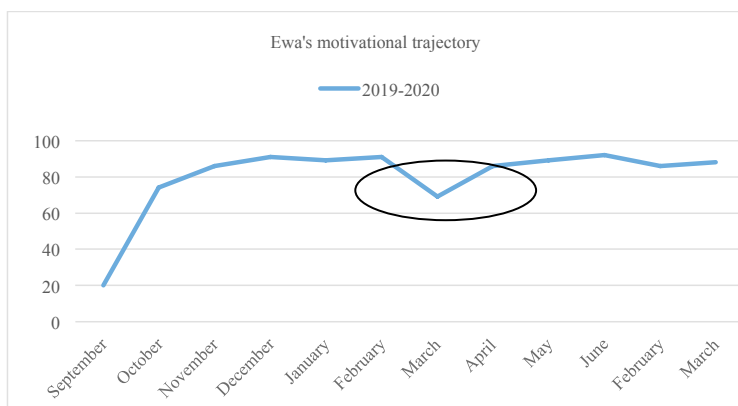


Figure 3. Ewa’s motivational graph

The account of the participant is unique in the sense that not only did the newly awakened sense of progress trigger Ewa’s DMC but also, it was the primary strategy the respondent used to prevent her motivational momentum from ebbing away. As she put it:

*Ewa: Whenever I was in a bad place, which happened from time to time, I would think about what the teacher had told me. This was one of the happiest moments since I have started learning English, it really helped me to keep going.*

It could be concluded that the acquisition of an effective progress verification routine provided Ewa with affirmative feedback and supported the participant in combating emotional plunges. This is not to say, however, that Ewa's motivation did not fluctuate, as she mentioned occasionally experiencing minor motivational dropdowns. Bearing in mind that DMCs cover lengthy timescales, regular feedback is indeed essential to ensure that those experiencing DMCs remain goal-oriented. This observation is in line with the findings of Zarrinabadi and Tavakoli (2017), who indicated that adequately tailored feedback might contribute towards the motivational intensity of DMCs. Likewise, Henry et al. (2015) asserted that the feedback of L2 speaking others, including teachers, make achievements visible as viewed through the eyes of important others, instilling feelings of efficacy and autonomy. As DMCs are governed primarily by a desired vision of future-self, it comes as no real surprise that progress evaluation would most typically pertain to assessing the distance separating a person from the accomplishment of one's superordinate goal. However, the above account indicates that moving backwards on the temporal axis of life may also constitute a reliable source of information regarding one's pursuits. Other studies researching individual DMCs have reached similar conclusions (Watkins, 2016; Jahedizadeh, Ghonsooly, & Ghanizadeh, 2021).

#### 4.2. The re-emergence of a superordinate goal

DMC is a motivational phenomenon in which actions are channelled towards the accomplishment of a specific goal. The analysis of the dataset indicated that not only does the presence of a personally meaningful objective contribute to the DMC initiation, but it also may support those caught up in a DMC in maintaining the intensity of their motivational momentum. Take, for instance, the account shared by Thomas (male, 34, German). After he had been attending a Polish language course for several months, Thomas suddenly decided to withdraw.

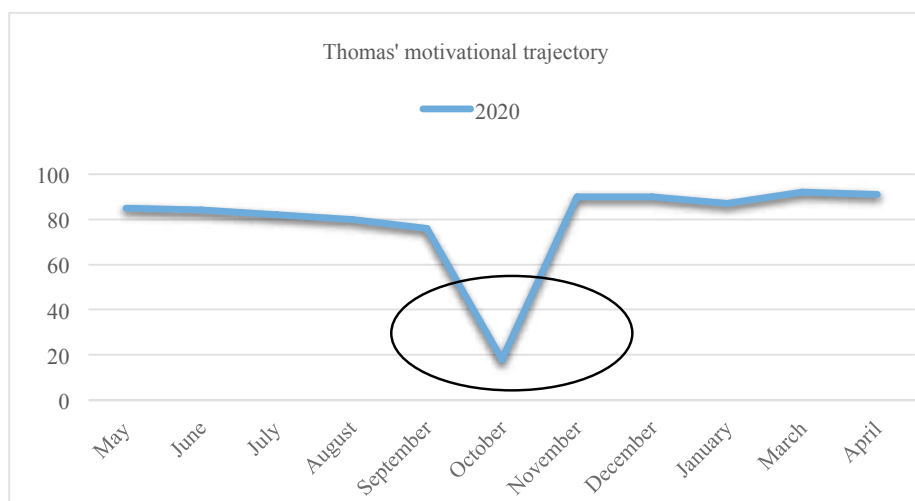


Figure 4. Thomas' motivational graph

When asked about what had prevented him from resigning from the language course, Thomas recalled:

*Thomas: My friend Dima said he was going to resign too. We signed up for the course together, and I could tell he was disappointed. I enjoyed the classes more when he was there. I really wanted to learn Polish, I had been thinking about it for many years. He encouraged me to finally do something about my passion for languages.*

*Interviewer: How did you feel at that time?*

*Thomas: I felt horrible! I was letting Dima down. I also realised that it would take me years to find the time and strength to start studying again.*

During the interview, it became apparent that what made Thomas' experience so utterly motivating was the ability to share his goal with a good friend. The willingness to spend more time with Dima inspired our respondent to pursue his long-time goal of mastering Polish, giving rise to his own motivational surge. Although a personally relevant goal is central to any DMC experience, it appears that even the clearest vision of one's desired identity may be temporarily clouded due to fatigue or unsatisfactory results (Pietluch, 2021). The prospect of Dima's withdrawal from the course made the respondent realise that not only would his own lack of enthusiasm prevent his friend from studying and spending time with him but, more importantly, it would severely limit his chances of becoming a proficient language user. This awakening was necessary for the respondent to once again discover the true reason for his motivational surge, allowing Thomas to trigger his current anew. Accounts of similar moments of realisation are present in the relevant literature (Ibrahim, 2017; Pietluch, 2021).

The experience shared by Hannah (female, 29, Ukrainian) is yet another account that clearly illustrates how rediscovering the true reason behind one's DMC may renew a motivational current. The respondent recalled experiencing a major motivational dropdown while she was changing her job.

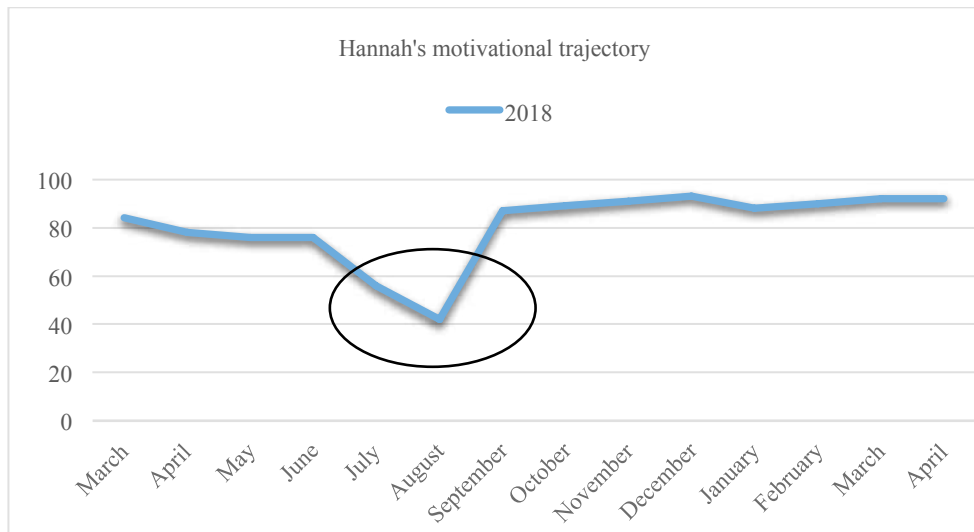


Figure 5. Hannah's motivational graph

When asked about the coping mechanisms used to counteract lower motivation, she commented:

*Hannah: I met this girl at work, she was also learning English, but in a different school. We hit it off right away! She suggested studying together after work, so we would meet three or even four times a week. Of course, we talked about work, but most of the time, we were studying. It was fun! We challenged each other with special tasks. I felt extra motivated as I did not want to let her and myself down. I was learning a lot! It was different from school and so motivating, exactly like at the beginning!*

In the case of longitudinal pursuits, such as developing a satisfactory command of an L2, individuals are bound to experience plateaus and setbacks stemming from both physical and mental exhaustion. It transpires that finding the new study partner aided Hannah in overriding the tiredness caused by a hectic lifestyle and, more importantly, helped the respondent to once again focus on the joy arising from the ability to develop her language fluency. In the literature on DMCs, it is possible to identify some accounts where motivational currents were triggered and successfully maintained due to the ability to share one's goal with other highly motivated individuals (Henry et al., 2015; Ibrahim, 2017). One may risk a tentative conclusion here that such a liaison may also contribute towards the longevity of already existing DMCs. Apart from the pleasure stemming from the possibility to share her goal with another person, the nature of the meetings with her friend provided Hannah with an abundance of opportunities for progress verification so that her DMC system would be cyclically boosted with affirmative feedback. This is of tremendous importance, as the positive emotionality which permeates a DMC experience stems primarily from the sense of progress and personal development (Ibrahim, 2020).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

It was initially conceptualised that the saliency of superordinate goals within DMCs may be restored due to rediscovering contextual and personal factors linked to the emergence of the current. However, the present research found that some re-triggering mechanisms might not be traced back to the factors responsible for initiating motivational momentum or DMC makeup. More specifically, whereas the DMC experiences of some respondents were invigorated through rediscovering the core reason behind their motivational journeys, it was also possible to link the untypical self-sufficiency of DMCs to participants' growing sense of agency. As autonomy lies in the centre of a DMC, it would be logical to assume that those caught up in the current would be well-assured of their capacity to produce the desired outcome. The analysis revealed, however, that individuals enter the DMC zone with various degrees of readiness to monitor their progress, and the lack of affirmative feedback may render the belief in goal attainability temporarily dormant. In the case of the participants in this study, the growth of agency and, consequently, the longevity of their DMCs, were inspired by newly evoked readiness for autonomous action, including self-reflection and progress monitoring. This observation coincides with the results obtained by Sak (2021), who indicated that regular self-reflection on one's progress might foster motivational currents. It is also noteworthy that even though DMCs stem from a sincere desire to pursue a personally meaningful objective, a sense of full ownership may be a by-product of functioning

within the DMC zone rather than something that emerges at the DMC launch. Depending on one's readiness to embrace it, motivational currents may either flourish or dissipate. From the pedagogical perspective, the most important conclusion to be drawn here is that aiding language students in sensible goal-setting and objective assessment of their performance may facilitate prospective DMCs and help those experiencing the current in tackling occasional apathy typical of longitudinal pursuits such as learning a foreign language. To this end, successful language curricula should be more learner-oriented, promote learners' autonomy, and incorporate efficacy building techniques. Similar postulates can be found in other studies researching DMCs (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Pietluch, 2018; Zarrinabadi et al., 2019)

It seems warranted to assume that the intense motivational involvement typical for a DMC experience may constitute a significant challenge on both mental and physical levels. Thus, the longitudinal nature of the phenomenon in question necessitates the existence of re-triggers. To maintain the unique motivational properties of the current, those affected by DMCs need to stay connected with the true reason for their motivational journey. The present study suggests that such a degree of goal-orientedness may be triggered due to various circumstances, including the prospect of a temporary lack of ability to pursue a desired achievement, sharing a goal with an important other or a novel study routine. Whereas not all of those factors are within an instructor's control range, it should be postulated that end-goals of a language teaching curriculum that aims at inspiring and sustaining potential DMCs must be comprehensible for learners. This may be accomplished through engaging students in the content selection process, which not only contributes to goal tangibility but also, may render the final objective of a curriculum to be of strong personal importance. This observation would be in line with the findings of other studies, which linked increased students' engagement with the emergence of DMCs (Watkins, 2016; Sak, 2019; Pietluch, 2021; Li et al., 2021). Additionally, it would be recommendable for future studies to scrutinise other strategies those experiencing DMCs employ so that their superordinate goals remain central to their experiences. This would equip teachers and instructors with an unparalleled tool to inspire and magnify students' motivational involvement.

Regardless of the insights offered, the present study is not without its drawbacks. Firstly, the present initiative focused primarily on investigating major motivational dropdowns reported by the respondents. This is not to say, however, that individuals did not experience minor motivational fluctuations throughout their DMC experiences. Although it can be assumed that through the acquisition of effective re-triggering mechanisms, the participants were well-equipped to combat such motivational plunges and, thus, temporary setbacks did not pose a significant threat to their currents, this observation opens an intriguing research avenue. Therefore, future studies could focus on an in-depth analysis of such minor motivational deficits. Additionally, considering the present study was retrospective in nature, future research endeavours might focus on inducement and longitudinal examination of real-time DMCs. It would also be recommendable to verify whether the findings of this study could be extrapolated to DMCs experienced on a group level. This knowledge may be then used to create a much-needed effective toolkit for those concerned with motivational interventions in various life domains, including education.

Overall, the findings of this research suggest that whilst true DMCs depict a superordinate form of motivational engagement, the longevity of the phenomenon may be attributed

to factors other than a vigorous launch or structural properties of a motivational surge. Considering human motivation to perform is highly dynamic and ever-changing, re-triggering mechanisms within the DMC framework bridge the periods of heightened engagement. Bearing in mind that individual DMCs are highly unique, the strategies supporting the longevity of the current may also vary substantially. As further research projects are most definitely required to fully comprehend the role of re-triggering mechanisms, the prospective studies could concentrate on identifying other factors contributing to the sustainability of DMCs in various environments.

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## **7. APPENDIX**

### **Appendix A – Interview protocol**

1. Can you describe your motivational experience?
2. How did you feel during the experience?
3. How did it start? When did it start?
4. What were you trying to accomplish?
5. What did the experience change in your life?
6. Was your motivation steady throughout the experience?
7. What did you do to stay motivated?
8. Did anyone help you to stay motivated?
9. How did you cope with difficulties?
10. Would you like to experience something similar once again?