Maximising Confidence:
A grounded theory on Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS) in a language class

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This thesis presents my own original research. All sources have been duly acknowledged. Except where acknowledged in the customary manner, the material presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, original and has not been submitted in whole or part for a degree in any university.

Eleonora Quijada Cervoni

01 December 2021

To the memory of my beloved father

who by example taught me the power of a dream.

To my adored mother and best friend

who has taught me never to give up.

To my dearest brother

who has instilled in me two of life's pillars, tenacity and virtue.

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ABSTRACT

Learning to speak a second language is a challenging experience for the majority of language learners. “Your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language and into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and acting” (Brown, 2000, p. 12). Thus, teaching to speak a foreign language is also a defying undertaking where, if we want students to use the language in class realistically and autonomously, speaking class activities need to be “productive, purposeful, interactive, challenging, safe and authentic” (Thornbury, 2007, p. 90). That said, there is a widespread assertion amongst language teachers that in class “students do not talk at all” (Bahrani & Soltani, 2012, p. 26).

Within that context, this study investigates the factors affecting Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS) in a language class, which is an unexplored concept—from the students’ perspective—linked to the theories of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Student Engagement (SE), and Willingness to Communicate (WTC). A mixed methods approach was used to obtain the data, including a focus group, student and teacher interviews, participant observation insights, self-reflections, and a survey. The data was analysed by using Grounded Theory (GT) strategies (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 2007; Pace 2012) within an Analytic Autoethnography (AAE) (Anderson 2006) to search for an emergent theory that could explain what engages students *to speak* in a language class. The study is framed within a constructivist approach to data collection and analysis, and the research includes the participation of 388 undergraduate students of French, Spanish, German and Italian from an Australian university, at different levels of instruction. It also incorporates the views of 14 teachers and the researcher’s own voice, supplemented by the relevant literature. The journey is paved with quotes of students’ and teachers’ words and with self-reflective ethnographic analytical memos.

The findings, obtained through the process of coding, categorisation, and theoretical development of the qualitative data, complemented by the quantitative results of the survey, are grounded on students’ lived experiences as well as the researcher’s. They suggest that SEtS is a socio-affective process underpinned by three interdependent dimensions involving

the teacher's personal qualities, the course content, and the classroom environment. The students' level of connectedness to those three dimensions affects their self-confidence and either engages or disengages them to speak in class. This study shows that what really matters to students is still the human condition underpinned by affective and behavioural components such as teacher-student relationships, motivation, and anxiety, and it serves as a steppingstone towards further research in the area of language education and student engagement, and particularly on the role the personality of a teacher may play in maximising students' confidence to speak.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAE	Analytic Autoethnography
CFC	*Cercle français de conversation* (French conversation circle)
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
FLCA	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety
FLE	Foreign Language Enjoyment
FLE	*Français Langue Étrangère* (French as a Foreign Language)
GT	Grounded Theory
L1	Native Language
L2	Second or Foreign language
SDtS	Student Disengagement *to Speak*
SE	Student Engagement
SEtS	Student Engagement *to Speak*
SI	Strategic Interaction
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
STT	Student Talk Time (STT)
TL	Target Language
TP	Teacher's Personality
TT	Teacher Talk
TTT	Teacher Talk Time
WTC	Willingness to Communicate

CHAPTER 1
Introduction

1.1 Motivation for the current study

> It is… very disheartening to look out into a classroom and see disengaged students who make little effort to hide their apathy. They stare at us vacantly or perhaps even hostilely when we attempt to pull them into class discussions, and then bolt for the door like freed prisoners the moment it feels safe to do so (Barkley, 2010, p. 3).

How often have we, language teachers, been teaching a class, using numerous pedagogical activities to provide students with the opportunity to interact with the class and the teacher, testing a variety of language teaching strategies, pulling all kinds of tricks from our hats, and yet we are unable to engage our students to speak and participate in class? "I recall", said Cao (2009), "one teacher's remark during a staffroom discussion on extremely quiet students that, despite many years of experience in the classroom, she had still not managed to decode the behaviour of those reticent students, or work out suitable strategies to encourage them to talk in class" (p. 1). Indeed, learning a second language is a challenging and daunting undertaking that can break most people's confidence when they are attempting to express themselves through a medium with which they are unfamiliar.

> In language learning… so much is at stake that courses in foreign languages are often inadequate training grounds, in and of themselves, for the successful learning of a second language. Few if any people achieve fluency in a foreign language solely within the confines of the classroom (Brown, 2000, p. 12).

Brown's sentiments are echoed by other language researchers in the field. For example, Rossiter et al. (2010), in a study on the development of oral fluency in a communicative language classroom, concluded that after one or two full years of second language instruction, language learners still wrestle with speaking the language (Derwing, Munro, & Thomson, 2008). Through this study I will present evidence of the students themselves complaining about the fact that after two years of study, they felt their speaking skills were fading instead of improving. Many of them attributed that issue to being taught *about* the language, not the language, and to not using the L2 in class often enough.

When we teachers enter the classroom, we take our values and beliefs with us, we make assumptions based on our own cultural baggage, and we make choices engrained in our vision of the world. Palmer (2017) in his book *The courage to teach* wrote the following:

> After three decades of trying to learn my craft, every class comes down to this: my students and I, face to face, engaged in an ancient and exacting exchange called education. The techniques I have mastered do not disappear, but neither do they suffice. Face to face with my students, only one resource is at my immediate command: my identity, my selfhood, my sense of this 'I' who teaches—without which I have no sense of the 'Thou' who learns. (p. 10)

Teaching is a human multifaceted interaction between teacher and student, and "being a foreign language teacher is in many ways unique… [because you are not just teaching a subject, such as maths or history]. In foreign language teaching, the content and the process for learning are the same. In other words… the medium is the message" (Hammadou & Bernhardt, 1987, p. 302) which adds to its complexity. We may have reflected over and over on our experience and observed others in their practice, and yet, when we walk into a new classroom, do we not feel sometimes as if it were the very first time? New faces staring at us: some with blank looks, others with anxiety, and a few with defiance. Teaching languages may be a passion, a compromise or just a job, and a teacher may be experienced or new to the role, but often when the teacher attempts to engage students to speak in the language they are learning, an awkward silence fills the class environment until a student breaks the silence and perhaps responds with monosyllables. This does not apply to all classes, and some language classes may be dynamic and engaging, but that awkwardness and fear of speaking in class has been experienced by many of the students in this study who constantly expressed their frustration at not having attained a satisfactory level of second language (L2) fluency after many years of formal studies.

1.2 The research problem

So, how can teachers of second language change this paradigm? How can teachers help students achieve greater oral competence in the language they are learning? *How can language teachers engage students to speak in class?* For decades, researchers in the field of second language education have maintained that language acquisition occurs when language is used (Bell, 2009; Kang, 2005; Lantolf, 2000; Long, 1981; Skehan, 1991; Swain, 2000; Swain

& Lapkin, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978), and yet teachers still nowadays struggle to engage students to speak in class. Muho and Kurani (2011) in a paper reviewing Long's (1981) Interaction Hypothesis, deduced that "if teachers… provide opportunities for oral discussion in their classes, encourage learners to initiate topics, and put some responsibility on the part of their learners, the class would be enjoyable, creative [and engaging]" (p. 51). However, Aleksandrzak (2011), Garcia Laborda (2007), Skehan (1991), and Thornbury (2007) reported that many scholars in the field of teaching languages agreed that speaking was the most complex skill to teach in second language education, and yet "few will spend the time, the resources, and the energy required to get their students to speak" (Garcia Laborda, 2007, p. 503). Pakula (2019) in her article on "Teaching Speaking" acknowledged that the main desire for many language learners is to be able to speak the language, and yet even when students are in classes claimed to use a communicative language teaching approach, "it seems that the teaching of oral skills in language classroom does not have an important role… and [one of the reasons for this occurrence is] lack of knowledge of how to teach speaking" (p. 95).

When the students were asked throughout this research about their main reason for studying the L2, many simply responded they wanted to learn to speak the language (not about the language), and by speaking they meant the ability to communicate vocally and exchange information at different levels of proficiency. This interpretation of oral communication can be better illustrated with the theory of basic communication skills developed by Canale and Swain (1980) who "characterized [oral interaction] as one that emphasizes the minimum level of (mainly oral) communication skills needed to get along in, or cope with, the most common second language situations the learner is likely to face" (p. 9). The literature on teaching and learning a second language signals that communication—in this case language use—is an essential step towards language acquisition, but that practice alone is not enough. As Jansen (2014) highlighted, if teachers want learners to acquire a second language, they need to push the student to practise the L2 but this activity "needs to be enhanced through form-focused feedback or input during language production" (p. 331), and for that to be effective it should be done preferably when the learner is "ready" (Pienemann, 1984). However, this study's concern is not when and how to push the learners to practise, or whether the goal is fluency or accuracy or both, but it is to find out *what* engages students to speak in a language class.

1.3 Setting the study in context

My decades as a language (French, Spanish, English as a Second Language) teacher have motivated me to conduct a research study on an aspect of teaching languages not investigated in depth in the language field and with the mixture of enquiry methods used in this research. The year I started my research, I was teaching Continuing French at an Australian university to a cohort of 90 students divided into 6 classes, and for the next four years, I continued to teach French and Spanish. Simultaneously, I was leading a group of French students mostly from Continuing and Intermediate French in an extracurricular activity called the *Cercle français de conversation* (CFC) where students met once a week, every Wednesday at 5 pm, at a local "pub" to speak French. *No academic structure. Just come and speak French* was the motto.

The personal connection with the topic of my research led me to "walk the journey" with language students within an analytic autoethnography framework, while reflecting on my own practice and observing what engages—and disengages—the students to speak in class at a stage where they have acquired some basic language and linguistics tools, past the *ab initio* level, but prior to being too comfortable with the language. The data collected stem from the feedback of 388 students who participated in this study in two different learning environments, 14 teachers interviewed, and 17 classes observed.

Engagement to speak is an abstract, and thus not quantifiable variable that involves affective attributes such as people's feelings, behaviours and personalities, amongst other psychological factors. The Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) defines student engagement as "students' involvement with activities and conditions likely to generate high quality learning" (AUSSE, 2019, Background), but that involvement is often reliant on the institution's commitment to a specific curriculum. Student engagement is also defined "as a variable in educational research that is aimed at understanding, explaining, and predicting student behaviour in learning environments" (Axelson & Flick, 2011, p. 41). It is generally understood as the synergy between motivation and active learning (Barkley, 2010), and as being "a facet of human behaviour formed by positive emotions" (Marzano & Pickering, 2011, p. 3). However, the literature to date does not specifically mention student engagement *to*

speak in the target language (TL) in a language class. Thus, the research approach chosen to understand this phenomenon was based primarily on asking the students themselves (and their teachers), and on collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from different sources to provide a solid ground from where to develop a theory that would allow us to comprehend this fundamental aspect of language learning and teaching.

1.4 The research design and research questions

The current study combines two strategies of inquiry: Anderson's (2006) Analytic Autoethnography (AAE), a research method that gives a place to personal experience to be considered as part of valid data and that does not censure emotional involvement while retaining the commitment to an analytic agenda; and Grounded Theory (GT), originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), but also advocated by Charmaz (2000), that allows a researcher to build a theory from the bottom up while the data is being collected, coded and compared throughout the research. Many researchers (Chang, 2016; Charmaz, 2006a; C. Ellis, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994) support—albeit with some reservations—the combination of AAE and GT strategies, claiming that it is an effective and flexible strategy of inquiry that offers "different ways of making sense" (C. Ellis, 2004, p. 312) and "represents the freedom to modify research designs as required, and [maintain] an open mind" (Pace, 2012, p. 13). As I am an advocate of the importance of oral training in language learning and teaching, to offset this predisposition, my reflections were constantly compared and contrasted with the data collected from the different sources. This process helped plan the direction that my research took by constantly revisiting the initial findings as the data analysis progressed.

Following a flexible interpretation of Charmaz's (2000, 2006a, 2014) grounded theory methodology and as indicated above, the over-arching research question that encompasses two dimensions is:

- What does and does not engage students to speak in a language class?

A set of secondary questions was developed after the data collection had started and while the analysis was underway.

- What do students want when studying a second language?
- What are the differences between engagement to speak in a formal environment compared to an informal environment?
- What course of actions can teachers advance to engage their students to speak in class?

The teachers' perspective was included in an attempt to understand their views on what engages and disengages their students to speak, and to compare whether teachers' expectations on the students of the course objectives are similar to that of the students' themselves. This would allow recommendations to be made for further studies on what course of actions teachers can take to engage students to speak in class.

The present study is not a conventional one in that the concept of Student Engagement *to Speak*—identified in this study with the acronym SEtS—has not been investigated before, and thus there are no previous studies on this specific topic. Based on this premise, this thesis does not follow a traditional research pathway, and the unveiling of the grounded theory will be documented a step at a time. Throughout the data collection process, the students' opinions on Student Engagement *to Speak* in class were recorded and contrasted with their views on Student Disengagement *to Speak* in class, identified as SDtS. Students were asked what their main objectives were when studying a second language, and I also compared the students' perspectives on SEtS to the teachers' perceptions on what engages their students to speak in class in the L2. Relevant data was also collected and analysed to assess what engages students to speak in the L2 in two different learning environments: a communicative language classroom (as interpreted by the interviewed teachers) and an informal environment of a conversation group at a local "pub".

Drawing on the research paradigms of Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) applicable to the field of social sciences, I have followed an interpretative path searching for an emerging theory on SEtS from the raw data collected. As one of the methods I am using to analyse the data is autoethnographic, my own voice is sometimes present in the analysis. Second language learning should be an enjoyable pathway to one's own development, despite being paved

with vastly intricate psychological and social factors. By gaining the trust of many of the participants in this study, I was able to appreciate more closely what their struggles and challenges were in their language learning journey. Full immersion in the world of some of these language students, whether in the formal environment of a classroom or in more informal settings, complemented by self-observation and self-analysis, allowed me to search for depth and richness in the data. The study aims to understand and reveal key variables underlying SEtS and their implications for learning and teaching to speak an L2. It presents a platform for further research on Student Engagement *to Speak*, and it will contribute to the field of second language teaching and learning by bringing to light some sensitive aspects that can impact on how teachers can engage students in class and inspire them to speak.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis contains a total of seven chapters. Chapter 2 presents a theoretical framework that supports this study, as a point of departure to locate the topic of my research within established theoretical parameters. The first of the chosen theories is from the field of general pedagogy: Student Engagement (SE); and the other two are directly linked to teaching and learning a second language: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Willingness to Communicate (WTC). The chapter also presents a general literature review of key factors that enhance or impede engagement to speak, such as teacher-student relationship, student motivation, student identity, and classroom foreign language anxiety. However, following the tenets of a constructivist grounded theory, a more focused literature review is consistently done as the investigation progresses, and is referred to in the relevant chapters as the different findings emerge from the data. I have followed Charmaz's approach to GT, in order to "tailor the final version of the literature review to fit the *specific* purpose and argument of [the] research report" (2014, p. 307; emphasis in original). Despite showing how my findings can partially fit within the chosen theoretical framework and providing some scope to extend some of the theoretical concepts, a research gap is identified and discussed.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used in this study to collect and analyse the data and explore the research questions. As indicated, I used analytic autoethnography which made it possible to situate myself in my own teaching and in my students' "social and cultural

milieu… and bring the subjective and the objective together" (Armstrong, 2008, p. 44). However, to take a more methodical and analytical approach to the research, I used GT strategies (Charmaz 2006a, 2008, 2014; Glaser 1998, 2007, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to formulate a theory—or at least a credible interpretation—that could respond to the question of *what* engages students to speak in a language class. The data analysis, thus, was as logical and systematic as GT ought to be: a process that involves different types of coding, constant comparison, identifying the core category, its subcategories and its properties. My initial experience was characterised by renaming codes and categories over and over, recycling them, re-interpreting the data, questioning the research methodology, and casting doubts on my own ability to conceptualise the categories that were emerging. Memo writing however, was a very useful tool from the outset, as it allowed me to achieve a certain coherence, and the main categories became more obvious as I analysed the different data, until a theory emerged. This chapter also explains the triangulation of methods used to collect the data including focus groups, interviews, and a survey.

Chapter 4 starts with the exploration of why students had chosen to study a second language and examines their expectations. The students' rationale for their decision to study an L2 and their motives behind this choice were closely linked to the enjoyable aspect of learning to speak in another language. The chapter then presents the findings from coding the data collected from a pilot study, student interviews, and informal conversations on what engages them to speak in the different learning environments. The data includes my own class experience and self-reflections documented through the process of memoing and constant interaction with the data. A detailed discussion of the survey findings follows, searching to reveal the main reasons for SEtS and SDtS from the students' perspective, and comparing the survey data with the initial qualitative findings. As the building of the theory begins to unfold, the chapter concludes with the identification of key emerging categories from selective or focused coding and constant comparison of the data.

Chapter 5 cements the foundations for the study's theoretical development and examines in more detail the top three factors that students selected as impacting SEtS. It discusses more

deeply how students can be empowered by their connections to the teacher, the topic and the class environment, and as a more focused literature review is carried out, it shows how the findings can add value to the field of teaching and learning a second language. The students' description of an engaging-to-speak teacher's personality (TP) is compared to that of a disengaging-to-speak TP, and the effects of topic familiarity and a fun class environment on SEtS are also examined. All these variables are the building blocks of a more abstract core category revealed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 presents a constructivist grounded theory that responds to the research question investigated and that arises from the findings of the analysis of the qualitative data, the survey results and the analytic autoethnography. It attempts to "elevate the findings to a more theoretical level explaining how the core category can stand alone and resolve the problematic nature of the pattern of behaviour" (Glaser, 1978, p. 93). It unveils the main characteristics of the Theory of Maximising Confidence and its applicability to the field of teaching and learning a second language.

Finally, Chapter 7 reviews the research process and discusses the relevance of the findings for the field of second language education though acknowledging the limitations of the study. It highlights the contributions of the study and some of its pedagogical implications and suggests some areas for future research before drawing an insightful conclusion.

CHAPTER 2
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Research is an extension of researchers' lives. (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010, p. 2)

This thesis focuses on Student Engagement *to Speak* in second language learning, a topic that has a number of contested elements. These include the role of the student—in relation to the role of the teacher—the concept of engagement and the understanding of the "act" of speaking. In this introduction, these elements will be examined in the light of the existing literature.

When teaching and learning a second language, the social environment of the classroom and students feeling supported by their peers and by their teacher are motivating aspects of students' active participation in class. For example, Vygotsky (1978, 2012) viewed learning as a social process, where scaffolding and social interaction in the classroom environment were vital for students' learning. "Vygotsky [claimed that] all cognitive development… arises as a result of the interaction that occurs between individuals engaged in concrete social interaction" (Donato, 1994, p. 35). Di Pietro's (1987) Strategic Interaction (SI) approach (also known as Scenarios) described a more student-centred approach to teaching and learning languages based on Vygotsky's model of learning, where interaction among individuals in a social setting would stimulate the brain and generate language output. The pedagogical importance of SI is that learners are pushed to enter into a collaborative dialogue in the L2 while they "negotiate towards mutual comprehension" (Swain & Lapkin, 2001, p. 99), paying attention to both form and meaning, thus reinforcing language acquisition. Based on that premise, Di Pietro (1987) advises language teachers to "strive for interaction first [attempting to engage students to speak], then meaning, and finally structure" (p. 125).

In any second language learning environment, student engagement is a crucial element for the students' active participation and use of the L2 in the classroom. "True engagement

requires that the learner, at least to some extent, finds the process of learning a language intrinsically motivating… [and for that to happen] learners need to experience some joys and satisfactions in the activity itself" (Ryan, 2021, p. x). However, in the field of applied linguistics, the "understanding of engagement is still at an embryonic stage despite the consensus of its essential role in learning process and achievement" (Peng & Jiang, 2021, p. 1). It can be agreed, nonetheless, that engagement refers to "energized, directed, and sustained actions" (Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, & Wellborn, 2009, p. 225) which involve active participation in a learning activity, particularly when it refers to Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS). Thus, to explore this "notoriously slippery construct" (Hiver, Al-Hoorie, & Mercer, 2021, p. 1), this chapter will cover an initial literature review of some elements of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) that are relevant to this study embedded in a theoretical framework that focuses on enablers of speaking—without ignoring some of its impediments—from the lenses of communicative language teaching (CLT), student engagement (SE) and willingness to communicate (WTC). Supplementary references to relevant concepts and previous studies will also be distributed through key chapters to guide the analysis of the findings and compare and contrast the results with the literature.

2.2 A theoretical framework

In search of conceptualising Student Engagement *to Speak*, three pertinent approaches encapsulate the theoretical framework for this study: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Student Engagement (SE) and Willingness to Communicate (WTC). While these constructs do not directly address the concept of SEtS, they present a sound framework for this study.

2.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Richards (2006) in his book *Communicative Language Teaching Today* raises a thought-provoking issue: when language teachers in Western schools are asked to describe the teaching methodology they mostly use in class, many of them would insist that the methodology they use is of the "communicative" sort, and yet that is not what students claim to experience in the language classroom. The teaching of languages at university level has

traditionally focused on the practice of reading and writing skills and on the study of literature and linguistics, rather than concentrating on the development of oral fluency (Lo Bianco, 1987; Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009). For many different reasons, such as time, class sizes and budget, the learning outcomes in language classes are focused primarily on writing and accuracy, rather than on speaking and fluency. Lo Bianco and Slaughter (2009) identified a number of recurring issues in the teaching of languages at tertiary level in Australia, and one of these issues is "too much emphasis on the teaching of translation and grammar" (p. 56). It is important to point out that "the CLT approach is not solely a western phenomenon, but also a universal effort that has found inspiration and direction in the interaction of initiative, both theoretical and applied, in many different contexts" (Dos Santos, 2020, p. 105).

When reviewing the use of CLT practices in the language classroom, Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005) were still finding resistance from teachers to acknowledging "the learning value of communication activities" (p. 327), seen by many as intangible and unpredictable exercises, and yet language researchers in the field recommend that "oral fluency be explicitly taught in L2 programs" (Rossiter et al., 2010, p. 586).

The CLT approach, since its inception in the late 1970s, has had multiple interpretations. Said in very simple terms, "the core principle of the CLT approach is to learn in the language and to learn the language" (Dos Santos, 2020, p. 105) and not *about* the language, as many of the students in this study asserted. Bax (2003), Kirkpatrick and Ghaemi, (2011), and Spada (2007) opened the floor to a debate in attempting to clarify the misconceptions surrounding CLT as to whether the teaching approach should include a focus on linguistic aspects of the language and the practice of language forms, and also whether to include literacy skills, corrective feedback and the use of the first language (L1) in vocabulary instruction, amongst other goals. Some have even argued that CLT has lost its relevance to L2 teaching (Kirkpatrick & Ghaemi, 2011) and that it "has become a rather vacuous term" (Spada, 2007, p. 271). Spada brings to our attention that Howatt (1984) made a distinction between a strong and a weak version of CLT, the former corresponding to the position of those who believe that CLT is "a meaning-based, learner-centred approach to L2 teaching where fluency is given priority over accuracy, and the emphasis is… not [in teaching and correcting the language forms]" and the

latter corresponding to the position of those who agree that CLT is meaning-based, but it "includes attention to both fluency and accuracy" (Spada, 2007, p. 272).

On one side of the debate are language teachers who focus on developing students' linguistic skills and believe that learners will develop their oral skills outside the classroom. This latter assumption has been proved by Derwing, Munro, and Thomson (2008) and other scholars in the field to be unfounded. The practice of aiming explicitly at language accuracy and enforcing error correction can hinder—rather than promote—spontaneous language use (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). As Lo Bianco and Slaughter (2009) corroborate, "students [in Australia] recognise value in learning languages but complained that the teaching [of languages] was not geared to their level of need or interest" (p. 57). Grammatical competence is of course an important dimension of language learning and teaching. That is not debatable. But if the focus of the language classes is on linguistic competence and accuracy, a student will not develop—in 2 or 3 years of studying the language—the necessary skills to use the language for meaningful and authentic oral interaction, as experienced by many of the participants in this study and sustained by scholars such as Rossiter et al. (2010). On the other side of the debate are language teachers who believe that CLT embodies mainly "*implicit learning* [which] involves acquiring skills and knowledge without conscious awareness… [while the teacher provides] plenty of authentic input to feed the students' implicit learning processes" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 35, emphasis in original). Dörnyei (2009) disagrees and states that this language acquisition practice may work with children learning their L1, but "untutored learning through simple exposure to natural language input does not seem to lead to sufficient progress in L2 attainment for most [language] learners" (p. 35). Likewise, Lightbown and Spada (2006) stated that "language acquisition will [not] take care of itself if second language learners simply focus on meaning in comprehensible input" (p. 176). The implication here is that more explicit exposure to the language in terms of a more controlled practice, such as focus on form, is required for learners to acquire the relevant L2.

Bax (2003), an outspoken critic of CLT, maintains that CLT has omitted an essential aspect of language teaching, and that is the learning context in which it takes place. "By its very emphasis on communication, and implicitly on methodology, [CLT] relegates and sidelines the

context in which we teach, and therefore gives out the suggestion that CLT will work anywhere" (Bax, 2003, p. 281).

Critically observing CLT's position within the boundaries of SLA, Bax (2003) argues that "methodology is *not* the magic solution, that there are many different ways to learn languages, [and] that the context is a crucial determiner of the success or failure of learners" (p. 281). A language teacher must not only consider which teaching methodology is the most suitable for their students, but learners' cultural expectations, learners' needs and learning preferences, and even the classroom configuration must be factors considered when deciding on what teaching approach to use. A similar criticism is exposed by Dos Santos (2020) who maintains that one of the disadvantages of using CLT in language classes is that some of these classes have culturally diverse cohorts of students, many coming from Eastern societies, who will struggle in a CLT environment. These students may "believe that traditional teaching and learning strategies (e.g. Direct Method, teacher-centred) are the only effective ways of teaching and learning. [Many of] these students tend to focus their interests on memorising vocabulary and grammar… [and they will] tend to be passive [class participants] due to their cultural backgrounds" (Dos Santos, 2020, p. 107). The socio-cultural dynamics amongst students and their teacher and the language learning context are indeed two factors that influence a student's decision to speak or remain silent in class.

Other relevant studies in the field have focused on the use of a CLT approach in a language class with the objective of finding *how* to get students to speak. Talandis and Stout (2014), for example, conducted an experiment based on an action research strategy to evaluate class intervention and *how to get EFL students to speak* in a Japanese university. Although the context and the objectives were quite different from those of the current study, it was still relevant to examine their findings. The study of English was a requirement, which meant students did not necessarily want to be there as they did not have an intrinsic motivation to study the language. This often resulted "in classrooms filled with students lacking interest [and] motivation" (Talandis & Stout, 2014, p. 12) and the cultural differences affected the students' decision to speak in class because of the "significant difference in the role silence plays between English and Japanese conversation" (p. 11). Even though many of the students

were able to understand the grammar and other linguistic pragmatic concepts, it was difficult to make them speak. Thus, the teachers used an interactive English syllabus with structured and rehearsed conversations on familiar topics, and although the "conversations" were somehow unrealistic—or not as they happen in real life—, they succeeded in getting their students to speak. The study concluded that "students… need opportunities to practise speaking because understanding the concepts alone is not enough" (Talantis & Stout, 2014, p. 20). This pretend conversation is another one of the flaws of CLT, as identified by Qin (2012) in her article "Faire parler les étudiants en classe de FLE" (Making students speak in a French as a Foreign Language class). Qin (2012) noted that in a communicative language teaching approach, one has to accept that "none of the situations or contexts created in class are either *real* or *authentic*, they are all *artificial,* copied from real life" (p. 229, emphasis added, translated from French). It is indeed very difficult to recreate a real-life conversation within the confines and time constraints of a classroom.

CLT has continued to evolve through shifting educational paradigms and traditions. Some of the shifts are relevant to Student Engagement *to Speak* in that there is a greater focus on the learner, i.e., from teacher-centred to student-centred instruction. In addition, greater attention is placed on the learning process rather than the product, and more emphasis is given to the social nature of learning and to the diversity among learners, with the goal of connecting the classroom to the real world. As Jacobs and Farell (2003) acknowledged, CLT highlights the affective domain and concentrates on the importance of "learning a second language as a lifelong process rather than something done to prepare students for an exam" (p. 8). No matter on which side of the debate about CLT a language teacher is, there seems to be an agreement amongst many of those interviewed that to attain language fluency as well as a certain level of linguistic accuracy, the language teaching approach used in class should focus on giving the students maximum opportunities to practise the L2. Yet, many researchers in the field of teaching and learning a second language—from Widdowson in 1978 to Richards in 2006 and more recently Dos Santos in 2020—agreed that communicative language classrooms are not providing the expected opportunities for students to speak in the classroom.

Despite the criticism and the ongoing discussion on what is CLT and which teaching approach is the most effective in SLA, "the essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication in order to allow them to develop their communicative competence" (Savignon, 2007, p. 209) and it offers a set of useful guidelines about the goals of language teaching. As Littlewood (2011) stated "the term CLT serves as a valuable reminder that the aim of teaching is not to learn bits of language but to improve students' ability to communicate" (p. 542). By and large, CLT relies on classroom activities that point to the practice of speaking, and it defines the roles of teachers in the classroom as facilitators and perhaps as student "partners", to borrow a concept fostered by Healey (2014), who is an advocate of engaging students in higher education as partners in learning and teaching. As Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) corroborate in their recent book *Engaging Language Learners in Contemporary Classrooms*: "One of the key principles of communicative language teaching… has been the 'learning-through-doing' tenet, which foregrounds the learners' participatory experience in meaningful L2 interaction with communicative tasks. No method of language teaching can deliver results without ensuring that students are actively engaged in the process" (p. 4). This affirmation takes us to the next construct framing this study: student engagement.

2.2.2 Student Engagement (SE)

According to Krause, Hartley, James and McInnis (2005), engagement can refer to "the time, energy and resources students devote to activities designed to enhance learning at university" (p. 3). The essence of student engagement, as noted by Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) "concerns *active participation* and *involvement* in certain behaviour activities [such as] school-related activities and academic tasks" (p. 2, emphasis in original). Harper and Quaye (2009) would disagree with that interpretation as they perceived engagement as more than involvement or participation, but as a construct requiring feelings and sense-making as well as activity. The literature outlines three different types of engagement: emotional, cognitive and behavioural (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Ladd, Herald-Brown & Kochel 2009). Emotional engagement refers to students' feelings towards their teacher and peers; cognitive engagement encompasses students' strategies to acquire knowledge and learning skills; and behavioural engagement concerns students' participation in class activities. The classroom

environment is certainly influenced by many aspects of emotional and behavioural engagement, such as students' energy levels, a teacher's positive demeanour or personality, and students' perceptions of acceptance (Marzano & Pickering 2011). As these three components of student engagement are not always clearly delineated, scholars such as Roorda, Jak, Zee, Oort, and Koomen (2017) suggest treating "engagement as one multidimensional concept" (p. 240). In view of the varied interpretations of student engagement, Marzano and Pickering (2011) repositioned the concept as "the core of effective pedagogy", agreeing that "engagement is not an easily defined construct" (p. 3). Skinner et al. (2009) had concurred in that "there is no single correct definition of engagement… [as] a variety of constructs seem to overlap in meaning and use, such as motivation, attention, interest, effort, enthusiasm, participation, and involvement" (p. 224). However, in an attempt to define engagement, Skinner et al. (2009) conceptualised it as a facet of human behaviour that can be associated with the following emotions, which would apply to engagement to speak: "enthusiasm, interest, enjoyment, satisfaction, pride, vitality and zest" (p. 227). Lack of engagement or disaffection to speak**,** on the other hand, can be associated with boredom, disinterest, frustration, anger, sadness, anxiety, worry, shame, self-blame and low self-confidence (Marzano & Pickering 2011).

Another relevant concept that also has multiple interpretations is that of personality. In this study, personality is not taken as an unchangeable characteristic of an individual. "Personality traits are relatively enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguish individuals from one another. Their relatively stable nature notwithstanding, [they] can and do change across their entire life span" (Bleidorn et al., 2018, p. 83). In studying personality types, Sosnowska et al. (2019) found that an individual's personality is not static and its states or traits "can fluctuate across time and situations" (p. 11). They argued that "[an] individual exhibits different behaviours, affects and cognitions over time… Some people can act the same, while others might be highly variable in their personality traits" (Sosnowska et al., 2019, p. 12). People interact differently with each other, whether at school, at work or in society, and they can adjust to the surrounding environment. For example, teaching speaking and engaging students to speak in class are not easy tasks, and teachers may need to adapt to changes and advances in technology and the social media, and to students' needs. Thus,

personality traits in this context are seen as patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviour that can be changed to become more engaging.

In the next sub-sections, some prominent affective aspects related to student engagement will be examined as part of a more focused literature review: student motivation, student identity and investment, and foreign language anxiety. This will spell out some of the reasons why students study a second language and what encourages or hinders their engagement to speak in class.

2.2.2.1 Student motivation

Another significant emotional factor linked to students' engagement is motivation. The difference between motivation and engagement, though, is that motivation is seen as an affective factor (Schumann 1975) and engagement is one of many human behaviours that can be unexpectedly impacted by feelings or fears (Marzano & Pickering, 2011; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). One of the persistent questions in the field is how much does motivation affect student's engagement? Elizabeth Barkley (2010) in her handbook *Student Engagement Techniques*, declared that "motivation is the portal to engagement. An unmotivated student has checked out emotionally and mentally from the learning process" (p. 15). In the context of the current study, it is safe to assume that if a student has *checked out emotionally and mentally*, any possible connection to the teacher or to the class activities will be severed and engagement to speak will be hindered.

While the present study does not venture far into the ongoing deliberation of what motivation and its multifaceted constructs really mean, three theories may shed some light on the relationship between motivation and engagement. The first of these theories is the self-efficacy theory introduced by Bandura in 1977 in the field of psychology that "refers to people's judgement of their capabilities to carry out certain specific tasks" (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 119). This theory could explain why some students with a low sense of self-efficacy fear making mistakes and lose faith in their confidence and just give up in class, rather than participate. This low sense of self-efficacy will disengage them and prevent them from practising the language whenever the opportunity arises. The second theory that could be

associated with this discussion is Locke and Latham's 1996 goal-setting theory. As explained by Dörnyei (1998), this theory alludes to human behaviour and the fact that "for action to take place, goals have to be set and pursued by choice" (p. 120). In this view, students who have a strong motivation to learn to speak a new language and want to experience the satisfaction and the enjoyment of communicating with speakers of that language, are better positioned to reach their goal and engage with class activities—including speaking. This premise blends in with a third theory that could be more relevant to SEtS: the concept of Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE). Dewaele and his associates have investigated in-depth the relationship that exists between FLE and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), and they have found that language teachers and language researchers are more concerned with the impact that negative emotions—such as class anxiety—have on students' performance in class, rather than positive emotions such as class enjoyment (Dewaele, Gkonou & Mercer, 2018; Dewaele, Magdalena-Franco, & Saito, 2018; Dewaele, Witney, Saito, & Dewaele, 2017). Positive emotions may enhance students' motivation which in turn may boost students' engagement to speak in class. Promoting enjoyment in a language class, though, should not be considered trivial in an academic context in tertiary education, since as Boudreau, MacIntyre and Dewaele (2018) expressed, "enjoyment takes on additional dimensions such as intellectual focus, heightened attention, and optimal challenge" (p. 153), and thus may be relevant for a pedagogic strategy for SEtS.

A further distinction has been made between the key roles that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play in second language learning (Deci & Ryan 1985; Dörnyei 1994, 1998; Gardner & Clément 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2000). "Extrinsically motivated behaviours are the ones that the individual performs to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g., good grades) or to avoid punishment. With intrinsically motivated behaviours the rewards are internal (e.g., the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one's curiosity)" (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 275). The students in this study manifest a very strong internal desire to learn the L2, more for the enjoyment of doing it than for an extrinsic reward. Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) spoke also of integrative and instrumental orientations to learning a second language. Their studies found that some students who learn a second language want to "have contact with and perhaps identify with members of the community" and others would do it for a practical reason, such

as “job advancement or course credit” (Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2000, p. 59). These two motivational conducts are relevant to how students can actively participate in class: (1) integrative motivation is felt when a student wishes to be seen as a member of the community, and has a “sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group” (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 132); (2) instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is when a student wants to learn the L2 for practical reasons, such as getting a better job and being more competitive in the international market. After multiple studies, “Gardner stated that integrative motivation supplants instrumental motivation, due to the fact that it includes cognitive variables and goal-oriented strategies that are essential for the language learning practice” (Rozmatovna, 2020, p. 942). Furthermore, “one of Gardner and Lambert’s key findings from [their] early work was that individuals who were integratively motivated were more successful at learning [the L2] than those who were instrumentally motivated” (Norton, 2020, p. 155). However, Dörnyei (cited in Rozmatovna, 2020) “contradicted this idea and asserted that integrative and instrumental motivation are of equal importance and positively affect the success of language learning” (p. 942). Tarhan and Balban (2014) on reporting on another study conducted by Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh in 2006, concluded that if students “integrate themselves into the culture of the target language… and [if they] regard the TL as a means of reaching far better [professional] objectives… they are more likely to be motivated” (p. 185) to learn the language.

Even though, as mentioned, a deep discussion on how motivation impacts on students’ language learning and engagement is beyond the scope of this study, I would like to refer to one more aspect of it often mentioned in the literature reviewed: if the teacher is motivated and the students are motivated, it may be possible to create an engaging class environment conducive to building up students’ self-confidence to speak. A strong relationship between a teacher and their students and amongst peers could certainly influence students’ motivation to learn (Tarhan & Balban, 2014). But how is motivation measured? The Motivation Orientation of Language Teaching (MOLT) is an instrument developed “to assess the quality of the teacher’s motivational teaching practice as well as the level of the students’ motivated behaviour” (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008, p. 57). Through the MOLT scheme, Dörnyei (2001) was able to identify indicators of motivation that are essential to class participation and that

are relevant to student engagement. Amongst the key indicators to sustain a motivational teaching practice are "[the establishment of] a good teacher student rapport, a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere… and stimulating, enjoyable and relevant tasks" (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008, p. 58) supplementing the class content. The innovation behind MOLT was that it was based on a classroom observation component that complemented the traditional student questionnaire used to measure motivation in language learning. By observing the students' behaviour in class, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) concluded that students' motivation and participation in class were indeed affected by the teacher's practice.

Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009), acknowledging the phenomenon of globalisation—and the fact that English had become the world's *lingua franca*—argued that L2 motivation was undergoing a transformation and needed to be "reconceptualised and retheorised in the context of contemporary notions of self and identity" (p. 1). Indeed, student identity is another relevant concept correlated to motivation and student engagement.

2.2.2.2 Student identity and investment

"Identity work is often characterized by the ambivalence that individuals feel about exactly who they are and where they belong" (Block, 2010, p. 338). When you learn a language, you use words, expressions, registers, and accents that you are not familiar with at first, but that you "borrow" from that language until you make it your own. When you have an integrative motivation to learn a language, according to Dörnyei's psychological speculation of "possible selves" (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009, p. 3), a student can develop an *ideal self* which "refers to the representation of the attributes that [they] would ideally like to possess" (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009, pp. 3-4). This is the *self* who aspires to be partially integrated as a member of a particular community where the L2 is spoken, although this ideal *self* is not restricted to blending into that target group. It is just an image of the self who speaks the L2. Another possibility is the *ought-to self* which represents the *self* that a student believes they ought to be (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009). Identity, thus, "is a dynamic construct changing across time and space constantly…that constructs and is constructed by language" (Tahran & Balban, 2014, p. 185). Students may have a high level of motivation to learn a language and to engage to speak for that matter, but if every time they speak, their image of self—or identity—is

distorted by their own perception or by the teacher's or another student's behaviour or facial expression, they will refrain from speaking for fear of embarrassment in front of their peers or being laughed at. As Duff (2002) rightly noted "silence protected [the students] from humiliation" (p. 312), and yet their teacher and more advanced students, could interpret that silence "as a lack of initiative, agency, or [simply] a desire to improve" the L2 (Duff, 2002, p. 312). The decision to remain silent in class is a strong consequence of feelings of embarrassment and lack of confidence as many of the students in this study admitted. Often when a student decides to learn a second language, there is an ulterior motive, that can be related to wanting to belong to a particular community, in which case the student's *ideal self* needs to be shielded from possible ridicule. "The construct of 'language' is not only a linguistic system of words and sentences, but also a social practice in which identities and desires are negotiated in the context of complex and often unequal social relationships" (Norton, 2020, p. 160).

In relation to student motivation and L2 identity, Norton (2016) made reference to the concept of *learner investment*. "As a complement to the psychological construct of *motivation*, the sociological construct of *investment* signals a learner's commitment to learn a language, given their hopes for the future and their imagined identities" (Norton, 2016, p. 476, emphasis added). Learner investment as a learning construct is directly linked to identity in that it can strengthen or weaken that identity. "The more learners invest in a language, the more opportunities they will have to construct cultural concepts and L2 identity" (Tahran & Balban, 2014, p. 185). The findings of the study conducted by Tahran and Balban (2014) on the relationship between motivation, learner identity and investment confirmed that those students with an integrative motivation to study a language were authentically drawn to high investment in the L2 and showed a high identity level with both the ideal and the ought-to self. On the other hand, those students whose motivation to study the L2 was primarily instrumental did not invest as much in opportunities to practise the L2 as the L2 was not part of their chosen identity, but a tool to reach desired goals of finding a job, for example. Students on both sides of this spectrum had similar degrees of success—or failure—in language acquisition, but the level of investment—and how to choose the type of investment in the L2—was the key difference. Tahran and Balban's (2014) and Norton's (2016,

2020) studies present strong indication of the many intricate factors that a language teacher is subjected to when attempting to engage a student to actively participate in class and speak in the L2. Language learners have their own way of identifying with the language they are learning, and it is "the individual's ideals, dreams, and fantasies [that] come to the surface in the act of speaking" (Nasrollahi Shahri, 2018, p. 102). This is an insightful reflection to keep in mind when analysing the data, in that it refers to the many reasons why students can be engaged to speak in a language class, including *their ideals, dreams, and fantasies*. At the opposite end of the Student Engagement *to Speak* continuum, are those students who claim often to be paralysed by feeling anxious at the moment they are required to speak. This notion of language anxiety is examined in the next section.

2.2.2.3 Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

> *When I am in my Spanish class I just freeze! I can't think of a thing when my teacher calls on me. My mind goes blank.* (Quotation collected by counsellors at the Learning Skills Center at the University of Texas, Austin in Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 125).

One of the known impediments to SLA that can affect students' engagement to speak in a language class is foreign language anxiety (FLA). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) defined FLA "as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). In spite of conflicting findings, the researchers insisted that FLA was a type of anxiety specific to language learning, and their theory "has played a vital role in language anxiety research with a large number of studies using it as the theoretical framework" (Tran, 2012, p. 73). The situation described in the quote above from a language learner's perspective is still a very frequent occurrence in language classes according to the students in this current study. Although Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) could not show conclusive, clear-cut findings to confirm that anxiety did have a detrimental effect on language learning, they were able to validate some assumptions that are relevant to SEtS: (1) Some students are indeed afraid to speak in the foreign language class as they "feel a deep self-consciousness when asked to risk revealing themselves by speaking in the [L2] in the presence of other people; (2) … they also fear being less competent than other students or being evaluated by them; [and]

(3) … they are afraid to make mistakes in the [L2]" (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, pp. 129-130).

In a study that explored the role of FLA in students learning to speak an L2, "Suleimenova (2013) showed that students' speaking anxiety has a debilitative effect, which hinder learners from speaking, causing them to face 'mental block', stay quiet, and feel inferior to others" (Mulyono, Sati, & Ningsih, 2019, p. 14). These strong feelings caused them to panic, forget what they had to say, and remain silent. These factors present some of the current obstacles identified by L2 students to adequately engage to speak in a language class. To alleviate FLA, Horwitz et al. (1986) suggested back then, that "attaining foreign language confidence [is in the hands of] a supportive teacher who will acknowledge students' feelings in isolation and helplessness" (p. 132). More than three decades later, students still experience those fears of embarrassment and feelings of anxiety that could cause them to *freeze* when attempting to speak in class, as the findings of this study will show. A possible explanation alluded to by Horwitz et al. (1986) is grounded in the vulnerability that language learners feel when their *true* self is replaced by a more *limited* self as they progress in their studies and attempt to speak in the L2, thus impacting their confidence and self-esteem. Similar results were obtained recently by Teimouri, Goetze and Plonsky (2019) when they published the findings of a meta-analysis on how second language anxiety affects L2 achievement. They saw "an increase in students' anxiety… from senior high school students to college students… [when a more demanding] educational context… may create new experiences and obligations on the students that may cause more anxiety" (Teimouri et al., 2019, p. 379).

In another relevant study done by Djafri and Wimbarti (2018) on the relationship between foreign language anxiety, students' motivation and their perception of teachers' behaviour, the findings showed that in many instances the teacher's behaviour was "the source of [the students'] anxiety in the foreign language classroom" (p. 13). This behaviour was often associated with the manner in which teachers corrected language errors or used discouraging comments in class, affecting students' self-confidence. In proposing some recommendations on how to address students' language anxiety in the classroom, Djafri and Wimbarti (2018) referred to a study by Young (1991) who "suggested that teachers need to be more friendly,

relaxed and patient, make students feel more comfortable… and emphasize that mistakes are part of language learning process" (p. 14). Pair and small group work, as well as games in the classroom, were proposed as a strategy to minimise language anxiety. All these studies have an element in common: language anxiety in the classroom can impact negatively the process of language acquisition (Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Horwitz & Young, 1991) and does demotivate a student to participate in class. It is thus important to consider how a teacher with specific personality traits and the manner in which they communicate in class, may make students feel uncomfortable and increase their language anxiety levels to the point of disengaging them to speak in the L2.

This takes us to the third construct that frames this study: Willingness to Communicate.

2.2.3 Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

"Willingness to communicate (WTC) can be conceptualized as a readiness to speak in the L2 at a particular moment with a specific person" (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010, p. 162). As discussed, second language learners in a CLT class environment often decide to remain silent—or say the minimum when prompted—when the ideal scenario should be for them to speak the language whenever the opportunity occurs inside or outside the classroom. "The L2 learner's decision to initiate conversation has been likened to the notion of Crossing the Rubicon (Dörnyei 2005), an irrevocable decision that can lead to success or failure" (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010, p. 162). The teacher asks a question in the class and a student may be ready to speak, and yet at the last minute, they hesitate and for an array of affective, cognitive and behavioural reasons, decide to stay silent. This reaction is normally "associated with both higher language anxiety and lower perceived competence" (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010, p. 164). On the other hand, another student confidently responds without any concerns of being correct or not. As the literature reviewed in this chapter has suggested, one of the goals of students who are learning a second language is to become fluent in that language, and thus enhancing WTC in the classroom and paying attention to the teacher's role in the environment could help to achieve that goal. However, as Zarrinabadi (2014) claimed in his research on WTC, there is still some work to do in the field in that regard, as "far too little

attention has been paid to the influence of teacher on learners in relation to willingness to communicate (WTC)" (p. 290).

WTC was first defined by MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels in 1998 as the "result of an interplay of numerous factors, including the social and individual context, affective and cognitive context, motivational propensities, situated antecedents and behavioural intentions' (Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015, p. 2). The use of the L2 in class is WTC's ultimate objective. The variables influencing WTC are often displayed as a pyramid model with 6 layers from bottom to top:

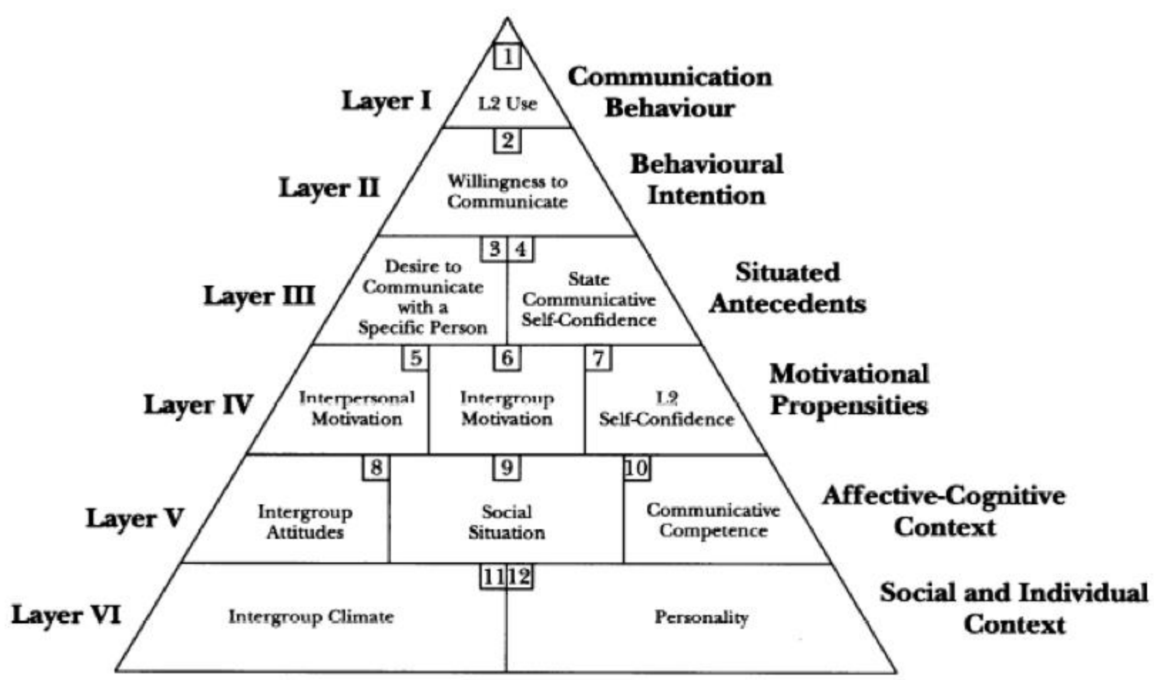


Figure 2.1 Heuristic model of variables influencing WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547)

The bottom layer of the pyramid (Layer VI) represents the societal and individual context. The variables considered in that layer are the personality traits of the learner and the structural characteristics of the community in terms of the learners' ethnolinguicity and the demographics of the group (socioeconomic, social representation, and so on). In a language classroom setting, this would equate to the interpersonal camaraderie amongst the students and the emotional satisfaction of being part of a group. The communicative exchange in the class environment would often be underpinned by the diversity of personalities existing in the

class, where some individuals would facilitate language learning while others might hinder it. A very common situation observed in language classes is that of the extroverts and domineering students at one extreme and the very shy and introverted ones at the other.

Layer V represents the affective and cognitive context. It equates to the different cultural groups and the learners' attitudes towards education, society and cultural norms, including the L2 communicative competence. Within a second language learning context, this could refer to students' desire to adapt to a certain culture, or just to fit in the classroom community and be accepted by their peers. Learning a language is a social endeavour and factors such as the setting, the familiarity with the topic of conversation and the perceived level of communicative competence of the other students can impact on the learner's desire to communicate.

Layer IV represents the motivational propensities based on interpersonal communication experience and motivation of the individual and of the intergroup they belong to. This stage includes the learner's self-confidence with respect to their use of the L2, which is a key element of SEtS. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), low self-confidence is intimately interconnected to the learner's self-perceived low communicative competence and the level of anxiety produced by this poor perception. At this level, the need to communicate may be influenced by who the receiver is, or simply by the obligation to answer a question asked by the teacher.

Layer III represents the situated antecedents of communication, involving the desire to communicate with a specific person or group of people, and is also related to the individual's self-confidence. This again embraces the relevancy of the context and topic of conversation and the desire to communicate with someone with whom a person has something in common. This can be a transitory stage where the person feels "a momentary feeling of confidence" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 549).

When the penultimate layer of the pyramid is reached, Layer II, the learner has reached the stage where verbal communication with someone may occur if the opportunity presents

itself. This layer is labelled Willingness to Communicate (WTC). The student is ready to speak; however, as Ajzen (1988) argued, “the intention to perform a behaviour does not guarantee its occurrence because circumstances may intervene between intention and action” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 548). This is exactly what students refer to when they allude to *freezing* in the moment and not being able to speak.

Finally, Layer I represents the communication behaviour, in other words when the L2 is used, or deemed to be used. The assumption is that the higher the WTC in a student, the more propensity this student has to use the L2 and reach the goal. However, in accordance with Ajzen’s (1988) argument, the student may have built up the courage to speak, but just before they do, something happens, another more confident student intervenes first, the teacher moves on, or at the last second, fear of embarrassment or of sounding silly overcomes the student, and they will remain silent. Therefore, the communication behaviour will not occur.

As Kang (2005) explained, WTC is “an individual’s volitional inclination towards an activity engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation, which can vary according to interlocutor(s), topic, and conversational context, among other potential situational variables” (p. 291). When learning a second language, communicating in that L2 should be one of the key outcomes. However, in the language classroom settings “where the majority of L2 learning worldwide occurs… learners are presented with little need to use the target language, apart from achieving good grades” (Joe, Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2017, p. 133). There are too many affective variables and situational factors that can affect the outcome of WTC, and that is one of the facts inspiring this research. For example, a study by Joe et al. (2017) on how students connect with the classroom social climate reported that higher levels of WTC do not necessarily mean that students will perform better in a formal class environment. “Having higher levels of WTC does not automatically lead to actual opportunities to communicate in the L2” (p. 140). This study also found that students’ needs in a formal classroom setting have better chances at being met when students perceive “that their teacher cares about their learning and is invested in their well-being” and they feel supported by their peers (Joe et al., 2017, p. 139). Another positive emotion that can affect WTC and ultimately engage a student to speak in class is enjoyment or having fun in class. The findings of a study done by Khajavy,

MacIntyre and Barabadi (2018) on the role of emotions in class and WTC, showed that "enjoyment was found as an important factor in increasing WTC at both student and classroom level, while anxiety reduced it [but] only at the student level" (p. 605). A further relevant study by Shirvan, Khajavy, MacIntyre and Taherian (2019) presented the results of a meta-analysis that allowed them to conclude that "[students'] perceived communicative competence [has] the largest effect [on WTC]" compared with language anxiety and motivation (p. 1241). A self-perceived low communicative competence vis-à-vis their peers is indeed another factor that increases students' disengagement to speak in class. Thus, being ready or "willing to communicate" is not enough to engage a student to speak. If teachers do not know *what* engages their students to speak in the language class, they may not achieve the desired communication behaviour. Ghanbarpour (2016) further argues that a student's "L2 self-confidence [makes] a statistically significant unique contribution to the prediction of WTC" (p. 2270), and "Cao (2011), Kang (2005), MacIntyre, Burns & Jessome (2011), and Wen & Clément (2003) [maintain] that teacher's attitude, involvement, and teaching style exert a significant and determining influence on learners' [class] participation and WTC" (Zarrinabadi, 2014, p. 290).

While a general conceptual framework of WTC helps us understand the nature of second language learning in formal settings, the importance of teacher-student relationship and its impact on students' WTC is worth reviewing in this last sub-section.

2.2.3.1 Teacher-student relationship (TSR)

Higher education research identifies teacher-student relationships (TSR) and the role of the teacher as key factors in engaging students in class (Hu & Kuh, 2002, 2003; James, Krause, & Jennings, 2010; Trowler, 2010; Zepke & Leach, 2010) and shows that teacher behaviour impacts positively—or negatively—on student learning, and thus can affect students' learning outcomes in the classroom (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Marzano & Pickering, 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For example, Blazar and Kraft (2017) in their studies "examining the effect of teachers on student outcomes beyond test scores… [found] that teachers can and do help develop attitudes and behaviour among their students that are important for success in life… [as well as their] academic performance" (p. 161). Schreck (2011) in her book *You've got to*

reach them to teach them, explored the multiple factors that engage students in a classroom—whether in school or college—and bring out the best in them. She proclaimed that it is the "human encounter between teacher and student [that] is often a more powerful teaching tool than the academic content, the grade… and the hours spent picking apart the curriculum" (Schreck, 2011, p. 5).

A study by Roorda et al. (2017) found that "affective positive teacher-student relationships, [exerted] an indirect effect through engagement [to] directly influence students' achievement" (p. 252). In fact, there is ample "empirical evidence [to affirm] that teacher-student relationship is crucial for students' successful learning at university; [however] the association between TSR and teacher factors is under-researched across all sectors of education, from school to university… and the research gap is particularly striking in higher education" (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p. 379). The study by Hagenauer and Volet (2014) focused on the effect that TSR has on students, as once again, "teacher effect is almost absent for empirical research" (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p. 372). TSR has two main dimensions when looking at higher education as opposed to secondary or primary schools: an affective dimension, which refers to the "bond built between students and teachers, forming the basis for secure and affective positively experienced relationships" (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p. 374) and a support dimension, which has to do with the support that teachers are expected to offer students in their journey through university (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). When I look at what engages students to speak in a language class, these two dimensions are essential. Students need to build a special relationship of trust with their teachers where they can perceive that the teacher actually cares. They also need to feel supported in order to speak.

Komarraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya (2010) reported that students who established a connection with their teachers outside class and built some type of interaction with them demonstrated a higher level of motivation and self-confidence. In their study, the authors were examining why some teachers are more approachable than others, and why students develop a more positive connection with them. They investigated specific dimensions of TSR—such as respect, approachability, connectedness, and other similar affective variables—

and explored how students' motivation and achievement were affected by those interactions in class and outside class. One of their findings confirmed that a strong TSR outside the confines of the classroom enhances the students' perception of their teacher "as being approachable, respectful and available… [and this in turn is] associated with stronger student self-confidence and motivation" (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010, p. 339). These are all affective and behavioural variables that impact Student Engagement *to Speak*—in both formal and informal learning environments.

Another relevant study by Sheybani (2019) examined the concept of TSR verbal and nonverbal "immediacy", defined as how close a teacher gets to a student without having too strong an impact on their motivation to perform. Her findings showed that teachers' immediacy to the students—whether verbal or nonverbal—had a positive impact on students WTC in the language classroom. "Teachers' immediacy attributes [are regarded] as an effective teaching component in promoting students' willingness to communicate" (Sheybani, 2019, p. 2). These attributes were defined by Ballester (2015) as expressions of "empathy, openness, kindness… praise, feelings of inclusiveness, humor… and willingness to engage students in communication, amongst others" (p. 10). Ballester (2015) also found that teacher immediacy may also play a role in decreasing FLA, and thus "by being more immediate, teachers might create positive feelings and increase student affect" (p. 12). However, when we talk about affective motives, instead of focusing on cognitive and more academic reasoning behind teaching and learning, we often face challenging and opposing forces: "Feelings and emotions play a huge part in all our lives, yet they have been shunned to a large extent by… [linguistic researchers and] the SLA literature" (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 9).

Another approach relevant to TSR and WTC was proposed by Sibii (2010) in "the metaphor of *companionship* as a particularly useful operationalization of the immediate teacher-student relationship" [emphasis added] (p. 531). The relevant claim to the current study is that teachers' attitude in class vis-à-vis their students is key to optimising an engaging-to-speak classroom environment. This attitude needs to be of the sort that "encourages a friendly, comfortable and [close] interaction with the students… [while combining] 'everyday' familiarity and friendliness with [the teacher's] 'professional' authority and leadership" (Sibii,

2010, pp. 531-532). This concept of TSR companionship is based on a mutually respectful and warm relationship, however, prompted predominantly by the teacher. Sibii (2010) argued that the students have a better possibility to engage with a teacher who is seen as a real and friendly person, rather than someone who seems uninterested and distant. “The companion-teacher does everything in his or her power to forge a person-to-person connection that… celebrates the complexity of human motivation and behaviour” (Sibii, 2010, p. 536). In the “teacher-companion” model, teachers and students can connect with each other more effectively when they possess shared interests—perhaps a cultural identification with the L2—without losing sight of the power dynamics that exists in an academic setting. Even though the author of that study warns that “this model is by no means devoid of risks—psychological, academic, political, and ethical” (Sibii, 2010, p. 540), it is still a potent reminder to language teachers and researchers that a genuine teacher-student relationship needs to be founded in a *real human* connection. Students who perceive their teacher’s immediate and caring behaviour may feel “more inclined to participate and more self-confident in their language skills” (Ballester, 2015, p. 20). The present study will examine the connection between students and teachers and its influence on SEtS.

2.3 The research gap: Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS)

Some of the literature relevant to student engagement that was reviewed relates to student engagement in elementary and secondary schools (Marzano & Pickering, 2011; Riggs & Gholar, 2009; Schlechty, 2011; Schreck, 2011) and other studies were found associated with tertiary education (Axelson & Flick, 2011; Bryson & Hand, 2007; Coates, 2010; Hiver et al., 2021; Parsons & Taylor, 2011; Zepke, 2013). Many of the studies are tied to the notion of engagement as motivation to come to school and attend classes (Skinner & Belmont, 1993), and some studies focus on engagement in a specific task, such as reading (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2000). Most studies with university students have assessed engagement at a macro level, measuring it as a global quality, and focusing on the student level of academic challenges and the supportive campus environment (Barkley, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, as mentioned, the literature reviewed does not address specifically what engages students *to speak* in a language class at tertiary education level.

To the best of my knowledge and as shown in this chapter, previous research in the relevant fields of teaching and learning a second language has focused extensively on WTC, motivation and FLA, but has not explored the notion of Student Engagement *to Speak* from the student's perspective; it is therefore an innovative topic of research. It is important to clarify that this study does not attempt to validate or dismiss decades of research in these areas. While most of the literature reviewed on factors affecting SLA and on the theories of CLT, Student Engagement and WTC is written about students and assumes the benefits these bring to student learning, the studies have primarily been carried out from the perspective of language researchers, linguists and language curriculum developers, and "a striking absence in the literature is the student's voice" (Trowler, 2010, p. 50). This study records primarily the voice of the students and addresses that gap.

So, after many attempts at defining Student Engagement t*o Speak*, searching through the relevant literature, coding the data collected, reflecting on what colleagues and students said, and reflecting myself about this construct, I arrived at the following conceptualisation of SEtS:

> Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS) is a facet of human behaviour that triggers a person's inner confidence and takes them one step further beyond willingness to communicate to actually speaking in the target language.

However, when teachers are asked how they understand student engagement and engaged learning… "answers to this refocused question have revealed a gap between what teachers [and students] consider engagement in learning…" (Parsons & Taylor, 2011, p. 4). According to Martín, Jansen and Beckmann (2016), there is a strong disparity between the expectations of students who enrol in language learning at university level and the teachers' and the institution's academic goals. Many studies (Bowden, Starrs, & Quinn, 1989; Martín, Jansen, & Beckmann, 2016; and Nettelbeck, Byron, Clyne, Hajek, Lo Bianco, & McLaren, 2007) have reported that while students want to learn to speak the language, teachers and heads of programs of study concentrate on teaching literature, linguistics, and cultural knowledge. A perennial debate in the field concerns the correlation between theory and practice in language teaching, and the antagonistic relationship that exists between linguists and language educators, where the former perceives language teaching *per se* as lightweight (Edge, 1989; Wang, 2014; Widdowson, 1980):

> As far as English language teaching is concerned, applied linguistics may be seen to have grown out of a desire to liberate language teaching from an intellectual subservience to linguistics. (Edge, 1989, p. 407)

Setting aside disputes between linguists and language teachers over how languages should be taught at university level, the findings of this study will offer opportunities for future research endeavours on the topic of SEtS. It may also inspire curriculum developers and language teachers to modify language programs and focus genuinely on an effective communicative approach to teaching languages. It could become the platform to develop inspiring and engaging pedagogical activities—based on what engages students *to speak*—that are feasible in language classrooms.

This chapter has highlighted the theoretical and scholarly challenges surrounding SEtS, since the concept of Student Engagement *to Speak* sits outside the boundaries of existing language teaching and learning concepts. Before revealing the findings of this research grounded on students' lived experiences as well as my own, in the next chapter I discuss the methodology used to collect and analyse the data for the present study.

CHAPTER 3
Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach to the study. As indicated in the introductory chapter, I have used a mixed methods research approach to investigate what engages students *to speak* in a language class. That is, I collected both qualitative and quantitative data and used two different methods for data analysis. The first method is analytic autoethnography, a "systematic approach to data analysis and interpretation… of social phenomena involving self" (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang 2010, p. 2) which allows the researcher to be at the centre of the investigation in the dual role of researcher and participant. However, in order to increase the validity of this approach, and to enhance the legitimacy of the study, I relied mainly on grounded theory strategies as a second method of research to collect and further analyse the data.

This chapter comprises several sections, each focusing on a distinct methodological aspect of the study. Section 3.2 outlines the research design and elaborates on the researcher's knowledge claim and on the rationale for choosing a mixed methods research approach. Section 3.3 presents both the strategies of inquiry selected for this study (analytic autoethnography and grounded theory), elaborates on the path chosen for data analysis, and examines two studies from the literature, which exemplify a similar mixed methods research approach. Section 3.4 gives an overview of the data collection design, including the ethical clearance protocol. Section 3.5 describes in detail the data collection methods and strategies and the participant recruitment process. Section 3.6 concludes with a summary of the chosen methodological approach.

3.2 The research design

Hatch and Farhady defined research simply as "a systematic approach to finding answers to questions" (1982, p. 1). However, there are many ways of compiling information from

different sources, and of collecting data through different research methods. In the present study, reality is seen through multidisciplinary lenses and the research is underpinned by the data collection, which follows both inductive and deductive logics. In this study, the findings "[rely] on quotes as evidence from the participants… [the researcher] spends time in the field with participants… [and] attempts to lessen distance between [herself] and that being researched" (Creswell, 2013, p. 21). By using this research approach, as Creswell (2013) explains, the process of collecting data and analysing it:

> … shapes the narrative. [It] tells a story that unfolds over time. [It] presents the study following the traditional approach to scientific research (i.e., problem, question, method, and findings) … [It] talks about [the researcher's] background and experiences and how they have shaped [the] interpretation of the findings. [It] lets the voices of participants speak and carry the story through dialogue… (p. 55).

Although a semi-narrative approach is used, the study follows a scientific method of research that allows the researcher's own voice and the voices of participants to be heard, while addressing the main questions to frame the research: "What knowledge claims are being made by the researcher? What strategies of inquiry will inform the procedures? [And] what methods of data collection and analysis will be used?" (Creswell, 2003, p. 5)

Thus, in the next sections, I first reveal the knowledge claims that I bring to this study; I then explain the strategies of inquiry that I have chosen for collection and reflection on the data; and finally, I identify the specific methods of data collection and analysis used.

3.2.1 The researcher's knowledge claim

As inevitably happens in the research domain, I started this project with certain beliefs and with my own experiential assumptions about the topic of study. My knowledge claims are based primarily on constructivist perspectives, that is, "multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially… constructed with an intent of developing a theory or pattern" (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). The literature review presented in the previous chapter confirmed my views that the continuous and active practice of speaking in the L2 in any social or university setting, including the language classroom, plays a vital role in the acquisition of a second language (Vygotsky, 1978; Krashen, 1982; Di Pietro, 1987; R. Ellis, 1994;

Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Swain, 2000; Chamot, 2005; Lightbown & Spada 2006; Garcia Laborda 2007; Gass 2013). Thus, developing a theory of SEtS, derived from the students' own opinions, may give language researchers a platform to create an effective teaching approach to Student Engagement *to Speak* in a classroom setting.

When alluding to the main theoretical perspectives that a researcher could have at the commencement of a research study, Creswell identified four schools of thought: post positivism, constructivism, participatory research and pragmatism. The position that best fits this study's knowledge claim is a constructivist one. According to Creswell (2003), constructivist researchers immerse themselves in the participants' reality, and seek to understand "the world in which they live and work… and [while] they rely as much as possible on the participants' view of a situation being studied… their own background shapes their interpretation of a reality" (p. 8). In other words, I will "position [myself] in the research to acknowledge how [my] interpretation flows from [my] own personal, cultural and historical experience" (p. 9). Indeed, this is a story of the students' journey along the path of learning a second language at a major Australian university, but their social reality is co-constructed and based on my interactions with them and their teachers. Their voices expressed their needs and expectations at the time this research was undertaken, and through the analysis and interpretation of the data by using a mixed methods research approach, I was able to conceptualise "what's going on" in the data. As asserted by grounded theorist Barney Glaser (2007), "the data is not 'truth', it is not 'reality'. It is exactly what is happening" (p. 2). Furthermore, in the eyes of Charmaz (2014), constructivism "acknowledges subjectivity and the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of the data… [where] theory development is the goal" (pp. 14-15). Using the analytic autoethnography approach, my own knowledge as a language teacher in this very environment is expected to enhance this construction and the interpretations I present.

3.2.2 A mixed methods research approach

To investigate the research topic, I have chosen a mixed methods research approach as my research inquiry framework, and a multiple perspective data collection and analysis procedure, known as "triangulation" (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966) to collect

the data. Triangulation offers numerous rich strategies of investigation, and it allows for "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 1978, p. 291). In this case, the subject matter of SEtS will be viewed from different perspectives—students', teachers', language researchers' and my own—and the study will use qualitative and quantitative data collection methods that will complement each other. The importance of using triangulation in this study is that it can reduce the researcher's own bias, and thus it can enhance the validity and reliability of the information. As Larsen-Freeman and Long (2014) acknowledge, "there is much to be gained from approaching the study of second language acquisition using a combination of attributes of both qualitative and quantitative paradigms" (p. 24). Several researchers concur, in that a "third paradigm" is needed such as a mixed methods approach. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), for instance, advocate a "non-purist" approach to research, in that it makes it possible to "draw from the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of both [methodologies] in a single research study" (p.15). If, by using these two different methodologies together, the findings complement each other, the researcher's conclusion would be strengthened (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2005), and it would allow for "a better understanding of [the] research problems" (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 5). Creswell and Clark's (2007) definition of a mixed methods research approach elaborates on the advantages of using the two methodologies concurrently:

> Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. (p. 5)

For this project, I chose a sequential exploratory design where the qualitative data was collected first, and the quantitative data collection followed with the intention of enriching and complementing the qualitative results. "This approach is especially useful when the researcher's interest is in enhancing generalizability" (Harwell, 2011, p. 153). The qualitative aspect, however, keeps me closer to the data, and although it is more subjective, it is also naturalistic and exploratory. This research tradition "is concerned with understanding human behaviour from the actor's own frame of reference" (Nunan, 1992, p. 3), and to respond to

the research questions, the analysis, the findings, and the discussion will be at the same time interpretive and confirmative. The various methods used and the multiple viewpoints, if they generate reliable and convergent results, will maximise the credibility of the findings.

3.3 Strategies of inquiry

The topic of my research is very closely linked to my professional life, and it contains a high degree of personal self-identification. I have therefore chosen to embed grounded theory analytic strategies—which are explained in detail in 3.3.2—in an autoethnographic study. This will allow me to be able to step back from my own narrative and to analyse systematically what others were saying in relation to the topic of concern. According to Anderson (2006), a sociologist with expertise in qualitative research methods, analytic autoethnography goes beyond the evocative autoethnographic method championed by Ellis and Bochner (2000). These two genres of autoethnography require "considerable narrative and expressive skills… and thus fracture the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature…" (Anderson, 2006, p. 377). However, the main difference between these two approaches to autoethnography is the reminiscent focus of Ellis and Bochner's method to "evoke emotional resonance with the reader" (Anderson, 2006, p. 377), whereas Anderson's commitment is to adhere to a more analytical agenda. "The purpose of AAE is not simply to provide an 'insider's perspective'… [but] to use empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data [itself]… directed towards theoretical development… and understanding of [the research]" (Anderson, 2006, pp. 386-387).

Charmaz (2006b) contends that by adopting a constructivist approach to GT, the researcher can write in a voice that will not detract from the stories being presented in an autoethnographic study, while using "analytic reflexivity to improve the theoretical understanding of their… practice" (Pace, 2012, p. 4). Charmaz further describes Anderson's method as "a rapprochement between contested definitions of social scientific work" (2006b, p. 396), and she agrees "that many ethnographies start with the experience of the ethnographer" (Charmaz, 2006b, p. 397). Pace (2016) warns research higher degree students about the challenges of using "two well-known contested research methods… [such as] grounded theory and autoethnography" (p. 188); he insists, however, that "this status [of

contested methodologies] does not detract from their value as research methods" (p. 195). In section 3.3.3, studies will be mentioned where the combined methods of autoethnography and grounded theory were used to investigate a research question with convincing results, according to the researchers.

In the next section, I will first describe the two research approaches, commencing with analytic autoethnography.

3.3.1 Analytic autoethnography (AAE)

AAE allows us to explore "[our] personal experience and [our] interaction with others as a way of achieving wider cultural or social understanding" (Pace, 2012, p. 2), while analysing the social community where the study takes place and remaining an active member of that community throughout the entire journey. As Woodley (2016) affirms:

> A more analytical approach to auto-ethnography can not only address criticisms of the method making it more acceptable within traditional approaches to academic research but can also maintain the emotional heart without letting this dominate (p. 44).

A central feature of this inquiry method is that the researcher is visible at all times within the written text. "The researcher's own feelings and experiences are incorporated into the story and considered as vital data for understanding the social world being observed" (Anderson, 2006, p. 384). This genre of writing accepts the use of the singular first-person pronoun, while combining characteristics of ethnography and autobiography and allowing for critical reflection and analysis of the data collected. Although this inquiry method generates strong criticism as it challenges the scientific credibility of research according to Sparkes (2000), Salzman (2002), and Holt (2003), Anderson (2006) believes it is a research technique that offers an introspective view of a research topic by engaging in analytic reflexivity and promoting insight beyond the data itself. In agreement with Anderson, C. Ellis stated that AAE gives "access to inner-most thoughts and sensitive issues [and thus] makes it a powerful methodological tool… [for] social scientists to better understand humanity" (cited in Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010, p. 3). Furthermore, Woodley (2016), in her defence of the use of AAE as a method to conduct research within a social structure such as the classroom, summarises its benefits—all relevant to my research—as follows:

- it allows a teacher-researcher to be immersed in the life stories of her students (in Woodley's case pupils or school children), while sharing "[her] experiences, thoughts and feelings with [her] identity of being a teacher" (p. 6);
- it can "generate rich data about the life inside the classroom" (p. 7), while acknowledging the deep shared relationship that can exist between a teacher and her students, and attempting to gain the students' trust; and
- it "can enable [both students and] teachers to have their voices heard" (p. 9).

Another feature of AAE that resonated with my research is the fact that the researcher must be a "complete member in the social world under study" (Anderson, 2006, p. 379). Throughout this journey, I had an active participant-observer role, particularly when comparing the learning environments of my own classes with the informal environment of the conversation groups that I organised as extra-curricular activities for the language students. The other three features of AAE allowed me to engage deeply with the data from the "inside":

- Through analytic reflexivity, I was able to understand thoroughly the reciprocal influence that existed between my position, the research setting, and the participants.
- Constant dialogue was established with all the data, going beyond the self-experience and reaching to as many other informants as possible.
- A commitment to theoretical analysis was demonstrated by the use of triangulation, collecting data through multiple sources (a focus group, interviews, observations, reflective memos, and the survey) and analysing the data qualitatively and quantitatively through grounded theory strategies. The purpose of my study is not just to document and understand *what* engages students *to speak* in a language class, but also to provide an "insider's perspective" while attempting to engage the readers emotionally, asking the *why* questions and endeavouring to respond to the *how* questions. To address the *what* questions which represent the core of the study, I use AAE insights to read the data collected and analysed through GT. This is where GT analytic strategies can best be blended with Anderson's methodological approach "by

> using analytic reflexivity to improve theoretical understanding of the [autoethnographer's] creative practice" (Pace, 2012, p. 4).

Pace (2012) asserts that researchers can combine GT analytic strategies within an autoethnographic study when their "narratives of past experiences [are] autobiographical" and when the study includes critical self-reflection and "presents opportunities [to formulate] a theory or a general explanation about the researcher's experiences" (p. 7). To those who may disapprove of combining GT strategies within an autoethnographic study, perhaps because it could compel the researcher to "write in an authoritative voice about the patterns that she or he discovers" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 758), Charmaz (2000) responds that by adopting a constructivist approach to GT, "researchers can avoid the possible authoritative objectivist trappings of the method" (p. 523). This brings me to the second method of enquiry used in this study to collect, analyse and maintain a constant dialogue with the data, that of grounded theory.

3.3.2 Grounded Theory (GT)

GT is a research method conceived by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967, as a result of a sociological research study on patients dying in hospitals (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). According to its founders, GT is an innovative methodology that allows for the unveiling of a theory from a "process of collecting data for comparative analysis designed to generate substantive and formal theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 2011, p. 9).

3.3.2.1 Rationale

GT strategies were used as an analytical tool to understand the issue under study and to search for an interpretative theory emerging from the data. As Glaser (1998) rationalises:

> Grounded Theory is an inductive approach that calls for emphasis on the experience of the participants. The goal of GT is to generate a theory that accounts for patterns of their behaviour which are relevant and problematic for the participants. The core category is that pattern of behaviour which is most related to all the other categories and their properties in the theory which explain how the participants resolve their main concern. (p. 117)

In GT, “a new ‘theory’ is developed from empirical data” (Dunne, 2008, p. 60), and this data can be both qualitative and quantitative. Although this methodology is used mostly in qualitative studies in the social sciences fields, including education (Strauss & Corbin, 1997), Glaser and Strauss (2011) stressed that “each form of data [qualitative and quantitative] is useful for both verification and generation of theory… [and] in many instances, both forms of data are necessary—not quantitative used to test qualitative, but both used as supplements, as mutual verification and… as different forms of data on the same subject, which, when compared, will each generate theory” (pp. 17-18). It is also fundamental to note that in GT the researcher should not have, in principle, any predetermined hypotheses when they start a research project (Cutcliffe, 2000). Although I am a strong advocate for the importance of teaching oral skills in a language class, I had no prior hypothesis on *what* does engage students *to speak* in a language class, since there are no existing theories on SEtS. Indeed, that is the reason why I decided to embark upon this research.

It is well known that researchers in the field have defined and interpreted GT in many different manners (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Cutcliffe, 2000; Charmaz, 2000, 2014; Glaser & Holton, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), even though Glaser has always expressed apprehension over the diverse interpretations of the methodology. However, Charmaz (2014) claimed that “in their original statement of method Glaser and Strauss (1967) invited their readers to use grounded theory strategies flexibly in their own way” (p. 16). Likewise, Birks and Mills (2011) advise that “it is not necessary to subscribe to one version of grounded theory throughout your study. Your own philosophical position will determine whether you align yourself with one particular author or another, or perhaps draw from each of them to varying degrees in your application of essential grounded theory methods” (p. 24). For this study, even though I am drawing on the different versions of GT to compare and analyse the data, I more closely follow Charmaz’s GT (1990, 2000, 2006a, 2014) version of how to construct theory through observation of different environments, interaction with the subjects of my research, and personal involvement with the rich data gathered on the research question. Charmaz (2006a) insists that GT is a flexible method that allows us to collect and analyse data layer by layer to develop a theory in order to explain an issue or understand a

topic. Her view is that the theory that arises from the data is closer to an interpretation of the world being studied than “an exact picture of it” (Charmaz, 2006a, p. 10).

Despite the differing approaches to what GT is or should be, a review of the literature indicates that there is consensus regarding certain features of the methodology. The constant stages of GT involve memo writing and sorting, coding and categorisation of the data, constant comparison, theoretical sampling, and theoretical development. The way in which I collected and simultaneously analysed the data is displayed and discussed throughout this study. I will now briefly discuss the key stages of GT, and provide some samples of memoing, and initial coding.

3.3.2.2 Memoing

Memoing is at the heart of any GT study since it reflects “the researcher’s internal dialogue with the data at a point in time” (McCann & Clark, 2003, p. 15). Glaser (1978) describes memos as a “moment capture” occurrence, and he calls it the “bedrock of theory generation” (p. 83). The objective of memoing is to record ideas and write down thoughts as soon as they come to mind, as otherwise the thoughts are lost when other ideas present themselves. Memos can also help identify gaps in the data analysis (Charmaz, 2006a). The goal of memoing is thus not just to write down ideas and self-reflection freely as these appear, but to start coding them with labels, comparing them with other codes, and analysing the data until some clear categories and their properties begin to appear. Memos “accumulate and mature until it is time… to sort the memos into an outline and write up the completed analysis” (Pace, 2010, p. 10), which leads us to the emerging category or categories, and subsequently to the grounded theory. Through memoing, a researcher engages with the data, explores, and compares it, asks more questions, uncovers properties, sub-categories and categories and looks for relationships between these, and attempts to develop a storyline until a theory emerges. Glaser (1978) identifies the following five key features of memoing:

> (1) It raises the data to a conceptualization level; (2) it develops the properties of each category; (3) it presents hypotheses about connection between the categories and/or their properties; (4) it begins to integrate these connections with clusters of other categories to generate the theory; (5) it locates the emerging theory with other theories with similar relevance (p. 84).

Thus, "memoing is a reflexive process of data analysis that encourages reflection and inductive thinking on the part of the researcher and engages the researcher with the data" (Locke, 2001, p. 51). Early memos may consist of ongoing field notes and annotations of all kinds. Glaser (1998) reminds us of this simple rule in life: "If it is talked about it is likely to be lost. Writing memos preserves with no need to remember… The goal is to capture meaning and ideas for one's growing theory at the moment they occur" (p. 178). To abide by this method, I followed a pattern whereby immediately after a class observation session or an informal corridor conversation with a colleague or a student, I would jot down notes on relevant facts that would serve as a memory aid when completing the memos of the day. Below are some examples of memoing.

These are extracts taken from different memo entries from classroom observed patterns, recorded in my journal during class observations and after different activities were conducted in class. The highlighted sections form part of the initial line-by-line coding phase.

> *The teacher was standing in front of the classroom and leading the activities at all time. Although not measured, most of the speaking was clearly done by the teacher. When the students were asked a question directly, they would respond with different levels of competency. In whole class activities, students would read from a textbook and respond in monosyllables or chunks of sentences when asked a direct question. In smaller groups, the 'speaking' would start in the L2 and digress very quickly into the L1, be it English, Chinese or any other large variety of languages and cultural backgrounds present in the classes. Often, when the teacher asked a question to the whole class, his/her attempt to engage students to speak was met with an awkward silence. What was happening here? Was the topic engaging? Did the students seem bored? How did the teacher react to the awkward silence? Who broke the silence? (One of the students who looked quite uninterested, responded with a few words, and then the teacher continued the task, impassive to what had just happened, and the cycle went on)*
>
> *Although, most teachers insisted during the interviews that the main teaching methodology used in their classes was of the communicative sort, not much free flowing communication happened in any of the classes observed.*

When I reflect about writing my memos, I cannot help thinking that some of my perceptions could be a distortion of the reality since I might be looking at the dichotomy with the tinted glasses of my oral advocate convictions. However, to minimise this potential bias, this data is constantly compared with the data collected from the focus group, the interviews, and the survey.

Thus, all throughout my research, I followed Charmaz's (2006a) advice on writing separate memos on observed patterns while highlighting codes and potential sub-categories, constantly questioning the data and looking for properties, gaps and emerging categories. Memos are the foundations of theory building, and through an evolving narrative and constant analysis and reflection, I was able to conceptualise the data by narrowing down all the coding stages that I will describe in the next sections.

3.3.2.3 Initial coding of the data: a sample

Charmaz (2006a) stated that GT approaches utilise at least two coding phases: "an initial phase involving the naming of each line of data, followed by a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent earlier codes to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data" (p. 93). This section will present a sample of initial coding to show how the methodology of coding works.

Initial coding, also called open coding, is the first level of coding in grounded theory analysis, "in which data [is] transcribed and broken down into units of meaning" (Fassinger, 2005, p. 160) and, as Barnett (2010) asserts "it begins the chain of the theory building process" (p. 89). During this phase Charmaz (2006a) advises the researcher to keep codes "short, simple, active and analytic" (p. 50). Initial coding is crucial, as it represents the researcher's first interpretation of the data. Glaser (1978) insisted that coding should be done using gerunds as it makes the GT initial processes easier and avoids much deviation from the data, which aligns with Charmaz (2006a)'s recommendation to code "with words that reflect action since the actions can lead to topics and behaviours emerging from the data" (p. 48). As is shown in Table 3.1 below, I alternated between coding line by line and segment by segment; however, I found that coding the data was not always clear-cut and I had to go back and re-think or dissect the data further in order to code it. At first, I ended up with hundreds of coded data, but with practice I was able to dissect the data and discover ideas, comparing data to data, with the aim of separating data into more focused coding or categories. Below are some excerpts of the focus group transcription (see Appendix I for the entire transcription), and how I coded the data initially and then proceeded to label it with emerging categories.

Table 3.1 Initial coding examples

Text transcribed from the focus group (03/06/2011—names are pseudonyms)	Researcher's interpretation of data or coding with gerunds	Initial label/code
It is frustrating when you want to say something in class [in the L2] and it is not coming naturally to you. You feel like if you take too long to try to find a word, other people are going to move on, and you are not going to get your ideas across anyway. (George)	Student expressing frustration in his/her level of competency of the L2	Fearing failure
It is very intimidating for a lot of people. (William)	Feeling intimidated	Lacking confidence
I think for oral classes, the topics are very important. They can't be things like... in my class [Intermediate] they keep talking about politics and there will always be people who don't talk, because this topic is going way over my head, and I have no idea what they are talking about. If some people start talking about politics in Afghanistan, that does not engage me, so I'll just sit there too and stare! (Charlie)	Not being engaged to speak when topics are unfamiliar or not of personal interest	Not engaging with the topic
A lecturer can facilitate and make sure that you can get your thoughts out, and that you don't have to be afraid if someone else jumps in...that you can have your moment. (George)	Giving the teacher a role in reducing students' fear of speaking	Feeling valued/Being given opportunity to speak
It is up to the lecturer to prepare the atmosphere, so students can speak... (Charlie)	Creating an engaging atmosphere in class	Feeling safe
I definitely can see that in some classes I am much less inclined to speak...like last year [Intermediate] with some teachers I didn't want to speak...mainly in oral classes I didn't feel comfortable around them... (Linda)	Not connecting with who the teacher is	Feeling intimidated by teacher's personality
[What makes me uncomfortable?] ... I guess making mistakes and the fear of being corrected. Hum... And then... I would say at some point I just gave up, because I wanted to contribute, but I just was too slow for the speed of the conversation... (Matilda)	Making mistakes creates low self-esteem and leads students to give up	Disconnecting from the class/Feeling anxious
Yeah...That's another problem in Continuing is that there are so many different levels [in the class], that some people don't feel comfortable speaking in front of other people that speak much better... (Caroline)	Having different levels of spoken competence	Lacking confidence

During this process of initial coding, I familiarised myself with the raw data by labelling the data and assigning "units of meaning to incidents, actions, and events derived from the data" (Barnett, 2012, p. 50). The labels or codes are attached to words, expressions, sentences, or entire paragraphs. Many of these codes can contain just a single segment of data while others can contain multiple segments. The codes are often modified or changed as the data labelling progresses and more accurate labels are found when comparing data with data. However, the initial coding of the data collected during the initial phase of the research ended up having significant validity as the analysis progressed, because the labels chosen to identify the data were used over and over throughout the analysis. By labelling the data in such a manner, I was able "to compare incident to incident and incident to concept", as Barnett (2010) clearly explains, "leading to the development of categories and themes, which are later integrated into the emergent theory" (p. 89).

3.3.2.4 Selective coding and constant comparative analysis

As the analysis is progressed, Charmaz (2006a) suggests that the dialogue be kept with the data and any emergent theme or concept be categorised. Thus, in pursuing the goal of becoming more selective in the coded data, I continually asked the following three questions of my data (adapted from p. 47):

1. What is the main concern in this study, or what is this data a study of?
2. What is actually happening in the data—from the students' perspective?
3. How can the study's concern be resolved—theoretically?

When coding the data, I had to constantly go back to it, and re-think or dissect the data further, in order to code it again. This dissection allowed me to discover ideas, compare data to data, and start preparing for more focused coding. By then, I was totally immersed in the participants' world as their teacher and in my role as participant observer in my own classes and in the informal environment of the *Cercle français de conversation*. By being open, approachable, and present, I was able to gain the students' trust and it allowed me to record anecdotes and rich conversations as part of my data. Since I was aware of my potential biases,

I made sure I collected data from different sources and different learning environments, and the data was constantly compared and contrasted.

By linking raw data with theory development, coding represents the "analytic scaffolding" that allows the researcher to bridge the data with theoretical deductions (Charmaz, 2000, p. 517). However, coding is also seen as a complicated process, since the researcher has to "go beyond the data, think creatively, ask questions from the data, and generate credible, original and relevant theories" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 30). Through constant dialogue with all the data, I looked for the relationship that could link the subcategories and the categories together, while revealing a story line between the categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994).

In defining the stages of comparative analysis, Dunne (2008, p. 64) wrote:

> Constant comparative analysis involves continuously examining the data for commonalities, contrasts and variations throughout the research process (Emerson, 2004)… [which] in practical terms, [it] means that in grounded theory the process of data collection and analysis is not linear (Coyne and Cowley 2006; Dick 2005). Instead, in order to compare the data and further develop and test the emerging ideas, data collection and analysis is conducted in a cyclical fashion, with both collection and analysis "interwoven in a seamless dialectic" (Dey, 2004, p. 84).

Dunne (2008) agreed with Creswell's interpretation of constant comparative analysis as a "'zigzag' process—out to the field to gather information, analyze the data, back to the field to gather more information, analyze the data, and so forth" (p. 64). Thus, on following the "zigzag" pattern, I was able to reach the next key stage of data analysis, called theoretical development. This phase takes the researcher closer to the creation of the substantive theory, "by merging concepts into thematic categories… and reaching theoretical sensitivity, which relies on the researcher's intuitive and interpretive analysis of the data" (Barnett, 2012, p. 50).

3.3.2.5 Theoretical development (coding, sampling, sorting)

At this point in the analysis, I begin searching for provisional hypotheses that could explain the nature of the concern under study and start to unveil a theory. Theoretical coding should reveal the interrelationship existing amongst all the categories and disclose the core category.

For example, *if I like the teacher, if the teacher is friendly, if I am not intimidated by the teacher,* or *if the teacher is supportive* were recurring initial codings emerging from the focus group and the interview data. These were subsequently grouped under a more focused coding of *teacher's personality* and examined through the survey. The process of theoretical development in GT directs the researcher to build upon concepts and tentative hypotheses which have emerged from the data, and which have increased in importance as the analysis progressed (Charmaz 2006a). Thus, it became critical to determine the main properties of teacher's personality (TP) that affect students' WTC and SEtS. When attempting to further define TP in the process of theoretical sorting, I kept coming across two constant remarks impacting the students' definition of TP: "if mistakes are OK" and "if I feel more confident" were two conditions constantly specified by the students in the memos and the data coding in terms of students' engagement to speak.

In GT, the core category should "resolve the problematic nature of the pattern of behaviour" (Glaser, 1978, p. 93). However, one of the difficulties of data analysis when using GT is to conceptualise the data into well-determined categories. The process of categorisation is a difficult one in that not all coded data will fit into the categories chosen for the development of the relevant theory. It is important to note that in GT it is acceptable, however, to select the coded data that appropriately fits into a category, and to omit those codes that will not contribute to the emerging theory, always avoiding the temptation to "force" the data into a category.

How, therefore, are these categories or subcategories derived and related to each other? Can I reach any hypotheses that explain the nature of the concern under study? The process of theoretical coding should assist in responding to these two questions and help identify the core category. Through the process of theoretical sampling, I thus turn my attention to those properties and dimensions of the categories that begin to stand out, as more memos are written. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain, "properties are the characteristics or attributes of a category; dimensions represent the possible locations of properties on some kind of continuum" (cited in Hull, 2013, p. 12) that will guide the storyline. In the literature of GT, a discrepancy exists in that Glaser claims there is only one core category in GT and the rest are

subcategories. Charmaz, on the other hand, explains that there can be more than one core category and all the categories are interconnected. When reflecting on theory generation and still sorting and organising memos, I kept “fracturing the data with substantive codes [and continually asking myself] what is going on in the data” (Glaser & Holton, 2007, p. 314). The answer to this question should guide me towards unveiling a central phenomenon of the emerging theory to which a conceptual label can be given, and this label must be “abstract, broad but telling… and all the other relevant categories are ordered along [this] story line” (Hull, 2013, p. 21).

3.3.2.6 The grounded theory

What is theory in the context of grounded theory? How do we progress from coding, comparing, and analysing the data to producing a grounded theory? More pertinently, as Charmaz (2014) asks: “How do we make our grounded theory analysis theoretical (p. 227)?” A theory proposes a new idea, a new concept constructed upon building blocks, until reaching a substantive theory formed by empirical fragments of data, according to Glaser (1998). Charmaz (2014) warns, however, that “the term theory [in GT] remains slippery” (p. 228) and ambiguous, and she recommends that GT novices adhere to this definition of theory in the social sciences: “a theory states relationships between abstract concepts and may aim for *either* explanation *or* understanding” (Thornberg, Perhamus, & Charmaz 2015, p. 406, my emphasis).

Furthermore, Charmaz (2014) identifies two philosophical approaches to comprehend the definition of theory: positivist and interpretivist. The positivist approach seeks objective explanations, and researchers who abide by this definition of theory “try to keep their values out of their research to avoid contaminating the results” (p. 229). They predict relationships between variables and focus on the importance of universality, impartiality and objectivity. The interpretivist approach, on the other hand, is more pragmatic, and aligns better with my own beliefs about research as a vehicle of social constructivism. It allows the researcher to interpret the phenomenon under study by seeking to understand the real concerns of people, how they construct their reality, and why it is important for them to solve their problems. This interpretivist theoretical approach “may recognize the subjectivity of the researcher… and

offer an imaginative theoretical interpretation that makes sense of the studied phenomenon" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 231). It is in that vein that the two methodological approaches chosen for this study complement each other: while grounded theory guides the researcher to conceptualise the studied phenomenon in an abstract and interpretivist theory, analytic autoethnograhy simultaneously allows us to explore "the connections between our personal lives and our scholarly interests and activities [that] many of us are aware… exist" (Anderson, 2006, p. 390) Some studies of this type have been done, as described in the section below.

3.3.3 Successful studies in cognate areas

Steven Pace (2012) referred to grounded theory and autoethnography as "contested research methods" as they differ from mainstream approaches to qualitative research particularly because they do not test theories, but build them, and they are more inductive than deductive. However, he advices novice researchers, such as myself, that "adopting contested research method[s], executing [them] well, and communicating [them] clearly can be a rewarding experience" (p. 197).

In further illustrating how the two research methods can work together and produce convincing results, I will now refer to a couple of studies in cognate areas where grounded theory and autoethnography have been used in a complementary manner to generate a theory.

3.3.3.1 So many data, so much time (Broad, 2017)

Broad (2017) embarked in a long "autoethnographic study on how *family writings* shaped the individual and collective identities and agencies of [his own] family" (p. 92, author's emphasis). "The study qualified as an autoethnography because the researcher [was] a member (life-partner and father) of the four-person family being studied" (Broad, 2017, p. 97). As Broad acknowledges, when one is doing ethnographic research and one has unlimited time, one risks collecting too much data, particularly when one is part of the data, and one's penchant is for accumulating it. Thus, Broad (2017) decided to use GT strategies to complement his research methodology as it allowed him to make sense of the huge pool of

data collected through processes such as open coding and labelling the data, writing analytical memos, and later sampling, selective coding, and theoretical development. In sorting the codes, Broad (2017) looked at those that were "most quantitatively substantive… [and he named them] *super-codes…* [which began the more] focused coding" (p. 98, author's emphasis). Through further analysis and sorting, he decided to "zoom in on the super code of *thanks/gratitude/appreciation* [as it had] enough emotional resonance to be interesting at a humanistic level, but also enough academic identity (since giving thanks is a powerful social act) to be compelling intellectually" (Broad, 2017, p. 98, emphasis and parentheses from author). By being a member of the family and reflecting on his own feelings expressed through his own family writings, the researcher was able to conclude that the family "believes explicitly and profoundly in the power of expressing thanks to improve human life" (Broad, 2017, p. 99). GT is based on the principle of creating theory rather than proving or disproving a theory from determined hypotheses. In that sense, GT "helps us fulfil our responsibility, inherited from ethnography, to represent the meanings people attach to their experiences using the terms and concepts that those people use" (Broad, 2017, p. 95).

3.3.3.2 Seeking progressive fit (McDonald, 2010)

McDonald (2010) was investigating "how do parents deal with the education of their children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) over time?" (p. 112) McDonald (2010) decided to combine "constructivist GT strategies within an autoethnographic study to generate a theoretical understanding and explanation of how parents deal with the education of their child with ASD over time. The choice of such methods allowed [the researcher] to access rich data inherent in [her] own and [her] participants' lives" (p. 4). In combining the two research methodologies, she was able to methodically collect and analyse data with the rigor that GT strategies demand, but she was also able to include her own family experiences as valuable data to develop a grounded theory. "The innovative use of autoethnographic elements within the study was imbedded in the understanding that the constructivist grounded theory method openly acknowledges and values the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and knowledge as data that should be considered equally with other data gathered" (McDonald, 2010, p. 60). Through the different processes of coding, memo writing, sorting these memos, and theoretical development, the researcher was able to build a storyline. Simultaneously, she

was checking the results with the study participants' experiences and her own and comparing and contrasting the different stages and occurrences of how the families dealt with the education of their children with ASD. Major categories arose from the data analysis, such as *researching*, *increasing awareness*, *diagnosing*, *beginning battle*, *assessing value*, *settling*, *chasing*, and *broadening*, to name a few (McDonald, 2010). A theory eventually emerged from the data which explained "how parents set about gaining [and maintaining] an appropriate education for their unusual child that maximises their progress and increases the child's independence and skill level in all areas" (McDonald, 2010, p. 8). The theory was named *The seeking of progressive fit.* This theory was grounded on all the data collected from the families who participated in this study, including the researcher's own family experiences, and then systematically analysed.

3.3.3.3 Two complementary contested methods

While these two research methods are not often combined, these two studies demonstrate that using GT strategies as a tool to analyse the data within an analytic autoethnographic study may strengthen the validity of the study as it allows the researcher to immerse him/herself in the building of the story, and it does not disregard the relationship that can exist between the researcher and the researched. The aim of theoretical development under a constructivist GT approach is to uncover concepts that can explain the nature of the concern under study and to develop a theory based on both the empirical and anecdotal data that has been collected. Thus, Pace (2012) emphasises that the primary objective of using GT analytic strategies in an autoethnographic study is to build theory through GT, rather than to test it, and to complement such theory through autoethnographic narratives of jointly lived experiences, analytical enquiries, and self-reflection. "In this instance, the term 'theory'… [would] refer to theory that [aims at understanding] how and why something happened—theory that yields conjecture and a potential basis for subsequent research" (Downs & Fawcett, 1986, cited in Pace, 2012, p. 7).

The next section describes the data collection design and the different instruments used to collect the data for this study.

3.4 Data collection methodology

To allocate sufficient time to carry out the research with the different methods and to allow for constant comparative analysis of the emerging data while incorporating the multiple viewpoints, the data was collected in three phases over a period of 24 months.

3.4.1 An overview

It is important to clarify here the instruction levels mentioned in this study and their corresponding European Framework equivalent (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, CEFR/CEFRL). At the university where the study was conducted, there are 4 levels of mainstream language instruction in addition to thematic courses. Introductory (the *ab initio* level) could be considered the equivalent of CEFR level A1; Continuing is approximately the equivalent of CEFR level A2; Intermediate corresponds approximately to CEFR levels B1-B2; and Advanced could be considered equivalent to CEFR levels B2-C1 depending on the competence level of the students and the program followed.

In terms of enrolment, traditionally, French and Spanish are the most popular language classes at this Australian university, and German and Italian have been comparatively less popular in terms of number of students enrolled. On average, every semester 73% of Modern European language students study French and Spanish, and 27% choose German and Italian (Source: enrolment figures from the relevant Australian university school, 2008 to 2013). This ratio is reflected in the participant percentages in the study. Therefore, for the purpose of comparison, I sometimes divide the languages in two groups: Group One, which includes French and Spanish and represents 280 students (which corresponds to 72% of the entire sample population); Group Two, which includes German and Italian, and corresponds to 180 students (28%) studying those two languages.

The data collection was undertaken in three phases:

- In Phase I, memoing started with data entries from class observations, including my own classes, informal conversations with teachers and students, self-reflections, and

ethnographic style notes taken during the extra-curricular activity of CFC (the French conversation circle) that I conducted, and that was attended by some students of French. A focus group pilot study was conducted at the end of semester 1, 2011 with Continuing and Intermediate students of French from the same school, with the aim of streamlining the research design and testing the interview questions. A set of initial interviews with students was also conducted. The reason for including only students of French in this initial phase of the study was a practical one, although memoing was extended to include data entries concerning students from the other three languages whenever I came into contact with them.

- In Phase II, the qualitative data collection phase continued with constant comparison and simultaneous analysis and collection of most of the data by the end of semester 2, 2012. The core data collected during this phase originated from student and teacher interviews conducted at the school. The collection process also included further journal entries from class and group observations and memos that captured relevant informal conversation with language students and teachers. The student interviews involved a total of 47 undergraduate students from four different languages (French, Spanish, Italian and German) and mostly from two different levels, Continuing and Intermediate. The 14 participating teachers were from the same languages and levels. The teachers were interviewed after the examination period to allow sufficient time for the interview to take place and for the teachers to reflect on the questions asked without the normal pressure of the semester. The data collected from the teachers is included to allow us to have a better understanding of the pedagogical framework surrounding the concern of this study, and to look at the discrepancies between student and teacher views, if any.
- Phase III was designed to collect descriptive quantitative data through a student survey to supplement the information collected during the focus group, the class observations and the interviews. This was done towards the end of semester 1, 2013, and as noted, 388 students from the four languages agreed to do the survey. The response rate and survey procedures are discussed in detail in section 3.4.8.

3.4.2 Ethical clearance

For this research, I was granted ethical clearance by the Human Ethics application to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). I thus made sure that participants being observed through this journey, and those involved in interviews (students and teachers), surveys or focus groups, were accorded the respect, protection and confidentiality that is due to them, and I carried out the research with integrity and mutual responsibility.

In every step of the study, I obtained the participants' written informed consent to participate in the different phases of this research in which I was proposing to collect data. The informed consent to participate in the focus group and in the interviews was to be voluntary, and to fulfil this requirement, three forms were created and distributed to the research participants: (1) an information sheet describing the goal of the study and the purpose of the research, including the potential risks and benefits of the research (see Appendices A and B); (2) an invitation to participate in the interview and/or the focus group, reinforcing that participation was completely voluntary, and describing the procedures that would be adopted to ensure confidentiality and anonymity during the collection phase, data storage and in the publication of results (see Appendices C, D and E); (3) an informed consent form where the participants acknowledged to have received all the information concerning the research, including their consent to being recorded by the researcher (see Appendices F and G).

I personally conducted the focus group and all the interviews with both students and teachers. I designed, launched, and administered the survey, and analysed all the findings myself. Some of the students participating in this research were in a dependent and unequal relationship with the researcher, since I was their teacher during the semester the data was collected, or in previous semesters. Unequal power relationships in the context of this research could impact on the truthfulness of student voices, as they may say what they think the researcher—in this case their teacher—wants to hear. Thus, I needed to be aware of that factor when coding and analysing the data. To minimise this impact, the data was mostly collected in relaxed and trusting environments, and I assured the students that anonymity would be preserved at all times by the use of pseudonyms or numbers when reporting the findings. The participants were also informed that if they related a story about a particular

event during an interview that was sensitive in nature, and later felt uncomfortable about what they had disclosed, they had the option to request that the information be removed from the research findings. This did not occur.

The next section describes in detail the various methods employed to collect the data, the participants involved in the different stages, the procedures for collection, the objectives and some of their limitations.

3.4.3 Triangulation: the data collection methods

In this study, triangulation took a number of forms: methods triangulation, data triangulation, and multiple viewpoints (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1990) (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2). “The multiple viewpoints allow for greater accuracy” (Jick, 1979, p. 602) and “researchers using qualitative methodology are encouraged to systematize observations and to develop quantifiable schemes for coding complex data sets…” (Jick, 1979, p. 604).

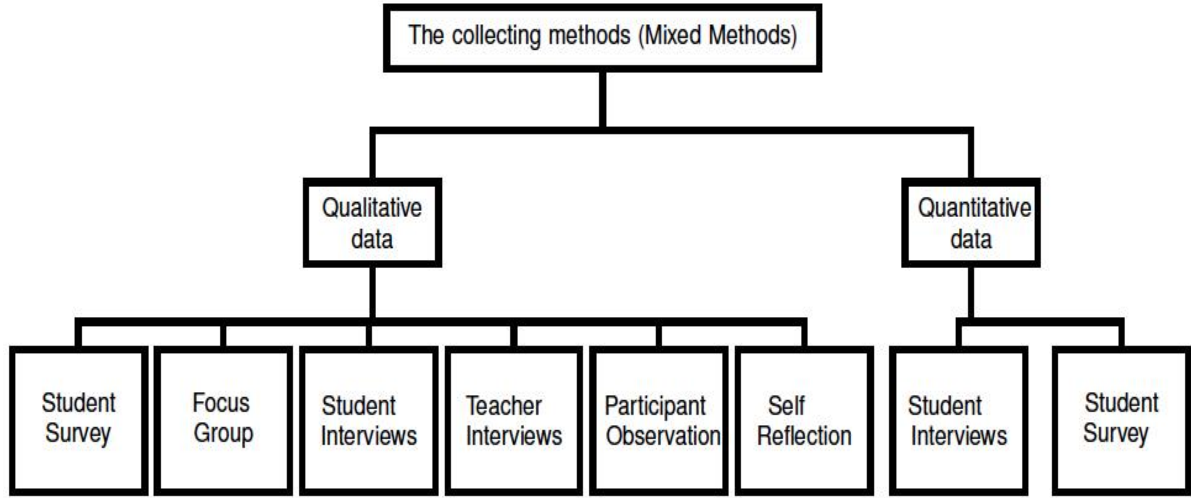


Figure 3.1 Triangulation of data collection (adapted from Cao, 2009, p. 64): The data collection methods

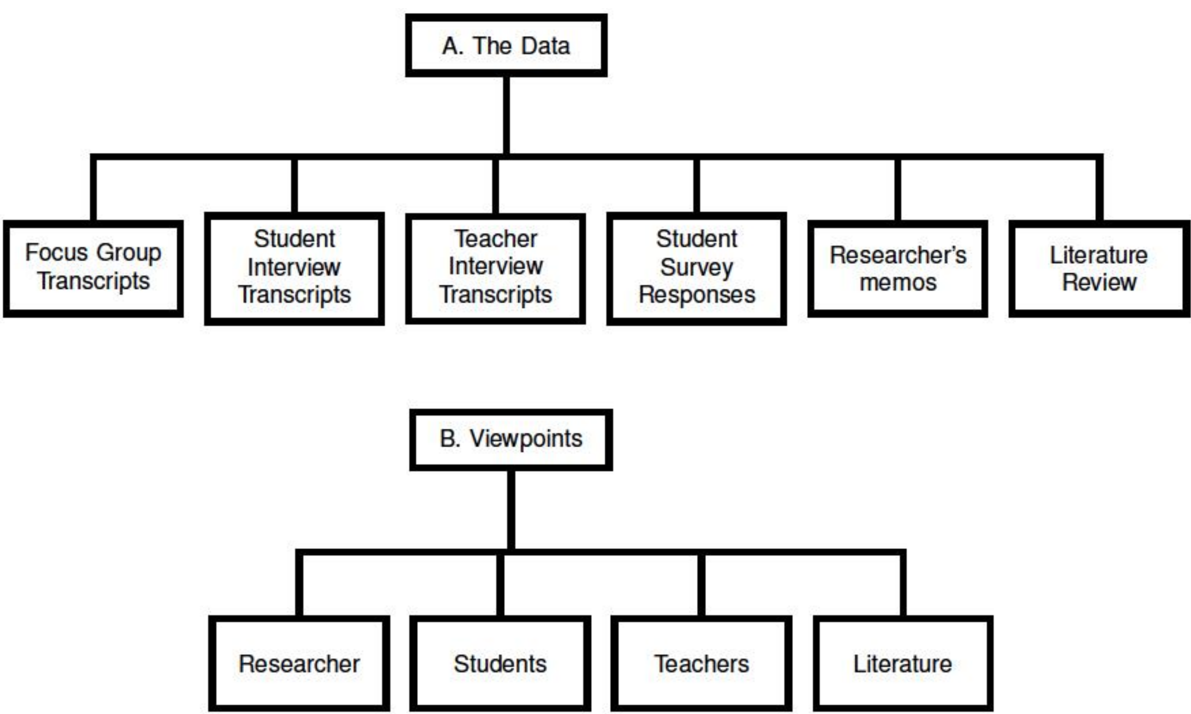


Figure 3.2 Triangulation of data collection (adapted from Cao, 2009, p. 64): A. The data and B. Viewpoints

Each of these steps is described and explained in the sections below. The process for recruitment of the participants is also identified and the strategies and limitations of each method are highlighted.

3.4.4 Focus group

As indicated, Phase I of this research consisted of a pilot study in the form of a focus group with twelve (12) students of Continuing and Intermediate French.

3.4.4.1 Description and rationale

Focus groups may be used as an exploratory method when the phenomenon under study is not well known, or as a confirmatory process when testing some hypotheses (Tremblay, 2010). A combination of both methods can also be valuable. For this study, I used an exploratory focus group, since the main objectives were to explore the groups' thoughts on what engaged or disengaged them to speak in class, to identify key areas of investigation that would be helpful in the design of the interview and the survey, and to obtain more clarity and

insight on the research topic. Focus groups are a powerful tool to stimulate the participants to engage in group thinking, and to brainstorm potential solutions to a problem.

The main objectives of this pilot study were: (1) to streamline the research design; (2) to test the interview questions and check how at ease the students were with answering these questions; (3) to uncover and address any problems with the topic of research; and (4) to generate preliminary ideas on what engages students to speak in a language class at tertiary level. A common selection criterion that I set was that these participants would have all attended the extra-curricular *Cercle français de conversation* activity, since a secondary objective of this interactive session was to compare their experience of speaking in the L2 in the formal environment (i.e. the classroom) as compared to the informal environment (i.e. a social environment). This is the main reason why all the students invited to participate in this initial stage of the research were students of French.

Focus groups can be used to understand student needs and ideas on specific topics that may impact their learning or their experience as a whole in the university. They can uncover feelings, issues, and concerns, and produce valuable and rich information that may not come to light in the interview process. Through a focus group, I was also able to note non-verbal information on the participants, such as excitement, doubt, embarrassment, and anxiety that are not apparent when collecting data through a survey, for example. As tested during the focus group session, an excellent advantage of using it as a research tool is that some members of the group are able to build upon the response of a more vocal member of the group and contribute with other ideas or thoughts. Thus, a focus group was the preferred method for the pilot study, to identify issues on the topic that could be explored further in the individual interviews and through the survey of a larger and more representative sample that would include students from all four languages. The testing of the focus group and interview questions showed that the students were very comfortable expressing their views about the topic of my research, and no issues were identified where students would feel embarrassed or uncomfortable when answering key questions. The data obtained from the focus group generated some preliminary ideas that ended up being part of the main investigation. These will be explored more in depth in Chapter 4.

3.4.4.2 Participants and procedure

In accordance with the ethical guidelines, the students were invited to participate on a voluntary basis, and the meeting place I chose was a classroom in a building easily accessible to the students. The students shared some characteristics: they had all taken the course of Continuing French at the same university, their teacher was or had been this study's researcher, and they had all attended CFC at least half a dozen times in the past 12 months. Participants' demographic information was collected, although it is not displayed in full in this study for ethical reasons (see Appendix H).

I acted as a moderator in the discussion, which lasted 90 minutes, and I provided some refreshments and organised the seating arrangements to create a calm environment. The classroom selected for this activity had amply-spaced seating, and we all sat together at a round table with good lighting and pleasant temperature. I made sure the participants felt relaxed, and that the environment was non-threatening, so they would open up to expressing their ideas and opinions freely. Since the participants' feedback was an important part of my investigation, they were assured that their individual experiences and opinions would be respected and highly valued. Video and audio recordings were used, with the students' prior consent, to gather all the information. Video was used mainly to see the dynamics of the activity and to be able to revisit the session and observe non-verbal participation if needed. The participants were guaranteed anonymity, and they knew exactly how the information collected was going to be used. These students had been studying together for at least two years, had attended the CFC, and felt very comfortable with each other.

3.4.4.3 Strategy and limitations

The focus group used three leading open-ended questions of the type *what do you think*. The specific questions that guided the 90 minutes of brainstorming activity were:

1. What do you think engages you to speak in a language class?
2. What do you feel disengages you and your classmates to speak in class?
3. What do you think engages you to speak at CFC in the informal environment?

Some closed-ended questions were also used at times to clarify unclear or conflicting feedback. For example:

> *What about what George* (pseudonym) *said about swapping pairs: Do you feel more comfortable talking in the L2 to someone you know, or do you feel more comfortable going around and getting to know new people?*
>
> *If everybody is talking in French, is it less or more intimidating to speak in the L2?*

It is important to mention that this pilot focus group was a biased sample in that all the attendees were students of French, members of the CFC and known by the researcher, as opposed to the sample of students who participated in the interviews and the survey, who were students of French, Spanish, German and Italian. However, the data obtained from it was still a valuable contribution to my research. The students' ideas, thoughts and feelings about SEtS were freely expressed in this initial session, and they were later corroborated and expanded during the student interview phase.

Another limitation to be considered when analysing this data is the fact that "the small size of a focus group does not allow for statistically significant generalisation of responses to a larger population" (Focus Groups, 1999, p. 3), and also that there may always be more assertive members in a group that may influence the ideas of others. However, these possible limitations were overcome by the use of a multiple data collection methodology and by the large quantity of data collected.

3.4.5 Participant observation

In this study, observation was carried out in two different settings: (1) the formal classroom, including reflections on my own classes, and memos on corridor conversations with teachers; and (2) the informal CFC conversation group. As explained earlier, the idea behind observing students in a formal setting compared to the students' behaviour in an informal environment was to have a clear and contextual background to this study.

3.4.5.1 The formal setting: participants and procedures

I observed 17 classes: 5 French classes, 5 Spanish classes, 4 German classes, and 3 Italian classes. These classes were from the Introductory, Continuing, Intermediate and Advanced levels. Although my research focuses mostly on students at Continuing and Intermediate levels, I included Introductory and Advanced classes as well, to have a larger variety of classes from which to compare methodologies, attitudes, personalities, engagement to speak, class environments and so on. The period of class observation went from the 1st week of classes in second semester until the end of that semester, and in total I observed 14 hours of classes. Observing classes during the first week is very important for SEtS, since it is suggested that students form an instant idea about the teacher: "The first-class meeting of the semester is the most important one. It sets the tone for the entire course—for better or for worse" (McGlynn, 2001, p. 35).

As indicated, the main purpose of these class observations was for me to have an idea of what was going on in the classes in terms of SEtS, and to be able to position the research in the right context when analysing the data. To minimise the observer's paradox phenomenon (Labov, 1972), I sat at the back of the classroom when possible, or in a position where the teacher and the students were not distracted by my presence. In addition to the completion of the forms required by the ethics clearance for participants involvement, I had previously obtained the relevant teachers' and students' oral informed consent. I sat in the classes passively, taking notes, just observing what was happening: how large the classes were; how the students interacted with each other and with their teacher; how the teacher interacted with the students; whether there was eye contact; whether the teacher was sitting down, standing in front of the class or moving around among the students; how the teacher addressed the students; how the students addressed the teacher; how the students communicated amongst themselves; how often they were using the L2; who spoke, what topics were discussed, whether they were using textbooks; what was the main teaching approach used; what was the mood in the class; whether the focus was on oral activities, or whether it was a grammar class, whether most of the attention was placed on writing and reading activities, or a combination of all four skills. All these are variables that painted a useful background to the research by giving information of levels of engagement in

environments and topics. They positioned the data analysis in context. The memos also recorded informal conversations with the teachers and some reflections on how they thought the classes went, whether they thought students were engaged, and what their perception was on what engaged their students to speak.

I also observed the students in my own classes when I was teaching, and I recorded mentally some instances where students were really engaged in discussions, and when an awkward silence set in. After the class, I would write down some reflections in my journal to help visualise the class and the participants in the context of a language class. For this study, the data entries on my own classes were considered autoethnographic accounts of what happened in my classes, and they included moments recalled when a student was engaged to speak in class in the L2, factors that I thought engaged the student to speak, class dynamics, tasks or activities conducted when a student participated, and other observations.

3.4.5.2 The informal setting: participants and procedures

Observation of the informal setting was carried out mainly at the French conversation circle (CFC) at a local "pub" during the first three years of this research. Students attending the Spanish Conversation Club of the same institution were also observed occasionally when I attended their events, and meaningful information was added to the memos. Large amounts of rich data were collected on the participants' behaviour and actions when engaging to speak in the target language (TL) during these sessions. My journal entries include topics discussed, language used, seating arrangements, the room atmosphere, the participants' attitudes, the participants' non-verbal expression, the number of participants and the students' reactions to the presence of native speakers. I personally conducted the CFC activities every week during the semesters throughout my research.

The average group size attending CFC was 15 students, although during the first weeks of the semester, before students were occupied with assignments and tests, the attendance often reached 30 students or more. The data entered in my memos include general observations on what was happening there in terms of engagement to speak in the L2, and also comments and feedback from the students. When considering whether to include this data in the

analysis, I decided to follow Yin's (2009) recommendation: "Your five senses [must] be the main modalities for measuring and assessing information from the field. You [must exercise] your own discretion in deciding what to record… [because in this case] you will be serving as the main research instrument" (p. 123). The data collected during this long period was thus particularly valuable to my journal entries when comparing Student Engagement *to Speak* in the L2 in an informal setting as opposed to the formal environment of a classroom.

In qualitative research, the field setting can include a relatively small group of people who share a common bond. In this situation, the common connection among the members of CFC was the desire to speak French. Observing the students interact in French in that informal environment was a valuable aspect of data collection as to what engages students to speak, and an important insight into the world of second language learning.

3.4.6 Journal entries and memo writing

A journal was kept throughout the study. This type of data collection was very useful in my research, as the annotations entered in my journal consisted of rich sources of data coming not only from students and teachers' comments made outside classes, but also from critical self-reflections on my own performance in class and my own beliefs about teaching and learning a second language. They yield important and sometimes thought-provoking perceptions into the world of SEtS. Through analytic autoethnography, I was able to use empirical data to gain insight beyond the data itself and to provide an insider's perspective of the research subject. Journal entries supplement one of the key steps of data analysis in GT: memo writing. This aspect was discussed above in section 3.3.2.2 and some examples of memos were presented.

The journal entries came not only from student remarks in class or at the CFC, and from colleagues' comments or feedback on what they thought was needed to engage students to speak in class; they also consisted of key statements and relevant quotations from the literature reviewed. Memo writing, on the other hand, promoted self-reflection on all the different steps of the research, including personal assumptions and opinions, thus adding

some transparency to the research. Engaging in analytic self-reflection challenges prior held beliefs and attitudes and it enriches the storyline.

3.4.7 Interviews

In Phase II of the research, the interviewing process began first with the students and continued later with the teachers. The purpose of these interviews was to find answers to the research questions with a focus on students' and teachers' experiences and beliefs.

3.4.7.1 Description and rationale

The invitation to participate in this stage of the research, the research information sheet, and the consent form were distributed by the teachers in the four language classes. Those students who expressed interest in participating in this part of the research were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. The majority of the students interviewed (77%), were from the French and Spanish courses, perhaps because they knew me and had been my students in previous semesters.

The process started in week 10 in the first semester of 2012 and ended after the exam period of second semester 2012 with the teacher interviews. In using interviews as a method to collect data, I wanted to know the students' experience and their personal views on what engages them to speak in the L2 in class and compare their perspectives to the teachers' perceptions of what they believed engaged their students to speak in class. The interviewees who accepted the invitation to participate were assigned a pseudonym by the researcher to preserve their anonymity, and when quoted, they were identified by the letter S and a number. The voluntary participants comprised 47 undergraduate students mainly from the Continuing level (68%) and Intermediate level (21%) classes of French (27), Spanish (9), Italian (5) and German (6).

In this study, a combination of qualitative interviewing methods was used. The interview process followed a more informal conversational mode, and two sets of structured interviews—students' and teachers'—were developed containing a group of open-ended

questions with almost identical wording. The interviews were carried out in a conversational mode "since learners are more at ease speaking than writing and are more likely to provide extended answers in a conversational format" (Mackey & Gass, 2015, p. 174). To cite an example of interview question, the students were asked: "*Could you please tell me three things that engage you to speak in class in the L2?*" and the teachers were asked: "*Could you please tell me three things that you believe engage your students to speak in class in the L2?*" (see Appendix J for the Student Interview and Appendix K for the Teacher Interview.) By comparing the responses to these questions, it was possible to document what engages students to speak in class, while simultaneously exploring whether students and teachers agree. The importance of having a standardised set of questions even when using a conversational mode of questioning was threefold: "to minimize the interviewer effect", allowing the participants to vocalise their own thoughts; "to use the interviewee time effectively" while maintaining a good rapport with the participant; and "to make the data analysis easier" by organising the data in such a manner that we can locate each respondent's answer to the same question rather systematically (Patton, 1990, p. 285).

3.4.7.2 Demographic profile of the students

The demographic information on the participants was collected through a biodata questionnaire (see Appendix L), which was adapted from Mackey and Gass (2015). The questionnaire included questions intended to elicit demographic characteristics. These were the following: gender; age; the participants' first language (L1); the participants' parents' L1; their language learning experience; the language(s) currently studied; the number of languages spoken fluently (according to their self-assessment); current level of study; length of time spent learning the L2 including high school; recent travel to the country/countries where the L2 is spoken; whether they currently lived with someone who speaks the L2; and finally whether they had been attending a conversation group in the last 12 months. 72% of the students were female and 70% of the participants were between 18 and 21 years old. The remainder were in the 22 to 25 age brackets, except for one student who was 17 years old and another participant who was in the 40+ range. 70% responded that English was their native language. For 34% of the students, it was their first year in a language class as undergraduates, and 57% (27 out of the 47 students interviewed) said they had attended a

conversation group outside class time at least once in the semester. This demographic information was collected to establish a clear background of the student sample population for generalisation purposes, and to be able to compare the findings of this research with a similar target population from other universities through further studies. The initial intention was to cross-reference the data collected with specific groups: for example, I would have liked to compare male vs female topic preferences in establishing Student Engagement *to Speak*; or when assessing those students who attended extra-curricular activities, it could have been interesting to know whether these had recently travelled to a foreign country, or whether they lived with someone who spoke the language they were learning. As the length of the study kept growing, the original intention of comparing groups was later abandoned.

3.4.7.3 Structure of student interviews

For the student interview, I used a list of 30 questions, and all participants were asked essentially the same questions. Even though the questions were written down, I used the list only as an *aide mémoire* to keep the style of interviewing as informal as possible. When the interview started, I did not go directly to question one. Instead, the first few minutes were spent talking casually about the information included in the student's demographic questionnaire that was handed in when the student arrived at the interview.

The interview format consisted of three types of questions: (1) closed ended questions or multiple choice questions where the answer choices were given to the respondent orally and the respondent had to select the most appropriate answer; (2) sentence completion questions where the beginning of a sentence was provided and the respondent was asked to finish the phrase with the first thing that came to their mind; and (3) open-ended questions where the interviewees had the freedom to express their thoughts and ideas. The majority of the questions were of the open-ended kind. Each student's interview lasted 30 to 40 minutes. The participants were advised of the potential duration of the interview process and before the interview started, they were again reminded briefly of the goals of the research. It is particularly important to be straightforward with the participants in any research that involves people, since participants are asked to "grant [the researcher] access to their lives, their minds, [and] their emotions" (Lofland & Lyn, 1984, p. 25).

All the participants consented in writing to being recorded, and occasional written notes were taken during the interview. “Recordings have the advantage of capturing data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes might and can make it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview” (Hoepfl, 1997, p. 7). To reduce the possibility of technical failure when recording, two small recording devices were used, rather than one. When time permitted, I transcribed the data on the same day of the interviews, since I had the information fresh in my head. The transcription of all the interviews was handled solely by me “in the belief that the transcription process is an integral and inseparable part of the process of analysis and interpretation” (R. Ellis, 2005, p. 209).

3.4.7.4 Interviews of teacher participants

The teachers’ invitation to be interviewed for this research was sent via e-mail to a group of 21 colleagues of the four languages, and all the corresponding forms to comply with the ethics requirements were attached to the e-mail. Two thirds of the teachers invited to participate accepted. A very flexible schedule of sessions that expanded along 12 weeks during the semester break was then sent via e-mail to those teachers, so that they could select a convenient date and time for the interview. The 14 teachers had taught one of the four languages at the Continuing and/or Intermediate levels in the previous two years. The participating teachers were five (5) from Spanish, four (4) from French, three (3) from German, and two (2)—the only two in the school—from Italian. In percentage terms, 64% were teachers of Spanish and French, and 36% from German and Italian.

The teachers who signed up to participate in this part of the research were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix M). The questionnaire included the following questions: gender, age and nationality of the participant, the participant’s first language (L1), their educational background including their language teaching experience, their teacher training expertise, the language currently taught, the number of languages spoken fluently (according to their self-assessment), length of time teaching the L2 in higher education, and finally whether they held or participated in any conversation groups in the last 12 months as an extra-curricular activity. The 14 interviewees comprised 12 women and 2 men, and the age range was quite varied, going from the 23 to 28 age brackets to older than

49. One participant declined to indicate her age range. There were different nationalities as well among the participants, ranging from teachers of French, Italian, German and Australian origin to the Latin Americans represented by Argentina, Colombia, Chile and Peru. Their educational background ranged from having Master and PhD degrees in linguistics, language and culture or literature to less than two years of academic training as a language teacher. However, most of them stated that they had vast experience in teaching the L2. Only two out of the fourteen teachers had held or participated in an extra-curricular conversation activities outside the university. An important fact uncovered in this part of the research is that none of the interviewees throughout their years of academic formation as language teachers had ever been specifically trained to teach the spoken language, apart from one who had a degree specifically in teaching languages.

3.4.7.5 Structure of teacher interviews

The format of the interview was structured, but my style of interviewing was again informal and conversational. The questions seldom required any form of clarification, except to translate some concepts every now and then from Spanish into English or vice-versa for the teachers of Spanish. Once again, my objective was to create a relaxed and spontaneous interaction between interviewer and interviewee. An interesting observation is that when interviewing some of the teachers, the ambiance on some occasions was tense, while on other occasions it was quite friendly.

The interview contained the same three types of questions: (1) closed or multiple-choice questions; (2) sentence completion questions; and (3) open-ended questions which again formed the majority of the questions. However, a slight variation was added to the closed ended questions. The teachers were asked to “think aloud” when answering them. This allowed me to gather more information and document what was going through the teachers’ minds when responding to this set of questions, since they had to talk through their thought process as they rationalised their answers. By using a “think-aloud” component in an interview, “respondents are encouraged to engage in a running commentary of everything that occurs to them as they are working through [a question]—what is a clear and accurate

reflection of their experience, what is ambiguous or awkward, and what is absent from the item [or question]" (Desimone & Le Floch, 2004, p. 6).

Each teacher's interview ran for between 50 and 60 minutes (10 to 20 minutes longer than the student interviews) despite them being asked almost the same 30 questions. The difference in interview duration is attributable mainly to two factors: the added "think-aloud" feature in some of the closed ended questions, and also the fact that the teachers' responses often came with additional information on their educational background and expertise, in some cases almost justifying—without being prompted—why their classes had no specific focus on oral activities or on developing the speaking skill explicitly. Some teachers believed all skills needed to be taught concurrently; others explained that the large size classes made it impossible to focus on teaching oral skills, and that an imposed reduction of face-to-face contact hours did not allow for a dedicated oral module.

All the interviews were transcribed apart from interviews with two teachers who accepted to participate in the research but preferred not to be recorded. The responses to these two interviews were therefore manually written down. Most of the interviews were conducted in my office, by mutual agreement between the participants and the interviewer. Two of the teachers requested to be interviewed in their own office because it was more comfortable for them.

3.4.8 Survey

Phase III of this study started towards the end of semester 1 2013, and it took the form of a survey designed to collect quantitative data as well as more qualitative data. It also allowed me to rank possible factors influencing student engagement and disengagement to speak in class.

3.4.8.1 Definition and justification

Prior to launching the survey, a pilot questionnaire was developed (see Appendix T) in order to generate preliminary ideas on the students' experiences and to check for any

misunderstanding in the proposed questions. The questionnaire was given to a group of 50 language students from my own classes, and they were asked to identify the most important elements for them to engage in speaking in class.

As noted in section 3.2.2, the survey was developed following the directions of a sequential exploratory design, where the qualitative data was collected first, and the quantitative data collection followed in order to complement the qualitative results, thus giving more strength and validity to the emerging theory of SEtS. The survey was self-developed and both quantitative and qualitative data was collected via a web-based cross-sectional survey platform called Survey Monkey, then analysed with the use of SPSS, a statistical software package for data analysis.

3.4.8.2 Participant demographics

The students were invited to participate in the survey according to the following criteria: They had to be students of French, Spanish, German and/or Italian at that university from Introductory to Advanced levels, and they had to be actively enrolled in semester 1, 2013. All 47 students who participated in the interview phase were encouraged to participate, and especially those who took part in conversation circles throughout the year.

The survey was launched during the semester break and sent to 784 students. “In order for us to be able to generalise, we need to have an unbiased sample of the population, which means that we want our sample to be representative of the population we are studying” (Muijs, 2010, p. 38). Thus, a high response rate was needed, and to reach that objective, I had to send the survey four times to the participants. The messages to encourage their participation were sent by e-mail, and they can be seen in Appendix P. The final time the survey was sent by e-mail, it was aimed only at the students who had still not responded. This last call worked and gave me the opportunity to collect a large amount of valuable and quantifiable data. As reported, 388 students responded to the survey, which constituted a response rate of 49.5%. The majority of the participants (78%) were between 18 and 21 years of age, and 69% of them were female. 40% studied French, 32% were students of Spanish, 21% studied German, and 7% were in the Italian classes.

3.4.8.3 Structure of the survey

The survey consisted of 55 questions (see Appendices N and O), divided into eight sections. Some of the questions were open-ended, giving the respondents the freedom to respond in any manner they saw fit, and the remainder of the questions were closed ended, seeking uniformity of measurement, quantifiable data, and therefore greater reliability. The 388 students of the four languages who participated in the research gave responses to the following key variables in the survey:

- Sections 1 to 3 included 19 mostly descriptive questions on the students' demographic profile, their language experience, their academic background and their level of engagement in class (self-assessed).
- Sections 4 and 5 contained most of the closed ended questions where the students had to decide *what* engages them to speak in class, as well as *what* disengages them to speak in class. These two sections consisted of 25 questions that the students were asked to answer by using a 5-point Likert scale where the options were *strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree*. These two sections also contained some open-ended questions where the students were requested to explain why they agreed or disagreed with a particular question.
- Sections 6 to 8 contained a set of 4 ranking questions, 5 closed ended and 2 open-ended questions eliciting students' most important reasons for studying a language at university and for attending conversation groups and asking for their opinion on the two key concepts of this study: Student Engagement *to Speak* and the importance of speaking in class (see Appendix N).

I identified the survey variables through the pilot study, the relevant literature and the thematic preliminary analysis of the qualitative data collected through the focus group and the interviews. However, the data collected during informal conversations with the students was the basis for many of the survey questions. For example, what engaged and disengaged them to speak in the informal environment in comparison to the classroom, how regularly they attended the informal gatherings, and why was it easier to speak in the L2 in that informal environment than in class.

By comparing the data from the different student groupings of language and year level, I aimed to identify a possible trend in what engages students to speak in a language class from their own perspective, and to enhance the more subjective qualitative findings. SPSS was used for the statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected, not just to describe and summarise the data, but also to infer information about the population the sample represented. A series of cross tabulations were used to inquire about the interrelation between the variables, and the findings were presented in histograms, bar charts or frequency distribution tables.

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented in detail the research design and methodological approach used in this study to collect and analyse the data. The choice of analytic autoethnography as a preferred writing genre and method of enquiry has been explained, and an overview of the grounded theory process of the coding phases and theoretical development has been described. In defence of the choice of using contested research methods for this study, I have presented two examples of studies where the researcher used GT strategies embedded in an autoethnography to reach a theory that solved the research question. Having explained the process of ethical clearance required for the study, I presented a detailed description of how the data was collected through a focus group, student and teacher interviews and a survey. A description of the sample collected, and the basic demographic characteristics of the participants has been reported.

In searching for a contextual background to this study, Chapter 4 will explore the data about students' expectations and their main reasons for studying a modern European language at university, and it will compare some of the findings to the teachers' perceptions of what students want. The chapter will examine what engages students *to speak* in the formal environment of a class as opposed to an informal environment. It will briefly discuss these qualitative findings and compare them to the quantitative components that surfaced from the survey, while identifying emerging categories as part of building the grounded theory.

CHAPTER 4
Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS) in Language Classes

4.1 Introduction

> *In a language class, you are always afraid to make a mistake.* (Interview S37/Q7)
>
> *I feel like I am better off saying nothing, because I am going to sound like an idiot.* (Interview S46/Q8)

As reported in the literature reviewed, the anxiety or apprehension of making mistakes often paralyses students, and even if they are willing to communicate, at the last second, fear or embarrassment overcomes them, and they remain silent.

This chapter includes a qualitative study and a quantitative component with the findings presented within an autoethnographic framework. In order to protect the identity of the participants in the study, when the students are quoted, they are identified with the letter S and a number. Section 4.2 explores the data on students' expectations and main reasons for studying the L2. It examines the data in more depth, per language and per level of instruction, and reveals which aspect of language learning students enjoy the most. Section 4.3 records and compares students' initial feedback on what engages them to speak in three different environments: the formal class, my own classes, and the informal environment. Section 4.4 confirms and discusses the findings through the survey, and analyses the main reasons for SEtS and SDtS. Section 4.5 identifies the emerging categories and discloses the final process of theory building.

4.2 Exploring the data about student expectations

Following the tenets of AAE, and reflecting along this journey about how teachers can engage students to speak in a language class, it was important to clearly establish the background against which the research questions of this study are framed. These findings arise from the survey (see Appendix N) that was done in the last phase of my research.

4.2.1 Main reasons for studying the L2

Question 45 of the quantitative survey sought to establish the main reasons for studying the language. I examine these findings from three different angles: (1) overall, which includes students of the four languages and the four different levels (see Figure 4.1); (2) per the specific language studied (see Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4); and (3) per level of instruction (see Tables 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8).

4.2.1.1 All students

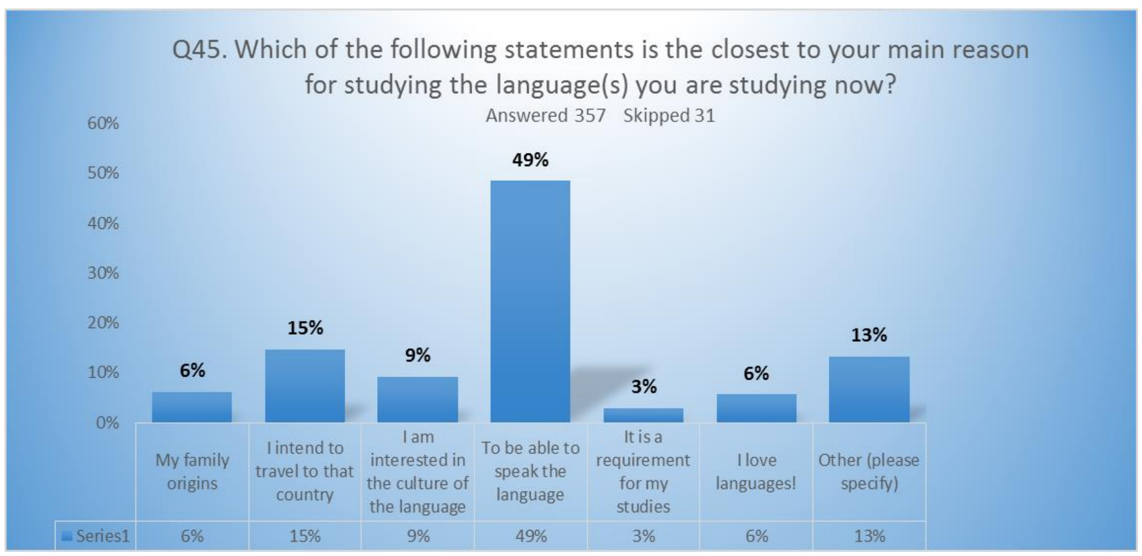


Figure 4.1 Main reasons for studying the L2: All students

Source: Student survey Q45: Which of the following statements if the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? Semester 1, 2013. (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

When I look at the results for the overall number of students, 49% of the 357 students who answered this question said that the closest statement to the main reason why they were studying a second language was that they wanted to be able to speak the language. Although this does not represent a clear majority, it still stands out over the second closest statement, identified by only 15% of the respondents, who selected their intention to travel to the country where the language is spoken as their reason for studying the L2. Only 9% of the students chose as their main reason their interest in the culture of that language and another 6% said it was related to their family origins. Just 3% said it was a requirement for their studies. Even though from this question alone, one cannot draw the conclusion that the students wanted to speak the L2 more than read, write, and understand the L2, they have

selected speaking over other reasons they had alluded to during the focus group and the interview. The intention to learn the language to be able to speak it and the lack of interest in the written aspect of the L2 was reflected in the following comment:

> *I am also planning to travel to countries where German is spoken, and perhaps even study in them, and improve my speaking… It is a combination of factors! I think it is worth noting that I have no need or desire to learn particularly high level of German and very little need to be able to WRITE it…* (Survey S8/Q45 Other)

Among the 13% students who ticked "Other" as a response to survey question 45, two of the main reasons that emerged more frequently in the data collected were that students saw the studying of a second language as a natural progression from high school, and that it could open up possibilities for future employment such as working at the United Nations or in other international organisations:

> *I studied it in high school and wanted to pursue it at a university level to get more advanced in the language and develop better fluency.* (Survey S24/Q45 Other)

> *I study the languages I do because they are 2 of the official languages of the UN and two of the most widely spoken languages other than English. I want to work internationally.* (Survey S45/Q45 Other)

Another reason expressed by some of the students was that they had lived in the particular country for a period of time, and they wanted to further develop their ability to speak the language:

> *I study Spanish because I lived in Chile for three years as a child.* (Survey S12/Q45 Other)

I can infer from these comments that what students want mostly when studying a language is to learn to speak the language and to participate in new communities of speakers of the target language, "reducing all communication to the oral interaction they valued most" (Magnan, Murphy, & Sahakyan, 2014, p. 242).

4.2.1.2 Per specific language being learned

The tables and figures in this section provide visible confirmation that in each of the four languages under study, overwhelmingly the main reason for studying an L2 is to be able to speak the language. These results were obtained by using SPSS and cross-tabulating the

findings of Survey Question 45 with Question 15. Question 15 of the survey asked the students to indicate what languages they were currently studying. When looking at numbers and percentages, it is important to keep in mind that 19% of the students who responded to the survey questions were studying more than one language. This cross-tabulation allowed us to have an idea of why students were studying the L2 and compare the differences between languages of study and levels of instruction. I will now examine if there are any significant differences relevant to a specific language.

- **FRENCH**

Table 4.1 shows that amongst the 160 students of French who responded to this survey question, 55.6% replied that their main reason for studying French was to be able to speak the language.

Table 4.1 Main reasons for studying French (N=160)

Q 45A. Which of the following statements is the closest to your main reason for studying French Semester 1, 2013?						
	What languages are you currently studying this					
Answer Options	Introductory French	Continuing French	Intermediate French	Advanced French	Response Percent	Response Count
My family origins	2	1	2	1	3.8%	6
I intend to travel	5	10	3	2	12.5%	20
I am interested in the culture of the language	4	4	3	2	8.1%	13
To be able to speak the language	24	22	31	12	55.6%	89
It is a requirement for my studies	5	2	0	1	5.0%	8
I love languages	1	1	3	1	3.8%	6
Other (please specify)	6	3	7	2	11.3%	18
					answered question	160
					skipped question	6

Source: Student survey Q45: Which of the following statements if the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

A distant second reason for students of French was the intention to travel to the country where the language is spoken, where 12.5% of the students selected this reason as their main reason for studying the L2. Another 8.1% indicated their interest in the culture of the L2, and only 5% stated that it was a requirement for their studies.

In providing details when responding "Other" to Q45 and during the interview process, the students gave many different answers to the question of why they were studying the L2 (Interview Q4), and some of them shared their personal motivations:

Because I like wine! I am hoping to visit the wineries in France someday and I need to be able to communicate with people in their language. It would be the right thing to do. (Interview S79/Q4)

I started in high school. French is a pretty language to learn and it is spoken all over the world, and I like to travel. Our French teacher was great: she was crazy and very friendly! (Interview S7/Q4)

French is my wife's first language and we intend it to be our primary household language. We also intend to spend a few years living in her homeland. (Survey S12/Q45 Other)

- **SPANISH**

In Spanish, it stands out again that speaking is what students want. Table 4.2 shows that of the 110 students who responded to Q45, 52.7% agreed that to be able to speak was their main reason for studying the L2.

Table 4.2 Main reasons for studying Spanish (N=110)

Q 45B Which of the following statements is the closest to your main reason for studying Spanish - Semester 1, 2013?						
	What languages are you currently studying this semester?					
Answer Options	Introductory Spanish	Continuing Spanish	Intermediate Spanish	Advanced Spanish	Response Percent	Response Count
My family origins	2	0	0	0	1.8%	2
I intend to travel	8	8	2	1	17.3%	19
I am interested in the culture of the language	5	2	1	1	8.2%	9
To be able to speak the language	27	18	8	5	52.7%	58
It is a requirement for my studies	0	0	1	0	0.9%	1
I love languages	4	2	0	0	5.5%	6
Other (please specify)	8	2	3	2	13.6%	15
					answered question	110
					skipped question	14

Source: Student survey Q45: Which of the following statements if the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Again, the second reason, selected by 17.3% of the respondents, was to travel to a country where the language is spoken, followed by 8.2% who expressed an interest in the cultural aspect of the language. Only 5.5% responded that the love of languages was the main reason for studying Spanish. In comparison to those studying French, students of Spanish attribute very little relevance to family origins and only one student (0.9%) selected course requirements as a reason for studying the language compared to 8 students of French (5%).

The other reasons were closely related to their perceived need to communicate with speakers of the language and to travel to countries where Spanish is spoken, as exemplified in these students' comments:

> *I've lived in Spain and would like to expand my vocabulary so I can communicate with people when I go back in the summer.* (Survey S5/Q45 Other)
>
> *Spanish is my boyfriend's native language. Also, I would love to travel to places where this language is spoken.* (Survey S31/Q45 Other)
>
> *I study Spanish because it is prolific and important in the world, plus I have had great experiences around Spanish speakers and the countries in which Spanish is spoken attract my attention.* (Survey S2/Q45 Other)

- **GERMAN**

When we look at German, the reasons are more diverse, depending on the level of instruction. Table 4.3 shows that of the 73 students of German who responded to this question, 31.5% nominated speaking to be the main reason for studying the language, while in a not too distant second place, 20.5% expressed their intention to travel as their reason.

Table 4.3 Main reasons for studying German (N=73)

Q 45C Which of the following statements is the closest to your main reason for studying German Semester 1, 2013?						
	What languages are you currently studying this semester?					
Answer Options	Introductory German	Continuing German	Intermediate German	Advanced German	Response Percent	Response Count
My family origins	3	1	2	0	8.2%	6
I intend to travel	8	2	2	3	20.5%	15
I am interested in the culture of the language	3	2	3	1	12.3%	9
To be able to speak the language	10	5	5	3	31.5%	23
It is a requirement for my studies	0	1	0	0	1.4%	1
I love languages	1	1	2	2	8.2%	6
Other (please specify)	3	6	4	0	17.8%	13
					answered question	73
					skipped question	8

Source: Student survey Q45: Which of the following statements if the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

These students' interest in the culture of the language is more visible than in the other languages, with 12.3% of the students choosing this as their main reason for studying the L2, while their family origins and their love for languages are equally weighted (8.2%) as motivations for their studies.

Compared to the students of French and Spanish, the key reasons for studying German are more equitably divided between speaking and travel. Only one student (1.4%) of Continuing German revealed that they were pursuing language studies as a requirement for their degree. The other reasons for studying German were again quite personal:

> *My boyfriend and his family speak German and I like the country and its culture after learning about it from him.* (Survey S5/Q45 Other)

> *While German is not a requirement for my degree, I am an opera singer, and therefore a working knowledge of pronunciation and speech of German is very important to my career. I am also planning to travel to countries where German is spoken…* (Survey S8/Q45 Other)

- **ITALIAN**

The leading reasons why students of Italian study the language differ to some extent from the students of the other three languages. It is, however, important to note that the sample of students of Italian is much smaller than that of the other three languages. Table 4.4 below shows that just 23.1% expressed their desire to be able to speak the language as their primary motivation, while a larger percentage (30.8%) selected family origins as the main factor leading them to learn Italian. This perhaps makes sense when we look at the data collected by Index Mundi (2021) representing "self-identified ancestries" that shows Italians (3.3%) as the largest non-English speaking ethnic group forming the Australian population demographic profile after the English-speaking groups (65.2%) comprising mainly English, Australian, Irish and Scottish. Another distinct result when compared to the students of the other three languages is that 15.4% of the students were studying Italian because they were interested in the culture of the language, and another 15.4% simply expressed their love of languages. Intention to travel is not as prominent a reason for the students of Italian, with only 11.5% selecting it as a reason for studying the L2.

Table 4.4 Main reasons for studying Italian (N=26)

Q 45D. Which of the following statements is the closest to your main reason for studying Italian Semester 1, 2013?						
	What languages are you currently studying this semester?					
Answer Options	Introductory Italian	Continuing Italian	Intermediate Italian	Advanced Italian	Response Percent	Response Count
My family origins	3	4	1	0	30.8%	8
I intend to travel	2	0	1	0	11.5%	3
I am interested in the culture of the language	2	1	1	0	15.4%	4
To be able to speak the language	2	4	0	0	23.1%	6
It is a requirement for my studies	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0
I love languages	1	1	0	2	15.4%	4
Other (please specify)	0	0	1	0	3.8%	1
					answered question	26
					skipped question	2

Source: Student survey Q45: Which of the following statements if the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Some of these students may want to learn the language to reconnect with their family ethnic background or may have a strong cultural connection to the language through family interaction. As one of them stated during the interview:

> *Another thing is in Italian, history and culture engage me, because I am interested in finding out more about my family origins and because I love history so much.* (Interview S16/Q7)

Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) stated that Foreign Language (FL) students at university level often have a desire "to reconnect with their family's heritage through language" (p. 222). This may well be the case for the students of Italian. In the "other" category, a student's love of languages was chosen as the main reason, as well as a more pragmatic reason such as working for an international organisation:

> *I love languages and I would like to work at the UN when I graduate.* (Survey S6/Q45 other)

4.2.1.3 Per level of instruction

I will now examine the data by reference to each of the four level of instructions: Introductory (cf. A1); Continuing (cf. A2); Intermediate (cf. B1/B2) and Advanced (cf. B2/C1).

- **INTRODUCTORY**

Table 4.5 below shows that at the Introductory level, 50% or more students of Introductory French and Introductory Spanish and 36% of the students of Introductory German identified

speaking as their main reason to study the L2. Despite the different percentages, they all identified it as the primary reason. Only 20% of the students of Introductory Italian selected speaking, as for 30% of them their main motivation for studying the L2, is their family origins, as noted in the previous section. When we look at the second most important reason to study the L2, they all agreed, in varying percentages, that travel was in second place.

Table 4.5 Main reasons for studying the L2 at Introductory level

Q45 Reasons for studying L2 at Introductory level, per language compared. Semester 1, 2013 (139 respondents)					
Level	Reason	FRENCH	SPANISH	GERMAN	ITALIAN
INTRODUCTORY	My family origins	4%	4%	11%	30%
	I want to travel	11%	15%	28%	20%
	I like the culture	8%	9%	11%	20%
	I want to speak	51%	50%	36%	20%
	Study requirement	11%	-	-	-
	I love languages	2%	7%	3%	10%
	Other	13%	15%	11%	-

Main reason   2nd most important reason (excluding "Other")

Source: Student survey Q45: Which of the following statements if the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

In the case of students of Italian, travel, culture and speaking were given equal importance, after family origins. If we look at speaking and travelling together, then over 60% of the students of Introductory French (62%), German (64%) and Spanish (65%) and 40% of students of Italian are studying the L2 for these two key reasons. This information is important to contextualise this study and to better understand the students' needs and expectations.

Amongst the survey responses, a more philosophical reason was given by one of the Introductory level students who was studying more than one language:

> *Everyone should know a language other than English. A truly homogeneous international society is not one that is linguistically homogeneous but one that understands a*

commitment to understanding other cultures and ways of life and that the language that one speaks is an important part of that. (Survey S33/Q45 Other)

This student's motivation to learn languages other than English is deeply engrained in their belief that in this globalised world we ought to be multilingual to better appreciate the multicultural societies to which we are exposed.

➢ **CONTINUING**

When we look at the students at the Continuing level in Table 4.6 below, we find that all students selected speaking as their main motivation—amongst the six clearly identified reasons—for studying their L2. A low 28% of the students of German chose speaking though, while 33% of them selected the "other" category. The second most important reason again for all students is to travel, except for students of Italian where none of the students selected travel as their reason for studying the L2. Speaking in this group, though, was selected above family origins which differs from the students of Italian at Introductory level.

Table 4.6 Main reasons for studying the L2 at Continuing level

Q45 Reasons for studying L2 at Continuing level, per language compared. Semester 1, 2013 (103 respondents)					
Level	Reason	FRENCH	SPANISH	GERMAN	ITALIAN
CONTINUING	My family origins	2%	-	6%	39%
	I want to travel	23%	25%	11%	-
	I like the culture	10%	7%	11%	10%
	I want to speak	51%	56%	28%	41%
	Study requirement	5%	-	5%	-
	I love languages	2%	6%	6%	10%
	Other	7%	6%	33%	-

Main reason 2nd most important reason (excluding "Other")

Source: Student survey Q45: Which of the following statements if the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Again, if we look at speaking and travel together at the Continuing level, a high 81% of the students of Spanish selected these as their main reasons, while 74% of the students of Continuing French concurred. In the "other" category, 33% of the students of German offered a variety of reasons for studying the language. Some indicated that it was a natural progression for them from high school where they had choses German for their foreign language studies; others attributed their interest to a close relative or a boyfriend/girlfriend being German:

> *Heritage and family origins—my ancestors really. I started doing German, and I fell in love with it, and I actually started learning a lot of English through my studies of German. I study [it] because I want to be able to speak the language and communicate with people who speak that language.* (Interview S10/Q4)

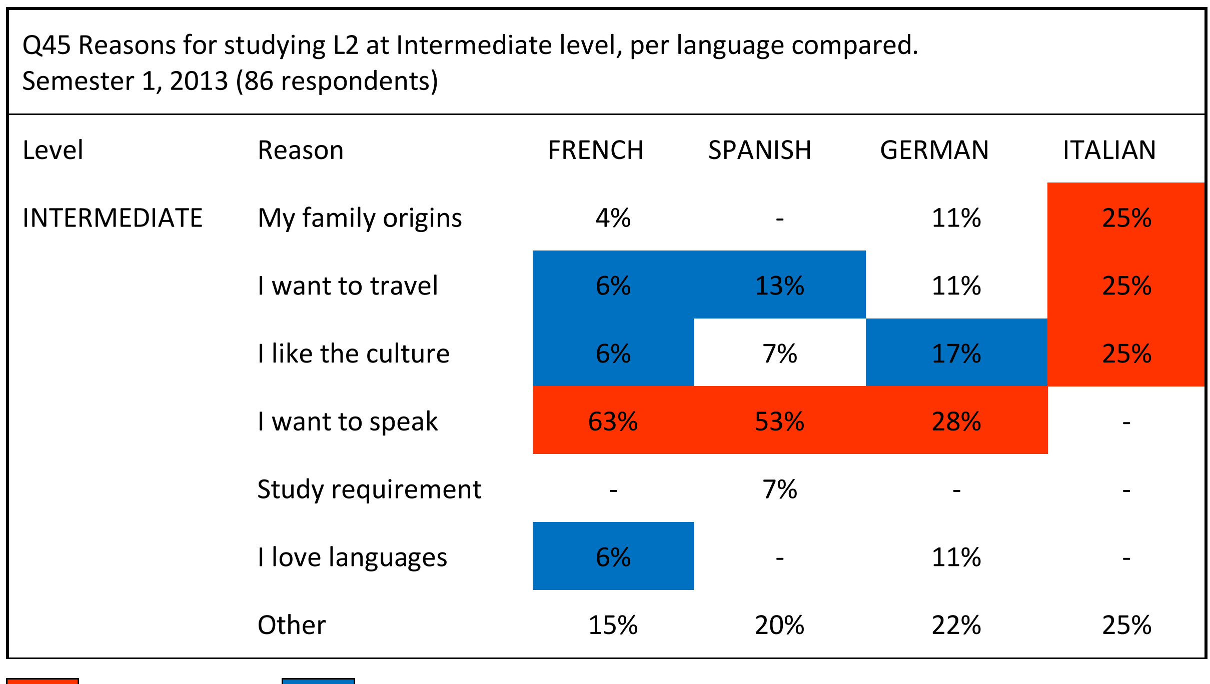
> *I chose German in high school and completed it throughout Year 12 and wanted to continue to improve...* (Survey S4/Q45 Other)

- **INTERMEDIATE**

As per Table 4.7 below, at Intermediate level, a strong 63% of the students of French indicated that what they wanted was to learn to speak the L2; this desire is echoed by a lower but significant 53% of the students of Spanish. 28% of students of German expressed their desire to speak the L2, while none of the students of Italian showed interest in speaking. They assigned equal interest to family origins, traveling, culture and "other" which was related to the simple fact that they had already made the effort and spent some time studying it, so why "let go of it"?

> *I've learnt it for 5 years and it would be a shame to let go of it.* (Survey S1/Q45 Other)

Table 4.7 Main reasons for studying the L2 at Intermediate level



Q45 Reasons for studying L2 at Intermediate level, per language compared. Semester 1, 2013 (86 respondents)					
Level	Reason	FRENCH	SPANISH	GERMAN	ITALIAN
INTERMEDIATE	My family origins	4%	-	11%	25%
	I want to travel	6%	13%	11%	25%
	I like the culture	6%	7%	17%	25%
	I want to speak	63%	53%	28%	-
	Study requirement	-	7%	-	-
	I love languages	6%	-	11%	-
	Other	15%	20%	22%	25%

Main reason   2nd most important reason (excluding "Other")

Source: Student survey Q45: Which of the following statements if the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

The high percentage of students of French expressing their interest in learning to speak the language helps illuminate why the students were constantly complaining about the fact that the curriculum at Intermediate level focused more on *academic work* at the expense of oral interaction, as one student stated:

> *The Intermediate course is heavily weighted towards "academic" work—literature and written structures. Whilst this is important, I feel it has been at the expense of spoken skills in the language. I could speak [the language] much better last semester… I really miss having the spoken class component.* (Survey S11/Q18)

Most of the students attending the French conversation group CFC were in fact from Intermediate French. I originally attributed this high attendance rate to the fact that they had been my students in Continuing French and that I persistently encouraged them to attend this extra-curricular activity so they would be exposed to the use of the L2. However, in reviewing the students' feedback entered in the memos, I realised that the main reason why these students attended CFC was that they were looking for opportunities to practise the spoken language in real life scenarios, since it became difficult to do so in class. In the context of this study, it is critical to highlight that many students—from all four languages—expressed their

frustration at not being able to practise the spoken language in class as frequently as they wished:

> *Now I am in intermediate […], and I don't say anything. Unless I am spoken to, and I do want to say something, but the conversation is often too fast for me to interject.* (Interview S15/Q7)

One of the students of German brought up a meaningful issue: they spoke a lot in class because no one else did and they felt uncomfortable with the *awkward silence* that followed after the teacher asked a question. This student's feedback brings to mind what Schlechty (2011) warned against: "Students who are engaged are involved; but not all students who are involved are engaged" (p. 15).

> *Even though I speak a lot in my intermediate German class, I do not feel particularly engaged, because all of the work is very easy for me. I find this frustrating, and honestly, the main reason why I speak up in class is because no-one else does; I find the awkward silences after my teacher asks the class a question very painful to sit through!* (Survey S24/Q19)

- **ADVANCED**

Table 4.8 shows that 57% of students of Advanced French and 56% of Advanced Spanish students stated that wanting to be able to speak the language was their main reason for having persevered to the Advanced level. 34% of Advanced German students chose their intention to travel as their number one reason, followed very closely (33%) by their desire to speak the L2. Many of these students expressed disappointment over the curriculum of the Advanced courses, in that they were not focused on the continuous development of speaking and listening skills, as this student stated:

> *Oral and aural skills are not nearly as highly developed at [our institution] as writing and reading. This is for good reason (it's an academic degree, not a business language course), but it is frustrating to be at the end of a [language] major, with consistent Distinctions, and to have trouble understanding a … film. Hopefully an exchange semester will fix that, but not everyone has the ability to do that. Anything to redress this skills imbalance would be very useful—the more speaking, the better.* (Survey S74/Q55)

The students of Italian differ from the other students in that their main reason for studying the Advanced L2 is their love of languages. However, the 100% figure for Advanced Italian

expressing their love for the L2 is to be viewed with caution given that it represents only two students.

Table 4.8 Main reasons for studying the L2 at Advanced level

Q45 Reasons for studying L2 at Advanced level, per language compared.
Semester 1, 2013 (41 respondents)

Level	Reason	FRENCH	SPANISH	GERMAN	ITALIAN
ADVANCED	My family origins	5%	-	-	-
	I want to travel	9%	11%	34%	-
	I like the culture	9%	11%	11%	-
	I want to speak	57%	56%	33%	-
	Study requirement	5%	-	-	-
	I love languages	5%	-	22%	100%
	Other	10%	22%	-	-

Main reason (red) | 2nd most important reason (excluding "Other") (blue)

Source: Student survey Q45: Which of the following statements if the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Among the other reasons expressed by the students at the Advanced level, a frequent comment is that they have travelled either to France or to one of the countries in Latin America, which motivated them to study the language, so that when they return to those countries, they are able to communicate in the L2 with the people in the different communities. At this level, few students expressed their interest in the culture of the language as one of the main reasons for studying the L2. In referring to a survey by Magnan and colleagues in 2014, Kramsch (2014) highlights the fact that students "of FL instruction place the greatest value… on Communities and Communication, and on the conversational power that comes from fluency in the language… Not a single student… [saw] Cultures as the main point of language learning" (p. 303). Kramsch attributes these findings to her belief that nowadays "people belong to different cultures and change cultures many times over the course of their lifetime" (2014, p. 303).

To complement Q45 above, Q46 in the survey asked students to rank in order of importance what they wanted to be able to do with the language(s) they were learning (see Appendix Q). The possible responses were different from those of the previous question. To be able to speak the language was again included in the options, but this time it was juxtaposed with the other three linguistic skills: reading, writing and understanding the language, together with learning about the culture of the language.

Looking at Figure 4.2 below, we can see again that to communicate and speak in the language was the overwhelming response to the question *what do you want to be able to do with the language you are learning*, and it was ranked as the most important goal by 74% of the 363 respondents to this question.

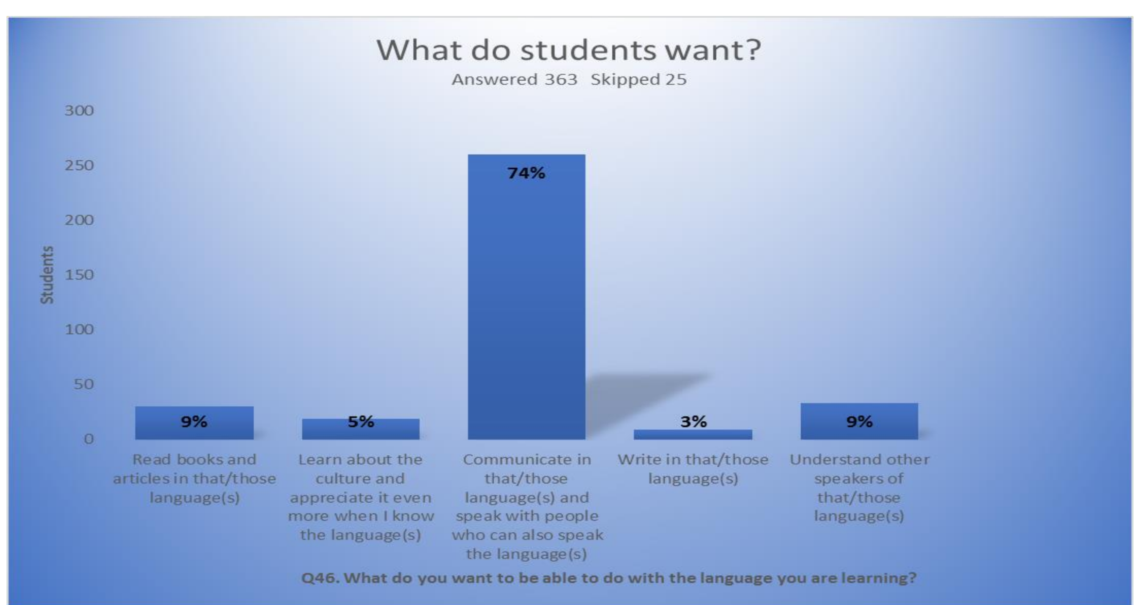


Figure 4.2 What do students want: Ranking of categories

Source: Student survey Q46: What do you want to be able to do with language you are learning? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

In evaluating the answer to Q46, however, we cannot categorically aggregate all the votes in favour of “speaking” because the students could have interpreted “communicate” as including all channels of communication, and not just “speaking”. The wording of this question needs to be rectified if this survey is to be used again.

4.2.2 The most enjoyable aspect of language learning

Reflecting on Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory and their conceptualisation of intrinsic motivation (IM) as a factor to engage learners of a second language in a learning activity because "that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do" (Noels et al., 2000, p. 61), I asked the students to identify which aspect of the language study they enjoyed the most (Q47). As per Dewaele, Magdalena-Franco and Saito (2018), enjoyment can "encourage creativity, play, curiosity and exploration, behaviours that are considered extremely advantageous to learning, [and learners who enjoy themselves in the classroom, can become] more aware of language input and consequently [absorb] better the FL" they are studying (p. 6).

Figure 4.3 below clearly shows what aspect of the language study students enjoy the most. The previous options were included in this question—culture, listening, reading, speaking and writing—with another dimension to language learning added to the question: learning about the grammar. Students were asked to rank their answers in order of importance from 1 *the most enjoyable* to 6 *the least enjoyable skill for students to learn*. If we look at the most favourably ranked aspect, speaking in the language was identified by 41% of the students as being the most enjoyable. If we add to that result the students who ranked speaking as the second most enjoyable activity (18%) (see Appendix R), we can determine that speaking is found by nearly 60% of the students to be one of the most enjoyable skills to learn when studying a second language. At the other end of the spectrum, writing the language and acquiring listening skills are notably the least enjoyable aspects of studying a language. This is problematic, since students are also saying that understanding the language is their second objective after speaking when they are studying the L2.

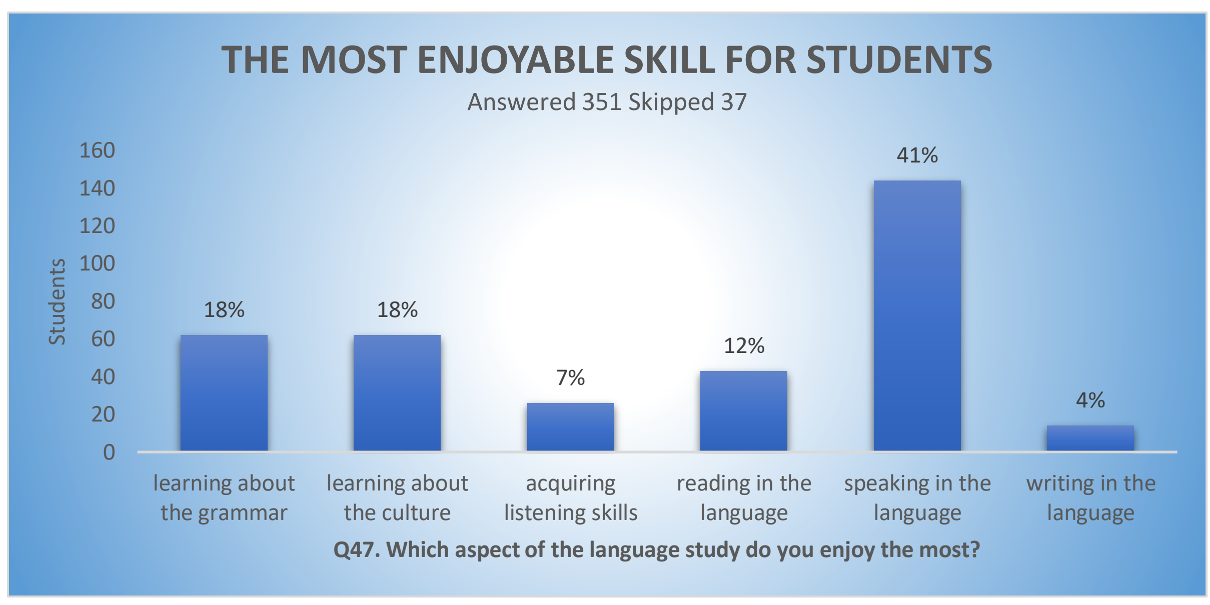


Figure 4.3 The most enjoyable skill for students to learn

Source: Student survey Q47: Which aspect of the language study do you enjoy the most? Semester 1, 2013 (Survey data Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Writing is clearly the least enjoyable skill to learn for these students, since only 4% of the students ranked it as most enjoyable, whereas learning about grammar was ranked as the most enjoyable skill by at least 18% of the students. There is often an assumption in the field that teaching grammar can be boring and stress-inducing; however, teachers know that if they design pedagogical activities that capture students' attention and provoke their curiosity, grammar can become stimulating. In fact, at CFC, I was able to join in my students' lively discussions on a particular grammatical aspect of the language that they thought was fascinating.

Culture is another topic that often emerged as important in informal conversations, and although most of the teachers interviewed in this study considered language and culture to be inseparable aspects of learning a language, the option of learning about the culture of the language was selected as most enjoyable by only 18% of the students:

> *I love the language more than the culture. I want to be able to speak with French people. I love grammar. I love English grammar. I feel I know a little about French culture, but there are cultures that interest me more.* (Interview S7/Q27)

Reading was not ranked very favourably in terms of enjoyment either—selected by only 12% of the students as most enjoyable—even though it is preferred to writing and listening. An

unexpected finding from this study is that students enjoy learning about grammar more than reading, listening, and writing. According to the following statement from a student, however, grammar has its place and time:

> *Grammar is important in the early stages. But sometimes you start to wonder, why did I have to learn for example, the imperfect subjunctive? Once you get to Advanced, there is no need for you to be doing further grammar exercises. Focus on grammar in the first 3 years, and then focus on how to implement it.* (Interview S39/Q27)

The popularity of grammar is thus perhaps short-lived, as the survey shows, since it decreases considerably when the students are referring to their ability and their engagement to speak the language. It affects their self-confidence and discourages them from speaking when they feel they are *constantly being judged* on their grammatical accuracy, as this student claims:

> *[If] there is a very strong focus on writing the language and on the grammar and getting the grammar correct, which is good but it also discourages people from trying to talk in the language because they feel like they are constantly being judged on the exactness of the grammar and being corrected about their grammar in front of the class.* (Interview S31/Q23)

The call for a focus on more speaking activities in class is a recurrent request amongst a large percentage of the students who participated in this research:

> *I wish there was more speaking activities instead of spending so much time on Grammar. In my opinion too much emphasis is being put on grammar. You can do well in grammar tests, but this does not make you a good speaker of the language!!!* (Survey S55/Q19)

We can see from the students' responses below that they want to learn to speak the language not only because it can be fun, but because it stimulates their mind and can give them an enjoyable sensation of accomplishment and excitement when they do *speak*:

> *The love of languages engages to speak and for that I am ecstatic that there is such a thing as the "circle* [sic] *de conversation"!* (Survey S38/Q55)

> *I love learning languages, just for the sake of communicating and stimulating my mind. I love feeling totally shattered after the effort of learning a new language. I love the mental stimulation. I love to be able to speak with people in another language. It's different. It's an amazing feeling!* (Interview S51/Q4)

4.2.3 A dedicated oral module

At the time of this study and according to students' accounts, their language courses involved three 50-minute classes a week, some with an additional 30-minute online component. During these sessions, a variety of content was covered, relevant to the language level. Some classes used a textbook, other classes relied on handouts, and other again used slides or videos. Depending on the course curriculum and the teaching style, there were individual tasks, pair or group work, or combinations of these.

According to the majority of the students who participated in the survey, *teaching to speak* remains the neglected activity in the communicative language classroom, a fact I was able to witness during class observations, and which is reflected in the voice of the following student:

> *We need to speak more in class and do fun activities to practise the language. Most of the time in class is spent reading from a textbook or listening to the teacher. If oral language classes were conducted in a more informal environment, I may feel more relaxed and at ease to speak up.* (Survey S80/Q53)

Most students who participated in this study insisted on having more oral practice, particularly beyond the Continuing level, as this student notes:

> *My* [L2] *started very well, speaking and all, and now it's awful and somehow, I am considered an advanced student. Honestly! …I know that I have lost so much vocab, because we are concentrating on a specific topic* [at Advanced level] *or so much in writing, which is good because my writing is awful as well… but there is not enough oral practice.* (Focus Group/Beatrice)

To further determine what students need to enhance their engagement to speak in class, they were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the following statement: *I would like it if every language course had a dedicated oral module, i.e., one or two hours a week dedicated mostly to speaking. This could help in my engagement to speak in class* (Survey Q38). Although I acknowledge that this could be a leading question, the students' responses illustrated in Figure 4.4 remain valid.

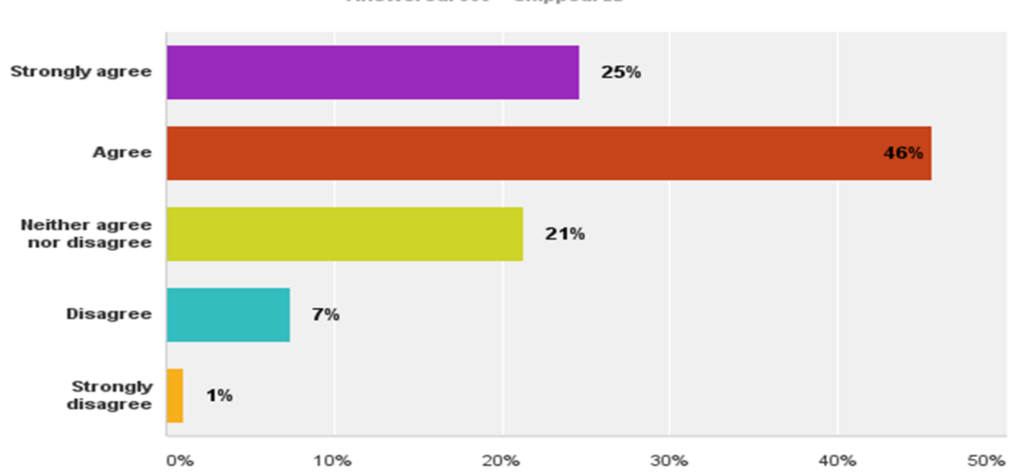


Figure 4.4 A dedicated oral module

Source: Student Survey, Quijada Cervoni. 2013.

Q38 I would like it if every language course had a dedicated oral module (N= 366).

Of the 366 students who responded to this survey question, 71% of the students said they strongly agreed/agreed that they would like one or two hours a week dedicated mostly to speaking, and that this could help in building their confidence and their engagement to speak in class. One of the students at Intermediate level expressed their frustration—shared by other classmates—of a self-perceived lower competence in speaking, when progressing from the Continuing to Intermediate level. They attributed this perception to not having developed sufficient oral skills, to a lack of individualised focus, and to being intimidated by those who were more competent in the spoken language:

> *My classmates and I believe that our speaking skills have actually gotten worse… because 1) we have not developed the SPOKEN fluency to express some very philosophical and complex concepts 2) we engage mostly in large class discussions and 3) we are intimidated by the students who have already completed a few thematic courses before.* […] *There is the pressure to participate and this often forces us to speak on a topic we are uncomfortable with, for the sake of saying anything.* (Survey S46/Q55)

It cannot come as a surprise to hear students asking teachers to dedicate more time to teaching speaking skills, if their main goal for studying the L2 is to speak the language. However, according to Little (2007), "teachers persist in believing that it is possible to develop

communicative proficiency in a foreign language by doing anything but use of [that] language" (p. 21). Is it then appropriate to think that our language programs are incompatible with the needs of students? Martín, Jansen and Beckmann (2016) seemed to agree, when they wrote the following:

> The *contest* between spoken and other forms of language learning remains a concern… [and there is] a curriculum design conflict from the perspective of students and staff around the relative importance of spoken [vs] written language. (p. 14).

If we want to engage students, "we need to change how we teach as well as what we teach" and move "from a didactic to a constructivist pedagogy… based on a strong respectful teacher-student and student-student relationship" (Parsons & Taylor, 2011, p. 18). A more genuine and respectful connection between teacher and student, and amongst peers, should exist in the classroom.

With this clear result from students about their interest and enjoyment in speaking the language, let me turn to the qualitative study.

4.3 The qualitative findings

As already outlined in Chapter 2, I have conceptualised SEtS as follows:

> Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS) is a facet of human behaviour that triggers a person's inner confidence and takes them one step further beyond willingness to communicate into actually speaking in the target language.

Speaking in class, in one's own L1 can be a frightening ordeal, even for the most extroverted. Cunningham, Lefkoe and Sechrest (2006) identified people who are scared of speaking in their L1 as having one or more of the following self-beliefs: "if I make a mistake I'll be rejected; people aren't interested in what I have to say; what I have to say isn't important; I'm not capable; I'm not competent; I'm not good enough" (p. 186). Similar fears were voiced by the students in this study, as expressed by one of the student respondents:

> *Speaking in another language can be very daunting so having a very supportive, friendly teacher gives me the confidence I need to give it a go/make mistakes and learn from them.* (Survey S74/Q28)

An undeniable fact about learning a language, however—as expressed by many of the students—is that to learn to speak the L2, one must practise speaking in that language.

> *Without actually speaking you are only learning the theory. You can read and write, but you cannot speak.* (Interview S27/Q24)

This sentiment was echoed by others:

> *Yes, if you don't start speaking in class, you will never speak. Once you start speaking, you start thinking in that language more, and that is the only way you are going to be able to know the language fluently. Not speaking, is not a good idea. (*Interview S67/Q24)

> *Speaking is something you always have to practise nearly every day to get the hang of it.* (Interview S68/Q24)

In the next subsections, I will first explore the qualitative data obtained from the focus group and the interviews, and then the data entered in the memos from all the different sources.

4.3.1 The pilot study and students' initial feedback

When the process of data analysis began, and following the guidelines advocated by Charmaz (2006a), I started by coding the transcribed data that originated from the focus group, while collecting and simultaneously coding the first interview transcriptions. In addition to the initial coding sample shown in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), the following is an example of a flip flop mechanism (Corbin & Strauss 2008) used to compare initial coding of focus group data looking for opposites, in this case positive versus negative emotions. Table 4.9 illustrates the students' general emotional state in class as compared to the students' feelings in the informal environment, and the reason why in class they have more difficulties engaging to speak French compared to their engagement to speak at the French conversation circle (CFC).

Table 4.9 Student affective variables compared: the formal environment vs an informal setting

The students' feelings in class:	The students' feelings @ CFC:
▸ You feel guilty ▸ You feel stupid ▸ You feel very uncomfortable ▸ It is embarrassing ▸ You're wasting other people's time	▸ I feel there is nothing wrong about me ▸ I feel so safe ▸ I feel everyone is the same ▸ I feel confident ▸ No one can see your face
The peers in class: I can't get engaged to speak because… ▸ I don't know anything about the person sitting next to me ▸ I don't have anything in common with the person I am supposed to be talking to ▸ I don't care about the people in my group ▸ You don't know the people	The peers @ CFC: I am engaged to speak because… ▸ I am with people I care about ▸ I am interested in these people ▸ In 2nd year [Continuing], the class was easier because we got to know each other at CFC ▸ At CFC, the people engage me ▸ You know the people

Source: Initial coding of focus group data—Focus group June 2011 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

As an initial observation, the negative emotions experienced by students in class, such as feeling stupid, uncomfortable, and embarrassed, can be compared with the positive reactions displayed in the informal environment, where they felt safe, confident, and equal. In terms of the relationship with their peers, the students identify with their peers who attend CFC, and can thus establish a common bond, whereas in class it may be more difficult to engage as they may have nothing in common with the person sitting next to them.

Table 4.10 provides a further comparison of the class and CFC environment in terms of students' thoughts on the topics that work for them and those that do not, and the type of atmosphere that promotes an engaging to speak environment.

Table 4.10 Student affective variables compared: Engaging topics and engaging atmospheres

The topics in class:	The topics @ CFC:
➢ If the topic works for me, that would engage me ➢ The topic went way over my head ➢ I was not engaged to speak because the content was too hard ➢ I would feel more engaged to speak, if I could choose the topic ➢ Basic everyday topics give me more confidence in speaking	➢ We choose the topics of conversation ➢ We talk about things we actually care about ➢ We talk about things we know about ➢ We talk about things that interest us ➢ We talk about daily life things, things you do, things you want to do ➢ It is motivating to speak about anything you want to
The atmosphere in class: ➢ It is intimidating ➢ Too many people watching; it is stressful ➢ I am too exposed	The atmosphere @ CFC: ➢ It is friendly and relaxed ➢ You speak to one person and then change partners ➢ The lights are dim. No one can see your face

Source: Initial coding of focus group data—Focus group June 2011 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Students are more comfortable to speak about topics that *work for them*, *basic everyday topics* where *the content is not too hard* and topics *they could choose*. One could deduce that when students are not familiar with the curriculum content or the topics being discussed in class, the motivation to speak will be weakened. At CFC, students often choose their own topics of conversation from daily life issues to topics of wide interest as if they were speaking in their own L1. These are *things they care about, things that interest them*, and it is easier to find the motivation and perhaps even the courage to engage to speak in these circumstances. The class atmosphere is another important factor for SEtS. Students believe that it is up to the teacher to create an environment where students feel secure and relaxed. If it is *intimidating or stressful*, and they feel *too exposed*, they will choose to remain silent. On the other hand, the environment at CFC is *friendly and relaxed*, and students choose who to speak to and when. As *the lights are dim*, they do not feel too exposed. The brightness of the lights is an element not to be disregarded altogether when reflecting about student engagement. It

brings to mind the language teaching method introduced by Lozanov in the 70s called Suggestopedia whereby the students were offered a comfortable class environment in which the lights were dim in order to make the students' mind more relaxed (Nostrati, Karimi, Malekian, & Hariri, 2013).

4.3.2 Student engagement in three different environments: researcher's self-reflections

For this study, as already mentioned, I was able to observe Student Engagement *to Speak* in three different environments: The formal classes of my colleagues, my own formal classes, and the informal environment of CFC. The main goal behind the class observations was to obtain a general appreciation of the different teaching approaches used in the language classes, the dynamics of these classes, the teachers' teaching styles and personalities, and the when, how and what engaged students to speak in the various classes observed. I then reflected about how these behaviours compared to those in the informal environment, looking for how students used the language they were learning to communicate with others, and again the when, how and what engaged them to speak.

4.3.2.1 The formal class setting

The data collection started with the journal entries and the memos where I wrote down what triggered a student to speak. The annotations were focused on queries such as: what was the topic of discussion when the student engaged to speak? What was the activity being conducted at that precise moment? Some of the entries also included aspects like: what was the main subject taught in that class? Who did most of the talking in this class, the teacher or some of the students? What was the general class atmosphere? And so on… Casual conversations with the teachers were then conducted after the class observation sessions and quick notes jotted down about relevant facts that would serve as a memory aid when completing the journal entries of the day.

Table 4.11 below is an excerpt of initial coding taken from the transcription of the focus group and the students' feedback on what engages—or disengages—them to speak in a formal class environment.

Table 4.11 Excerpt of initial coding: the formal class

Initial coding from the focus group: the formal class
➢ Wasting other people's time
➢ Feeling guilty
➢ Feeling embarrassed to make mistakes
➢ Feeling stupid
➢ Feeling as being assessed all the time
➢ Not being able to choose the topic disengages
➢ Not knowing anything about the person sitting next to me
➢ Not having anything in common with the person sitting next to me
➢ Being more confident when talking about basic everyday life topics
➢ Liking the teacher from day 1
➢ Feeling uncomfortable when put in the spot
➢ Learning everyday French is engaging
➢ Making the teacher responsible for creating an engaging environment
➢ Feeling confident when the topic works for you
➢ Feeling uncomfortable around the lecturer disengages
➢ Building the students' confidence is in the hands of the teacher
➢ Having fun in class is important

Source: Initial coding of focus group data—Focus group June 2011 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

This table illustrates some of the common characteristics emerging from the initial data collected though the focus group, and it makes it easier to compare with the initial data that emerged from the student interviews. Affective and behavioural factors are predominant such as the students' fears of feeling stupid or wasting others' time, relying on the teacher to make the environment more engaging, and being more confident. Were there any striking differences amongst the different classes observed?

Turning to the memos I wrote, Table 4.12 presents initial data coding from these memos on the formal class observations. As explained in the methodology chapter, I categorised the classes in two different types: class type A were those classes where I observed the least

engagement to speak amongst the students; and class type B were those classes where the environment was much more dynamic, and I could observe a higher number of students engaged to speak.

Table 4.12 Initial coding from class observations

Class of type A	Class of type B
Students less engaged to speak	Students more engaged to speak
Teacher fronted class	Teacher moved around students
Teacher seemed aloof	Teacher was energetic
Sitting in rows mostly	Sitting in semi-circle mostly
Course content seemed uninspiring going by students' apathy	Course content seemed relevant going by students' enthusiasm and engagement
One or two students answered	Many students were involved
High level of anxiety perceived in the environment	Low level of anxiety perceived in the environment
Teacher Talk was more dominant and an awkward silence often prevailed	Students were often laughing and interacting with the teacher's humorous comments

Source: Initial coding of memos from class observations (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

In the 17 classes I observed, the style of most teachers was friendly and informal, the class atmosphere in general was quiet and passive, and I could perceive different levels of anxiety amongst the students. Classes of type B in this study, when compared to classes of type A, were more successful at engaging students to speak, although I rarely witnessed a free-flowing conversation. Audio-visual material was often used, and very often the students were seated in rows of desks and the teacher was mostly fronting the class. Some teachers attempted to be funny, but students did not laugh; other teachers were serious, smiling occasionally; and there were those teachers who used humour and triggered an engagement by at least catching students' attention. Very often answers needed to be dragged out from the students and as an external observer I could not feel a connection between students and teacher, bar a few exceptions. In many of the classes, the same three or four students always answered. Teachers were often writing on the whiteboard, and students were looking down

at their books or writing in their notebooks. Teachers used mainly the L2 in classes, except at Introductory levels and when explaining grammar at Continuing levels. Students did use the L2 to respond to the teacher's questions, but the L1 mainly to address their peers. Students looked emotionally disengaged in general, although they seemed to be listening to the teacher, or doing written exercises when asked to do so. Some teachers were trying hard to encourage the students to speak: they used multiple activities; they moved from grammar to culture, to writing, to reading, to asking questions or working on oral drills, though relying mostly on a textbook. They moved from whole class Q&A drills to small group tasks, to pair activities… All these attempts, however, were met by most of the students with the same passive attitude, and often anxious looks on their faces. In some of the classes observed, towards the end of the class time, an interactive drill, a role-play or a short audio-visual activity was integrated into that day's practice. When that occurred, the sombre mood continued in classes of type A. However, in classes of type B most of the students would come alive and a sudden energy would revitalise the class dynamics. In both classes, the use of L2 was short lived however, unless the teacher was close by. What, therefore, were the differences from an observer's point of view? The following observations come from entries in my memos.

> *In classes of type A, students seemed uncomfortable to speak in the L2. Some were shy, some were hesitant, and some looked anxious. Awkward silence. Empty looks. No free-flowing conversation. A student starts a sentence; but he/she is too slow; another one interrupts and shows his/her higher level of competence; the teacher moves on. There is no chemistry between the students and the teacher. The topics seemed to be mostly irrelevant to the students, and they were met with indifference. When I later queried the students about their passivity in class, their feedback clearly suggested that their disengagement to speak was related to the lack of familiarity with the topics or just that they were not interested. Why would we be engaged—they reacted—to speak in the TL about elections and left and right-wing political parties (Focus Group/Charlie), French colonisation (Interview S8/Q8), literature (Survey S32/Q19), economics (Interview S61/Q8) or whether some extreme right wing should be the president (Focus Group/Beatrice). Grammar drills in series, sentences without any context. Some students look bored. One closes her eyes, the other one is yawning (it is 10:30 am!), and another one is looking at the clock on the wall behind him.*

> *In classes of type B, although there were similarities with type A classes in terms of the awkwardness of the silence setting in every now and then, the topic not always being inspiring or engaging, and some students being more active than others, there was a sense of connectedness between students and teacher. The teacher had a contagious energy and enthusiasm. Everyone one was alert and awake. Students were sometimes laughing. The teacher was only using the L2, and students were responding, making mistakes. It was all right. Very little or no correction was done by the teacher. The*

textbook may have been there, but mainly as a reference. You could feel a different energy in the environment: it was active, warm, friendly, no tension. The topics were either based on everyday conversation, relevant in their domesticity and simplicity, or slightly controversial. I could sense that most students identified with the topic: they wanted to give their opinion because it was a familiar topic and they knew about it in their own language, or because it was a controversial or somehow humorous topic that was meaningful to them, such as the wearing of the Burqa or what to do if you are traveling overseas and suddenly your passport is stolen. The students were attempting to respond, and they did not seem to fear making mistakes, nor was the teacher correcting them—at least not explicitly. The activities in these classes were more varied and the students seemed to have fun, often laughing at their own mistakes or at something the teacher said. They were definitely more confident than the students in type A classes.

Although there were no prominent contrasts between the two types of classes, some key differences were observed: in classes type B, the teacher had a contagious enthusiasm, there was no felt tension in the environment, the students seemed to be familiar and comfortable with the topics and they would often laugh at their own mistakes.

4.3.2.2 My own classes

The following two examples are extracts of some of my reflections on what happened in my own classes, where I was beginning to implement some of the findings emerging from my research. I attempted to record in my mind those instances when students were more engaged to speak. The highlighted parts are codes of a broader category.

Classes of type A:

It is so difficult to engage my students to speak in class. What can I do? Some of the students say a few words here and there; chunks of sentences; monosyllables; acknowledging what another student said; I feel I talk too much; but when I stop, silence sets in; awkward silence; I ask them to read some sentences from a book or from the teacher's handout to practise pronunciation, so I can hear their voice at least; I ask them to get in pairs and give them a task to perform often with set questions or a clearly structured oral activity to engage in; I move to an audio activity, I go back to the textbook, and ask them to work with their group on a specific exercise. There is such apathy, so little energy, such lack of interest and a perceived low level of self-confidence in the room; some seem very shy or absent; others are present, but they won't have a go. Only a few, the same, venture to talk a little…

Classes of type B:

Today, I had a very lively class. It was a scenario class where students had to improvise about a particular situation that was given to them, and within their group of 3 or 4 students, they had to find a solution. They had some time to prepare and the use of L1 was permitted to make sure that all students understood the issue they were going to

solve. I told them that making mistakes was all right, that I was not looking at their grammar, but wanted to hear their voices. When two volunteers—one from each group—stood in front of the class to perform and improvise a dialogue they had prepared within their group, they were laughing with the class in spite of the struggle to communicate in the TL. The whole class devoted their attention to them perhaps because it was an awkward but funny situation, and laughter and some sense of comfort filled the classroom environment. The two students attempted to use the vocabulary and expressions they had learnt, and their body language was a treasure to watch. After the brief sketch, the class was engaged, many students were speaking, and different solutions were offered in the L2 to solve the issue originally presented by the two students who had volunteered.

Table 4.13 below presents a summary of the initial coding to record this experience of self and compare the two types of classes.

Table 4.13 Initial coding from reflecting on my own classes

Class of type A	Class of type B
Standard class (all skills)	Scenario class (oral focus)
Whole class activity	Group activity
Sitting in semi-circle always	Sitting in semi-circle always
Awkward silence	Lively class
Teacher talk dominant	Student-centred activities
Apathy from students	Fun improvisation of dialogues
Low level of energy	Lots of laughs
Perceived low level of confidence	Sense of comfort and class engagement
Fear of making mistakes	Mistakes are all right
Some seemed shy or absent	Students were speaking in the L2

Source: Initial coding of memos from the researcher's own classes (Quijada Cervoni 2012-2014)

When I observed the students in my own classes while teaching, I mentally recorded instances where students were very engaged in discussions, and also when the awkward silence set in. After the class, I would normally write down some reflections in my journal to help visualise the language class and its participants. These reflections included moments I recalled when a student was engaged to speak in class in the L2, factors that I thought engaged the student to speak, class dynamics, tasks or activities conducted when a student participated, and so on. A major difference between classes of type A and of type B was that in classes of the A type

the material was imposed upon me. In those classes, I was a tutor and the course convenor insisted that we integrate all skills in the one class and did not accept any practice or activity beyond that specified in the curriculum. In type B classes, I was course co-convenor and I was permitted to develop new material and adapt it to the curriculum. When I conducted those classes, I had the autonomy to be creative and I was encouraged by the course convenor to experiment with innovative pedagogical tools. Since the focus of these classes was to get students to speak in the L2, I often created class initiatives based on "scenarios" inspired by a student-centred approach to teaching second languages termed Strategic Interaction (SI) by Robert Di Pietro. A "scenario" is described as "a mini-drama that happens because of an unexpected event or the need to resolve some dilemma of social interaction" (Di Pietro, 1987, p. 22). Through this fun activity that was very popular amongst my students, I was able to observe the students' engagement to speak through a sense of connectedness or silent complicity amongst them. The students leaned on each other for help and enjoyed themselves while attempting to communicate in the target language. The class environment was filled with expressions of emotions, a mixture of "good" nervousness and students' laughter. I was able to witness the excitement of learners handling unexpected situations and collaborating with each other in an attempt to find a solution to a problem. That sort of activity created an inclusive environment in the classroom that built the students' confidence, momentarily tossing aside their fear of expressing themselves in the L2 (Quijada & Martín, 2014):

> *The improvisation was daunting, but it was a good exercise and helped overcome my fear of speaking French.* (Course feedback questionnaire, Continuing French II, Semester 2, 2011)

I can summarise this experience of class observations by saying that as a result of the variety of course content and class activities, the teachers' different teaching styles, personality and methodologies, there was a different level of interaction each time. Although most teachers insisted during the interviews that the main teaching methodology used in their classes was of a communicative type, most of the *speaking* occurred when a student was directly asked a question or a comment. In smaller groups, the communication in L2 was often aided by the students' L1, whether English or another language.

Di Pietro wrote in 1987:

> In a traditional second language classroom, language use is often artificial, and students engage in producing mindless questions and answers, and decontextualized sentences aiming for accuracy rather than fluency (p. 18).

I can presume from the students' feedback that most language teachers interviewed tend to focus on accuracy when conducting an oral activity in class, and when that happens, students feel that teachers are listening not to what they are saying, but to how they are saying it. When students speak, the tendency is to convey incomplete ideas or *mindless answers*, as I witnessed in many of the classes I observed. Alas, 30 years on, Di Pietro's concern over the artificial nature of the practice of teaching *speaking* in language classes is still very much alive in most of the classes I sat in, including my own classes.

4.3.2.3 The informal setting

When reading the memos on my observations of students' behaviour in the informal environment, a different story unfolded:

> *Today at CFC, there was such energy and enthusiasm among the students. Only French was spoken. There were around 20 students; they came in at different times during the activity; they went to get a beer or a non-alcoholic drink and sat next to their friends; but some were new, and after I introduced them to the group, they took a spot and introduced themselves to the people next to them, and the conversation went on strictly in the L2. There was a lot of laughter, and some voices were louder than others, but everyone was engaged and speaking. But hold on a second: some of the students in this group were in my class on Monday, and they normally do not say a word in class or very little. [Translation from French] "Patrick", I called, "you are in my Continuing French class and you don't say much in class, and yet here you have been talking to Alice and Paul for the last 20 minutes in French. Can I ask why?" "Yes", he responded in French, "here I can make mistakes and it is ok." He switched to English momentarily (probably to make his point clear) and continued "here I feel safe and confident, no one is going to judge me, we are among friends, we are having fun, you are one of us, we are here to speak French, and it does not matter if we make mistakes…" And Alice added [translated from French] "we can choose the topic of conversation."* (Excerpts from informal conversation with students at CFC, 2013)

When we examine the initial codes in all three environments, we can recognise elements mostly of an affective nature, some negative, some positive: feeling guilty, feeling stupid, feeling uncomfortable, liking the teacher, feeling confident with the topic, having fun in class. When we look at the initial codes extracted from the focus group in relation to what engages students to speak in the informal environment of the CFC, illustrated in Table 4.14 below, we

again find predominantly affective factors which express positive emotions: caring, feeling safe, knowing that mistakes are ok, not feeling judged, choosing relevant topics, feeling confident, connecting with the teacher. These are all codes of a broader category.

Table 4.14 Excerpt of initial coding: the informal environment

Initial coding from the focus group: CFC
‣ Knowing that you are not being assessed engages to speak
‣ Feeling there is nothing wrong with you
‣ Caring about the people you talk to
‣ Feeling so safe
‣ Knowing that making mistakes is all right
‣ Talking about daily life things, things you do, things you like to do, or things you want to do
‣ Not feeling judged by your teacher and your peers
‣ Talking in English is not the norm
‣ Speaking French and having fun is the norm
‣ Knowing the people makes the conversation flow
‣ Hiding behind the dim lights
‣ Choosing relevant topics of conversation
‣ Choosing topics of conversation you are interested in
‣ Knowing that the teacher there is one of us
‣ Feeling confident because you are amongst friends

Source: Initial coding of focus group data—Focus group June 2011 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

If I needed to condense in a few words what most of the students' sentiments were during the informal conversations held during the different phases of my study, it could perhaps be encapsulated by the reflections of the following four students who attended the first focus group. The students' names are pseudonyms.

William said:

> *A lot of people just give up… People don't like to make mistakes. If you are stumbling a lot to get your point out, you feel you're wasting other people's time… You feel stupid,*

> *and it's not a good feeling… I often felt completely out of my league. When you don't know about the topic, how can you give an opinion?* (Focus group/William)

William is expressing a constant feeling of fear over not being sufficiently competent and making mistakes. He even expresses a certain feeling of guilt for *wasting other people's time* and explains why his anxiety and his frustration are aggravated by the fact that he has to speak in the new language about a topic with which he is unfamiliar.

Caroline and Linda stated:

> *When you are put in the spot, it often makes you feel very uncomfortable…. I think that when you are having fun, like in the Scenario classes, you are less shy and thus you get the courage to speak with more confidence.* (Focus group/Caroline)
>
> *Yeah… Feeling uncomfortable around a lecturer is not engaging to speak.* (Focus group/Linda)

Caroline and Linda explain that if you feel uncomfortable, you will simply not move out of your comfort zone if you have the choice to not do so, and if you are *put on the spot* this makes the situation even more uncomfortable, and thus disengaging to speak. On the other hand, if you are having fun while learning the language, *you get the courage to speak with more confidence*. This sentiment is reinforced by Charles below, who explains why having fun in class takes care of your fears and inhibitions. It relaxes you and increases your self-confidence:

> *Having fun in class is important. You forget about your fears and your inhibitions. You are more relaxed and you feel more comfortable to speak and it does not matter if you make mistakes … It's important to build the students' confidence.* (Focus group/Charles)

4.3.2.4 Comparing the three environments

After much of the initial coding was done of memos and journal entries, I proceeded to lay down in a table—see Table 4.15 below—the different variables that would allow me to compare the three environments: The formal class type A, the formal class type B, and the informal setting.

Table 4.15 Initial coding from researcher's memos comparing students' attitudes and reactions in the formal vs the informal environments

CLASS type A (LOW or ZERO SEtS)	CLASS type B (GOOD LEVEL OF SEtS)	INFORMAL SETTING (CFC – HIGH SEtS)
[Students less engaged to speak in the L2]	[Students more engaged to speak in the L2]	[Students engaged and speaking in the L2]
1. Teacher seemed aloof	1. Teacher was approachable	1. Teacher was one of them
2. Course content based on syllabus	2. Topics chosen by the teacher	2. Topics chosen by the students
3. Environment: teacher talk dominant and an awkward silence often prevailed	3. Environment: strong teacher-student interaction and students were participating and often laughing	3. Environment: teacher as participant; fun, constant laughter, enthusiastic energy; spontaneous interaction
4. Sitting in rows; often no familiarity with peers	4. Sitting in semi-circle; often next to someone familiar	4. Sitting in semi-circle next to friends; new comers integrated
5. One or two students involved	5. Many students involved	5. All students involved and engaged
6. High level of anxiety perceived in the classroom	6. Low level of anxiety felt in the classroom	6. Minimum level of anxiety perceived in the environment
7. Students' fear of making mistakes and feeling stupid	7. Students' perception that mistakes are all right	7. Students absolutely confident that mistakes are all right
8. Explicit error correction	8. Implicit error correction	8. No error correction

Source: Initial coding of memos comparing data from class observations, the researcher's own classes, and the informal environment of CFC (Quijada Cervoni 2012-2014)

The categories that began to emerge from the initial coding—lower-level categories—concerned affective and contextual matters: fear of failure, fear of ridicule, students' own perception of competence, engaging with the teacher, feeling less vulnerable in a fun and relaxed environment, and engaging with a relevant topic. The coding process was revealing that although students felt very strongly about who the teacher was and whether the environment and the topic were appropriate, a stronger reason was emerging that was impacting on their decision to speak in class or to remain silent: the need to feel confident. This need was satisfied if the teacher had a closer connection with the student, or if the teacher was able to create an environment where the student would feel more confident to

speak, while being familiar with the class topic. All these emotional and contextual elements would boost the students' confidence.

This experience gave me the opportunity to observe the same students who attended my classes in the informal environment of the CFC. Large amounts of rich data were collected on the participants' behaviour and actions when engaging to speak in French during these sessions. Again, memo entries were based on empirical data and included topics discussed, language used, seating arrangements, the room atmosphere, the participants' attitudes, the participants' non-verbal expression, the number of participants, the students' reactions to the presence of native speakers, and so on. As indicated previously, I personally conducted the CFC activity for four years throughout this research, and I was present in this extra-curricular activity as a participant observer. Attending this conversation circle every week allowed me to collect crucial data that equated to fieldwork data.

The data collected showed that the environment at CFC was naturally more casual than in the engaged environment of class type B. The topics were relevant and chosen by the students, although sometimes suggested by me. The environment was relaxed and fun and students felt confident to speak without fear of being judged or making mistakes. The interaction between all the participants was spontaneous, and I could sense a collegial bond and an appearance of trust. Laughter filled the environment, and no level of anxiety was perceived. Students wanted to be there because it was enjoyable and they were practising French, and although some felt the temptation to fall back on the L1, their peers would quickly discourage them from doing so. Students would sit in a semi-circle, and everyone—including new arrivals—felt welcome and at ease.

The process of initial coding I have detailed above is a fundamental point of departure "as it represents the researcher's first interpretation of the data" (Dunne, 2008, p. 66). The next step in grounded theory, called theoretical sampling, directs the researcher to build upon concepts and tentative hypotheses which are emerging from the data, and it becomes increasingly important as analysis progresses (Charmaz 2006a). It determines where to go and what to look for as the data collection and the analysis unfold. Thus, the next section returns

to the quantitative findings, and the discussion focuses on the top three reasons identified by more than 85% of the students surveyed, as factors of Student Engagement *to Speak* in class. Although I look at confirming findings, the main objective is to contrast and compare these quantitative results to the qualitative data obtained from the student interviews and the focus group evidence within a larger population. The inverse notion—Student Disengagement *to Speak* (SDtS) in class—is later also analysed and discussed briefly.

4.4 The quantitative component

As this study involves a mixed methods research design for the purpose of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from different sources, this section will consider whether the quantitative findings relate to the qualitative results (Nassaji, 2015). The quantitative findings are descriptive, and even though they are more detached from the researcher and more objective than qualitative findings can be, they still aim to contribute to a tentative theory about SEtS. “Quantitative research methods attempt to maximize objectivity, replicability, and generalizability of findings” (Harwell, 2011, p. 149), and “as Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out, both qualitative and quantitative research methods emphasize truth, consistency, applicability, and neutrality while taking different procedural approaches to assure quality” (Harwell, 2011, p. 150). In addition, quantitative data, according to Trochim (2002), can be “the glue that holds the research project together” (p. 18) “The guidance of quantitative analysis is helpful in establishing truths about the body of data that might be lost if the analyst simply followed her impulses regarding what to study [next]” (Broad, 2017, p. 100).

4.4.1 Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS)

When analysing the survey data, the goal is to understand what engages students to speak in class, by tapping into the students’ perceptions of what it is that makes them speak in class as opposed to sitting passively and remaining silent or speaking only when asked a direct question. Table 4.16 below displays the nine reasons specified within the survey ranked in order of importance by the 388 students on what engages them to speak in the language class. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, these nine variables were identified as

elements of engagement to speak through the analysis of the data that emerged from the students' focus group, the interviews and the informal conversations. Response rates in percentages were calculated for each response category, and the answers were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with the following value labels: Strongly agree (5), agree (4), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1). However, for the purpose of a more structured interpretation and analysis of graphs and figures, the response rates were consolidated into three groups: 1. Strongly agree/agree; 2. Neither agree nor disagree; 3. Disagree/strongly disagree. Percentages rather than counts, means or frequencies, were used because they provided a better visualisation of the data.

Table 4.16 Main reasons overall for SEtS in a language class (N=388)

	Reasons	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
1	If I am having fun in class (Q26)	92.90%	6.01%	1.09%
2	The teacher's personality (Q27)	92.10%	6.81%	1.09%
3	A relevant topic that works for me (Q20)	86.81%	10.44%	2.75%
4	If I feel I am among "friends" (Q24)	79.51%	16.39%	4.10%
5	A "safe" class environment (Q23)	74.45%	24.18%	1.37%
6	If I knew my teacher was listening to what I was saying and not just listening for my mistakes (Q32)	62.30%	20.49%	17.21%
7	Everyday life happenings and issues (Q22)	61.10%	30.41%	8.49%
8	If I did not feel as being assessed all the time (Q36)	36.34%	25.41%	38.25%
9	If my teacher talked less (Q31)	11.91%	36.29%	51.80%

Source: Student Survey, June 2013. Part 1:
What ENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK in your language class in the language you are learning? (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

As the top three motivators for SEtS, the students ranked the following elements as the most important: a fun class, the teacher's personality, and a relevant topic. A definition of teacher's personality as well as the characteristics of an engaging TP will be discussed in Chapter 5.

A very high 92.90% of the students strongly agreed/agreed that the top reason for students to engage to speak in class in the L2 was when *they are having fun in class*. This factor could include the personality of the teacher, as well as aspects of the class environment. Almost as many students (92.10%) rank the teacher's personality as the second most important factor that engages them to speak in class. A noteworthy result is that only 1.09% of the students disagreed/strongly disagreed with these statements, and a low 6.01 to 6.81% neither agreed nor disagreed. Finally, 86.81% of the students who responded to the question identified *a relevant topic that works for them* as the third most important element of SEtS. Only 2.75% strongly disagreed/disagreed that topic was an important factor, and 10.44% neither agreed nor disagreed. These top three reasons for SEtS are analysed and discussed in the context of SE and WTC, according to language level, in the next section.

The data collected also revealed that 79.51% of the students found that if they felt as if they were amongst friends, they would engage to speak in class. The feeling of being amongst friends or the familiarity with the interlocutor is a psychological factor that enables communication, as reported in a study by Cao and Philp (2006). That study determined that when learners found themselves in a class context where they had to communicate with classmates seen as "strangers or acquaintances, rather than people [they] felt comfortable with", there was a certain reluctance to speak and thus their WTC was lower (Cao & Philp, 2006, p. 487). The rest of the data showed that 74.45% of the students said that a "safe" class environment would engage them to speak in class, and 62.30% of the students strongly agreed/agreed that if they knew their teacher was listening to what they were saying rather than just waiting for mistakes to occur, that would engage them more to speak in the L2. As the qualitative findings show, this last reason is heavily emphasised as an important element of SEtS by many students that I spoke to.

The fear of making mistakes is a constant element of discouragement to speak in class, as confirmed by the students during the interview process and ratified through data collected from the survey open ended questions. Perhaps to minimise the risk of making mistakes, 61.10% of the students said that more mundane topics such as everyday life happenings and issues would encourage them to speak, which leaves 38.90% of the students surveyed

responding that they were either indifferent to the topic chosen for class discussions or they disagreed that a topic related to everyday life situations would engage them to speak. A noticeable 36.34% of the students agreed that if they did not feel that they were being continually assessed, they would speak more often. This argument was raised by many students to explain why they did engage to speak in the informal environment of the conversation groups outside the classroom. This finding, however, is weighted against a strong 38.25% who disagreed with the statement, which is not surprising as this concern was often mentioned by the students during the focus group. Another unexpected result is that teacher talk time (TTT), which is an important factor studied in SLA in preventing students from practising the L2 more in class (Canale & Swain, 1980; R. Ellis 1994; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014; Nunan, 1991; Walsh, 2002), does not seem to be an element of particular concern for the students surveyed since only 11.91% of the survey participants strongly agreed/agreed that if their teacher talked less, they would be more engaged to speak in class. At the other end of the spectrum, 51.80% of the students disagreed/strongly disagreed that this was a reason preventing their engagement to speak in class. It is also the highest-ranking reason amongst the undecided group, where 36.29% of students neither agreed nor disagreed that TTT had any impact on their engagement to speak in class.

In checking whether the reasons might differ among students at different levels of instructions, the findings—shown in Table 4.17 below—are striking in that there is strong consistency across the four language levels in terms of students' sentiments on what engages them to speak in class.

Table 4.17 Main reasons for SEtS across the four levels of instruction: Percentages of strongly agree/agree and ranking of variables (N=388)

Variables	Intro Year 1	Cont Year 2	Inter Year 3	Adv Year 4	Rank Intro Year 1	Rank Cont Year 2	Rank Inter Year 3	Rank Adv Year 4
The teacher's personality (Q27)	93.55%	91.21%	95.70%	86.21%	1	1	1	3
If I am having fun (Q26)	91.94%	90.11%	94.62%	96.61%	2	2	2	1
If a topic works for me (Q20)	82.93%	83.33%	89.25%	96.55%	3	3	3	2
If I feel I am among "friends" (Q24)	79.03%	81.11%	76.34%	84.48%	4	4	4	4
A "safe" class environment (Q23)	71.54%	80.00%	68.82%	81.03%	5	5	6	5
If I knew my teacher was listening to what I was saying and not just listening for my mistakes (Q32)	52.42%	64.84%	70.97%	65.52%	7	6	5	6
Everyday life happenings and issues (Q22)	58.87%	62.22%	64.52%	58.62%	6	7	7	7
If I did not feel as being assessed all the time (Q36)	38.71%	36.26%	34.48%	32.76%	8	8	8	8
If my teacher talked less (Q31)	4.96%	11.11%	15.22%	22.41%	9	9	9	9

Source: Student Survey, June 2013. Part 1:
What ENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK in your language class in the language you are learning? (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

In the comparison of the findings, teacher's personality is ranked as the number one factor by the first three levels of instruction, i.e. Introductory, Continuing and Intermediate levels, whereas the students at the Advanced level gave top priority to having fun in class. For them, teacher's personality is ranked third after relevance of topic and having fun. The second element of importance for SEtS for the students at Introductory, Continuing and Intermediate

levels is having fun in class, and relevance of topic comes in at third place. These findings per level of instruction will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter 5.

In the next section, I turn briefly to the opposite dimension of SEtS: Student Disengagement *to Speak* (SDtS) in the language class.

4.4.2 Student Disengagement *to Speak* (SDtS)

The opposite phenomenon of disengagement to speak in a language class has not been researched much in the literature of student engagement and WTC. However, it is important to note that according to Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015), although WTC is still in its infancy, it was "unwillingness to communicate (Burgoon 1976) that first captured the attention of researchers" (p. 2). Burgoon (1976) identified the perception of learners of "being denied communication by others… [and having] negative attitudes toward communication… [including] actual withdrawal from communication" (p. 60). When an individual anticipates a negative experience, they may prefer not to take the risk. Low self-esteem and anxiety about participating in oral communication are also attributes of the unwillingness-to-communicate syndrome evoked by Burgoon's studies. These findings coincide with this study that when students have amassed the courage to reach the penultimate stage of the WTC pyramid, the impulse to use the L2 can be affected or even halted either by the student's own fears or by a more confident classmate who jumps ahead or simply by the teacher who moves on.

To contrast the students' voice on engagement to speak with disengagement to speak in a language class, the inverse question was included in the survey: *"What DISENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK in your language class in the language you are learning?"* The list of variables which the students were asked to rank came from comments made during the interviews with the students. In hindsight, I should have included "If I am bored" amongst the reasons for SDtS to offer a direct comparison with the reasons for SEtS, but boredom—or what leads to the feeling of boredom—was seldom mentioned by the students as a reason for disengagement. This omission needs to be reconsidered if a similar study is repeated. Table 4.18 below shows

the overall findings of the survey that illustrate students' perspective on SDtS in their language class.

Table 4.18 Main reasons for SDtS in a language class (N=388)

	Reasons	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
1	The teacher's personality (Q29)	75.07%	20.11%	4.82%
2	The fact that other students are at a higher level than me (Q33)	64.75%	17.49%	17.76%
3	A topic I am not familiar with (Q21)	61.92%	22.47%	15.62%
4	If I feel silly and embarrassed in front of my classmates (Q34)	46.69%	18.78%	34.53%
5	If I am normally a shy person (Q35)	29.83%	26.24%	43.92%
6	If I do not have anything in common with the person I am talking to (Q25)	19.95%	26.78%	53.28%
7	If I rarely get the opportunity to speak in class (Q37)	15.47%	14.09%	70.44%

Source: Student Survey, June 2013. Part 2.
What DISENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK in your language class in the language you are learning? (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

A significant 75.07% of the students surveyed again identified teacher's personality as the top reason for their disengagement to speak in class. A relatively significant 20.11% of students responded they neither agreed/nor disagreed that teacher's personality disengages them to speak in class, and 4.82% disagreed/strongly disagreed. This result contrasts with the findings for SEtS where a high 92.10% agreed/strongly agreed that the teacher's personality could have a strong impact on their engagement to speak in class. This result could have two different interpretations: either the students did not identify as much with the notion of disengagement to speak, or these questions appeared redundant, as voiced by some of the students in the open-ended questions where they answered: "the reverse of previous answer" or "opposite answer to Q28" or even "this survey is too long!" (Survey 2013, Q30).

Different competence levels was selected as the second most important reason by 64.75% of the students, and *a non-familiar topic* as a close third factor for SDtS was pinpointed by 61.92% of the survey participants. When comparing these results with those obtained when asking about SEtS, we find some parallels: teacher's personality was again the top reason identified by the students as a factor that impacts on their decision to speak in class, and a non-familiar topic was selected as the third most important reason, paralleling the findings in SEtS. The second reason is related to class environment. As revealed in SEtS, the second most important factor in engagement to speak is to have a fun class environment. In SDtS, we find that different levels of competence amongst the students is considered the second most important reason for disaffecting students from speaking. This was a recurrent complaint by many of the students interviewed. The perceived different competence levels in class was a factor intimidating many of the students. This concern was also expressed by some of the teachers. There is an appreciable difference in the L2 knowledge and skills of the students of language and culture in a same class at tertiary level, yet "this aspect is crucially important to learning outcomes… since students [are] reluctant to speak their 'new' language in the presence of more advanced students" (Martín, Jansen, & Beckmann, 2016, p. 12).

Almost half of the students (46.69%) identified feeling silly and embarrassed in front of their peers as a factor in their disengagement to speak. Although these negative emotions were constantly voiced by many of the students in this study, a significant 34.53% disagreed. Having a shy personality was ranked 5th in order of importance for SDtS, where 29.83% of students placed themselves as belonging to the group of the more introverted students. Although a higher percentage of students (43.92%) disagreed with that statement, an extroverted personality did not directly translate into engagement to speak. Another concept that was raised by some students during the focus group and the conversations at the CFC was the idea that "if I don't have anything in common with the person I am talking to", I will not engage to speak. However, in the survey, only 19.95% of the students selected that as a factor impacting on SDtS, and 53.28% disagreed/strongly disagreed. The final element of SDtS was the proposition that students rarely have the opportunity to speak in class. Only 15.47% of the students strongly agreed/agreed that this was a concern. In fact, a high 70.44% of the student strongly disagreed/disagreed, implying that they do have the opportunity to speak, even

though we know from class observations and the students themselves that engagement to speak is sporadic and often negligible. This also matches the findings for SEtS where TTT does not seem to be a concern for the majority of the language students who participated in this research.

Looking more closely to compare what disengages students across the four language levels, the data depicts a similar story and complements the findings of SEtS, adding a new dimension for SDtS: the importance of different levels of proficiency within the class, or a perceived difference in communication competence. Table 4.19 below presents the responses concerning SDtS per instruction level. At first glance, it is important to note that in the first three levels of instruction there is a correlation between the findings of SEtS and SDtS in that teacher's personality and topic are ranked first and third in each case.

Table 4.19 Main reasons for SDtS across the four instruction levels: Percentages of strongly agree/agree and ranking of variables (N=388)

Variables	Intro	Cont	Inter	Adv	Rank Intro	Rank Cont	Rank Inter	Rank Adv
The teacher's personality (Q29)	71.07%	71.26%	80.68%	80.70%	1	1	1	2
The fact that other students are at a higher level than me (Q33)	59.68%	67.03%	68.82%	65.52%	2	2	2	3
A topic I am not familiar with (Q21)	57.26%	59.34%	58.70%	81.03%	3	3	3	1
If I feel silly and embarrassed in front of my classmates (Q34)	49.18%	53.85%	44.57%	33.33%	4	4	4	4
If I am normally a shy person (Q35)	38.71%	29.67%	23.60%	20.69%	5	5	6	6
If I do not have anything in common with the person I am talking to (Q25)	16.94%	17.58%	21.51%	27.59%	6	6	7	5
If I rarely get the opportunity to speak in class (Q37)	4.03%	13.64%	30.43%	18.97%	7	7	5	7

Source: Student Survey, June 2013. Part 2.
What DISENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK in your language class in the language you are learning? (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

At Introductory and Continuing levels, 71.07% and 71.26% of the students respectively strongly agreed/agreed that teacher's personality was the major reason for SDtS, and an even higher percentage (80.68%) of students at Intermediate level concurred. The second most important reason for SDtS, where the first three levels again coincided, was that students perceived a different level of communication competence amongst the students in the same class and identified it as a disengaging factor to speak. When we go back to the second most important factor for SEtS—to have fun in class—this study finds that these two elements of engagement to speak—a fun atmosphere and spoken competence levels—can both be seen as determinant factors for an engaging class environment, and thus can be classed together as the environmental dimensions of Student Engagement *to Speak*.

At the Advanced level, the results for SDtS differ moderately from those found for SEtS. The top three factors were the same: Teacher personality, class environment and topic. However, the ranking was different. The students gave greater weight to a non-familiar topic as the most important factor in not engaging to speak, selected by 81.03% of the students. Teacher's personality was ranked a very close second factor of importance for SDtS, chosen by 80.70% of the respondents. In third position was different competence levels, chosen by 65.52% of the students. The students who enrol in an Advanced level course have either successfully completed the Intermediate level or have been able to satisfy the advanced requirements of a placement test. This could occur if they had achieved a significantly higher level of competence in the language, for example through a bilingual parent, secondary studies at a high level, or studying the language in a country where the language is spoken. There may be other factors influencing these results such as self-assurance or familiarity with classmates.

These results of SDtS per level of instruction will be considered in the discussion of the findings in the next chapter.

The quantitative findings that emerged from the survey complement and support the results established through the qualitative coding process. They revealed that teacher's personality is an important element considered by students in establishing a teacher-student relationship that will influence their decision to engage to speak in class or remain silent. Familiarity with the topic and the learning environment—devoid of language anxieties—where the student can feel confident and motivated to speak were also found to be two very important elements of SEtS.

4.5 Theory building and emerging categories

When we start identifying preliminary themes and concepts emerging from the data, we move—to use the GT terminology—to selective or focused coding. "Focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data" (Charmaz, 2006a, p. 97). This is a critical stage, since with the constant comparison and contrasting of data, more conceptual categories are identified. When their properties fit

comfortably with one another, we begin to visualise some form of theoretical development. However, Glaser (1988) warns novice researchers to be patient, and not to force the data, since the core category will eventually emerge. Charmaz (2006a) states that in GT, to embark on a more focused and selective phase, “we use the most significant or frequent earlier codes to sort, synthesise and organise large amounts of data” already collected (p. 93). I therefore proceeded to sort and organise the most significant concepts emerging from the memos and the survey data into sub-categories. Constant comparative analysis led me to change, rename and recode the data, and as I progressed though the coding process, some concerns expressed by the students during the focus group began to re-appear in the interviews. For example, some of the repeated descriptive codes were *a non-intimidating teacher, if I like the teacher or if the teacher judges me*. All these initial codes were organised together under a more selective coding that I named *teacher’s personality*, since the students were alluding to who the teacher was and that teacher’s personal traits. While the constant comparison of incidents evolved, I began to look for the action behind the code and a theoretical sample emerged in the basic form first of *liking the teacher* which then became a sub-category that I named: *engaging with the teacher*. As a consequence of this, I continued collecting data, coding and memoing with a more determined focus, oriented always to the main study concern of what engages—and disengages—students to speak in class. The emerging categories and their descriptions are presented in Table 4.20 (see Appendix S for a broader list of coding categories).

Table 4.20 An extract of interview data, selective coding and emerging categories

Excerpts of text transcribed from the Student Interviews (Quijada Cervoni 2012)	Selective coding	Emerging categories or sub-categories
When I am having fun… I am interested in the conversation. That means I actually want to take part in it. (S9/Q7)	Having fun engages to speak.	Connecting with the class environment
An interesting topic that you want to talk about, that engages me to talk a lot more. It also depends on the teacher. I am not entirely sure to explain how that happens, but I find that with certain teachers I feel more at ease speaking than with others. (S17/Q7)	Identifying with the topic. Feeling empathy towards the teacher.	Engaging with the topic Connecting with the teacher's personality
What engages me to speak is if I know the answer I will speak up. But if I am not too sure, I will keep quiet, just as not to embarrass myself in front of other people, I guess. In a language class, you are always afraid to make a mistake. It is not like maths, where it is either the right answer or the wrong answer. (S37/Q7)	Feeling embarrassed. Being afraid of making mistakes.	Engaging with the topic Lacking confidence
I find that if the teacher is explaining something and I find that there are one or two words that I don't understand what they mean, then I won't talk, because I think I am going to get this completely wrong and I am going to make a fool out of myself. Again if I don't know what I am talking about in English, then I won't speak in the language. (S35/Q8)	Expressing fear of looking like a fool and making mistakes.	Lacking confidence Fearing embarrassment
In my class… speaking is casually… I brought it up with the teacher: "I would like to speak more" and the reply was what I thought it would be: "there is not enough time in the class!"… You can't really learn to speak if we spend all our time focusing on [grammar]… (S10/Q24)	Describing their frustration for not being able to speak more in class.	Expressing frustration for lack of empathy

Source: Student Interview data (Quijada Cervoni 2012)

These emerging categories will now be analysed in more detail.

4.5.1 Students' feelings and confidence

One of the emerging factors affecting SEtS was the participants' concern about how to overcome fears and their own sense of low confidence when put in the position of speaking in the L2. How, therefore, can this concern be addressed? How can students be prevented from constantly fearing failure or feeling embarrassment when they are going to speak in the L2? Is it possible to assist them to overcome their feelings of inadequacy? Can their self-confidence be strengthened?

When comparing the focus group data to the data from the interviews, and in the discussions with the students about what engages them to speak in the language class, a general sentiment—identified in the literature on SLA and WTC—started to become evident, which was that students needed to build up their self-confidence if they were to have the courage to speak. This affective factor was modulated mainly by who the teacher was, how the students felt in the class environment, how familiar they were with the subject matter, and whether they were made to feel comfortable if they made mistakes. These common concerns were summarised as follows during the interview when answering question Q7: *Can you tell me three things that engage you to speak in class in [the L2]?* Although these are students' individual thoughts, I present them as a single narrative, to show the correlation between the students' voices:

> *[Things that engage me to speak in class are the need] to have an opinion on what is being discussed and feel comfortable (S14); to have confidence in what [you] want to say (S10); [for] a relative level of comfort with the subject matter (S11), [and] an open learning environment where it is OK to make mistakes (S13); [if the students] are all at the same level (S59); when you are having fun in class, you are less shy (S62); if the relationship the teacher builds with the students is more relaxed, and sort of fun (S65), [and] having a friendly atmosphere… and a teacher who is non-judgemental (S70); if the teacher can create a semi informal environment [where] you don't feel you are being judged (S79).*

In essence, the students are claiming an environment where they can feel confident in expressing themselves in the L2.

While aiming to code a more selected sub-set of data, I went back to the data collected through a "complete the sentence" strategy during the interviews. The students were asked to finish the following sentence: *I feel really engaged to speak in a language class when…*

(Interview Q10). It was interesting to see that the same clear sentiments were emerging from their spontaneous answers. The most frequent responses are represented in the following narrative:

> *[I feel really engaged to speak in a language class] when I feel comfortable in my abilities to speak (S10) [and] comfortable with the people around me (S27 and S65); when it's really fun (S13), when I have something to say (S14), [and] when I am happy (S15); when I find it interesting (S17), when I like the topic (S61) and I like the people (S62); when I feel I can make mistakes (S59); when my friends are around (S63), when I am confident in what I want to say (S64),[and] when the teacher is friendly and non-judgemental… and there is a good rapport with the teacher (S70).*

Again, the data reveals that the students' major concern—to be able to feel comfortable amongst their peers and have a *good rapport* with the teacher to build up their confidence to speak—is based on a socio-affective process.

The concept of disengagement to speak in class in the TL was also explored in the interview phase. Lack of confidence was one of the most cited reasons for not engaging to speak in class. The most common expressions of disengagement to speak as a response to question Q8—*Can you tell me three things that disengage or disaffect you to speak in class in [the L2]?* —can be summarised in the following statements:

> *[Things that disengage me to speak in class in (the L2) are] being incredibly nervous and not having enough confidence to say what I would like to say (S10); not feeling at the same level as someone else, and being unable to express what I want to express (S11); when I see one person who is just amazing at the L2, I feel intimidated… and also when I don't like the teacher (S13); when the feedback you get from the teacher is negative… you lose all confidence. When other people in the class speak better than you… you don't bother. A general lack of self-confidence (S27); a really critical teacher disengages me (S57); unfamiliar topics and a strict and uncomfortable environment (S59); error correction and teachers making facial expressions make me really embarrassed (S63).*

This is only an excerpt of the codified data that is relevant to some common aspects of Student Disengagement *to Speak*. When comparing the two sets of data, we can rapidly assess the theoretical similarities of the socio-affective dimensions that affect SEtS and SDtS. In this case, the students are revealing their level of discomfort when faced with more competent peers, unfamiliar topics, uncomfortable environments, error correction and perceived lack of empathy from the teacher.

Towards the end of the interview, the students were again asked to complete a sentence, but this time presenting the opposite scenario: *What really disengages me to speak in a language class is…* (Interview Q11). The most frequent responses were the following:

> *When I feel embarrassed or singled out (S65); when I feel overwhelmed (S14); when I am frustrated (S15); when I am bored (S17); when a teacher is really negative (S27); when the teacher or the students are being obnoxious (S57); when other people in the class are overbearing (S61) or too good (S62); when I don't understand (S66); when I have no idea what is going on (S68); when you have a severe hatred against a teacher (S69); when the teacher is judgemental (S7); when I don't feel confident… and out of my depth (S70); when I am not interested (S75 and S28).*

As soon as the survey was launched, I began to analyse the qualitative data from the open-ended questions, checking for similarities. The coding disclosed the same incidents and properties that had emerged previously:

> *Being scared of being wrong (S26/Q19); becoming more confident to speak the L2, without constant correction of grammar mistakes (S44/Q19); not saying anything at the risk of appearing stupid (S71/Q19); lacking the confidence to express myself in front of the whole class (S86/Q19); failing to see the relevance of what [we] are learning (S112/Q18); being judged harshly by the teacher for making mistakes (S6/Q23); being intimidated by [those] who are dominant in answering questions (S125/Q23); feeling pressured… and attacked when teachers single me out (S182/Q23); being judged by my peers (S23/Q23); feeling fear of people laughing at what you say (S20/Q23).*

As is clear from these quotes, the data is somewhat repetitive, and in GT "when no additional data [was] being found to develop new properties of a category" (Glaser & Holton, 2007, p. 315), it meant that the stage of data saturation was probably being approached. According to Charmaz (2006a), categories are "saturated when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights" (p. 113). When comparing the interview data to the responses from the open-ended questions of the survey, including those categories that were less prevalent in the rest of the data collected and codified, I realised I was in fact nearing data saturation; however, I still had not identified a core category, and I was far from visualising a clearly conceptualised emergent theory.

4.5.2 Who the teacher is, matters

The data unveiled many issues in relation to students' difficulty in engaging to speak in a language class. Some of the issues often referred to students' willingness to communicate

only if some conditions were met; in other instances, the data highlighted what prevented students from doing so. One of the main concerns emerging from the data was identified in recurring initial codes as *the role of the teacher, the importance of the teacher* or *the teacher-student relationship.* As stated previously, these initial codes were grouped under the more focused coding of TP*.* The students were constantly pointing out the fact that they would engage to speak if the teacher had personality traits that would offer them the confidence to "engage". The opposite was also a valid premise: if the teacher had a "disengaging" personality, the students would simply not engage to speak or say only the minimum required. However, was *teacher's personality* the property of a broader and more abstract conceptual category that needed to be explored further? Chapter 5 will reveal the characteristics of an "engaging teacher's personality" from the perspective of the students and explore in more detail how and why such an engaging teacher personality would engage students to speak. Two other potential categories that emerged from the empirical data will also be examined: the need for the teacher to propose relevant topics for class discussions and to create a genuinely engaging class environment. A further important concern that arose from the data was the students' need to be reassured by the teacher that making mistakes is part of the process of learning.

It was through this process that I conceptualised the students' primary concern as "their desire to connect with the teacher and build up their confidence in order to engage to speak in class". While looking for the "explanatory power to integrate all the categories" (Higgins, 2007, p. 314) as per the GT process, it became evident from the data coding that the core category would belong to a basic emotional and affective domain, since whether expressed by the students or inferred from the data, the participants' concerns were discernible from a range of emotions and feelings, from being afraid of being judged by their teacher or by their peers, to sounding silly and being embarrassed.

Glaser (1978) stated that "substantive codes conceptualize the empirical substance of the area of research. Theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory" (p. 55). If we were to theoretically code these factors into hypotheses, we could say that the more comfortable students feel

with the teacher's personality, the topic and the class environment, the more they will engage to speak. However, in GT, once we reach theoretical coding we still do not have the whole picture. It helps us to integrate and model the GT by suggesting that a relationship exists between the categories, the concepts and their properties, but we still do not have a theory. We only have a better understanding of the study's concern, and the coding of the empirical data has revealed the main factors that impact on SEtS. Therefore, in order to continue searching for the core category and reach a theoretical integration, I switched my attention to the quantitative data obtained through the survey, where I included open-ended questions to be certain that other topics not mentioned in the focus group and the interviews could also be identified.

4.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the students' main motives for studying a second language in higher education. I have established that students' desired goal when studying a second language is to learn to speak the L2. The detail of what engages—and disengages—students *to speak* has also been explored throughout the chapter.

The preliminary findings in this phase of the study suggest that students' confidence can be boosted when a teacher has an encouraging and friendly attitude towards them and creates an appropriate environment where students can be relaxed and not feel threatened by the prospect of making mistakes or being judged by the teacher and their peers. If the students are having fun or are enthusiastic about a familiar topic, their level of language anxiety may even disappear, though momentarily.

Adults may feel uncomfortable when learning a second language because they are afraid of sounding "like children" or "feeling stupid" or inadequate, and often a sense of frustration and impatience pushes them to give up (Rubin & Thompson, 1994, p. 10). The same occurs in a university language class: if a student is intimidated by the personality of a teacher, by more competent peers, by the class environment or by the lack of familiarity with the content, anxiety will overtake the student and they will freeze. Emotions and other affective variables

take over the cognitive process of learning to speak in the L2, affecting the learner's level of confidence, regardless of whether the learner is an extroverted or introverted individual.

Young adults do not always have a strongly developed identity and may be very conscious of how they look and how they sound, and thus feel embarrassed and experience low self-confidence when attempting to express themselves in a second language. Building a climate of trust and a connection with the students is shown in these findings to be a prerequisite for a student's willingness to speak. The students are then able to share "their feelings, experiences, interests, memories, daydreams [and] fantasies" (Moskowitz, 1978, p. 27). This is reflected in the voice of many of the students interviewed, as in the following example:

> *When we are having fun in class, we forget about the embarrassment or the fear to speak… We are all making mistakes, and it feels safe. We are laughing at each other. I don't like to talk much, but if I am having fun, I can get engaged to speak.* (Interview Q7/S28)

The quantitative findings have served as a complement to the analytic autoethnography and have cleared the path towards a grounded theoretical development of this study's concern, steering us closer to unveiling the core category and reaching the theory that will emerge from all the data. As Glaser (2008) emphasises, the core category will emerge eventually as the overriding pattern above all other categories and properties, and "it [will] provide the imagery of how the core variable resolves the main concern of the participants" (p. 32).

The next chapter will identify the final building blocks of the theoretical development and discuss in a more in-depth way the top three reasons identified by students, through the survey, as influencing SEtS. These results will be compared and contrasted with the relevant literature. The students' definition of the personality traits that make an engaging-to-speak teacher, or conversely a disengaging-to-speak teacher, will be explored.

CHAPTER 5
Student Connections

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I identified the main reasons that drove the students in this research to study a second language in tertiary education, and I discussed key elements that affect SEtS and SDtS in a language class, with teacher's personality having the highest impact. The research done to date in the fields of second language teaching and learning attributes a learner's decision to initiate communication in class or remain silent to many different factors, including motivation (Dörnyei, 2003; Gardner & Clément, 1990;), attitude (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003), anxiety and self-confidence (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Ghanbarpour, 2016; Horwitz & Young, 1991; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Nazarova & Umurova, 2016), perceived competence (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2002), student personality traits—the dilemma of the introverted versus the extraverted—(MacIntyre, Clément, & Noels, 2007), boredom (Chapman 2013), affect (Arnold, 1999; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Schumann, 1999), fear of error correction (Brown, 2000), self-esteem and inhibitions (Brown, 2000), learning strategies (Dörnyei, 2006), class activities (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014), intelligence (Genesee, 1976; Sasaki, 1996) and learning styles (Dörnyei, 2006; Genesee, 1976), among other cognitive, behavioural and emotional reasons. Yet, the importance of a teacher's personality in the fields of CLT and SLA seems to still be "a largely taboo research topic" (Königs, 1991, p. 81, cited in Kramsch, 1993, p. 92) as very little has been said on the subject to date. "It is surprising to know how little attention is paid to teachers themselves in language learning psychology research, especially compared to the depth and breadth of work on learners" (Dewaele, Gkonou, et al., 2018, p. 126). The present study has identified that students' decisions to speak in a language class is underpinned by their connections to (1) an engaging teacher's personality, (2) a familiar topic, and (3) a fun and safe learning environment.

Thus, this chapter will examine in more detail the findings of this research in relation to those three features of SEtS, and it will discuss in depth the importance the students attribute to

the connection they feel to these three elements. Section 5.2 will explore the definition of teacher's personality and examine the impact a teacher's personality—as defined by the students—can have on their decision to speak in class or remain silent. In section 5.3, I will turn to topic familiarity and how connecting—or not connecting—with the topic affects Student Engagement *to Speak* in class. Section 5.4 will look at the learning environment, and how students understand an engaging-to-speak class environment as opposed to a disengaging one. Section 5.5 will offer further reflections on how the three top reasons identified by the students are interlinked to form a theoretical basis for the emerging theory of SEtS.

In subsection 5.2.1, I will explore the definition of an engaging teacher personality from a student's perspective compared to a teacher's perception and assess how it influences engagement to speak. Subsection 5.2.2 will present further findings per level of instruction and discuss the importance of TP for SEtS. Subsection 5.2.3 will close this section by comparing this study's findings with the literature and assessing other effects of TP, with the goal of defining some of the properties of this category.

5.2 Connecting with the teacher

> *How the teacher presents him or herself right from the off…That makes a big difference, especially in the first week…nothing too bad has happened yet…They can't be too grumpy… If they come in smiling… Immediately there is a little bit of relax, of fresh air, especially if it is your first year at Uni.* (Focus Group/Beatrice)

Through the use of GT strategies, this study shows that who the teacher is plays a fundamental role in Student Engagement *to Speak* in a language class. To explore further whether students' connection with the teacher—and in fact students' connection with each other—can indeed make a difference in SEtS, I asked the students the following question during the interview phase: *Do you think a "teacher's personality" can make a difference on whether you become engaged to speak in class or not* (Student Interview Q20)*?*

> *Yes. You want to have a teacher who is prepared to have a laugh, who has a sense of humour, who doesn't take it too seriously, who can have a conversation and correct you without making you feel too embarrassed. Who talks about things that are of interest and*

> *is not challenging to understand. Who checks that you are keeping up as well.* (Interview S53/Q20)

This response reflects the majority of the students' sentiments. It describes a teacher who cares, who is *prepared to have a laugh*, who feels some empathy towards the students and who somehow connects with the students and strengthens this interpersonal exchange. It is someone who talks about interesting topics and is easy to understand. As Hargreaves (1998) eloquently remarked, "good teachers are not just well-oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge, and joy" (p. 835).

As seen in Chapter 4, students from Introductory to Intermediate level identified teacher's personality (TP) as the most important factor affecting both their engagement and their disengagement to speak in language classes (see Tables 4.17 & 4.19).

> *I think the teacher's personality and the relationship that the teacher builds with the students are really central to the process [of Student Engagement* to Speak*]. So, if that relationship is more relaxed, more informal, sort of fun, then I think that encourages the students to speak more in class.* (Interview S65/Q7)

But how do students understand personality in this context? What aspects of TP trigger Student Engagement *to Speak* or, on the other side of the coin, push them to remain silent? How do students define a teacher with an engaging-to-speak personality as opposed to a disengaging attitude? Do teachers and students agree on the importance of TP for their engagement to speak? The answers to these queries will be revealed as I further explore systematically the socio-affective dimensions of a language class, and as I approach the unfolding of a grounded theory within an analytical autoethnography.

5.2.1 Teacher's personality (TP)

Stevick (1980), who was influential in developing the communicative approach to language learning, proclaimed that "success [in language learning] depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom" (p. 4). This implies that it is the relationship that the teacher builds with the students which is central to language learning. Ambady and Rosenthal (1993) argued that

teachers who “were judged to be significantly more optimistic, confident, dominant, active, enthusiastic, likable, warm, competent and supportive on the basis of nonverbal behaviour” (p. 434), had a positive influence on the students’ decision to communicate in class.

It is important to clarify that in this study, I am not referring to personality types such as those defined by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI) (Rushton, Morgan, & Richard, 2007), but rather to a teacher’s personal characteristics related to affect, attitudes, and behaviour. As Penner (1992) rationalised, “personality is that part of the teacher’s self which he/she projects into every classroom activity, thereby affecting and conditioning every learning situation” (p. 45). The study of personality traits and characteristics in relation to foreign language (FL) education goes back to 1984, when Lalonde and Gardener studied specific personality traits, and to Goldberg who in 1993 proposed the Big-Five model—introversion-extroversion, pleasantness, consciousness, emotional stability and openness to experience—when studying the role of personality factors in FL learning (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). However, for many decades the research on personality traits in FL education focused on students’ personality, rather than on teachers’ personality.

“We teach who we are” said Palmer (2017, p. 1) in his book entitled *The courage to teach: exploring the inner landscape of a teacher’s life*.

> As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul (Palmer, 2017, p. 2).

When, as teachers, we reflect about teaching and learning and about who we are when we teach—and, by extension, our personality—we need to ask ourselves how often we reflect on the impact we have as teachers on the students’ learning and their life. We need to know what our values are so we can share them with our students and know who *they* are. Palmer (2017) believes that when we teach, we influence our students not just with our intellect but also with our emotions and with our spirit. Thus, that persona we bring to class will touch on the life of our students, particularly those who are at a young age, as 1st year university students, tasting adult life for the first time. Our personality, our identity, and our attitude in front of the students may represent the hook that engages our students to speak in class or

the shield that compels them to remain silent. Thus, in an attempt to better contextualise TP and see it through the students' lens, this study explores how the students perceive the personality of a teacher who has the ability to engage them to speak in class. Subsection 5.2.1.1 looks at how students define the personality of such a teacher, and then compares it to the characteristics of a disengaging-to-speak teacher's personality, in subsection 5.2.1.2. In subsection 5.2.1.3, I present what the teachers' views are of an engaging teacher personality and how this compares with what is perceived by the students.

5.2.1.1 An engaging-to-speak personality: the student's perspective

> *If the teacher is relaxed and having fun and likes to talk to us and engage with us. If they are generally very friendly and not intimidating, I feel much more inclined to speak [in class] because I am not afraid they will scold/laugh/patronise me.* (Survey S156/Q28)

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I included open-ended questions in the survey, in order to explore other variables or factors that could influence the students' decision to speak in class. From the above quote and many other similar comments, I recorded in the memos, it can be appreciated that students place more importance on the affective and perhaps behavioural characteristics of a person than on the cognitive variables of that individual's persona. One of the open-ended questions in the survey was stated as follows: *Can you describe the personality of a teacher who engages you to speak in class* (Survey Q28)? All 388 students responded to this question, and most of the responses related to affect:

> *If they are kind when you make mistakes in language or content, if they respond to your contribution and don't just "leave you hanging", if they are a good teacher in general you feel like you want to contribute.* (Survey S163/Q28)

In this statement, the students' perception of an engaging teacher's personality is closely related to the emotional aspects of an individual. So, how do students in this research define an engaging-to-speak teacher personality? As explained in the methodology chapter, NVivo was used throughout the analysis to help better organise and visualise the qualitative data. In order to explore the data, an NVivo word frequency query was generated to find out what were the 30 most frequent descriptive adjectives used by the students in responding to Q28 to explain how they define the personality of an engaging teacher to speak in class. Survey Q28 was chosen for this query since it represented a larger sample of students, and not just

my own students. Figure 5.1 below illustrates the result of that query. “The size and density of the font indicates frequency—the larger the word—the more frequently it appears” in the students’ responses (NVivo, 2012, p. 136).

Figure 5.1 An engaging-to-speak teacher personality through the student lens.

Source: Student Survey, June 2013, Q28 Can you describe the personality of a teacher who engages you to speak in class? N= 388 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

By looking at this word cloud, the top three descriptive adjectives that stand out in the description the students gave of an engaging-to-speak teacher are fun, supportive, and approachable. In this study, we know that the students identified TP and a fun class among the top three reasons for their engagement to speak in class; thus, the fact that *fun* is the main adjective used by the students to describe an engaging-to-speak teacher’s personality, does not come as a surprise:

> *A teacher who is* ***fun*** *and engaging herself makes you want to have a conversation with her! More-so, if she doesn’t make you feel stupid and understands what you are saying and is polite… makes you feel fine to make mistakes... makes you want to talk more.* (Survey S146/Q28)

Reflecting on my own experience and on conversations with language students, I anticipate that when a teacher creates a fun atmosphere, students will relax and perhaps temporarily lose their inhibitions, which steers them to use the L2 in a spontaneous manner as if they were speaking in their native language. They try to express themselves without barriers if they

know that making mistakes is part of the norm, and if the teacher does not make them *feel stupid*.

> *When a teacher is funny and open and **supportive**, I feel encouraged to make the most and have **fun** and give everything a go!* (Survey S198/Q28)
>
> *If a teacher is **approachable** and understanding it can improve my engagement in the class and also encourage me to move outside of my comfort zone.* (Survey S122/Q28)

A teacher who is "fun" lowers the anxiety levels in the class and the students' fear of being embarrassed and helps build their courage to "have a go". A teacher who is supportive creates a scaffolded environment to learning and increases the students' confidence to speak even if they make mistakes. As perceived by the students, an approachable teacher is someone who is not intimidating and who gives them the necessary strength to *move outside* [their] *comfort zone.* During the interview process, the students were also asked a question related to SEtS: *Can you describe the personality of a teacher who engages you to speak in class* (Interview Q21)*?*

> ***Supportive** …Encouraging when we are unable to say something… Being patient really Patience is a big thing…Sometimes you don't know what to say in that language… so just acknowledging that it is something that it is very easy to struggle with, easy to have difficulty with, it is very different from your own language… Just giving students confidence!* (Interview S11/Q21)

Finding a supportive teacher is a common aspiration amongst the language students: someone encouraging and patient, someone with empathy who acknowledges the difficulties of learning a second language and builds up their confidence to continue the journey. Another student echoed that sentiment:

> *Kind and patient and engaged themselves in what is going on. Engaged enough to let you know when you are making a mistake, but not in a negative way. I had a teacher who would tease people about their grammatical errors but in a gentle way, and only if she knew that people could handle it. It was like a game. So that meant that it was safe to make a mistake.* (Interview S57/Q21)

As the fear of making mistakes when speaking in the L2 is a recurrent source of anxiety in a language class, students need that safety net offered by a teacher who is kind and patient and who can create a fun and relaxing atmosphere in class. If a profile of that engaging teacher were to be constructed based on what the students said in the interview process, the result

would be some sort of ideally affective and charismatic teacher. An engaging-to-speak teacher as portrayed by these students would be someone with the following personality attributes: “warm, very open, very tolerant, supportive, patient, generous with their time, really friendly, open-minded, approachable, intelligent, non-judgmental, vivacious, excited, laid back, trying to make a connection, relaxed, forgiving, understanding, not intimidating, creative, confident, understanding of the different learning styles, available, accessible, funny, personable, passionate, gentle, able to connect everyone together, happy, outgoing, concerned, optimistic” (Interview students’ feedback, Q21). It is interesting to observe here that of the 47 students who answered question 21, no-one used cognitive adjectives such as “knowledgeable” or “experienced”. All the adjectives used are affective or behavioural characteristics of a personality.

Walls, Nardi, von Minden, and Hoffman (2002), in a relevant study on tertiary teachers’ education, concluded that students valued teachers’ affective characteristics more highly than their cognitive knowledge when assessing a teacher’s effectiveness in class. If we look at the field of educational psychology, we find that Brosh (1996), Bryson and Hand (2007), Kuh (2001), Symonds (1947), and Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), through a variety of studies, have implied that how the teacher is perceived by the students can have an influence on class performance. The old claims by Symonds (1947) that “the greatest problems faced by teachers are personal rather than professional [and that] teachers are appreciated not so much for their knowledge or for their ability to teach as for their friendliness, helpfulness, and appreciation of the [students’] difficulties” (pp. 653-655) seem very much applicable to the language classrooms of today, to gauge by the student voices in this study.

Thus, according to the students, if teachers are fun, supportive, genuine, approachable and friendly, it represents a step in the right direction as they may have a greater likelihood of connecting with the students and engaging them to speak in class. Teachers perceived as having these personality traits would be expected to create a “safer” (more secure) class environment where students would feel valued and more confident to speak, where they would be more relaxed and less anxious, and where they would not be embarrassed when making mistakes. Walls et al. (2002) identified characteristics including “closeness, warmth

and enthusiasm" and teachers' "caring and friendly" personalities as particularly prevalent in the description of a "really good teacher" who can create an effective learning environment, as opposed to an ineffective teacher whose personality—described as "cold, abusive, boring and uncaring"—generates rather "hostile learning environments" (pp. 40-45) which would thus not be conducive to engagement of any sort. So, how do students in this study define a teacher who has a personality that disengages them to speak?

5.2.1.2 A disengaging-to-speak personality from the student's lens

> *If I don't like the teacher… I wish I could be more adult or more loyal to the content… If I don't like the person for whatever intangible reason…I just don't respond very well.* (Interview S13/Q8)

This explanation of what disengages a student to speak in class is very honest and insightful: the student wishes *to be more adult* in the sense that other factors should be more important, but simply expresses that if they do not like the teacher, a connection is not established and thus speaking—or engaging with the teacher—will not occur. Having the courage to speak in class can be very closely related to an emotional personal reaction "linked to the chemistry that develops between the learners and their teacher" (Dewaele, 2011, p. 28). There should be some sort of connection for the students to engage, or they will remain silent.

During the interviews, many of the students conveyed that their disengagement to speak was closely linked to the teacher's personality and attitude in class, as it affected their self-confidence and increased their fear and anxiety to speak:

> *If the teacher is too abrupt, I will not speak in class because I am scared of making mistakes. I will only speak when the teacher asks me a direct question. I will answer with a few words.* (Interview S60/Q8)

It is known from the students' voice that their decision to speak spontaneously in class or wait for the teacher or a classmate to ask a question, is closely related to how vulnerable they feel. If they sense that the teacher is not interested either in the class content or in the students themselves, and has an intimidating personality, the students' level of self-confidence will be lowered, thus impacting on their willingness to use the L2 when it is their turn to speak. As expressed by Ghanbarpour (2016), "uncertainty about one's ability to deal with the difficulties

of a given communication task would lead to a decrease in their perceived L2 self-competence… also referred to as L2 self-confidence" (p. 2266). The notion of confidence is continuously highlighted, as in the following comment:

> *If the teacher is easily frustrated, bored with their own subject, or somewhat aggressive in manner, I'm unlikely to be willing to speak. Such personality traits make me feel vulnerable, and confidence is a key element of my willingness to participate* (Survey S255/Q30).

When I looked at the reverse situation of SEtS, I found that the effect that teacher's personality could have on the students' disengagement to speak in class was also quite significant. In the survey, a straightforward open-ended question was put to the students asking them to describe the characteristics of a teacher who disengages them to speak in class: *Can you describe the personality of a teacher who disengages you to speak in class* (Survey Q30)*?* Again, using NVivo as a tool to assist in organising the qualitative data for analysis and better visualisation, a word frequency query was generated to search for the 30 most frequent descriptive adjectives used by the students to define the personality of a teacher that would disengage them to speak in class. Figure 5.2 below presents a disengaging-to-speak teacher as being primarily someone who is disinterested, someone who is rude with the students and unfriendly, who is impatient and confused, uninterested and picking (picky).

Figure 5.2 A disengaging-to-speak teacher personality from the student lens

Source: Student Survey, June 2013, Q30 What is the personality of a teacher who disengages you to speak in class? N= 388 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

The adjective *disinterested* highlighted in this word cloud, perhaps attributable to its widespread contemporary usage as a synonym of “uninterested”, is a matter of concern. If teachers are perceived by the students as not being interested (uninterested) in teaching or in their students, how will they engage them to speak? In describing a teacher who is uninterested, a student wrote:

> *If they are aloof and don’t really look like they want to be there, or if they scold the class for not participating. Which makes one want to participate less.* (Survey S127/Q30)

Other students described their language teacher as rude:

> *If the teacher appears arrogant,* ***rude,*** *overly critical or easily offended by mispronunciation, I personally feel less inclined to “risk” negative consequences from speaking.* (Survey S132/Q30)

These personality characteristics are noted as having a negative effect on the students and will disengage them from speaking since they do not want to risk being scolded or belittled in front of their classmates. According to the students their confidence will be shattered, and they will remain in their cocoon, as is alluded to in the following response:

> *Overly critical and stern. Learning a language is so much easier when it is a positive experience, it need not be scary! I know this is copied from you question but so true!! I would be more engaged to speak in my language class—even if my grammar was not perfect—if I knew my teacher was listening to what I was saying, and not just listening for my mistakes.* (Survey S105/Q30)

Many other affective variables were identified in this profile of a disengaging teacher, such as overly critical and stern. During the focus group and in informal conversations with the students, they expressed frustration over giving oral presentations and perceiving that teachers were not really listening to what they had to say. The students felt that teachers were hunting for their grammatical errors. This was a big factor in disengaging them to speak naturally. Feeling stupid or foolish is a common concern expressed by students even at more advanced levels, particularly when they perceive their teacher to be impatient, patronising or, as implied by some of the students in some cases, humiliating.

> *A teacher who makes you feel stupid (by becoming frustrated or laughing) when you engage in class plays a huge part in disengaging the interaction.* (Survey S195/Q30)

Students at more advanced levels are often irritated if they feel their skills are undervalued, such as when a teacher resorts to English for explanations:

> *Personally, I find it highly disengaging if a teacher treats their students as though they are incapable of understanding the language they are being taught. Especially at higher levels, if a teacher resorts to English to explain activities etc. it seems a wasted opportunity to speak in the language that is being taught.* (Survey S43/Q30)

In such a climate, the environment in class becomes disengaging. The decision not to use the L2 to communicate is triggered by the teacher's treatment of the students, or by the teacher's perceived attitude towards students in class. This perceived negative attitude is what encapsulates the definition of a disengaging-to-speak teacher's personality.

> *If they present the superior attitude that "teacher knows all", I feel disengaged to speak. This is because I feel there is more chance for error and thus embarrassment.* (Survey S87/Q30)

The students' characterisation of an intimidating teacher as being someone arrogant with a superior attitude of *the teacher knows all* is a strong disincentive to student engagement to speak in class, as it impacts on self-confidence. As noted previously by a student, a simple like or dislike of the teacher can determine the boundaries for SEtS, although sometimes students describe extremes of teachers' behaviour, such as that described by this student:

> *One of the worst experiences that I have had in speaking in language classes here at […] was with a particular teacher… We had to do orals with short stories, and the teacher we had was really really critical on how everyone spoke, to the point that by the end of the semester no one was speaking. If you made a grammatical error [he/she] would laugh at you, and immediately correct it, and tell people that that was wrong and that it sounded too simple like children.* (Interview S57/Q8)

In this particular situation, the fear of making mistakes was exacerbated by the perception of a teacher's mocking attitude. The student would therefore choose to remain silent to avoid the risk of being embarrassed by the teacher in front of their classmates.

I have looked at the definition of TP from the students' perspective, and how they perceive a teacher who will be able to engage them to speak and one who would do the opposite. As mentioned before, most of the data collected for this study represents the voice of the students; however, some of the data was also collected to explore to a certain degree the

teachers' understanding of the personality traits of someone who would engage students to speak. I will examine this data in the next section.

5.2.1.3 The teachers' perception of an engaging teacher personality

In the search for the relevant properties of the emerging theory, it was important to hear teachers' opinions on the importance they attach to their own personality when teaching, and the perception they have of what attributes shape such a personality. As previously outlined in the methodology chapter, 14 teachers took part in this research by participating in the teacher interview process. The teachers were asked exactly the same question as the students: *Can you describe in two or three words the personality of a teacher that you believe engages students to speak in class* (Teacher Interview Q20), with the following being one of the answers:

> *Happy and friendly. Making them welcome and safe. It is such a scary world out there with a foreign language.* (Interview T2/Q20)

This teacher's acknowledgment of the *scary world out there* when studying a language, aligns with the students' feelings and fears. The students wish to have a *friendly* teacher, and if that teacher is *happy* in class, the students will probably feel *welcome* and *safe*. Since the data attached to this question was not sufficiently extensive, a word cloud was not considered necessary. The full responses to this question are presented in Appendix U. They show that the top three descriptive adjectives or properties that were consistently identified with an engaging teacher's personality by the teachers themselves were *respectful*, *friendly* and *funny* (Teacher interview Q20). One of the teachers added *friendly but not a friend!* (Interview T10/Q20). This teacher attempted to explain the sort of relationship they felt a teacher ought to have with students:

> *I think the relationship you have with students is important, although I don't think you have to be too close to students. For me, I don't want to be too close in class, but also I don't want to be too strict or too distant. Does that make sense? Because if you put too much distance and you say you are THE teacher and make them feel that they are not as good as you may be, they won't speak as much.* (Interview T10/Q8)

As Paolo Freire, the leading expert in Critical Pedagogy stated in his 1996 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, if a teacher is not genuine and insists on holding a higher level of power than

that of the students, the class dynamic becomes unequal, teacher-student interaction is no longer "democratic", and it creates a rather unengaging environment. Thus, if the teacher is perceived as "an" authority, students may not engage to speak truthfully and naturally. It is simply a human reaction to withdraw—sometimes momentarily, depending on one's own personality—when faced with arrogance or contempt. "The way teachers communicate [and relate] to students… and how this is perceived by the students might affect their affective and cognitive learning and their feelings throughout the learning process" (Ballester, 2015, p. 9).

Other qualifiers used by the teachers included knowledgeable, strong, professional, intelligent, approachable, and inclusive (Teacher Interview Q20). One of the teachers described an engaging teacher as "a teacher who is not a star" (Interview T6/Q20), while another said that an engaging teacher who can make the students speak is someone who can be "a good actor/actress" (Interview T12/Q20). At one point, I observed an *ab initio* class, and I could sense an environment of enthusiasm and warmth since the teacher was always smiling. At the end of the class, I approached the teacher and commented on how contagious their smile was to the students who were smiling back, and their response was: "I have experience. I am a good actor/actress!" From the students' reactions in this class and the positive atmosphere, the students must have interpreted the teacher's smiling as a genuine expression of a passion for teaching and not as an "act". Smiling and other emotional expressions can indeed fill a class atmosphere with positive energy and create bursts of enthusiasm. As Zhang (2014) wrote "an enthusiastic teacher often spices up the class with excitement, enjoyment, and anticipation, engages students to participate [and in this case to speak], and stimulates them to explore" (p. 44). "A teacher who smiles has a positive, uplifting impact upon the classroom… This act of smiling can create an instant positive and personal connection" with the students (Hagar, 2019, p. 47).

> *A teacher who creates an atmosphere… and allows the student to make mistakes, to be themselves, to joke with the language, to be cheeky, and who does not penalise them. A teacher who allows them to be themselves.* (Interview T1/Q20)

This response was more in harmony with the students' feelings, and this teacher showed empathy towards the students in attempting to minimise their fears and maximise their level

of self-confidence. One of the teachers played with the idea of attracting, charming and fascinating the students in order to engage them to speak:

> *I think you have to sort of seduce your students into speaking. To make them kind of see that speaking can be fun, and not frustrating or intimidating for them. That making mistakes is absolutely normal, it is expected; on the contrary errors is a manifestation of progress.* (Interview T5/Q20)

If *seducing* students into speaking is perhaps too strong a term, this interviewee seemed to imply that teachers can certainly attract, charm, and connect with students by creating a fun and non-intimidating environment, while reassuring students that making mistakes is indeed expected when learning a second language.

In general, the teachers' portrayal of an engaging-to-speak personality roughly matches the students' description. However, do these teachers feel their own personality matches their perception of an engaging-to-speak personality? Are these language teachers mostly *friendly, approachable* and *fun*? By observing the classes of the teachers interviewed, one would think so. However, I often sensed the class atmosphere to be tense, and many students remained silent in class when the teacher asked a question. The students who were active were responding primarily to questions directed to them when the more competent students did not answer the questions. If the students' and the teachers' understanding of an engaging-to-speak teacher's personality matches, why do teachers continue to have so little success in engaging the students *to speak*? How much is a genuine connection with the students a key factor to SEtS?

The issue of an *intimidating* teacher personality was often raised by the students when discussing the challenges of language learning, as voiced by the following students:

> *An intimidating teacher is somebody that kind of thinks they know so much, that their opinions is worth so much more than students' opinion.* (Interview S68/Q20)

> *An intimidating teacher is someone that seems angry, and that would often tell you that you were wrong but would never tell you when you were right. Someone that would tell you in an embarrassing way that you made a mistake and would make you feel insecure in front of the rest of the class.* (Interview S78/Q20)

The students' interpretation of "intimidating" puts emphasis on teachers who are arrogant and cause embarrassment, and who may frighten learners to the point that they feel less

confident and decide to remain silent. A teacher's personality affecting the students' confidence to speak impacts on how students interact with their teacher, and thus becomes an important affective quality associated with SEtS. One teacher declared:

> *I think I am definitely non-intimidating, I am inviting, I encourage them, I am close to them. But between them and me, I am the one who's got a bit of power here, I am the one who tells them what we do in classes and what we don't. So, in that regard, and especially with speaking, I can make that happen or not. Because, if I want, no one speaks in the class… And so there can be silence the whole time.* (Interview T5/Q19)

Do we really have the power to "make" them speak? This teacher's interpretation of being non-intimidating is not in line with the students' perception of that concept. The statement more readily fits the profile of an "authoritative" teacher who enjoys the aspect of control over the students, and thus makes the class more teacher-centred, which is not an environment conducive to students freely engaging to speak.

During the interview, the teachers were asked again the question similar to that of the students: *Do you think your "personality as a teacher" can make a difference on whether students become engaged to speak in class or not?* (Teacher Interview Q19). Some responses were as follows:

> *Yes absolutely. Because you can* ***make them feel like you are interested*** *in what they have to say.* (Interview T2/Q19)

> *Yes. It is all about that* ***relationship business****, you know… It's all about* ***negotiating****. You have to be a real psychologist. It is also being aware of* ***my likes and dislikes*** *of certain personalities, and not to be more open or kind to the students with whom I naturally resonate more. Students are very aware of this too.* ***It is sometimes exhausting to teach****.* (Interview T1/Q19)

Is there a difference between being genuinely interested in what students have to say and *making them feel like we are interested*? Can the students perceive this difference? Is teaching a business negotiation? Furthermore, can a teacher who finds teaching *exhausting* be engaging at all? These rhetorical questions need no answer if we agree with one of the statements above in that students *are very aware* of what is happening in class. They know when a teacher is behaving authentically or is acting, as this student states:

> *You can clearly tell when a teacher is not interested, you can tell by their body language. Sometimes they would even say they are not interested!* (Interview S21/Q20)

It is understandable that teachers are individuals with differing personalities, but are there some personality traits in an individual that naturally engage students to speak and other characteristics that do the opposite? This is what one of the teachers said:

> *I know I terrify some students because of my personality. They say so in the evaluations. Some students seem to love me, and those are engaged to speak. Others fear me, and those unfortunately do not talk much.* (Interview T12/Q19)

Here could lie the core of the students' concern: "love" engages to speak, and "fear" disengages. The student participants in this study profoundly believe that teacher's personality does matter and does influence their willingness *to engage to speak in class*. Brown (2009) reminds us that "mismatches between students' and teachers' expectations can negatively affect L2 students' satisfaction with the language class" (p. 46). So, if students need their teachers to be friendly, fun, approachable and supportive to come out of their cocoon, and teachers think that acting, negotiating and being authoritarian is the right approach in the language class, how successful can teachers be in engaging their students to speak in class?

> *If you have a positive teacher and you can make that personal friendship connection with them, then you are more inclined to speak… But if you have a teacher you clash with, you won't speak.* (Interview S27/Q20)

If a good rapport between teachers and students could be established, it could perhaps bring closer the two extreme situations alluded to by the student in the above quote. Personality is seen to be an element of the teacher's self which the teacher projects into the classroom, thus affecting positively or negatively the learning environment (Penner, 1992) and the connections students can build with their teacher. "While subject matter, knowledge, and skills enable effective communication, what is actually heard and taken in by the listener depends more on the personality of the speaker [in this case the teacher], or on the nature of the personal relationship between the instructor and the learner" (Eble, 1988, cited in Brosh 1996, p. 127). Although these ideas have been around a long time, they remained unexplored in depth in second language learning.

5.2.2 The importance of teacher's personality in SEtS

How does TP impact on SEtS in the language classes in the current study? And are there any significant differences between students in *ab initio* classes and those at more advanced levels? To answer these two questions, I proceeded to analyse the responses to Q27 in the survey and to compare and contrast the data throughout the four levels of instruction, as illustrated in Figure 5.3 below.

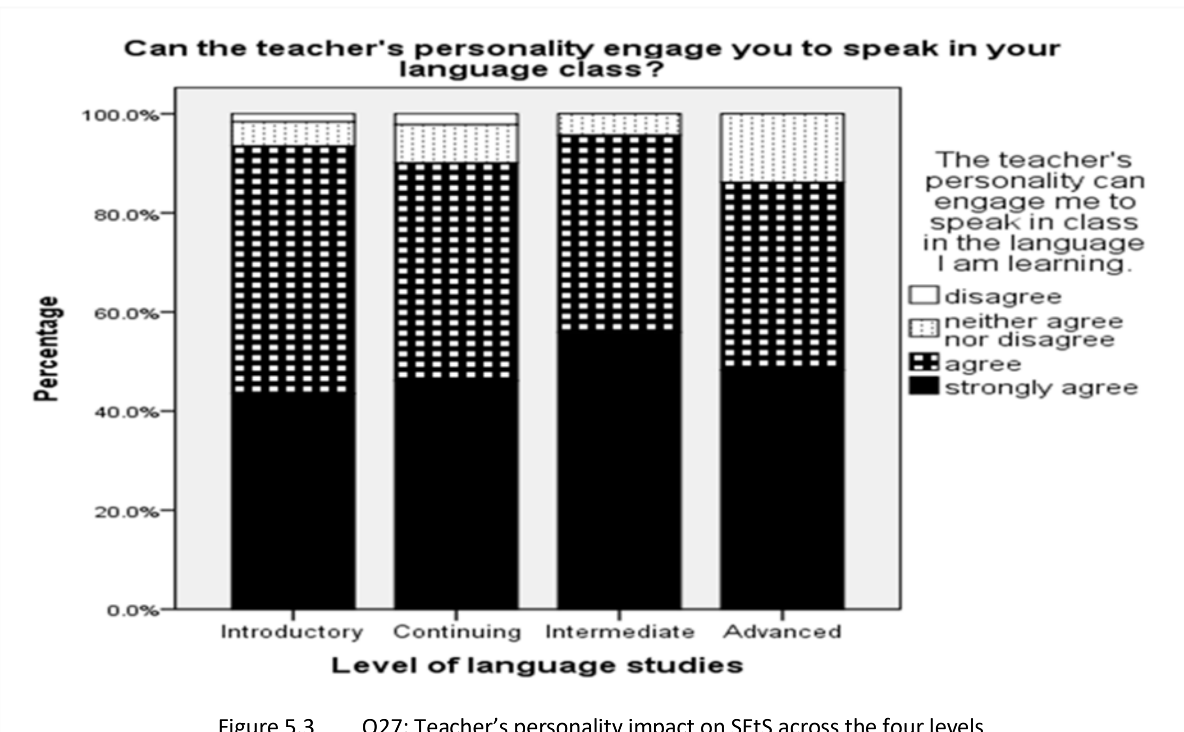


Figure 5.3 Q27: Teacher's personality impact on SEtS across the four levels

Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q27 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

At first glance, there is an overwhelming agreement among students at all levels that TP can engage the students to speak in class.

5.2.2.1 Introductory

As shown in Figure 5.3, at introductory level, the students attach high importance to a teacher's personal characteristics and mannerisms. The students are embarking on a new venture where they will be spoken to in a language they do not know. Paraphrasing Alan Brown (2009), learning a language is very different from learning other subjects. When you learn a subject taught in your L1, the transmission of knowledge and the learning process occurs in your own language. But when you learn a second language, "the transmission of

concepts and facts [is done] via the very subject under examination—the L2" (Brown, 2009, pp. 46-47). A certain apprehension may be present from the outset: What is this new environment? How am I going to be able to speak in this new language?

> *The teacher is one of the most important connections that the student has to the language they are learning, especially if the student is starting out at an introductory level. Therefore, if they see their teacher happily engaging in conversation, excited to impart knowledge to their students, the student can form a positive association with the language as well. Thus, through the teacher's personality and attitude towards their students and teaching, a student can learn to love the language just as much as their teacher* (Survey S50/Q28).

As the above statement affirms, the predominant link between the student and this new "unknown" is the teacher. The teacher consequently may become the reason why a student engages to speak and either continues in this learning journey, or gives up:

> *If I have a teacher like […], who seems genuinely engaged with improving my language skills in a friendly manner, I am more inclined to try to speak in the language in class.* (Survey S73/Q28)

As was noted, some of the teachers interviewed are convinced that when they teach, they present a "teaching persona", one of performing in front of the students:

> *I think my teaching personality is also important, because it is not really my personality, it is my teaching personality, because they are not the same. When I was a student I was very anxious to speak in front of students. But when you are a teacher, it is like being on a stage, like you are an actor.* (Interview **T**10/Q14)

Students can sense when a teacher is genuinely engaged; thus, if the students feel the teacher is acting rather than being themselves, there is an element of mistrust that can pervade in the environment, stifling spontaneity and crushing the will to feel empathy towards the teacher and engage to speak, as implied by some linguists and other scholars (Hagar, 2019; Kommaraju et al., 2010; Palmer, 2017; Sánchez, de González & Martínez, 2013). In this new world of language learning where a student may be out of their comfort zone and feel vulnerable, trust is a key element to continuing the journey. A relationship of trust between a teacher and their students "is crucial inside the [language] classroom… [and thus] it is necessary for teachers to understand that students need to feel comfortable with, and confident in, the person (teacher) with whom they are learning" (Sánchez et al., 2013, p. 117).

5.2.2.2 Continuing

At Continuing level, students still do not have sufficient linguistic knowledge to communicate without making errors; they are still assessing whether or not they like the language; they are in the early stages of oral competency, but they do not have sufficient repertoire to communicate with a certain degree of fluency. Thus, TP and whether the students can trust the teacher still play an important role in the students' decision to speak or not in class, as shown in Figure 5.3 and as expressed by this student:

> *I feel more engaged to speak [this semester in Continuing because] … I feel like I can trust the teacher to take me seriously, and sincerely correct me without patronising or ridiculing any mistakes.* (Survey S27/Q28)

Trust, honesty and respect are key drivers for SEtS, according to the students, and they are strong qualities of an individual's personality. Likewise, opposite personal characteristics that foster the fear of making mistakes and being judged by the teacher are recurring reasons affecting students' willingness to communicate. As mentioned, L2 anxiety in a language classroom can negatively affect learners' WTC and it "often stems from a fear of exposure or risk of being judged by peers [and their teacher] who may notice imperfections" in particular when they attempt to speak (Aubrey, 2011, p. 240). Karnchanachari (2019) echoes Aubrey's opinion and found parallels with her own studies on the effects students' individual performance can have on their own WTC. Students seemed comfortable speaking in the L2 "when role-playing in pairs, speaking in small groups, and speaking with the teacher one-on-one. [However, they] felt least willing to communicate when speaking in front of the class" (p. 94). The findings by Karnchanachari (2019) have close parallels with my own study.

> *I am afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at by my classmates. I feel I'm being judged. I don't feel confident speaking [the L2] … because I don't want to be mocked when I make mistakes.* (Students' comments in Karnchanachari, 2019, pp. 94-95)

5.2.2.3 Intermediate

At Intermediate level, a teacher's personality seems to matter the most, according to the very high survey result where 96% of the students strongly agreed/agreed that teacher's personality was the most important reason for SEtS. The third column of Figure 5.3 clearly illustrates the importance the students at Intermediate level attribute to TP. This is a

noteworthy result, since at this level, one would expect TP to matter less, as students should have had sufficient exposure to the language and a higher linguistic competence that would enable them to speak with more confidence and less fear. Yet the opposite is reflected in some of the students' comments:

> *Actually… I find that my spoken [language] and my confidence in speaking [the language] were better when I first started than now that I am in Intermediate. I actually feel less confident now.* (Focus Group/Linda)

At Intermediate level, students have usually spent at least two years studying the language, and they have decided to pursue it, but there is considerable pressure and often self-imposed expectations to perform more competently, according to many of the students interviewed. Would that be the reason why some students have less confidence in speaking at this level than at the lower levels? Recalling the discussion in Chapter 4 on the importance students attribute to having a module dedicated exclusively to oral communication (see Figure 4.4), the students perceive as counterproductive the fact that—as they progressed in their language studies—less focus was placed in the language curriculum on developing their speaking skills. The students in this study expressed their disappointment over and over about the fact that less time was dedicated in class to the practice of speaking, and more emphasis was placed on the development of their writing and reading skills. As an adverse consequence of this, the students felt that their confidence to speak lessened as they reached higher levels of instruction. As mentioned briefly in the literature review, Teimuri et al. (2019), in a study on the negative effects anxiety has on students' L2 achievement, cautioned that an "educational context [that] creates new experiences and obligations on the students… [can] cause more anxiety" (p. 379). This could also help understand why students feel less confident in speaking as they advance in their studies.

5.2.2.4 Advanced

At the Advanced level, as shown in Figure 5.3, students perceive TP to be an engaging factor to speak, but no longer the most important element for SEtS. Students may attribute less importance to TP because at this level, students feel more confident to speak since they have more advanced language knowledge, a greater vocabulary and higher linguistic competency. The fear of error correction, being embarrassed or sounding like a fool has diminished by the

fact that they are able to speak comfortably at a reasonable level and are no longer easily intimidated by the teacher or their peers. As seen above, some Intermediate students lose confidence in their ability to speak the L2 as they progress in their studies, mainly due to the poor practice of the spoken language in class. These students struggle with speaking, and many think of abandoning the study of the language after that level, as they themselves stated during informal conversations. Advanced students presumably should be more confident in their ability to speak the language because they have a stronger linguistic foundation, and the perception of being intimidated to speak by a teacher should be less present. However, many advanced students attributed their higher level of confidence as they progressed in their learning journey to the fact that they felt an "emotional support from friends… [that] provides a sense of belonging… [and establishes] a buffering effect against stressful experiences" of the class environment (Xerri, Radford & Shacklock, 2018, p. 591). Thus, although advanced students should have acquired a comfortable level of fluency in the L2, they will often decide to remain silent in class, and only answer when a direct question is asked. Language anxiety may again play a role in this decision. In reviewing the theory of FLA as expressed by Horwitz et al. (1986), Tran (2012) pointed out that "advanced and successful [language] students also reported anxious reactions" (p. 71), which could explain their decision to remain disengaged in class. A similar result was reported by Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) when exploring the effects FLA has on L2 courses at three proficiency levels. They found that "advanced learners… scored the highest in the language anxiety scale" (p. 101). A possible explanation is that "at more advanced levels of instruction… [students'] expectations of themselves as L2 speakers are higher compared to those of learners at lower levels of proficiency" (Tóth, 2011, p. 53). Another reason, expressed by the students throughout this current study, is the fact that advanced students wish to continue learning the chosen language itself, rather than *about* the language.

> *I suppose if it was an actual language class rather than a thematic course there is a chance, I would be slightly more engaged, I've always found the learning of the language itself a lot more rewarding than learning the history of it.* (Survey S12/Q19)

Although TP is not seen as playing the most important role for SEtS at this level, it was ranked third above other relevant factors, and thus it is still considered to be critical for SEtS. Ewald (2007), when investigating the impact FLA has on advanced students, detected that who the

teacher is plays a key role in causing anxiety for these upper-level students, as the students feel under a lot of pressure to satisfy the teacher's expectations. One of the participants in that study went so far as to say that she believed "certain teachers look for mistakes and can't wait to correct their students" (Ewald, 2007, p. 130). This statement agrees with the students in my study as will be shown in the next section.

5.2.3 Other effects of teacher's personality

In addition to the positive or negative impact the personality of a teacher can have on students' decision to speak in class, students mentioned other factors related to the connection with the teacher that merit consideration.

5.2.3.1 Attentiveness to meaning

In the many conversations I had with the students, they expressed their frustration at feeling as if they were being assessed all the time by the teacher. They also conveyed that they would be more engaged to speak in their class, even if their grammar was not perfect, if they knew their teacher was listening to what they had to say. However, they often felt their teacher was more attentive to their grammatical correctness and language accuracy than to the content of a presentation or the message they were anxiously attempting to convey. Survey Q32 addressed that concern, and asked the question directly: *Would you be more engaged to speak in your language class—even if your grammar was not perfect—if you knew your teacher was listening to what you had to say and not just listening for your mistakes?*

The findings reflected in Figure 5.4 below reveal that the students at Intermediate level struggle more with this issue, although it is also important at the other three levels. As some of the students expressed in conversations with me, Intermediate level is often seen by students as a decisive step to continue with the study of the L2 or abandon it. When students lose confidence in themselves and feel the pressure to perform as it is a more demanding level, it is important for them to feel the teacher is listening to what they are actually attempting to say. The feeling of being ridiculed by their peers increases as they are more conscious of their own speaking ability. "The fear of speaking the language inaccurately, with

mistakes, [is] a major source of anxiety in advanced levels [as well]" (Tóth, 2011, p. 47). The students appear to make a direct connection between their engagement to speak in class and knowing that the teacher is actually listening to what they are saying or presenting and not just noticing their mistakes.

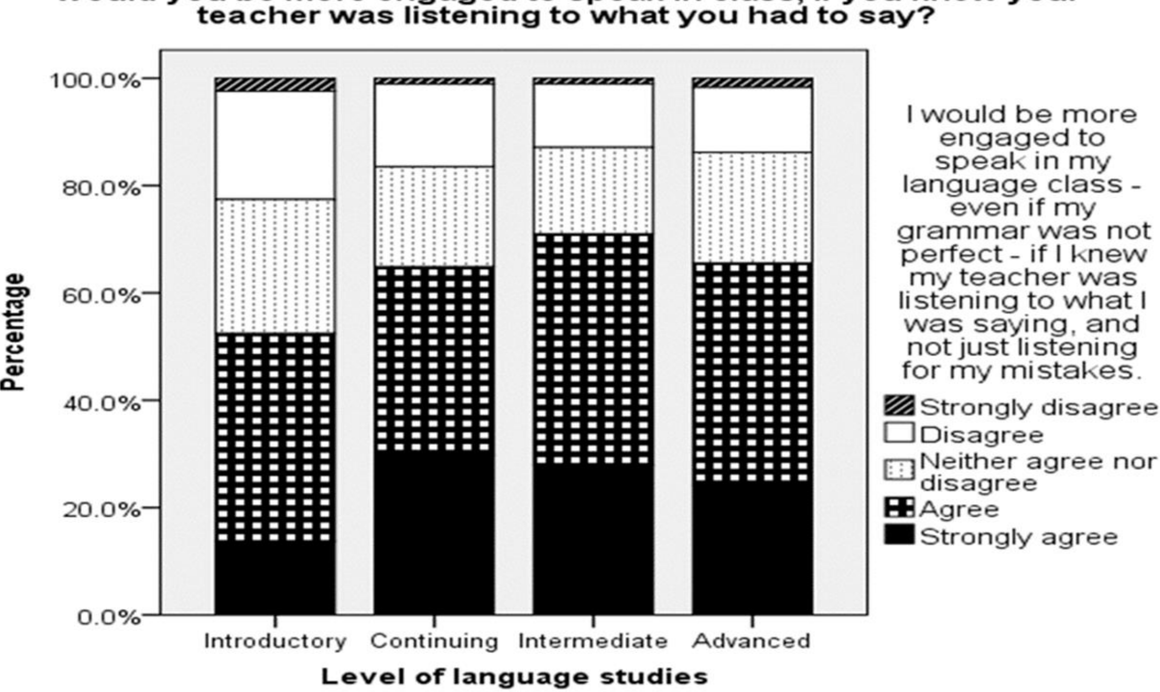


Figure 5.4 Q32: SEtS and the importance of teachers listening to what students have to say

Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q32 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Kang (2005) argues that a correlation exists between "the interlocutor's [the teacher's] interest… and the effect on the learner's excitement" (p. 285). If a student is speaking or giving a presentation and they sense that the teacher is not interested, this will affect their excitement and they will stop talking (Kang, 2005). The opposite also applies:

> *There is [this teacher] in intermediate who has always made me feel very comfortable speaking in class. I think it is something like when you are giving a presentation [this teacher] will sit there listening and nodding. It looks like [he/she] is taking on everything that you are saying, and [he/she] will then ask a relevant question. So you feel like at least your ideas are being valued. That engages me to speak in class.* (Interview S57/Q7)

This feeling was echoed by students from different levels throughout the survey responses, although it was more pronounced amongst the students at Intermediate level:

I am taking a thematic course [Intermediate level] and without constant correction of grammar mistakes I find that I become more confident to speak [the L2], as I just say what I can rather than worry so much about my expression that I say nothing. (Survey S44/Q19)

Error correction, as it can directly affect students' confidence to speak, is a potential sub-category of the emerging theory. It is a contentious issue in the field of learning and teaching languages, where researchers, linguists and language teachers diverge on how and when to correct language errors. Research on WTC, as shown earlier, indicates that when students are made aware of their mistakes while they are speaking, it "enhances their anxiety and makes them feel insecure about making mistakes in future interactions" (Zarrinabadi, 2014, p. 293), thus reducing their engagement to speak in class.

If [the teachers] are… less intimidating and do not cause embarrassment when correcting, this engages me more. (Survey S24/Q28)

The manner in which grammar ought to be corrected in the language class has always provoked debate amongst SLA theorists, with views varying from immediate correction (Brown, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Quinn, 2014; Richards and Rodgers, 2001) to no correction—as correction is seen as harmful to language learning—(Krashen, 1981; Truscott 1999) to explicit and implicit corrective feedback as it is advocated in CLT approaches (Bailey & Celce-Murcia, 1979; Dekeyser, 1993; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; S. Li, 2010; Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017; Russell, 2009; Russell and Spada, 2006). As mentioned, students are impacted by feelings of low self-confidence, which often relates to the fear of making mistakes or being corrected and embarrassed. "When error correction happens in the moment and the teacher's feedback immediately follows the individual's error, it tends to reduce WTC… and enhances [students'] anxiety… Delayed error correction, however, was found to increase WTC in that it let the students keep the flow of their speaking and deliver the message" (Zarrinabadi, 2014, p. 293). The effect of the timing of corrective feedback (CF) was investigated by Li, Zhu and R. Ellis (2016) in an attempt to understand the impact of immediate CF as opposed to delayed CF in acquiring implicit knowledge. Those theorists who support immediate CF (Fu & Li, 2020; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Long, 2014) insist that immediate recast, for example, encourages "the development of true linguistic competence… [as] learners… process receptively and/or productively those linguistics forms needed to express what they want to say, which activates the learning process" (Li et al., 2016, p. 278). On the other hand, theorists in favour of delayed CF (Hunter, 2012a; Hunter, 2012b) argue

that "learners might be better off focusing on meaning [when they are speaking] rather than dividing their attention between meaning and form… thus correcting errors… [only after] they have completed the task" (Li et al., 2016, p. 278). Although the results of the study by Li et al. (2016) did not show a clear endorsement for either form of CF, they presented a slight advantage for immediate CF, particularly because the effects of the correction seemed to last longer in time and "learners had the opportunity to use the feedback they had received [at a later stage] when producing new sentences" (p. 291). Other studies have indicated that when corrective feedback is integrated "into meaningful interaction" it does not necessarily break the communicative flow (Lyster, Lightbown, & Spada, 1999, p. 460), nor does it cause major "embarrassment, anger, inhibition, [or] feelings of inferiority" (Truscott 1999, p. 441).

Although beyond the scope of my research, this would be important to explore in relation to SEtS as "mismatches between learners' expectations and teachers' beliefs [in terms of CF] may have a great impact on students' satisfaction with the class and their motivation to learn the language" (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013, p. 143), and it could affect their engagement to speak. Lyster et al. (2013) concluded that "provision of oral CF is undoubtedly more effective than no CF" (p. 30). As mentioned during the focus groups, some of the student participants in this current research do not necessarily object to corrective feedback, but many feel embarrassed when corrected in front of their peers and they have expressed the wish not to be interrupted when making the effort to speak in the L2. They have stated that the less grammar correction there is while they speak, the more confident they feel about speaking in class. But most of all, they seek reassurance that making mistakes when engaging to speak is all right. If that is clearly established from the beginning, as seems to occur naturally in the informal environment, then students would feel more confident to speak even though they are aware of making errors. Students reiterated during the interviews that their confidence to speak grew stronger and their oral presentations, for example, flowed more naturally, when they knew their teacher was listening to the content of their oral presentation and not just looking for their linguistic mistakes.

5.2.3.2 The pressure of being assessed

A further cause of distress expressed by the students in this study was the perception that they were always being assessed when they attempted to speak in class. This feeling of being assessed was thus an obstacle to their engagement and made them feel uneasy and less confident to speak up, as this student indicated:

> *I find the classes very uncomfortable. Every class feels like an oral exam where I am put on the spot and feel like a fool.* (Survey S47/Q19)

Survey Q36 asked the students whether they would feel more engaged to speak in class if they did not feel that they were being assessed all the time.

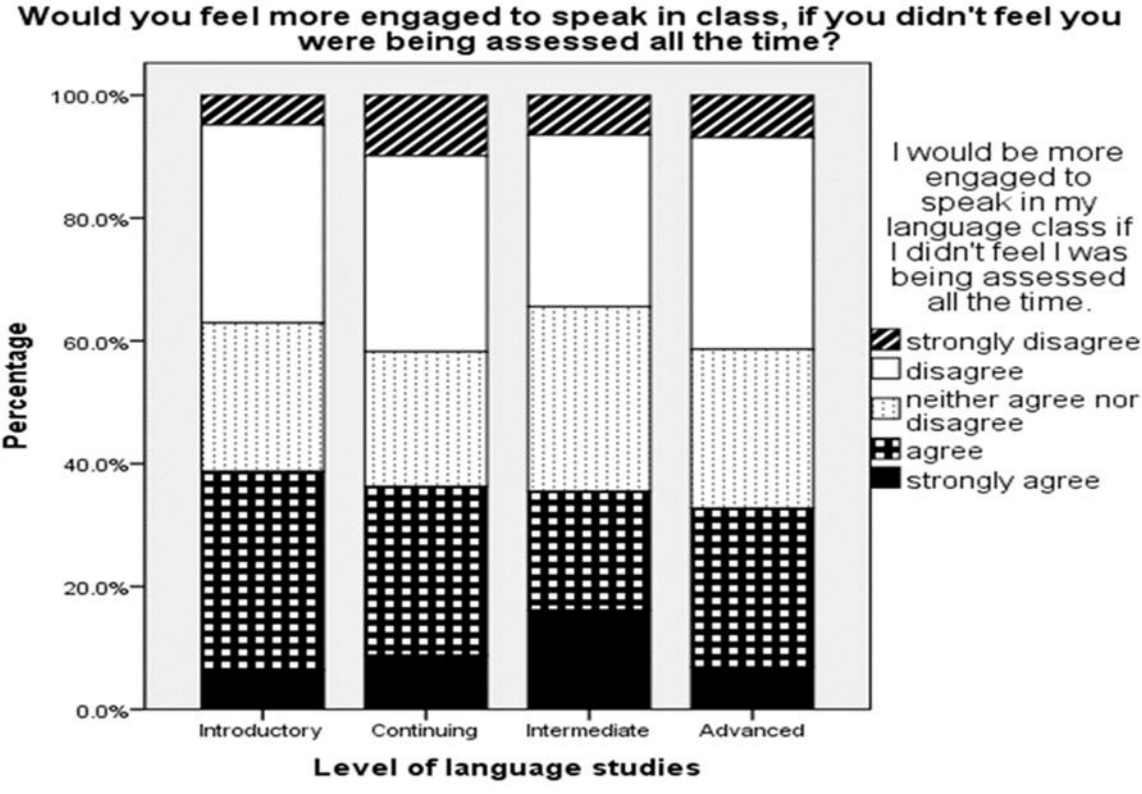


Figure 5.5 Q36: The impact on SEtS when feeling assessed

Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q36 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

As many of the students disclosed during informal conversations at the pub, a key difference between speaking in a formal environment and speaking in a relaxed informal setting was the notion or perception of vulnerability, as if being assessed all the time. Assessment can provoke fear, and thus may bring on a mental block and the mind goes blank. In my own classes and as related by other colleagues, some academically talented students do very

poorly in oral assessments because of the fear of speaking publicly. Survey Q36 addressed that concern, and as can be appreciated from Figure 5.5, in looking at the "strongly agree" black area of the bar graph, the students most affected by this perception of being assessed are those at the Intermediate level where the loss of confidence seems to be greater, according to some students. However, even though 40% of the students strongly agree/agree with the question, it does not seem to affect the students as much as other variables.

> *Free from judgement. You don't want to feel like you are being judged and assessed all the time. You want to feel comfortable.* (Survey S7/Q23)

When I compared the behaviour of students in class with their attitude in the conversation groups, I noticed that some of them who would speak freely in the informal environment, would be relatively silent in class. When I later asked them, during the interviews, to explain this phenomenon, many agreed that "at CFC it is all more spontaneous and they feel amongst friends; they all make mistakes and they laugh together; they do not feel judged or assessed, and although I (the teacher) am there, they feel I am one of them" (memo entries 2012-2014).

> *Even when you are in [Introductory], you feel you're being assessed all the time. Then in Continuing, you feel like… am I meant to be speaking as well as these people around me? Am I behind so much in my French, it's ridiculous? You feel very bad about it. That's why I think Cercle français* [CFC] *is better. You're not being assessed. You don't feel I'm having a bad month because I don't speak as well as the people around me.* (Focus Group/George)

This comment implies that if a student is not placed under the pressure of *feeling that they are being assessed all the time*, even if this is not the case, and if they are not surrounded by students they perceive to be more competent, they will be more willing to speak in their class. Williams and Andrade (2008) who, in their study, investigated situations that trigger classroom anxiety, observed that FLA "was most often associated with… output-related tasks… [and the] fear of making a bad impression" (p. 186). As an example of these situations, they cited "feeling uncomfortable when being stared at by other students while speaking" (p. 186), which is a common occurrence in language classes. A result relevant to the findings of this current study is that Williams and Andrade (2008) found that "in half of the cases (50.61%) the students felt the teacher was responsible for the anxiety-provoking situation… [and a possible explanation for this result was] fear of negative evaluation in the eyes of the teacher… A distant second was the students themselves (13.99%)" (p. 187). Even students in

advanced courses tend “to see their [L2] classes as an ongoing language exam in front of an audience, where they constantly had to prove their L2 competence was up to standard” (Tóth, 2011, p. 46).

5.2.3.3 Teacher Talk Time (TTT)

Teacher Talk Time (TTT), defined simply in the literature of learning and teaching a second language as “how much a teacher talks during a lesson” (Kostadinovska-Stojchevska & Popovikj, 2019, p. 26), is reported as an element of concern in diverse second language teaching approaches, but has also had its controversy in that some language researchers insist that Teacher Talk (TT)—which refers to the quality of it—has its place in pedagogy, and that the focus should be on the quality rather than on the quantity of teacher talk in class (Nunan, 1991; Walsh, 2002). TT is perfectly justifiable when teachers are conducting teacher-fronted activities, as long as they “engage learners in the classroom discourse… [and] promote opportunities for self-expression” (Walsh, 2002, p. 5). However, if the focus of the learning approach is student-centred, and teachers want students to practise the L2, TTT should be replaced by an increased Student Talk Time (STT). The reality, in most communicative language classes, is that “so much of classroom time is spent with the teacher being active in the front and the students being passive—when it should be the other way around!” (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 111). Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) ventured to say that “very few teachers have the charisma and persona to pull off an engaging performance when they are the *sage on the stage*” (p. 111, authors’ emphasis); this, thus, is a further reason why language teachers should concentrate on increasing STT. As can be seen in Figure 5.6 below, in this study students are not concerned about TTT, and according to them it does not seem to impact SEtS to any important degree. The majority of the students either disagree with or have neutral feelings about the statement that if their teacher talked less in class, they would have more chances of speaking. Figure 5.6 shows that a very small percentage of the students surveyed thought they would speak more in class in the L2 if their teacher talked less.

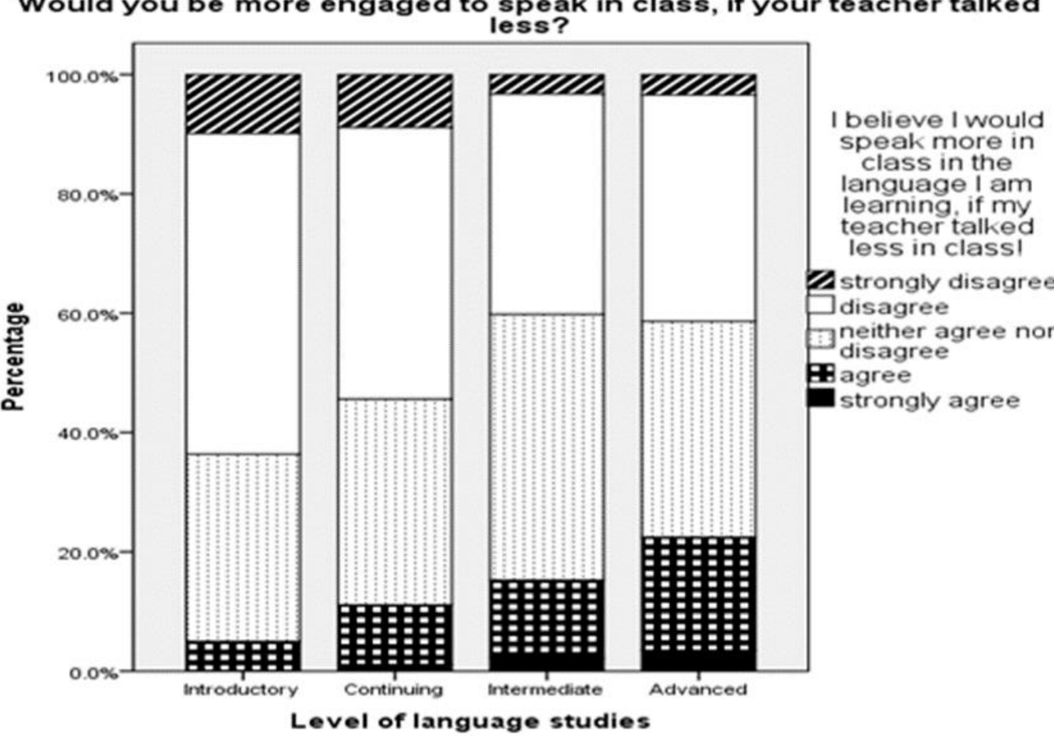


Figure 5.6 Q31: The impact of Teacher Talk Time (TTT) on SEtS

Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q31 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

What is worth noting, however, are the incremental bars in the figure that show that as students progress through the levels, they give more importance to TTT. This seems to indicate, as expressed by some of the students interviewed, that the more advanced the language level, the more time teachers spend talking in class. This issue was raised when students were asked in Q17 during the interview what they would like to change, if given the opportunity, in order for them to become more engaged to speak during class time. The following are indicative responses:

> *I would change how much some of my teachers [in Advanced] talk. Sometimes they can dominate the class by talking a lot and not giving space to the students.* (Interview S65/Q17)

> *Less talking from the teacher [at Intermediate level] and that [he/she] notices which ones aren't speaking, and addresses them and says "you need to say something".* (Interview S15/Q17)

Another possible explanation for the complaint by students at higher levels that teachers talk too much in class is that as the students' competence increases, they may feel they are more able to hold the floor, and thus may wish to do more of the speaking.

Although TTT was not identified as a strong reason for SEtS in the present study, studies by others have reported that teacher talk can dominate the classroom, leaving fewer opportunities for students to talk. Ahmad, Shakir and Arshad (2020) reported the results of a study done by Sukarni and Ulfah (2015) that investigated teacher-student talk in an L2 classroom. The data was collected via classroom observation and the findings showed that a little over 78% of the class time was spent in teacher talk. The data was analysed using Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories, a technique used to capture the verbal behaviour of teachers and students (Amatari, 2015). The authors observed that "only a small part of the student talk showed initiation related to the learning materials. Instead… the STT [was] used largely for responding to the teacher's questions" (Sukarni & Ulfah, 2015, pp. 275-276). Another study by Azhar, Iqbal and Khan (2019) revealed similar results: "65% of the total time was consumed in TTT and on average 22 seconds were spared for one student" (cited in Ahmad et al., 2020, p. 22). As per the comments of some of the higher-level students in the present study, it is important to be aware that students themselves feel they should be given every possible opportunity to speak in the L2 and to practise the language they are learning.

> *I find that in Intermediate, there is little opportunity for speaking [in the L2] which is disappointing...* (Survey S112/Q18)

When I analyse the interview and the survey data closely, I find that many of the students are asking for the amount of STT to be maximised, specially when the goal of the class is to enhance oral language acquisition. These students want to increase the opportunities to use the L2 actively in class and to minimise the teacher's interruptions in the form of error correction when they are speaking in the L2.

5.2.3.4 Teacher influence on student confidence

The findings discussed above confirm that a teacher's attitude in class contributes to the student's emotional engagement, as alluded to by Marzano and Pickering (2011). However, the current study goes a little further in concluding—in the words of the students—that the positive personality traits of a teacher contribute not only to students' affective involvement, but to actually engaging them to speak in the L2 in class, as the student-student interaction is strengthened:

> *Their [the teachers'] personality would determine the relationship they develop with the class, and therefore this would influence the relationship of the students with one another. It changes the style of interaction and how willing people are to engage and speak in class.* (Interview S65/Q20)

Silence and poor participation in the language classroom is often attributed to teaching methods and techniques or on a course syllabus that does not interest the students, and sometimes on whether the teacher is sufficiently knowledgeable or experienced in the subject. However, my L2 class observations suggest that a teacher may possess excellent academic qualifications, may be an expert in his or her field and may claim to use a communicative language teaching approach, and yet the oral communication in the class can break down or simply not occur. Brosh (1996) conducted a study to identify the "desirable characteristics of the effective language teacher (ELT) as perceived by both teachers and students" and concluded that "the students' unfavourable perception of the teacher's personality may be an impediment to the flow of communication" (pp. 125-126). Zepke, Leach, and Butler (2010) found that "teachers and their personal characteristics and attitudes in class were more influential in engaging students than students' motivation and other external factors" (p. 12). While these claims do not directly address SEtS, they align with the findings of the current study.

Although the literature on CLT and WTC does not explicitly address the influence that TP can have on engaging students to speak in class, one can infer from these findings that the *engaging* personality of a teacher, does matter for students' engagement to speak. It is important to acknowledge, though, that the *engaging* personality of a teacher—as described by the students in this study—does not guarantee alone that the students will speak, but it is nonetheless an affective dimension to be investigated further when reflecting on a CLT approach and on the pyramid layer components of the theory of WTC. As the students continually reiterated through the study, if the teacher is perceived as fun, supportive and approachable, they *may* engage students to speak in class. If students sense, on the other hand, that the teacher is disinterested, rude, unfriendly and impatient, they will tend to speak only when necessary. This is further evidenced in Dewaele's (2011) reflections on the "emotional and psychological aspects of foreign language learning and use, [in which he]

insists that the chemistry that develops between a language student and his or her teacher, plays an important role in the acquisition of the L2" (pp. 28-29).

The conflict that arises with students' vision of SEtS is that teachers believe that an engaging-to-speak teacher's personality is based on cognitive values such as knowledge and experience rather than on affective variables. When I observed the classes of the teachers interviewed, the teachers appeared gracious, encouraging and approachable, and some attempted to make the environment fun, with varying degrees of success. However, not many students were engaged and speaking in the L2. Why, then, were teachers having so little success in engaging the students to speak? The answer to this complex question could be grounded in the importance that students attribute to the emotional and affective dimensions of Student Engagement *to speak*, and the fact that if a teacher's demeanour is perceived to be false, as in *we must make them feel like we are interested*, a connection with the teacher will not occur and students will not engage to speak. Furthermore, if a teacher is perceived by the students to be uninterested and exhausted, that would contribute to the emotional constraints affecting SEtS. This echoes what Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) noted:

> As teachers, we often get caught up in the mechanics of teaching, thinking about which resources to use or which language forms to focus on… and continuously considering test formats and administrative pragmatics… [which] are unavoidable aspects of our profession… [However,] it is equally important to plan and teach with the quality of our relationship with our students at the forefront of our minds (p. 52)

The data analysed through this account of teachers' and students' interactions indicate that teacher-student relationship—and by extension teacher's personality—is a vital element or category of the emergent theory since it does play a significant role in a student's decision to speak or remain silent in class, notably as it has the capacity to reinforce the students' confidence. However, based on the premises of GT that the core category must pull together all the elements of a particular concern, I was not able to conclude at this stage that TP was the core category of the grounded theory. The data analysis has confirmed that engaging with the teacher's personality is a crucial factor, though not the only element of SEtS.

In the next section, I will look at another key element of Student Engagement *to Speak*, namely the importance of topic familiarity. I will examine students' understanding of an

engaging-to-speak topic and investigate what other class content could potentially engage them to speak.

5.3 Connecting with the topic

> *The content is always a big factor… If I am not interested in what you are talking about, I will struggle to pay attention and engage.* (Interview S13/Q7)

For students of languages, class content is an important factor that can easily engage students to speak or disengage them from the class or even from the entire program. CLT instils a focus on "authenticity" in the learning and teaching activities in the FL classroom. According to Buendgens-Kosten (2014) "in its widest sense, *authenticity* is related to notions of *realness*, and in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), [it] has been used to characterize… learning material, tasks,… forms of assessment, and even types of teacher and audience" (p. 457). In the CLT classroom, authentic learning activities would provide more opportunities for "engagement, meaningfulness and authentication by learners… [where] learners should be able to do something with language beyond the manipulation of forms, for example… using language to organise an activity" (Breen, 1985, p. 64). As explained by Gilmore (2007), the term authenticity has a range of meanings and interpretations associated with it. The relevance of this term for the current study is that it is associated with the social interaction and the connection the students can develop with the topic chosen for the class, where the aim is to engage students "to interact naturally, in real time, to achieve a particular communicative goal… [which] will far more likely lead to increased fluency and natural acquisition" (Guariento & Morley, 2001, p. 350). The type of authentic topics identified by the students in this study that may engage them to speak are those relevant to their personal and professional interests, and often to real-life situations or to contemporary themes or issues that can capture their attention and trigger their curiosity. Many of the students insisted that these must be topics they can already discuss in their native language:

> *If it is a topic I am knowledgeable [about] in English, then I am more likely to take a crack at it in [the L2].* (Interview S21/Q7)

In subsection 5.3.1, I will examine what an engaging-to-speak topic is from the student's perspective, and look at other effects and properties of a familiar topic relevant to SEtS, in

addition to a non-familiar topic in SDtS. In 5.3.2, I will further compare and contrast the findings to what the literature says in regard to how important familiarity with the topic is for students to engage to speak in class.

5.3.1 An engaging-to-speak topic: a student's perspective

> *They [the teachers] are more focused on material, such as literature. Which is not necessarily modern, it isn't something i* [sic] *think i need if i am travelling or working in France etc.* (Survey S32/Q19)

The students in this study often complained about the inadequacies of the class structure and the small amount of time dedicated to speaking activities in the classes. Many students felt that the focus on writing and reading in upper-level courses was detrimental to their progress in improving their L2 speaking skills. If insufficient time is spent on practising the language, and if, in addition, the topic is not relevant to the students, what chances do teachers have of engaging their students to speak in class?

In acknowledging that WTC can change from moment to moment, Kang (2005) established that topic is a strategic element that can determine whether a learner is ready to use the L2 or not. However, it is important to clarify that the aim of this study is not to become involved in the discussion of what type of topics are "appropriate" at tertiary level, nor to define conclusively what "a relevant topic" means for these students. The aim is to understand how a topic—any topic—"works" for the students and engages them to speak in the L2, in contrast to how a non-familiar topic disengages them from speaking.

When the students were asked to explain a topic that engages them to speak in class, most students interviewed agreed that they were more motivated by topics they knew something about, and some of them favoured everyday topics of conversation. During the focus group, there was a heated debate among the students at Continuing and Intermediate levels on what was an everyday topic (see an extract of this conversation in Appendix I). Some students suggested that a topic about everyday life happenings and issues could be too trivial in the academic space, but as one of the students replied, *You don't learn to run before you learn to walk…* (Focus group/William). It is known from the literature that spoken fluency comes with

practice and meaningful use, and thus ways of building up students' confidence need to be found, engaging them to speak in class. The *progression is strange* (Focus group/Charlie) added one of the students. Indeed, in some classes that I observed at the Continuing and Intermediate levels, the discussion focused on a subject of a political nature or on a literary or historical text, and students were struggling to come up with meaningful and accurate sentences. Some of these students attended the French or Spanish conversation groups, and they could not hold a simple conversation about what they did the day before. So, how can these students be asked to speak in the L2 and comment about a political, literary, or historical text when they cannot confidently say what they had for dinner the night before? While it is difficult to come up with a definition of what makes a topic "relevant" to undergraduate students, what emerged from the discussion during the focus group and the findings overall is that if students do not know anything about a topic, or if they are not inspired by it, they will not engage to speak. Giving the students a voice and "allowing [them] more freedom to choose their own topics [may generate] more opportunities for them to participate in classroom interaction" (Uztosun, Skinner, & Cadorath, 2018, p. 108).

> *I don't want to study subjects which I won't see any benefit in my real life.* (Survey S53/Q18)

It was noted previously that when students connect with the teacher, it gives them a certain level of confidence to speak in class. Likewise, if students feel interested in a topic—including in their L1—they would be more inclined to engage to speak in class. Thus, in an attempt to find out what topics would engage students to speak in class, the survey included Q39 (see Figure 5.7 below) to explore a little more the element of topic familiarity. The exact question was "*which of these topics grab you the most and make you want to engage and speak in class in the language you are learning?*" Five choices were given to the students, and they were asked to rank them in order of most engaging to speak in class to least engaging. The five subjects were: (1) culture and the arts; (2) history and politics; (3) language and grammar; (4) everyday life conversation; and (5) literature: extracts, novels and other.

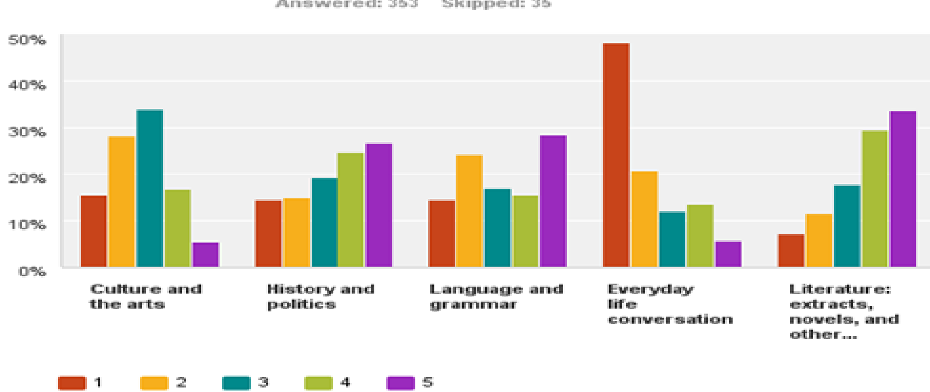


Figure 5.7 Q39: Most engaging-to-speak topics: Ranking

Source: Student Survey, June 2013, Q39 N= 353 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

A total of 353 students responded to this question, and 48% of those who responded ranked "everyday life conversation" as the most engaging topic to speak in class (see Appendix O), as illustrated by the prominent dark orange column in the above figure. The second but distant most popular engaging subject of conversation was culture and the arts, preferred by 16% of the 353 participants, while 14% ranked history and politics as their preference. Another 14% ranked language and grammar as their favourite topic to speak about in class in the L2, and a distant 7% ranked literature: extracts, novels, poems and other readings as their most engaging topic. The following reflection by one of the students summarises what many others alluded to when asked what could "work" in engaging them to speak:

> *We should be talking about things that actually happen to people… about their personal life. That is a way of engaging people, because people love to talk about themselves, and they always find themselves really interesting. Even talking about university life, the problems, the challenges, these are topics that everyone can say something [about].* (Interview S61/Q30)

Supporting what students stated during the focus group, the students interviewed claimed that an engaging topic is either one that students are knowledgeable about or a more personal topic that stimulates them not just to talk about themselves, but to discuss aspects and events of daily life. So, how does topic familiarity influence SEtS and SDtS? In the next

subsections, I will examine how students responded to the following questions: *Can a relevant topic engage—or disengage—you to speak in your language class?*

5.3.1.1 SEtS and topic familiarity

> *I feel really engaged to speak in my language class when… I am interested in what is going on and I like the topic.* (Interview S61/Q10)

Figure 5.8 shows that more than 80% of the students at Introductory, Continuing and Intermediate level found that a relevant topic engages them to speak in their language class, and the importance of a relevant topic is even more important for students at Advanced level, where 96.55% of the students (as illustrated in Table 4.17) ranked it as second most important stimulant for SEtS after fun.

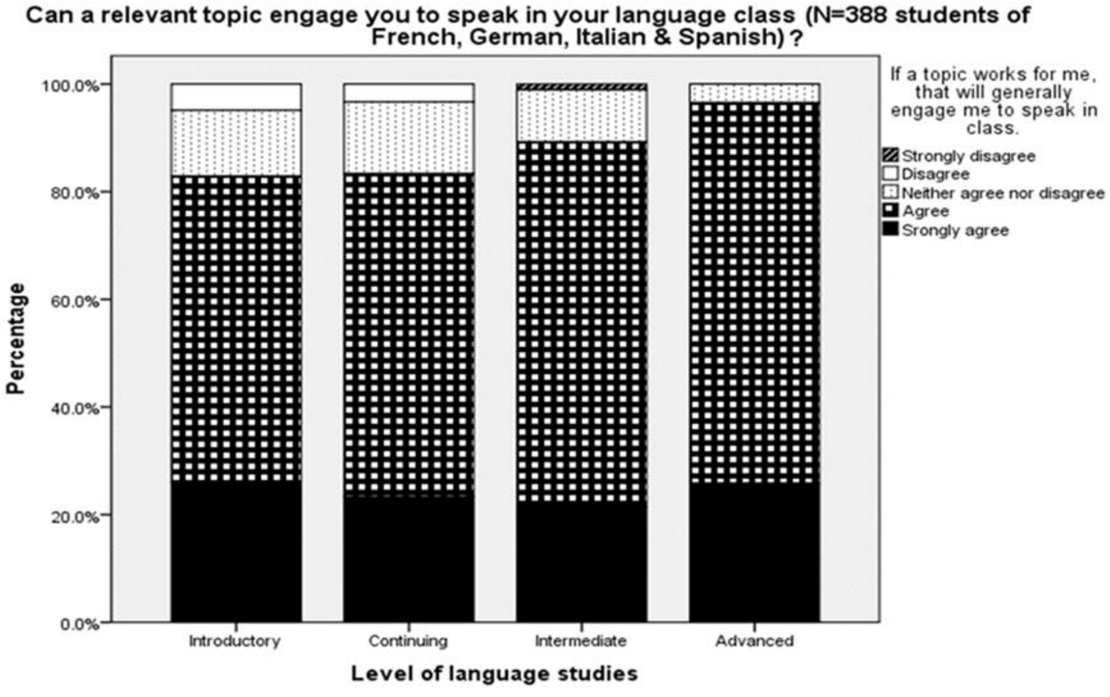


Figure 5.8 Q20: The importance of a relevant topic in SEtS

Source: Student Survey June 2013, Q20 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

To be able to compare the qualitative findings to the quantitative results, the students were asked during the interview to mention *three things that engage them to speak in class in the nominated language* (Interview Q7). An interesting topic and the familiarity the students have with it, were the focus of students' reflections, as per the response below from an advanced student in a thematic course:

If the topic we are talking about [in the classroom], does not interest me, I can go the entire lesson without saying anything because the topic does not interest me. I also find that if the rest of the class is not really involved or if the conversation is too formal and there is no humour, then that will not engage me to speak either. (Interview S75/Q7)

As many of the students expressed, if there is a general apathy about the topic, or if the conversation is too "dry", most students will not engage to speak. At the higher levels, one would think that students have acquired a good command of the spoken language, but that type of comment alerts us to the fact that whether the students have reached a competent level in the L2 or not, they will still not engage to speak if the topic does not resonate with them.

I find that in Intermediate,… occasionally I fail to see the relevance of what we are learning in this course. (Survey S112/Q18)

This study does not address the additional burden for engagement to speak experienced by native speakers of a language other than English. However, the same difficulties are voiced by foreign students, who admit that a topic that works in their own language would be conducive to engagement to speak, with just the extra step in mind of going from L1 to L2 to L3; that is, for example, from Chinese to English to French. This seems to be a long stretch to walk between the origin and the destination, and so if all the factors for SEtS are present, the teacher still needs to ensure that the effort does not stop at willingness to communicate.

Another important connection with the topic is that of the student-student interaction, as expressed in the following observation:

In class… You end up speaking with people with whom I normally would not speak. In lower-level classes you ask things like "What did you do on the weekend?" and I couldn't care less what this person did on the weekend. When you go to Cercle français, it's people you care about, you are interested in these people, and that is partly why you are there. In 2nd year [Continuing]*… for example, you are wearing jeans and the person sitting next to you is wearing a suit and he may be a student of law, and you have absolutely nothing in common with that person.* (Focus Group/Charles)

What the student reports is in line with what was observed by Riasati (2012) in a study investigating language learners' perception of factors that can influence WTC. It supports the student's explanation of why he does not engage to speak with the person he has been paired with. Riasati found that "familiarity with the interlocutor" can affect WTC, as the students

interviewed for that study "expressed more willingness to speak [in class] with a person whom they know well and hence they are more comfortable with" (Riasati, 2012, p. 1290). In sum, the students explained they felt more motivated to speak if they were familiar with the topic, if they had an interest in it, and if they knew their interlocutor.

When students are in an informal environment—as will be explored in the next section—they choose both the topic of conversation and the people they want to converse with. On many occasions, I witnessed the students' spontaneous use of the L2—in the conversation groups—without fear of embarrassment despite the challenges of communicating in the language they were learning. On one occasion, I was very surprised to notice how the students engaged in a lengthy discussion about grammar. The students were engaged in a passionate discussion about the agreement of the past participle with the direct object pronoun when using one of the tenses of the French language, the *passé composé*. They were genuinely interested in understanding the different grammatical rules of this French tense and they engaged to speak on this topic, despite linguistic difficulties, looking to me for scaffolded support, but with determination and enjoyment. If a topic stimulates students' interest and it becomes relevant to them, the desire to offer an opinion reduces anxiety, and the fear of speaking disappears. This student remarks that a controversial topic can also work and turn the learning environment into an engaging one by triggering SEtS:

> *I feel really engaged to speak in class when… I am very interested in the topic. I remember in [my L2 class] once there was this argument over same sex adoption, and people got angry and yelling at each other in [the L2], and that was great.* (Interview S69/Q10)

Thus, if a student has a background knowledge of the topic under discussion, they may feel their contribution to the conversation to be more significant since they understand it and can contribute ideas. What happens, on the other hand, when the student is not familiar with the topic or the content of the class discussion?

5.3.1.2 SDtS and a non-familiar topic

The opposite feeling of not being familiar with the topic adds an element of anxiety to the fact of not knowing the language:

What really disengages me to speak in a language class is when… something is beyond my capabilities to answer (Interview S53/Q11)*; when I don't understand what is going on* (Interview S57/Q11)*; when I don't understand the topic* (Interview S63/Q11)*; when I feel out of my depth.* (Interview S70/Q11)

I asked the students if a non-familiar topic can disengage them to speak in the L2 in class. Figure 5.9 shows that about 60% of the students at the first three levels found that a non-familiar topic disengaged them to speak, and 80% of Advanced level students strongly agreed/agreed that a non-familiar topic impacted on their engagement to speak.

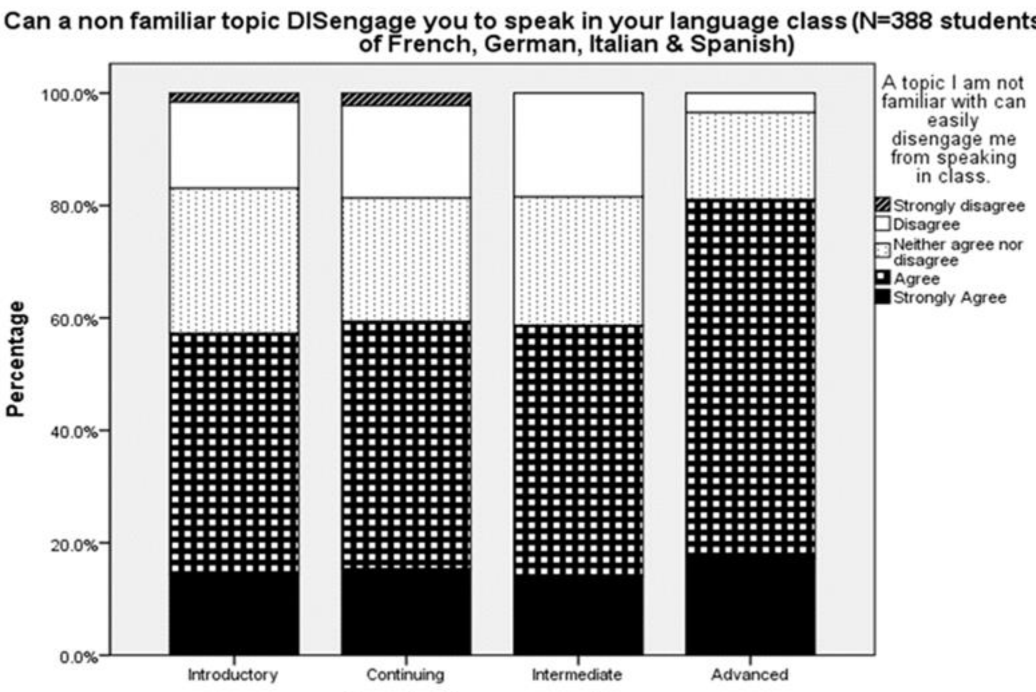


Figure 5.9 Q21: The impact of a non-familiar topic on SEtS

Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q21 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

The 4th bar in this figure stands out as the expectation would be that Advanced students who should have acquired a much better linguistic knowledge of the L2, and thus a higher capacity to interact verbally in that language, would not give as much importance to topic familiarity. However, as the graph shows, if they do not identify with the topic, they may not engage, despite their higher command of the language. The students were asked during the interview to mention *three things that disengage or disaffect them to speak in class in the nominated language* (see Appendix J: Interview Q8).

When… you want to participate but you don't have the vocab, because the topic is too complex. For example, French colonisation. It is an interesting topic, but I don't know the words to be able to express my opinion. If the teacher seems a bit stern. I don't want to make a mistake, because the teacher is going to get angry at me. If other people are doing so much better… I am going to look really stupid compared to them. (Interview S7/Q8)

Some students felt they had not yet acquired the capacity to use the language appropriately, either because they thought they did not have the necessary vocabulary, or because they did not know enough about the subject being discussed. Again, the fear of making mistakes is compounded with the lack of familiarity with the subject, particularly if *the teacher seems a bit stern*. In this case, the students would not connect with the topic or the teacher. Their level of anxiety would be further enhanced by the fear of *looking stupid* in front of their peers, driving them to remain silent. Even students who may have acquired a relatively good level of linguistic competence and a degree of fluency in the L2 may still not engage to speak in class, because of their lack of interest in, or knowledge of the topic being discussed:

Like now I am doing a third year of culture class, and I wouldn't know how to talk about most of the topics in English. I felt more comfortable last year in Continuing because the topics where [sic] *not very demanding.* (Interview S68/Q7)

Politics. It is a topic I don't know about. It makes me angry. I want to learn [the L2], not politics. (Interview S60/Q8)

When I don't really understand or know the topic. Like economics. I don't have anything to say about it. I struggle. (Interview S61/Q8)

Politics, economics and literature. These are topics that often feature in a comprehensive language curriculum at tertiary level, and students are possibly warned at the beginning of the semester that in an advanced level course they should be able to discuss unfamiliar complex topics, as per the CEFR framework. There is a view that the objective of educators is to prepare students for the world beyond the walls of higher education. Yet I have so often heard of students discontinuing their language studies because politics, economics and literature do not interest them, even in their native language. Thus, it is a challenge educators have when developing a curriculum to the satisfaction and the engagement of all students. As students stated, selecting topics or course content that involved events typical of students' everyday life had a significant impact on whether students decided to engage in the conversation or not. However, is that all?

5.3.1.3 Speaking about everyday life happenings: Is that all?

Most of the students interviewed expressed their desire to having real conversations in class, instead of being forced to answer a set of out-of-context questions that made the task of speaking uninspiring and tedious. The informality aspect of "communicating for the sake of communication", to borrow Kramsch's (2014) phrase, without explicitly aiming to learn a grammatical form not only makes it *easier and more fun* but stimulates the learner to think in the L2 continuously. They want an open and informal, but still structured class atmosphere where any type of contribution is allowed:

> *Informality, having a very informal setting. If it is just a conversation, it is much easier and much more fun. It means you are thinking constantly, rather than thinking just when you have questions.* (Interview S51/Q7)

> *I feel really engaged to speak in language class… where the class atmosphere is open, informal, but structured and receptive to any type of contribution.* (Interview S13/Q16)

It is understood that students feel the need to express their opinions when a topic resonates with their beliefs and personal values, and as shown in Figure 5.7, everyday life conversation was ranked as the most engaging topic about which to speak. But is that all? To find an answer to this query, I asked the students if they would be more engaged to speak in class if everyday life happenings and issues were part of the content of their language class. Figure 5.10 below shows that around 60% of the students said that a topic on everyday life happenings and issues could engage them to speak in class. It was, however, ranked 7 out of the 9 variables—apart for the Introductory level, where students gave it a ranking of 6—giving more importance to other variables involving the teacher and class environment (see Table 4.17).

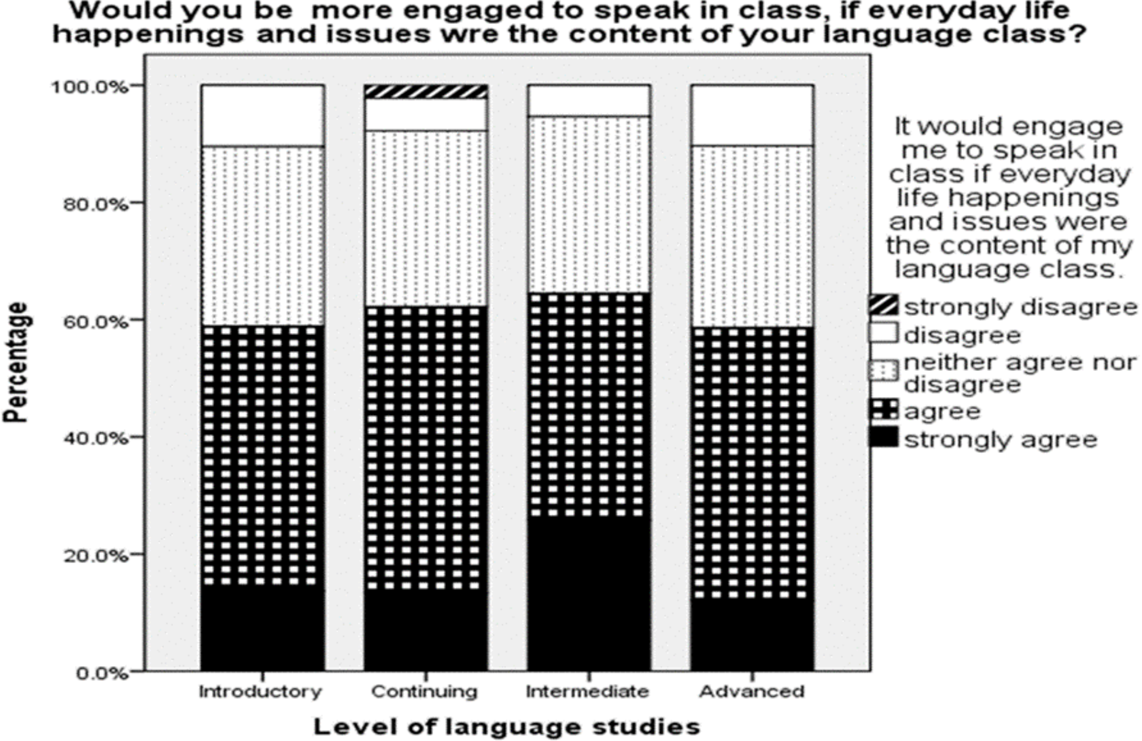


Figure 5.10 Q22: An engaging-to-speak topic: Everyday life happenings and issues
Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q22 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Thus, a relevant and engaging topic of conversation for SEtS is not just about everyday life happenings, but a theme that students feel confident talking about in their own language. Some students actually disagreed with the idea of including more personal topics as the subject of oral discussions, because they said they would feel vulnerable disclosing elements of their private life in class, as alluded to by this student:

> *Talking about people's lives and issues that would really raise up the engagement in a conversation. Although for some people it could be uncomfortable.* (Interview S64/Q30)

As noted by MacIntyre et al. (2007), "choosing to communicate in the L2 is an act of volition" (p. 569), and the topics have to arouse the students' interest and trigger that inner will that promotes the courage to speak. "*It is a personal choice to become more courageous to say things*", claimed one of the students, "*but I don't know how to address nerves. That is the problem*" (Interview S70/Q30). Amassing the courage to say something seems to be a challenge for many students, and sometimes just when they have organised the sentence in their mind and have built the courage to speak, "*the conversation has moved on*" (Interview S39/Q8). As expressed by many of the students in this study, they experience this frustration

and just give up. They can be at the threshold of WTC, but it does not mean necessarily that they will *cross the Rubicon*. This sentiment is in line with what Uztosun et al. (2018) highlighted when they asserted that "developing competence in speaking relies on participation in spoken dialogue, which in turn depends on an individual's willingness to join in class discussions and activities… [However, they stressed that] students' willingness to engage in classroom activities is influenced by the extent to which they are interested [in the topic] and take pleasure in [those activities]" (pp. 109 & 117). In another qualitative study supporting the importance of topic familiarity for students to participate in their language class, Kang (2005) argued that the key factors affecting WTC were "topic, interlocutor, and conversational context" (p. 277). When the students were amongst unfamiliar interlocutors and when they had no background knowledge of the topic of conversation and found themselves within an uncomfortable context, they felt insecure and thus less willing to communicate in the L2. On the other hand, when the students were "talking about topics in which they were interested… [and] had background knowledge, such as their family, major or [their L1] culture…" (Kang, 2005, pp. 284-285) with an interlocutor who appeared to be paying attention, their feelings of excitement were raised, and they expressed a higher level of WTC (Kang, 2005).

During the interview process, the students were asked (Q17) *if they could change something in their current language class to be more engaged to speak during class time, what would that be?* A response was:

> *More interesting readings. This semester [in Intermediate] the readings were boring. I would do the readings, but they were about politics, culture and history. I hate those readings, and most of the time I don't understand them. In the class, if there is discussion, I cannot participate. I don't understand the topics and I think the speed is too fast.* (Interview S83/Q17)

Thus, a connection with the topic is certainly another element of the emergent theory and topic familiarity plays an important role in SEtS. In a study on the characteristics of WTC, Cao and Philp (2006) identified students' interest in the topic as having a "vital" effect on learners' WTC behaviour in different class formats. "Content knowledge and topic familiarity… will result in a boost in one's linguistic self-confidence, while lack of knowledge about a topic and [lack of] familiarity with the register may inhibit communication" (p. 489). MacIntyre and colleagues (1998) and Kang (2005) agreed that topic familiarity increases the learners'

confidence to speak. On the other hand, having to face in class a topic of which one has very little knowledge will result in feelings of low self-confidence and will hinder communication. Thus, relevant or familiar topics are key components of second language teaching and learning, and as "MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue… expertise and familiarity with the topic will boost the learners' linguistic self-confidence… and in contrast, a lack of these aspects will hinder their willingness to communicate" (Siegel, 2014, p. 364). The students' concerns resonate with this:

> *If I don't have the confidence to say that I don't understand it, then I am not going to speak. If I never heard of a topic before, or if I don't even know it in English, how am I going to learn it in [the L2]? (Interview S15/Q8)*

More recently, Dewaele, Witney, et al. (2018) contended that "FL classes are too often emotionally uninteresting or emotion-free, which leads to routine, boredom and lack of engagement. Dewaele (2015) pleaded for teachers to have the liberty to do unexpected, challenging, and funny things in their classrooms" (p. 680). This is precisely what the students in this study are alluding to when they refer to not being engaged by topics they cannot relate to. However, an obstacle the teachers need to overcome is that the topics and class content (particularly in the earlier years of instruction) are often dictated by the course curriculum and/or the textbook used in class. Siegel (2014) contends that unfortunately very little research has been done in evaluating the "authenticity of textbook topics and their connection to the world outside the language classroom" (p. 365). His study comparing textbook topics to natural everyday topics that engage students in natural conversations found that "textbook topics tend to focus on universal and potentially superficial topics", thus not really engaging students to speak (Siegel, 2014, p. 371).

5.3.2 Students' needs and sensitivities

> *[If I could change something in my current language class to be more engaged to speak during class time], I would have to say the entire course content! It was not what I expected to be. I have learnt about the language, not the language… We are looking more at the pure linguistic theory. I just want to know how to speak the language well and practise it. I don't care what direct or indirect object pronouns are.* (Interview S75/Q17)

The dilemma of learning "about the language and not the language" will always be present in the discussions of what and how to teach a second language at tertiary level. Teaching

grammar and syntax needs to be an intrinsic part of the curriculum, but it does not need to be boring and dry, as students can be engaged to speak about it in the informal environment of a conversation group. Students can engage to speak in class, as they do in the informal environment, if the topic is relevant to them and if it is made *engaging*. The more vocabulary and language structures they have acquired, the more comfortable they may feel. However, a basic to moderate lexicon will not prevent them from engaging to speak. They will do so at the level of competence they have acquired and use their L1 as scaffolding support in the process of negotiating form and meaning. Advocates of WTC contend that when “the topic is chosen based on students’ opinions and interests, it leads to increased WTC” (Zarrinabadi, 2014, p. 294) and “familiarity with the topic significantly affects the ease of using the language” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 554). These scholars’ statements echo the findings of this current study in that being familiar with the topic is a strong factor of SEtS. As Williams and Andrade (2008) argued, “activities that relate to the learner on a personal level and raise the learner’s feelings of confidence provoke less anxiety and create a greater degree of comfort” (p. 187). However, familiarity alone does not seem to be enough, as this student conveyed:

> *Interesting content that you feel you are actually talking about something...* [However], *if there is no emotional involvement why would you want to talk about it?* (Interview S69/Q7)

The idea that if there is “*no emotional involvement*”, there is no interest in talking about a topic, is a powerful affective variable that fits perfectly into SEtS, as students in this study insisted that feelings and emotions were important when engaging to speak. Garrett and Young (2009) draw attention to the fact that “*affect* and *emotion* are terms that have been in the shadows of discussions of classroom foreign language learning, where the primary focus has been on the development of knowledge and use of the new language” (p. 209, emphasis in original). This neglect is attributed to the idea that emotion was perceived by 20th century psychologists as being “too subjective, too elusive and vague” (Damasio, 1999, p. 39). The focus has been more on the cognitive and functional values of learning a language, forgetting that the affective and emotional domains are intrinsic to the process of second language learning. Having an atmosphere of positive emotion in a FL classroom is particularly crucial, as learners’ self-image is vulnerable in the FL (Arnold, 2011) and “fear of losing face in front

of classmates and teacher can be daunting" (Dewaele, Magdalena-Franco, et al., 2018, p. 680). The latter sentiment definitely triggers SDtS.

Daniel Pink, in his book *Drive* (2009) about human motivation, supports the idea put forward by Schlechty (2011) that when "students are involved in tasks that have personal meaning to them, they are more likely to internalise, retain, and use in other contexts what they have learned" (p. 36). However, there are many other concerns that can affect the students' connection to the chosen topic, and one in particular is worth mentioning. A student from an Intermediate class admitted that the topics during that semester were actually quite interesting to them: some were about language, others related to culture and others about politics. However, this student's concern and the reason for their poor engagement to speak in class, had a moral dimension. "*In Intermediate*", the student said, "*all the articles that we were using were about racism and prostitution, and child slavery, so* [these were] *topics and content that could get you engaged*" (Interview S69/Q9). The problem was the fact that the teacher used these articles to explain aspects of the language, brushing over the moral issues contained in the article:

> *On children being sold into sex slavery, the teacher would say: look at this article, isn't this a wonderful example of x-grammatical structure. And, I was just like is this actually happening? I have very serious issues with that. So, you can't engage yourself in a class if you have this opinion about this teacher. Thinking this is weird.* (Interview S69/Q9)

In choosing topics for class discussions, students' sensitivities and emotional connections to controversial issues must be considered. The above quote illustrates an expression of disbelief by a student whose engagement to speak was affected by the teacher's decision to show more interest in a grammatical nuance than in the substance of the topic itself. This student's disapproval of the teacher's display of indifference towards a real human cause is in line with what Norton (2020) forewarned: "A student may be highly motivated, but if the classroom practices are racist, sexist, homophobic [or, as in this case, insensitive], the learner may have little investment in the language practices of the classroom" (p. 162). The sensitive dimension of humanity is an important factor to consider when selecting content and preparing pedagogical activities where connecting with the students and engaging them to speak is a priority.

A safe and comfortable class environment where students can engage to speak without anxiety and the embarrassment of being ridiculed by their peers is another crucial factor for SEtS identified in this study. But what characterises a safe and engaging-to-speak learning atmosphere?

5.4 Connecting with the learning environment

> *When I am having fun in class, I forget about my inhibitions. I find the courage to say things. It does not matter if I make mistakes because we are in a friendly environment. I find I learn a lot in the classes where I feel comfortable to speak and say what is in my mind… It is better to say something and practise the language, than to just listen and say nothing for the fear of making mistakes. We have to practise the language, otherwise how are we going to learn to speak?* (Interview S45/Q7)

This student's testimony reflects the voice of most of the students in this study, in that they need a friendly, non-threatening and enjoyable environment to *find the courage* to use the L2, knowing that it is alright to make mistakes. It is precisely when they are having fun that they forget about their fears and their inhibitions to speak. Thus, a fun teacher (as reported in Figure 5.1) who creates an enjoyable learning environment can be seen as catalysts for SEtS, since they are properties of the foundation where students stand to find their inner strength to communicate. A safe learning environment where teachers connect with their students instils confidence in the students and is more conducive to engaging them to speak. Promoting enjoyment in a language class should not be considered trivial in an academic context in tertiary education, since as Boudreau et al. (2018) asserted, "enjoyment takes on additional dimensions such as intellectual focus, heightened attention, and optimal challenge" (p. 153), and thus could be used as a pedagogic strategy for SEtS.

> Good teaching is an emotionally charged event where teachers connect with each student as they passionately deliver their lesson in a pleasurable environment. Such classrooms reflect an environment where both students and teacher are enthusiastic and excited as they discover learning and risk-taking in a safe environment (Farrell, 2018, p. vii).

What, then, are the characteristics of a pleasurable and engaging learning environment—according to the students in this study—and how do students perceive a class environment conducive to speaking? Furthermore, how can teachers foster such an environment? This

section will focus on presenting and discussing the findings of this study, where students identified the element of fun as the 2nd most important reason for SEtS.

I will examine the findings in relation to different properties of the category of class environment identified during the selective coding process, and I will reveal how they can influence SEtS. Sub-section 5.4.1 will examine the sort of learning environments that engage students to speak from their own perspective. Sub-section 5.4.2 will explore the importance of fun in teaching and learning a second language and relate the findings with the literature. In sub-section 5.4.3, I will discuss other key categories of a learning environment that underpin SEtS and SDtS and inform the emerging theory.

5.4.1 Engaging learning environments: the student's perspective

While theories of CLT have evolved over time, as previously discussed, one of its solid principles has been to provide learners with opportunities to practise the L2 by creating a learning environment in the language classes that is geared towards engaging the learner in real-life communication and authentic language use. Jacobs and Farrell (2003), when discussing the paradigm shift that has occurred in CLT, identified the "social nature of (language) learning" as one of the key components of that shift, in that the focus of language teaching has moved from learning in an individualised and decontextualised setting towards a more "social and collaborative environment" (p. 8). Later, Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) in their study of student engagement and the role the [U.S.] college faculty plays in students' learning suggested that the class environment created by "faculty behaviour and attitudes has a dramatic effect on student learning and engagement" (p. 157).

During the multiple informal conversations, I had with the students while I was collecting and coding the data, many alluded to the fact that it was easier to speak in the L2 in the conversation group than in class because the latter was a fun, safe and friendlier environment where they could speak in the L2 and make mistakes without being ridiculed or feeling embarrassed. Figure 5.11 below shows that of the 388 students who responded to question Q10, 34% indicated that they had participated in these extra-curricular activities, where they practised the L2, at some point in the preceding 12 months before the survey was conducted.

These conversation groups were run by students of the corresponding L2, except for one of the French groups that I created and ran for 4 years which allowed me to collect valuable data for this research.

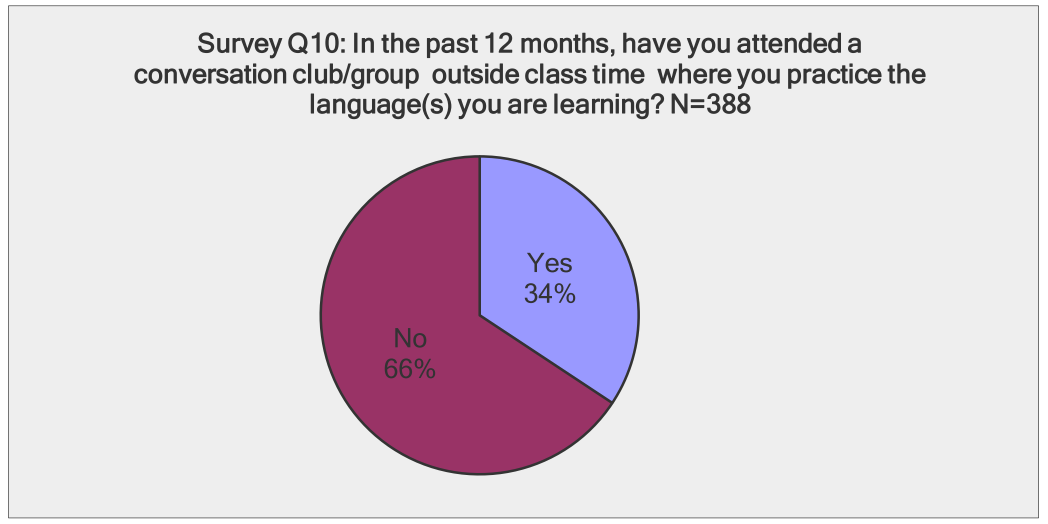


Figure 5.11 Q10: Percentage of participants who attended a conversation group in the past 12 months

Source: Student Survey, June 2013, Q10 N= 388 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Survey Q48 asked the 99 students to nominate which conversation groups they attended. Figure 5.12 below shows that 51.5% were members of the *Cercle français de conversation*, which is the group I initiated and ran as an extracurricular activity for students of French. There was another French conversation group on campus, the *French Collectif,* that offered a second option for students of French to practise the L2. Another 24.2% of the students attended the Spanish Club, and 12.1% attended the German Conversation Club. Some of these students, primarily those who were studying more than one language, were members of more than one conversation group. 15.2% of the respondents said they participated in other conversation groups, such as the *Alliance Française*, Dante Alighieri Society and other *ad hoc* groups, such as a German Conversation Club, organised by the students themselves in their halls of residence.

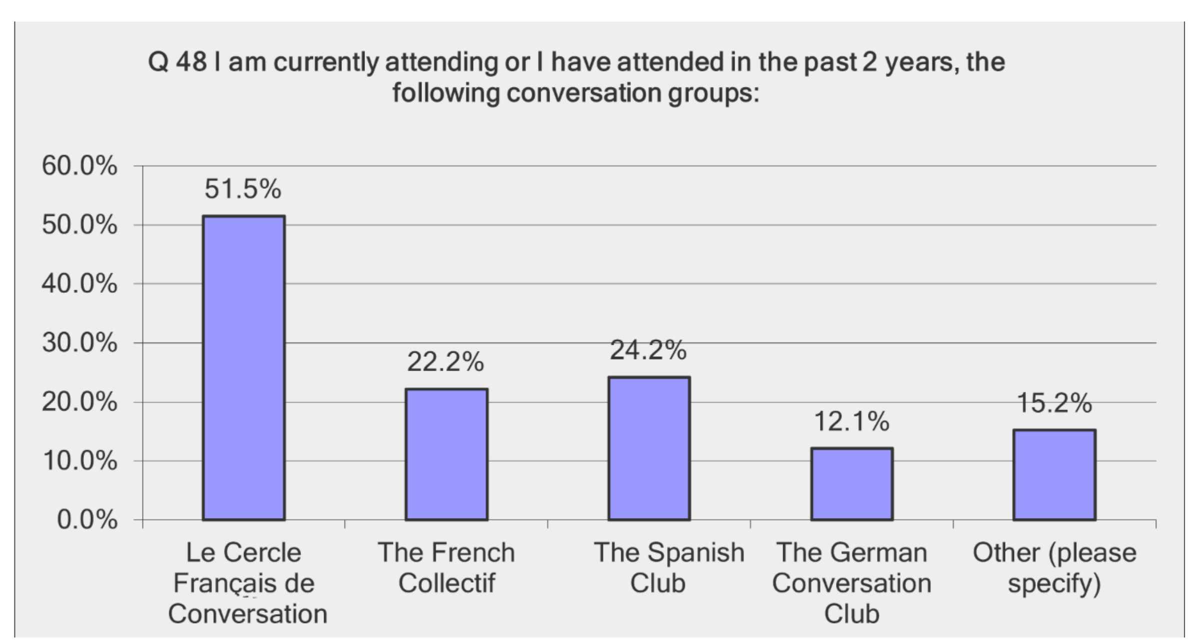


Figure 5.12 Q48: The different conversation groups attended by students

Source: Student Survey, June 2013, Q48 N= 99 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

As previously mentioned, I regularly attended CFC, and this allowed me to get closer to the students and gain their trust. In the group of students who participated in the conversation circle, some seldom missed a session, while others came less frequently. I observed that some of the students who were actively engaged to speak French in this informal environment were also very active in class; however, others were quiet when exposed to speaking in the formal environment. Why were some of these students more enthusiastic and engaged in the L2 in the informal environment and less so in the classroom? Below is a brief extract of the conversation between some of the students, during the focus group, that partially answers this question. The students' names are pseudonyms.

Matilda: *In Cercle français, I feel so safe… I feel very safe… If I make any mistakes, it doesn't matter because I have always made mistakes with these people.*

William: *[We should do in class] exactly what we have in the Cercle. We sit down and just talk. Because we talk about things that we actually care about, we talk about things that interest us, we talk about daily life things, about things you like to do or you want to do… Also you normally are talking one on one, and you don't want to let down the other person and you make the effort. Then you just change partners and speak with someone else.*

Linda: *It works really well; you just speak to one person, and then turn to someone else and the conversation flows…*

Charles: *… In class it doesn't work because you sit with someone you've never met before, or you have nothing in common with; so you just sit there and say nothing.*

Matilda: *… In Cercle français, what encourages me are the people; you know everybody is there to speak French and to have fun.*

Linda: *Also at Cercle français you can have a glass of wine.*

Marc: *But I think not too many people drink at Cercle français; actually I think most people do not drink.* [Approximately 1/3 of the people drank]

George: *It's true. I drink, but not at Cercle français.*

Andrea: *It's quite dim.*

Charlie: *Yes. No one can see your face.*

Beatrice: *Yes. The lights… absolutely.*

George: *In class, it's only a 50 minute-class, so by the time you get in, start the class, you only speak for 15 minutes if you are lucky or outgoing like me. At Cercle Français, you arrive and everybody is already speaking French, and you get right in the mood, and then you stay for 2 or 3 hours and that is great.*

When coding this data (see the highlights), I was again able to determine that SEtS is strongly linked to affective feelings of security, defined by Zhang, Beckmann, and Beckmann (2018) as "feeling safe from the fear of making errors or losing face when communicating in the L2" (p. 233). Another strong determiner of SEtS is the presence of a solidarity bond and silent complicity within the group where the goal is to practice the L2 in an enjoyable and fun learning experience. Knowing that mistakes are all right and having some sort of connection with the topic of conversation—as in things the students actually care about—are strong contributors to lowering their level of anxiety, and thus to increasing their WTC. The students who alluded to the fact that the lights were dim at the pub, and that no-one could see their faces clearly, expressed a feeling of less vulnerability in such an environment. In class, I observed students attempting to hide behind their books or behind an imaginary shield, but the lights are definitely bright.

Teacher's personality, not mentioned in the above conversation is absent from consideration in the informal setting: although I (their teacher) was present, I was seen as "one of them", non-threatening, non-intimidating and non-judgmental as per the different informal conversations I had with the students. For them CFC was:

> *…less intimidating* (S6/Q50); *it is about speaking for fun* (S5/Q50); *the atmosphere is less judgmental, and you are free to discuss whatever you like* (S76/Q50); *it's such a casual environment* (S25/Q50); *and [you are] among friends [who] will not judge you.* (S26/Q50)

According to the students, there was a strong perception that people went to CFC because everyone was there to practise the L2 and have fun at the same time. This was a big magnet that attracted the students to this extra-curricular activity over the years it operated. My journal entries and the reflective memos disclosed the emotional and affective differences sensed by the students when conveying their experience in the formal settings of a class as opposed to that of the informal environment of the conversation groups at the pub.

> *In order to learn to speak a language, you need to practise it and use it in real life situations as often as possible. These conversation groups give you that opportunity.* (Focus Group/George)

Should teachers, in class, attempt to replicate real-life situations or scenarios so students are more inclined to engage to speak? "Widdowson (1990)… argued that authenticity of language in the classroom is 'an illusion', since the language intended for NSs (native speakers) cannot be authentic for the language-learner audience in the classroom setting" (Siegel, 2014, p. 365). It is very difficult to reproduce real conversations—in 50 minutes—inside the walls of a classroom. This is corroborated by the students in this study, who express their frustrations of being involved in a language learning environment that does not bear any resemblance to reality. And this is still true today despite the new techniques and technological innovations developed to simulate a "virtual reality" in the classroom.

As mentioned in previous chapters, I used Strategic Interaction (SI) in my oral language classes as a strategy to engage students to speak while using real-life happenings and situations that encouraged oral interaction in the L2 in a natural way between the students. This teaching methodology follows the principles of a communicative language approach involving activities to promote the acquisition of the L2 through real communication, by engaging the students in "meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns)" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 161-162). The pedagogical importance of SI and its relevance to this study is that when learners are pushed to enter into collaborative dialogue, "they use other dimensions of communication to interact with each other, including

non-verbal elements such as gestures, facial expressions, intonation and laughter, which are natural reactions in our day-to-day communication with other people" (Quijada & Martín, 2013, pp. 366-367). Students have fun and laugh often during the improvisation aspect of the scenarios, and it is particularly remarkable to observe that in this activity their fear of speaking and sounding silly disappears:

> *Scenarios create a relaxed environment in class which helps everyone's confidence. The tasks are funny and enjoyable, and the pressure isn't there. You generally want to be involved; such is the nature of the environment.* (Course feedback questionnaire, Continuing French, Semester 2, 2011)

> *When I am having fun, it is much easier to speak in class. I don't worry about making mistakes and my classmates are laughing with me and not at me.* (Survey S245/Q28)

The notion of scaffolding is often associated with this type of class environment. The students connect through a sense of complicity and support each other tacitly when they are having fun. The class atmosphere may feel more comfortable, but they are still working towards an educational objective, which in this case is the use of the L2.

> *I feel really engaged to speak in a language class where the class atmosphere… is light hearted but not frivolous; we are still working hard but we are having fun… in that they are trying to learn from each other, but are not competitive.* (Interview S7/Q16)

It is important to remember the main reason, according to the data, why the majority of these students chose to study a second language in the first place: Most of them want to be able to speak in the L2 with people who speak that language in a day-to-day environment.

> *I feel more engaged to speak in informal environments because these are the contexts in which I imagine myself speaking the language generally. I decided to study the L2 because I wanted to be able to chat fluently—easily—with people… I did not choose to study it so that I can become a linguist or specialist on [that] language.* (S75/Q51)

So, how can teachers create an engaging and enjoyable learning environment in class? And how instrumental is "having fun" in class to students' engagement to speak the L2? Can a fun class environment be part of the social nature of learning that is so important in CLT classes, and can it embrace all the elements identified in the WTC pyramid to support that theoretical claim? From the perspective of the student participants in this research, the psychological and social impact of "having fun" in class while learning the language serves as a conduit for SEtS.

5.4.2 The importance of fun for SEtS

One of the many ways of reducing class anxiety is—as Krashen implied in an interview—"to make the message so interesting that students forget that it is in another language" (cited in Young, 1992, p. 169). Could this be extrapolated to making the environment so enjoyable and fun that students would forget the fear of speaking in another language? Could introducing language play or simply having fun in class create a more relaxed classroom atmosphere and reduce the levels of anxiety that the learners feel? Berk (1996) noted the psychological effects that laughter, as an expression of having fun, can have on students by "reducing anxiety, decreasing stress, enhancing self-esteem and increasing self-motivation" (cited in Garner, 2006, p. 177). So, how can teachers create an enjoyable learning environment where the element of fun can enhance Student Engagement *to Speak* in class, as identified in this research?

> *If the classes are more interesting as in the teachers make it more fun perhaps I would engage more in my classes.* (Survey S74/Q19)

Having fun in class is closely allied with the teacher's approach to teaching and/or to teacher's personality traits; however, this study positioned the element of "having fun" as being related to class environment. Through the survey, the students were asked whether *"fun" can engage [them] to speak in [their] language class* (Q26)*.* Figure 5.13 displays that, at all levels, having fun in class can engage students to speak in class in the language they are learning. The participants in this research stated that having fun in class is a key element in SEtS for the following reasons:

> *When I am having fun in class, I don't get embarrassed. I forget about my fears. If I make mistakes, it does not matter. We are all making mistakes, and it is alright. We are laughing at each other. I am normally a little shy, but if I am having fun, I can get engaged into speaking.* (Interview S28/Q7)

Figure 5.13 Q26: Can "fun" engage you to speak in your language class?

Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q26 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

The element of fun as pedagogy has not been explored in sufficient detail as an important aspect of student engagement and teaching languages. The effect of humour in pedagogy, however, has been examined in the field of education, but it has proved controversial, in that "historically, humour was perceived [by the educational institutions] as having no place in the classroom" (Bryant, Comisky, & Zillmann, 1979, p. 114). This view began to change in the 1990s, as noted by Deneire (1995), when "what for a long time seemed to be opposite concepts—the serious undertakings of education and the leisurely character of humour—suddenly appear to be complementary" (p. 285). Deneire's claim is based on various well-documented studies on the use of humour in the American classroom, in particular a study conducted by Murray (1983) who inferred from student evaluations that those teachers who used humour in the class were perceived to have "outstanding teaching behaviour" compared to those who did not use humour who were judged to be "average or poor lecturers" (p. 285). Another study by Bell (2009) found that learning through humour has social and psychological benefits. Based on her findings, Bell (2009) suggested that language teachers should be encouraged to use humour in the classroom, as when the students are

having fun it helps them to relax and bond with classmates, raises their interest, and "simply makes [their] learning more enjoyable" (p. 241).

Bell (2009) recommends further research in the area, but states that if her arguments are not convincing, we should turn to Medgyes (2002), who famously said "school without laughter is sheer torture" (p. 110). And this is one of the points the students in this research are attempting to make. Laughter is not about humour, or jokes; it is about social interactions (Provine, 2001). When students are laughing, they establish a deeper bond and connect with their social environment, and even in an educational setting it is easier to interact. The student quoted above confirms that *we are all making mistakes and it is alright. We are laughing at each other.* The sense of camaraderie makes it less embarrassing. In any situation outside a class environment, when people are having fun, they tend to be less inhibited, and the sense of ridicule is minimised by the feeling of being in a safer environment. If this is transferred to the language classroom, it follows that students would feel more relaxed and more confident to speak when they are having fun, and the fear of making mistakes would not prevent them from expressing themselves, even when they know they will make linguistic errors. It will create a more effective learning environment, increase the level of WTC, and trigger the use of the language. Paraphrasing Huss and Eastep (2016), fun and laughter "can bridge the gap between the teacher and the students by putting students at ease" (p. 43).

In the classes that I observed, when students were perceived as having fun, the atmosphere was not as tense. In my own classes, when the environment was relaxed and fun, I noticed that even some of the students who did not normally participate actively were inclined to join in the conversation. "Fun provides for emotional release when tensions are high" said Schlechty (2011, p. 26) when discussing effective student environments. Adding fun pedagogical activities to a language program can in fact infuse a class with enjoyment and vitality. Group dynamics and class environment are important for SEtS in a language class, particularly since learners in languages are often organised in pairs or small groups when working on class activities. The CLT approach has traditionally aimed to develop the learners' communicative competence through classroom interaction and creating a class environment

conducive to communication. “The quality and quantity of such interaction is, to a large extent, a function of the social structure and milieu of the class” (Clément et al., 1994, p. 424).

> *I think that when you are having fun like in the scenario classes, you are less shy and thus you get the courage to speak with more confidence.* (Focus group/Caroline)

We may be on the side of those who believe that “humour is one of the most universal of all human phenomena, making it a beneficial tool in classrooms at all levels of learning”, (Morrison 2010, cited in Collins & André, 2014, p. 266), but it must be acknowledged that the use of humour in class can be controversial because the cultural idiosyncrasies of humour mean that what may be funny for one group of people may be offensive to another (Huss & Eastep 2016; Schmitz 2002; Yue, Jiang, Lu, & Hiranandani, 2016). Besides, “humour is most effective when it is appropriate for the setting and style of the teacher and when it has an emphasis in ‘having fun’ rather than ‘being funny’” (Baid & Lambert, 2010, p. 549). In this study the question to the students was clearly put as whether *having fun* in class engaged them to speak, and not whether humour engaged them. This research is based on the premise that in most cases, humour is intended to produce fun. Thus, the question posed to the students was whether a fun environment could engage them to speak in the L2. Deneire (1995) suggests that “smiling and laughter… in the interactive context of the language classroom… allow the expression of satisfaction, relief, complicity, approbation and pleasure… [where] the resulting tension can be released through humorous situations created by the teacher, the students, and/or the material used” (p. 286).

However, some of the teachers interviewed in this research were not convinced that creating a fun environment was sufficiently “academic”:

> *I don’t think fun is always appropriate in a university context. Fun sometimes helps, but you cannot always have fun. Respect might be more important.* (Teacher Interview T7/Q18)

They perceive *fun* to be an *inappropriate* feature of the class environment that could hinder what should be a serious and respectful dynamic between student and teacher in higher education. *Do I have to be a clown now and entertain the students instead of teaching them?* was the response I obtained in a conversation with a colleague when mentioning that the students of this research were saying that having fun in class was an important motivator for

their engagement to speak in the language they were learning. Indeed, a two-way respect is a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning, but in all the years I have taught, having fun in class has never undermined respect.

The current study aligns with previous findings (Ameen, 2016; Deneire, 1995; Jonas, 2009; Medgyes, 2002; Schlechty, 2011) that highlight that fun is a valid pedagogical tool that can improve classroom instruction by creating a more relaxing environment to learning. For example, Jonas (2009) claims there is a tested relationship between having fun and student achievement in a FL class, and this relationship has been supported not only by research, but "it has proven to be successful" (p. 27). Ameen (2016) argued that "fun class activities… can be regarded as effetive teaching tools that may add some fun and excitement to the [language] teaching and learning processes" (p. 400). Furthermore, amongst the positive effects that these activities can have on students' experience in a language class, Ameen's findings reinforce the importance of offering students opportunities to use the target language in a friendly and non-threatening environment. These fun class activities can help "reduce boredom… boost [students'] self-confidence… increase students' vocabulary and better internalize grammatical structures… and make [learning the L2] enjoyable" (Ameen, 2016, p. 405). In a class environment devoid of intimidation and fears, but with fun and relaxation, students are more inclined to participate in class activities and build the courage to speak. Teachers who embrace fun in class are seen as more approachable and engaging. If students feel that making errors and mistakes is acceptable, they venture to narrow the gap between willingness to communicate and speaking. As this student reflected, even when they are not *in the mood* to speak, fun can lighten up that mood and trigger SEtS:

> *It is all about the mood. When I am not in the mood, like I am tired, I don't want to speak, and I am like I am going to sit here and wait till the end. When I am in that mood, only fun activities can make me speak...* (Interview S37/Q8)

Fun gives the students a sense of freedom to speak and relaxes them to the point where they would engage to speak as if they were in a more informal setting. A fun class environment is thus another catalyst of the emerging theory. So, what other elements of the class environment were found as being engaging or disengaging to speak?

5.4.3 Other effects on SEtS and SDtS related to class environment

As is well known, students with differing levels of spoken and written L2 competence may find themselves in the same language class.

> *You get at least 3/4 of the class who won't say anything. Because you get the fluent ones, that say everything.* (Interview S15/Q7)

Many of the participants in this research admitted that this unbalanced environment affected their confidence to speak and increased their anxiety levels. Clément, Baker and MacIntyre (2003) found that perceived different levels of communication competence amongst peers can impact negatively or positively the class environment, and it is one of the strongest predictors of WTC. Jacobs and Farrell (2003) stated that a collaborative class environment is the most effective setting in a CLT classroom, and Riggs and Gholar (2009) advocated a supportive, non-competitive and learner-centred environment as the ideal atmosphere for students to engage in class. Based on these studies, the students were asked, through the survey, whether having other students in class with a perceived higher level of competence in the L2 affected their engagement to speak.

As shown in Figure 5.14 below, Q33 in the survey addressed the concern students had when finding themselves in a class where they felt that other students had a higher level of language competence. Students have a tendency "to measure themselves against others, [and thus] the presence of other students perceived to be 'better'… [is] a major source of anxiety for these learners" (Tóth, 2011, p. 48). This is a reason for deciding to remain silent, and it was ranked by the students in this study as the second most important overall factor for SDtS after teacher's personality. Around 60% of the students attached importance to this variable, and it was ranked second most important for the first three levels of instruction. For students at Advanced level, it was ranked third in terms of importance for SDtS, after a familiar topic and teacher's personality.

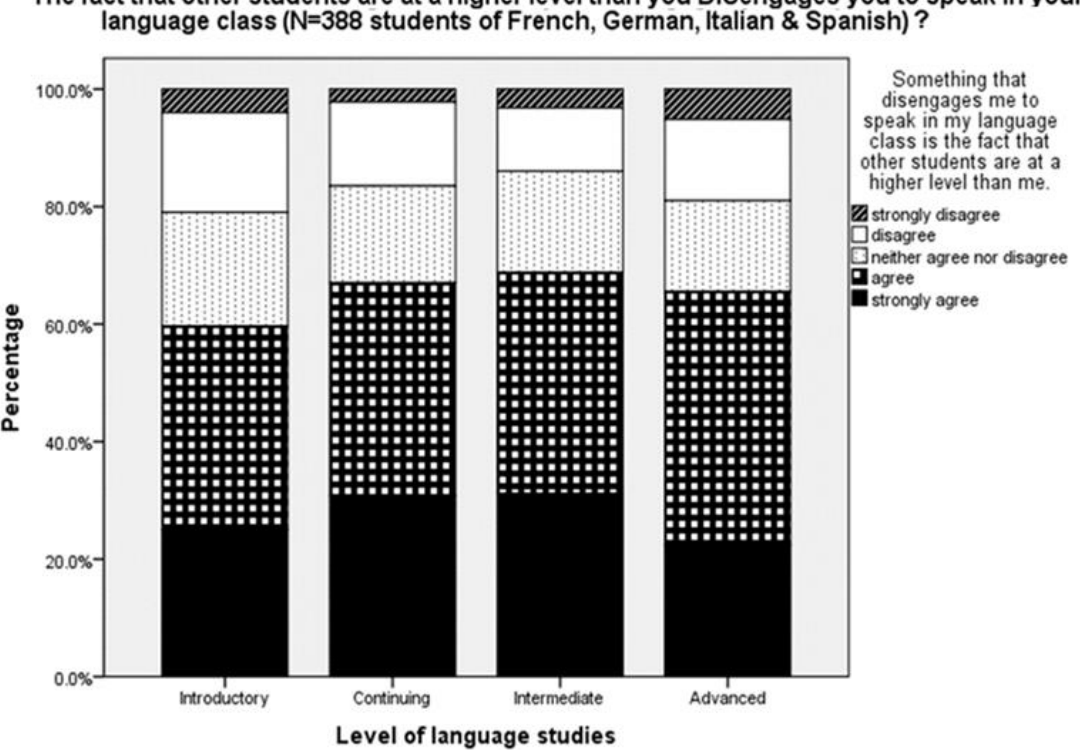


Figure 5.14 Q33: Other students at a higher level than you disengage you to speak

Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q33 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

This low self-perceived ability to speak the L2 as a factor affecting SEtS is an issue echoed in the findings of Uztosun et al. (2018) of an action research study on how to enhance student engagement through student negotiation. The study showed that by satisfying students' needs and interests, the teacher was able to increase the students' WTC while enhancing the students' self-perception of weaker L2 speaking abilities. "Students with low perceived language competence may be unwilling to participate in classroom activities and this will hinder them from improving communication abilities" (Uztosun et al., 2018, p. 107). A study by Hashimoto (2002) supported that hypothesis, when they found that "L2 anxiety… [exerted] a strong and direct negative influence on perceived competence" (p. 57), whereas a higher self-perception of their own ability to speak vis-à-vis their peers would lead to "greater motivation for language learning [which in turn raises] the frequency of L2 use in the classroom" (Hashimoto, 2002, p. 40). An intriguing result from Hashimoto's study worth further investigation, though, is that a higher self-perception of "the ability to communicate can affect the frequency of L2 use with beginning students but not with more advanced

students" (p. 57). This is not the case in this current study where students at all levels indicated this factor affected their SDtS, as per Figure 5.14 above.

> *[In two of my language classes] it is a lot easier to be engaged because the knowledge people have is quite consistent; whereas [in this other class] it seems harder to be engaged as the level that people can speak is quite divided, and I happen to fall on the lesser side; so I tend to avoid going to classes at risk of being embarrassed.* (Survey S69/Q19)

It is a concern to hear a student admit that they would rather not attend a class than risk the embarrassment of having to speak in front of their peers whom they perceive to have a more advanced level of spoken competence in the L2.

> *What really disengages me to speak in a language class is when the person who knows a lot, does not give anyone else the time to say anything. It gets to a point when you say "why bother". It is terrible when the teacher does not try to dissuade them from speaking all the time. They would answer all the time, and the teacher would just say like "cool" and the class will continue.* (Interview S10/Q11)

Having students of different levels in a language classroom is often a concern for many teachers, but it is not a new issue. In their 1986 study of FL classroom anxiety, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope found that students become very anxious when they fear being singled out as less competent than other students, and "they may skip class or seek refuge in the last row in an effort to avoid the humiliation or embarrassment of being called on to speak" (p. 130). In the present study, students reported feeling intimidated by those who have had the opportunity to live abroad and become acquainted with the language, particularly the spoken language. The grammar and written skills of these more experienced students may be of a lower level, but they are confident in their speaking abilities since they have had the opportunity for immersion in the language while overseas. Other students have studied the L2 for three or four years or more at secondary level or have family roots embedded in the culture of the L2, and so are more fluent in speaking the L2. This has a negative impact on the rest of the class:

> *When you feel like everyone else is fluent, and to try, you feel like you are stupid trying to go in a conversation. I feel like I am better off saying nothing, because I am going to sound like an idiot. (Interview S46/Q8).*

It is important to note the fact that some students in this study blame the teacher for not providing all students with the same opportunities to speak and by not addressing the

problem that some students have a perceived advantage over others. A situation where all students in a classroom are at the same level of L2 competence remains a utopia. Yet language teachers have a responsibility to address as best as they can the additional complexity of having students in the same class with different levels of spoken competency.

Another factor that students identified as making a difference in an engaging language class was the feeling of being amongst friends in a safe class environment. As seen before, a safe class environment is one where "students do not have a high level of fear about making mistakes or producing errors, [and teachers can recreate that atmosphere] by listening to them carefully, smiling and providing some active responses" (Kang, 2005, p. 290). Zhang et al. (2018) in reviewing multiple studies (e.g. Cao & Philp, 2006; Kang, 2005; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015; Riasati, 2012) found that "students prefer talking with friends [as opposed] to strangers… and [they] enjoy communicating with those who are cooperative and actively participating in the [class] discussion" (p. 230). This assertion is echoed by the following student:

> *In 2nd year* [Continuing]*, the group was too big. I remember feeling very intimidated because other students spoke non-stop. It's very awkward to speak when you don't know the people…* (Focus Group/Matilda)

Knowing the people in class gives the students more confidence to speak as opposed to not knowing their classmates, where they feel intimidated by the fear of making errors or being judged by their peers. The perception of different levels of spoken competency again adds to their embarrassment to speak in class, but this diminishes when they feel they are amongst friends and on the same learning journey. Question 24 in the survey asked students whether they would feel more engaged to speak in a language class if they felt amongst friends. The response was homogeneous (see Appendix V). Approximately 80% of the students strongly agreed/agreed that *feeling amongst friends* was important for their engagement to speak in class. One of the students commented on the value of attending the conversation groups outside class time, explaining this had increased their level of confidence in using the L2 in class:

> *The French conversation circle is very helpful :) I find that my engagement to speak in class has increased because I feel more confident to speak French after attending Cercle français.* (Survey S81/Q19)

This student felt more comfortable in the classroom because they felt supported by the new "circle of friends". Embarrassment and fear of speaking in class had been minimised, thus promoting engagement to speak in class. When the notion of safety in the context of a language classroom was explored in more detail, the students associated it with feeling comfortable in class and not threatened—or even *tormented*—by their peers or their teacher.

> *If a class is "safe" it means that I can feel comfortable, give confusing questions a shot and be myself without fear of being teased or tormented by classmates or the teacher in anyway. It also means that none of the people in the class do or say things that make me feel stressed or threatened (Survey S114/Q23).*

Survey Q23 asked students whether a *safe* class environment engages them to speak in class. Over 70% of the students at all levels strongly agreed/agreed that a safe class environment was a factor of engagement to speak (see Appendix W). Safety to engage in speaking in class appears related to not being judged or ridiculed by other students, nor by the teacher, when mistakes are made:

> *A safe class means I feel respected, and comfortable to express my view (not judged). I think the existence of laughter also adds to a safe class though!* (Survey S45/Q23)

This student correlates safety with feelings of being respected and comfortable to express their view without the fear of being judged. Having fun in class—or *the existence of laughter*—can reinforce the notion of safety.

> *Safe for me entails the teacher making it clear that it's okay to make mistakes, for there to be no outward judgement from others in the class when a mistake is made, and there being no competitive mentality in the class wherein one or two people are always answering every question and making everyone else feel dumb.* (Survey S24/Q23)

Thus, a fun and safe class environment where students feel amongst friends and where they are not intimidated by the different levels of competence, plays an important role in SEtS, and is yet another element of the emergent theory. It is important to acknowledge that "establishing a good emotional atmosphere in the classroom depends on both learners and teachers and is crucial for learning to happen… Progress in FL occurs when good chemistry develops amongst students and between students and their teacher" (Dewaele, Witney, et al., 2018, p. 679). But again, a class environment with those characteristics will not engage students to speak if they are unfamiliar with the topic or the class content, or if the teacher is arrogant and rude.

5.5 Empowering the students through connecting

> *Learning is not something that happens in a textbook, it is a living interaction. The teacher sets the tone, and if you don't meet each other on the same level playing field where you feel comfortable making mistakes, you'll never engage with speaking and learning.* (Interview S13/Q20)

Throughout the study, students stated that a genuine *living interaction* between them and the teacher needs to be created in the classroom in order to engage them to speak, and teacher's personality can *set the tone* and create an effective learning environment where students will *feel comfortable making mistakes.* This in turn will minimise their fears, lower the affective filter which makes the student receptive to language input (Krashen, 1982), and engage them to speak, as long as they are interested in the topic or class content.

> [What engages me to speak in class is] *probably not a fear that* ***the teacher*** *will shut me down. Having an* ***interesting*** *subject matter or a* ***topic*** *we have* ***fun*** *talking about it. Enjoying a conversation and being in each other's company.* (Interview S7/Q7)

> [In the informal environment] *we're not FORCED to talk about the seemingly randomly chosen topics that are assigned to us in class. We can talk about whatever we want—where we go out on weekends, what sports we play, experiences we've had overseas, etc.* (S66/Q50)

A learning environment where the teacher is seen as an authoritative person in the classroom, who *forces students* to communicate, is the antithesis of a friendly and fun environment where students have the freedom to choose the interlocutor and the topic, and thus will impact negatively on SEtS. Students want an environment where *everyone is friendly* (S3/Q51); where they can talk *about what interests and is most important to* [them] *rather than what is dictated to* [them] (S4/Q51); and where people are relaxed and *are speaking for fun* (S7/Q51). Some of the teachers interviewed agree:

> *The relationship between a teacher's personality and the creation of a relaxed learning environment is crucial to the students' engagement to speak.* (Teacher Interview T9/Q19)

When the entire class is engaged in speaking in the L2 and everyone wants to give their own opinion, a lively and contagious atmosphere may develop, one that seems to attract even those who normally remain in their shell. Thus, as Choudhury (2005) advised, "it is important to remember, that while teachers have a certain amount of power in the classroom, learners also clearly influence the pace and direction of the interaction" (p. 81). While the power

dynamics in engaging the students to speak leans towards the teacher—for example they choose the teaching methodology, the course content and the pedagogical activities—, the students have a strong role to play as in the end it is their decision to engage and to connect. A strong influence of peer relationships exists in shaping an engaging environment, and when students have established a positive rapport with the teacher, they can co-construct a supportive classroom environment and "direct their own learning within the bounds of the contextual constraints" (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 161). A fertile and effective connection goes both ways: teachers can empower students by connecting with them and making them feel confident in their ability to speak in the L2, but students can also take their share of responsibility in co-developing a class environment conducive to speaking. Zhang et al. (2018) defined a "positive and stress-free classroom atmosphere [as one] co-created by classmates who cooperate with each other as well as by teachers who support their students" (p. 231).

It has been shown that for SEtS to occur, three main categories must be present concurrently: a teacher with a fun, friendly and approachable personality; an engaging and interesting topic that students are familiar with; and a fun class environment that gives students' choice and the confidence to speak. These theoretical assumptions suggest that engagement to speak needs to have meaning for the students, and an emotional connection needs to be established with the key players of a learning environment: the teacher, the topic and the classmates. In discussing student engagement, Schlechty (2011) insisted that "building a trusting relationship between teacher and student and creating fun classes… is critical to designing engaging work" (pp. 25-26). This comment accords with the findings of this study, where, from a student's perspective, once a trusting relationship is established, teacher and students can create a fun environment to learn, thereby minimising the students' fear of embarrassment and maximising their confidence to speak in class. It is, however, vital for the teacher to lead the way towards enabling that environment.

In the next chapter, I push these research findings to a more abstract level and reveal the emergent grounded theory.

CHAPTER 6
The Theory of Maximising Confidence

6.1 Introduction

> Theories try to answer questions. Theories often account for what happens, how it ensues, and may account for why it happened… Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (1997) propose that qualitative researchers could address "why" questions "by considering the contingent relations between the *whats* and *hows* of social life" (p. 200). Hence, we treat accounting for *what* people do in specific situations and linking it to *how* they do it as contingent relationships (Charmaz, 2014, p. 228).

Through this journey, I have attempted to show how the inductive reasoning process of GT leads to the formation of a substantive theory through the coding of individual actions, thoughts and events to form conceptual categories that lead to theory development (Harry, Sturges, & Klingner, 2005). As explained in Chapter 3, it takes significant effort for coding, memo-writing and initial sampling to evolve into a conceptual level of the categories and their properties, and to determine whether there is more than one core category. In this study, I have analysed coded data from different sources that form the universe in which Student Engagement *to Speak* is embedded. Seen through the students' lens, it can be affirmed that the fundamental nature of SEtS is underpinned by the impact that teacher's personality and the connections created in the learning environment can have on students' confidence to speak. As mentioned before, teacher's personality—as opposed to students' personality—and its role in a second language classroom is a factor that has largely been neglected in the literature reviewed, whereas the findings of this study suggest that "who the teacher is" should be given prominence in the pedagogical paradigms that frame language teaching and learning in higher education. Furthermore, the data analysed has enabled me to conceptualise the personality of a teacher who engages students to speak as one that maximises students' confidence to speak. In following the principles of GT, it needs to be assessed whether there is indeed one single core category that can amalgamate all the underlying properties of SEtS.

In reviewing the different versions of GT, Hallberg (2006) concluded that "the data is constructed through an on-going interaction between researcher and participant" (p. 146), and through interpretation of the constant data comparison and the analysis, the findings of a research are guided by "the researcher's interpretative understanding, rather than the researcher's explanation, of how the participant creates his or her understanding and meaning of reality" (p. 146). These observations are consistent with the strategies of inquiry and analysis used in the current study. Furthermore, Charmaz (2014) maintains that GT allows us to raise and answer inquisitive "why" questions in addition to "what" and "who" questions. In this study, the major research question was *what* engages student to speak in a language class. To answer this question, I had to look at students' multiple situations, contexts, backgrounds, levels of competence and more, by interacting with them and being part of their world. In searching for the core category, I had to attempt to understand *why* certain teachers and settings engage students more than others, and I needed to present credible and useful recommendations on *how* the concern could be addressed. Constructive GT advocated by Charmaz, which I have mostly followed in this study, abides by a constructivist approach "that places priority on the studied phenomenon and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 239). This is important to emphasise, since I am a member of the social world under study, both as researcher and as active participant-observer, and my own experience as a learner and teacher of languages influences the lens through which this theory is perceived. Charmaz (2014) states that "the theory depends on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it" (p. 239). However, as I have shown, this does not mean that all my findings are subjective, as I had to confront numerous instances where my assumptions were not corroborated by the data.

In this chapter, I consolidate the findings of my research into a theory by completing the process of analysis, self-reflection and dialogue with the data within an analytic autoethnographic framework, and by returning to the methodological strategies used in GT. I reveal the foundations of an emergent theory on Student Engagement *to Speak* in class, grounded on the coded qualitative data complemented by the quantitative findings. While I follow the last steps advocated by Charmaz in constructing GT, these are underpinned by my

shared experiences with the students of what impacts their engagement to speak in class. Section 6.2 elaborates on the process of developing the emergent theory through an interpretive pathway within a constructivist GT approach. In Section 6.3, I outline the emerging theory and explore some of its applications in the field. Section 6.4 concludes with some recommendations.

6.2 Developing an emergent theory on Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS)

> An alternative definition of theory emphasizes interpretation and gives **abstract understanding** greater priority than explanation. Proponents of this definition view theoretical understanding as gained through the theorist's interpretation of the studied phenomenon. (Charmaz, 2014, p. 230)

This study opens a door to further research in the area of second language teaching, particularly to investigate how the personality of a teacher can influence Student Engagement *to Speak* in class, and eventually enhance students' opportunities to acquire the spoken language. The question is whether TP is sufficiently distinct to stand as the core category that pulls together all the elements of engagement to speak. Is TP an incomplete phenomenon, or is it simply the result of a representative sampling of a quantitative piece of research, and thus a conceptually non-substantive property of my main category? Can TP nevertheless lead me to the emergent theory, if I retrace my steps back to the memos and further reflect on the content of the data? I address these queries in the next section.

6.2.1 Theoretical sampling

"Theoretical sampling guides where you go" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 197). Conducting "theoretical sampling is strategic, specific, and systematic… [but] it depends on having already identified a category… and its range of variations" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 199). The data in the form of statements made by the students pointed to the fact that students would engage to speak if they had enough confidence in themselves to do so and if the teacher had an engaging personality as defined by the students. An initial tentative category thus emerged, which I labelled *teacher's personality* or *engaging with the teacher*. However, I remained unsure whether this was the core category or a sub-category of a more abstract category, as it did not have the required binding power suggested by GT and it could not stand by itself. Charmaz

(2014) advises to then “push the boundaries of a substantive finding and answer the ‘So what?’ question” (p. 205). When you have tentative categories directing your research, you may use the practice of theoretical sampling at different stages in your research, including in the later stages (Charmaz, 2014). I therefore went back to revisiting the results and the ethnographic narratives, searching for gaps in the analysis, and examining one more time the main dimensions of SEtS that frame the theory.

1. The majority of language student participants in this research were studying a second language because they wanted to learn to speak the L2, and they were disappointed at not having more time in class dedicated to oral practice. Teachers know that students’ main aspiration is to learn to speak the language, and yet their teaching practice focuses on teaching reading, listening and writing over speaking, and the language course curriculum concentrates on topics of linguistics, literature, history and culture. There is, thus, a clear disparity of expectations between students and teachers. The students’ perspective is important, since research has shown that “learners’ expectations play a critical role in determining how teachers [succeed] in the L2 classroom [when] teachers and learners’ beliefs… differ” (Loewen et al., 2009, p. 102).

2. The descriptive quantitative data analysis completed in this study identified TP as the major factor that engages—and disengages—students to speak in class. An engaging-to-speak personality is defined by students as one possessing the following key characteristics: the teacher must be fun, approachable, supportive, friendly, and must let students know that mistakes are “ok”. The students claimed that this would lower their anxiety levels and maximise their confidence to speak, as a tacit teacher-student and student-student connection would be established. An intimidating teacher, on the other hand, would make students feel insecure and vulnerable, and this would increase their level of anxiety, lower their WTC, and decrease their self-confidence. As TP is seldom considered in the literature as a factor influencing second language learning, it is reasonable to think that language teachers normally do not actively reflect on how their own personality could impact on students’ engagement to speak.

3. The qualitative research, backed up by the quantitative inquiry results, revealed that the two other major factors influencing SEtS are a familiar topic and a fun class environment. The students claimed that by having some degree of familiarity with the class topic and by being immersed in a fun learning environment, they would be more inclined to engage to speak, as in the relaxed climate that this exemplifies, their level of anxiety would be minimised, thereby boosting their self-confidence. Their disengagement to speak, on the other hand, would be reinforced in a class environment where students are concerned about being judged by their teacher and by their peers, and where their self-perceived low competence would be further impacted by feeling intimidated by their classmates. The relevance of topic and its importance on second language learning is a key element discussed at length in the literature reviewed; however, the element of fun remains a controversial theme in the university environment.

4. When I compared the different environments, there were significant differences between them. In the informal environment of the pub, the personality of the group facilitator, a relevant topic and a fun environment were key factors in engagement to speak. The students reiterated that speaking at CFC was easier than in class since they could connect easily with the facilitator and with each other in a non-judgemental social environment where making mistakes in the L2 was the norm, and where they could choose their topic of conversation as well as their interlocutor. Looking at the formal environment, on the other hand, a recurrent concern expressed by the majority of the students was that their teacher was too “distant”, they felt no connection with the class content or with their peers, and insufficient time was devoted in class to the practice of speaking. Often the curriculum would not allow for that to occur, but many of the teachers interviewed did not believe that an emphasis on speaking over the other skills was pedagogically more appropriate. Paradoxically, most of them claimed to embrace a communicative language teaching approach, but free-flowing conversation was not particularly evident in any of the classes I observed.

In revisiting my memos on class observations and following Pace’s (2016) recommendation of using autoethnographic narratives to build theory, the following register of events emerged:

> *The teacher—whether standing in front of the class or moving around in a semi-circle setting—still seemed distant and was doing most of the speaking. There was no obvious connection between teachers and students. Many students seemed oblivious to what was going on in the class and would engage only when asked a direct question. Often, the teacher's questions were met with that awkward silence, until the same two or three students would respond over and over again. Sometimes, when a student had engaged to speak about a subject he or she was noticeably enthusiastic about, the teacher would interrupt him/her to continue with the planned class syllabus. Even in smaller groups, the apathy and the low energy of many of the groups were almost exasperating. As an observer, I attributed that to either the uninspiring course content or to students not having anything in common with the people sitting next to them—as it was many times expressed by the students themselves through the focus groups and the interviews. The dynamic was different in the classes where you could feel a connection between teacher and students through the teacher's contagious enthusiasm and non-judgemental attitude. These teachers were able to create a relaxed class environment by asking the students to engage in a topic that resonated with them—whether it was fun, controversial, or newsworthy—and where the emphasis of the class was on speaking. The class environment was fully animated, and students seemed confident in their ability to express themselves in the L2 and did not seem to be embarrassed by their use of the language.* (Extract of memos written after observing languages classes from Continuing and Intermediate levels).

The sorting and further analysis of the data endorsed the three systematically determined but tentative theoretical categories originally proposed: *engaging with the teacher, engaging with the topic* and *engaging with the environment*. But what else is there? Following the advice of Charmaz (2014), once these tentative theoretical categories are defined, the next step is to look at understanding or interpreting the analytic links between the categories and their properties, and then it can be attempted to establish a relationship between the categories. The objective of theoretical sampling is thus to identify the properties that refine each of the tentative categories of the emergent theory, though looking this time for a higher-level category that can sit above and integrate the other categories. This process is aimed at "fleshing out theoretical categories to increase the precision of the emergent theory" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 517). For example, some of the major properties of the *engaging with the teacher* category were found to be as follows: speaking would occur if a connection was established with the teacher, if the teacher was perceived as someone the students could trust, if students knew that mistakes were alright, and if the students felt valued and respected. In such an environment, the students' anxiety to speak would be reduced and their level of confidence would be lifted. "Theoretical sampling forces [the researcher] to check ideas against direct empirical realities" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 208).

Another element of GT that assists in searching the data at a deeper level is theoretical sensitivity. It "reflects the researcher's ability to use personal and professional experiences as well as methodological knowledge, and thereby see data in new ways and think abstractly about data in the process of developing theory (Hallberg, 2006, p. 144). The three tentative categories mentioned above are interlocked, and through the GT analysis and my own empirical observations, I was able to explore this relationship in more depth and look beneath the surface at the underlying layers of my findings. "Theorizing is a practice" insists Charmaz (2014, p. 233). "[It] means stopping, pondering, and thinking afresh… [It] fosters *seeing* possibilities, *establishing* connections, and *asking* questions" (2014, p. 244, emphasis in original). In following this process, I was able to establish that some of the underlying properties of the core category were characterised by feelings of *liking*, *connecting* and *trusting*, as voiced repeatedly by the students. This is a valid interpretation or, in the words of Charmaz, "an imaginative theoretical interpretation that makes sense of the studied phenomenon" (2014, p. 231), that aims to understand the students' concern in an effort to conceptualise the emergent theory. The students would engage to speak in class if they liked the teacher, the topic and the environment, if they connected with the teacher, the topic and the environment, and if they trusted and felt confident with the teacher, the topic and the environment.

6.2.2 Theoretical sorting

Theoretical sorting helps to integrate the researcher's categories and add some logic to the analysis (Charmaz, 2014). When sorting out the findings of this study, the value of student "confidence" or "self-confidence" appears very frequently when analysing the memos, whether in the context of SEtS or SDtS. Self-confidence is one of the key emotional traits affecting students' decision to engage and speak in class, as identified by many SLA researchers when investigating the hurdles to be overcome by learners of a second language (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Rubin & Thompson, 1994; Zayed & Al-Ghamdi, 2019). For example, Lightbown and Spada (2013) maintained that a good language learner is one who is not afraid of making mistakes and thus is confident in their ability to communicate in the L2 independently of the language level acquired. However, in order to reach that level of self-confidence, these learners are encouraged to practise the L2

in class as often as possible, which is not what happens in most of the language classes I observed nor what is expressed by the students who participated in this study. As a consequence of the lack of practice and other factors of intimidation, when asked to speak in the L2, the students feel removed from their comfort zone, and need as many safeguards as possible to increase their WTC and their courage to speak. When asked to rationalise their "fear", the students pointed to the importance of who the teacher was, and how he or she connected with them, as dominant regulators of self-confidence.

In the process of conceptual sorting of the memos and the narratives derived from analysing the data, I was able to systematically narrow down a theoretical categorisation of the emerging grounded theory in stating that students with high levels of confidence would be more inclined to engage to speak in class and express themselves in the L2. This is by no means a new discovery, as these students are "likely to volunteer answers in class" when they feel confident (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, p. 6). What is new, however, is to have been able to rationalise through GT strategies of coding, comparing and memoing, and by listening to the students' voices, that if a teacher is able to connect with the students as a result of his or her personality, and to expand that connection to the topic and to the class environment, the students' self-confidence increases and it maximises their willingness and engagement to speak.

6.3 The emergent theory

> The process of generating theory is one of deconstruction and reconstruction of the data.
> (Coyne & Cowley, 2006, p. 503)

All the factors affecting SEtS suggest a need for a connection with the learning environment, one that extends to all participants and characteristics of that environment. In principle, it could be argued that the stronger the bond between teacher and students, the higher the success in engaging students to speak. It is true that teachers have different styles of teaching, different expertise, different beliefs about pedagogy or about what teaching a language at tertiary level should involve, but it is also true—as expressed by participants in this study—that some teachers have the personality that does engage students to speak in class. What

more, then, underpins the characteristics of TP and the students' learning environment overall that engage students to speak in those classes?

6.3.1 Reflecting on characteristics of the emergent theory

As has been inferred from the data analysis and the theoretical sorting, the main characteristics of the emergent theory evolve from not just the way in which the teacher connects with the students, but also how connected the students are with each other. In GT, these main characteristics are known as higher-level categories, and part of the process is to subject them to "further analytic refinement" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 247). It is known that a learning environment at university level is often a daunting space for students, particularly in their first year of studies, but also for higher level students having to confront an array of challenging situations. Language students have to adapt to new peers with different levels of spoken competency, cope with diverse teaching styles and pedagogical activities, and address topics of varying degrees of complexity. To this situation, the fact must be added that—when studying an L2—the language being studied is also the means of communication, which brings an extra load of anxiety. The point at issue is what changes in a class where the teacher connects with the students and attempts to create an enjoyable stress-free environment? According to the students in this study, in those classes, anxiety is alleviated, and students feel more confident if they know each other. The fun and approachable personality of a teacher influences the tone and the class dynamics to such an extent that it produces an engaging-to-speak environment.

The findings of this study identified topic familiarity and a fun learning environment as the other high-level categories that can lower students' anxiety and boost their confidence to speak. These concepts are seen as catalysts for WTC that can trigger the action of speaking, and "they serve as interpretive frames and offer an abstract understanding of relationships" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 248) between the different categories. For example, as reviewed in the previous chapter, fun is an emotion that lightens the spirit, and laughter can contribute to a genuine connection between students and teacher, which in turn can strengthen students' confidence to speak in class (Jonas, 2009). As witnessed in some of the classes observed—including my own—and in the informal environment of the CFC, having fun reduces the fear

of being exposed and sounding foolish; it creates bonds of complicity amongst students of different cultural backgrounds, and it soothes nervous moments while momentarily removing the challenge of using the new language. A fun atmosphere generates a positive attitude since it liberates creative capacities and fills the environment with a positive energy (Deneire, 1995). “Psychologically, the effects of… laughter have been shown to reduce anxiety, decrease stress, enhance self-esteem and increase self-motivation” (Berk, 2003, cited in Garner, 2006, p. 177). In essence, a fun learning environment can become a very powerful connector between human beings, and it can promote learning, reduce students’ anxiety and instil confidence in speaking. “Teaching is not just about content… it is also about forming relationships and strengthening human connections… When people share laughter, there is a special connection between them” (Savage, Lujan, Thipparthi, & DiCarlo, 2017, pp. 343-344).

Connecting with the teacher and the learning environment involves trusting the teacher and feeling comfortable in the teacher’s presence. When the teacher enters the room, his or her ability—or inability—to connect with the students is immediately tested. The students inevitably form an instant idea of who this person is and whether he or she is friendly, likeable, approachable, fun and supportive, or strict, demanding, distant, intimidating and arrogant. In a language classroom, the initial environment is charged with expectations and anxiety over what is about to occur. If, from the outset, the teacher connects with the students, this establishes a bridge of communication where students’ WTC is sparked, potentially igniting the desired engagement to speak.

6.3.2 The Theory of Maximising Confidence

A theory can be co-constructed with the data from the participants’ view of the world under examination, with other contributing sources of data, and with the participants’ and researcher’s shared experiences. As mentioned, theorising involves “*seeing* possibilities, *establishing* connections, and *asking* questions” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 244, emphasis in original). If this pattern is followed and the emerging theory is represented through “somewhat sequential major processes that may overlap”, as suggested by Charmaz (2014, p. 245), the sequence of events in the studied phenomenon will be as follows:

1. Being in class
2. Having to speak/Wishing to speak
3. Feeling anxious
4. Liking the teacher and connecting with him or her
5. Being exposed to a relevant topic and connecting with it
6. Feeling safe in the class environment (which could include having fun and connecting with peers)
7. Maximising (students') self-confidence
8. Engaging to speak

It has been confirmed that students aspire to learn to speak the L2, and they wish more time was spent in class on the practice of speaking the language. The students' main concern is how to overcome the fear of speaking in class without feeling embarrassed in front of the teacher and in front of their classmates. A study conducted by Nunan (1991) highlighted the fact that when students have more opportunities to practise the L2 both in class and outside the classroom, their willingness to take more risks increases, diminishing their feelings of anxiety, and engaging them to speak more often in class. Thus, if the sequence described above is followed, assuming that connection with the teacher and the environment occurs, the students' level of self-confidence will increase, and SEtS will have a higher chance of taking place.

Having conducted this meticulous exercise of theorising and visualising the process of SEtS, I was able to conclude that my provisional category of "teacher's personality" or "engaging with the teacher" did not stand up as the core category, since it was only one piece of the GT puzzle, and it lacked the power to amalgamate the other categories. An engaging teacher, a familiarity with the topic, or a fun class environment—as categories isolated from each other—would not necessarily engage students to speak. For students to engage to speak, their self-confidence needed to be maximised. Thus, *maximising confidence* binds together the three high-level categories, and it can rise as the core category. Further reflection engendered the concept of *connecting* as the major property of maximising confidence. *Connecting* emerged as a course of action that students could use in an attempt to solve their

concern and maximise their confidence to speak in class. *Connecting*—stimulated by teacher's personality—will prompt the students to practise the L2 in class, thus increasing their level of confidence to speak. *Connecting* will occur if the topic is relevant to students and if the class environment is fun, thereby minimising their fear of feeling embarrassed. *Connecting* will lower the emotional barriers as well as the students' affective filter, and thus, according to Krashen (1982), may place them on the right pathway towards acquiring the language. In GT terms, this theoretical analysis and abstract interpretation of the findings of this study informed what participants could do to engage to speak in class and how they could do it. Through *connecting* with all the various factors affecting SEtS, including the teachers' effort to connect, students would be able to maximise their confidence and engage to speak. If the connecting process is interrupted at any stage, students' confidence will be hindered, and SDtS may occur.

As stated by Creswell (2013), it is important to highlight that a grounded theory can be "articulated toward the end of a study and can assume the form of a narrative statement, a visual picture, or a series of hypotheses or propositions" (p. 56). Figure 6.1 below offers a visual representation of the Theory of Maximising Confidence, and it illustrates the different strategies identified by the students when expressing their desire to find an answer to their lack of engagement to speak in class. The three different high-level categories are interlocked in socio-affective processes that increase students' self-confidence and propel them to the goal of SEtS: (1) connecting with the teacher, (2) connecting with the topic, and (3) connecting with the class environment.

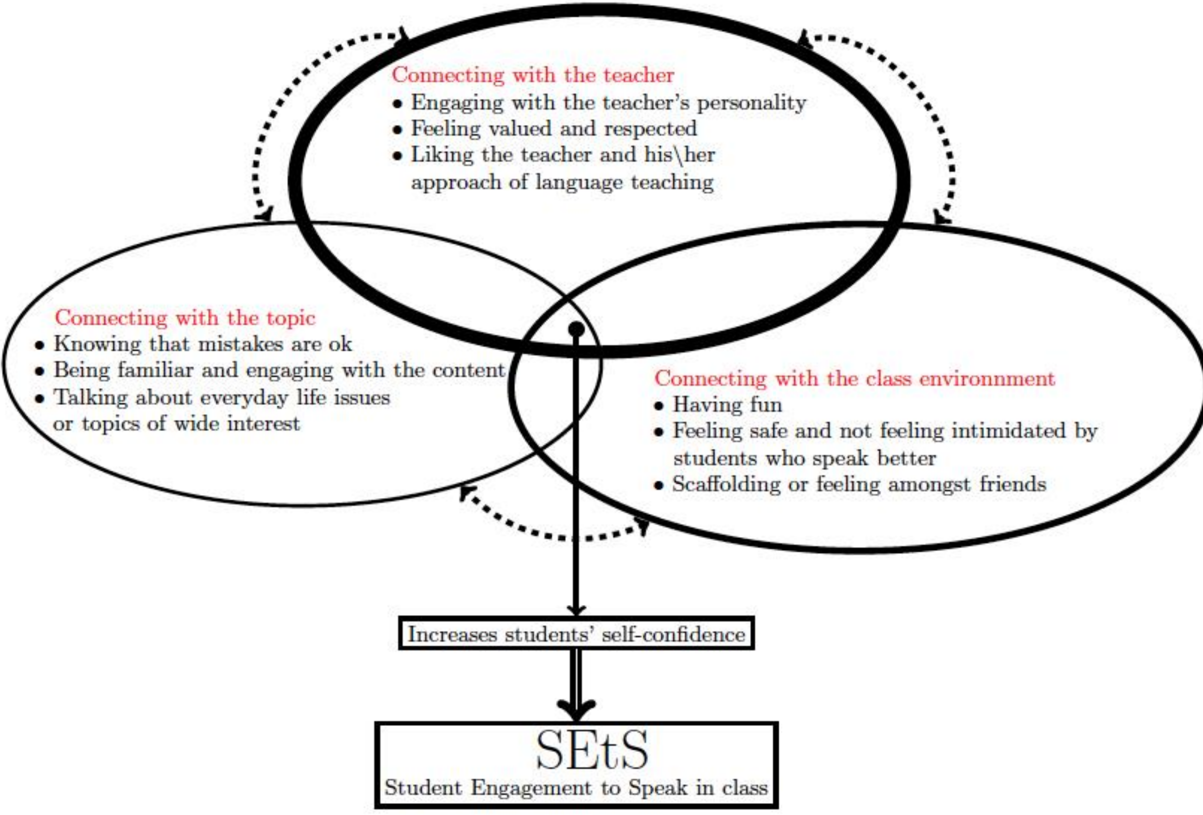


Figure 6.1 The Theory of Maximising Confidence

Connecting with the teacher—which encompasses engaging with who the teacher is, i.e. with the teacher's personality—occupies a prominent space in the Theory of Maximising Confidence since the two other strategies of connecting with the topic and connecting with the class environment are heavily reliant on who the teacher is. It is the teacher who designs or delivers the course content and therefore selects the topics for the class, and it is the teacher who engenders the class dynamics and thus creates an engaging class environment. Each of these connective processes has its own properties. The students will connect with the teacher if the teacher's personality has the characteristics described earlier, and if the students feel valued, respected, and listened to by the teacher, or quite simply if they like the teacher and the way the teacher conducts the class and delivers the content.

Connecting with the topic, according to the students, depends on how relevant the class topic is to their reason for studying the L2. The data explicitly mentions everyday life issues or other

topics of wide general interest. Connection with the topic also involves knowing that making errors is expected, that mistakes made when speaking will pass without explicit on-the-spot judgement, and that, when the student expresses an idea on a particular topic with which they are unfamiliar, "mistakes are alright". This is one of the properties interconnected with all three subcategories since it makes the class environment less tense and more enjoyable. When a teacher overtly acknowledges that making errors is part of the normality of language learning, the students will feel more confident, and they will be more inclined to speak in class.

The last strategy that maximises students' confidence and engages them to speak in class is *connecting with the class environment*. As documented in Chapter 5, when students are having fun, their level of anxiety is minimised, they connect with their peers, and they feel safer. Their willingness to communicate is consequently reinforced. In contrast, a strong reason for disengagement to speak is feeling intimidated by those who speak better. Thus, the creation of an engaging class environment is not solely the responsibility of the teacher, but it also depends on the class composition and whether the students establish a connection with each other. When the students know each other, it becomes easier to connect and the class atmosphere becomes enjoyable and less tense.

The argument that connecting with the teacher has a place of prominence in this grounded theory is reinforced by the data on students' experience—and my own observations—of repeated tutorial classes that involved the same content and the same syllabus but were taught by different teachers. The environment in those classes was totally different (as were the course evaluations, not included in this study for privacy reasons). In some classes, I observed a distinct connection by students with the teachers who were *fun, approachable,* and *supportive.* The enthusiasm of these teachers was so contagious that the students felt stimulated to speak in the vibrant class atmosphere that was generated; they connected to their peers through laughter and even through struggles. This was confirmed by the students themselves. In the other classes, in contrast, I observed teachers who were rather *cold, unfriendly,* and *impatient*. The class environment was emotionless and the students' apathy

and fear of speaking and being judged could be sensed. It was very difficult to connect within such a scenario and the students felt safer in their own corner.

In conceptualising the Theory of Maximising Confidence through the concept of connecting, the "explanatory power to integrate all the other categories and their properties" (Higgins, 2007, p. 314) is found. According to grounded theorists, conceptualisation in GT should not be confined to a specific location or to a special kind of people, like a language classroom and the students. The theory needs to stand on its own feet, as advised by Glaser (1998), and one should be able to generalise it to a process or to different places and different people. The concept of *connecting to maximise confidence* in a language class fits these principles since it can be applied to other environments or situations, such as that of an interview where connecting with the interviewer makes the whole experience of the interview more productive and the environment less stressful; when the interviewee's confidence increases, they are more able to engage with the panel and present their claims more effectively. In the workplace, connection with a manager impacts positively on performance and the work environment, it increases self-confidence and enables more successful engagement with the job required.

The Theory of Maximising Confidence further conceptualises SEtS as a personal, affective, and conscious choice that the students make when certain conditions are met. It emerges from the analysis as a potential lifeline to which the students can cling, to feel safe and confident in their engagement to speak. Reaching this conclusion was achieved by a rich amalgamation of all the different methodological elements intervening in this study, and which were developed in two stages. The first stage included the processing of the initial coding of the data, memo writing, transcription of interviews, participant observations and self-reflections on my own experience, to generate the initial GT categories and the survey questions. The second phase involved the coding of more selective data towards theoretical development in the GT cycle, incorporating autoethnographic reflections into a narrative of jointly lived experiences with the students. This last stage was further complemented by the quantitative survey findings and the responses to the open-ended questions, which strengthened the analytical aspect of the autoethnography and refined the GT process. The consolidation of

these diverse research techniques allowed the final theory to emerge. No single methodology used on its own would have enabled this result. As Miles and Huberman (1994) observed, “research is actually more a craft than a slavish adherence to methodological rules” (cited in Pace, 2016, p. 198).

6.3.3 The importance of Maximising Confidence in the language classroom

The Theory of Maximising Confidence within a SEtS approach of language teaching proposes that a teacher who is able to make the required connection with the students and create a confidence-triggering class environment, has more chances of engaging students to speak. How important is students’ self-confidence in language learning, according to linguists, language scholars and researchers in the field?

Hayrettin (2015) in a study investigating the role of self-confidence and foreign language learning stated that “a student [who lacks in self-confidence] will have constant negative feelings like fear of failure, being inadequate, fear of humiliation, and anxiety towards the teacher and [the] course during the class, and refrain from speaking and participating in classroom activities” (p. 2576). In another study assessing the role of emotions in WTC, Khajavy et al. (2018) concluded that for a learner to communicate in the L2, they needed more than language competence: “a learner must also develop the psychological ‘readiness’ to speak when the opportunity arises” (p. 609), and for that to occur, strong feelings of self-confidence are amongst the positive emotions that increase WTC. “Self-confidence in using the L2, [can be] operationally defined in terms of low anxious affect and high self-perceptions of L2 competence” (Clément et al., 1994, p. 422). From the literature reviewed for this study and the analysis of the findings, it can be agreed that a direct relationship exists between self-confidence and language anxiety. However, in the study by Zayed and Al-Ghamdi (2019) an interesting question is raised: does anxiety cause students’ low confidence, or does low confidence cause students’ anxiety? Without attempting to respond to this convoluted question, teachers should think about stimulating students’ positive emotions in an attempt to lower the negative affective factors. Young (1991) stated that “instructors can reduce language anxiety by adopting an attitude that mistakes are part of the language learning process and that mistakes will be made by everyone” (p. 432). In a

positively charged environment, the students will feel more comfortable and confident to speak. The teacher's encouraging attitude can empower the students to connect, can instil confidence in them, and can thus engage them to speak. "High self-confidence enhances [an individual's] motivation to act", reiterate Bénabou and Tirole (2002, p. 873) when arguing that since people do not really know the extent of their own abilities, their self-confidence needs to be fed not only by their ability or self-perception of competence, but also by external emotional factors and their own effort to accomplish a goal. This argument is corroborated by Clément et al. (1994), Clément, Gardner, and Smythe (1980), Krashen (1981), Nazarova and Umurova (2016) and many others in the field who have found that there is a positive correlation between self-confidence and L2 learning.

The Theory of Maximising Confidence would certainly be applicable in today's language classrooms, but it would require language teachers to reflect on the manner in which they relate to students in class and the way in which they can create a confidence-building environment for SEtS to occur. It must involve a CLT approach in the language classroom, where the goal is engaging students to speak while placing a special emphasis on developing a safe learning environment where students' confidence can be maximised.

6.4 Chapter conclusion

This study has highlighted a new feature not often discussed in the fields of learning and teaching a second language, that of teacher's personality, which in turn led to the conceptualisation of the Theory of Maximising Confidence. I will not speculate on whether this could bring about changes in the way teachers conduct their classes, or the way in which they approach their teaching, but if the premises underlying the Theory of Maximising Confidence are considered to be serious factors influencing the students' decision to engage in class discussions and speak in the L2, this study could motivate researchers to explore these overlooked aspects of language learning and teaching. Indeed, with further research on the topic, the stage may be reached where teachers will take on board the extent to which their personality, and the class environment they create can have a strong impact on enhancing student's confidence to speak, and thus on strengthening SEtS. This could pave the path for institutions to embrace the challenge of matching appropriate resources, both human and

budgetary, to the demonstrated student needs, by reinforcing L2 oral practice opportunities in and around university language classes. It could also motivate language researchers and teachers themselves to further develop language programs and its associated training.

Richardson (2000) states that an acceptable criterion by which to evaluate autoethnographic research is “how much the narrative expresses a reality” (p. 254). Throughout this study, the students clearly express their concerns and their opinion on what engages and disengages them to speak in a language class. By bringing to light the importance of how teachers can *connect with the students to maximise their confidence and engage them to speak*, healthy conversations amongst language teachers and researchers can perhaps be stimulated. This study invites language teachers to reflect about the fact that by maximising students’ confidence, they can indeed engage them to speak in class. Ideally, it would also prompt language teachers to seek specific training to this end.

CHAPTER 7
Conclusion

7.1 Breaking the silence

Charmaz and Mitchell (1996) advocated for researchers to have a more “audible writer’s voice [to] reflect [their] empirical experiences… [as] scholarly writers [had] long been admonished to work silently on the sidelines” (p. 285). Nowadays, in the field of qualitative research, “there is an increased tendency for not just the participants, but also the researchers to narrate the account of their research” (Davis, 2020, p. 2). Thus, in writing this thesis, I decided to break the silence and make my own voice as well as that of the language students heard. In this final chapter, I present a brief review of the content of the chapters and provide a summary of the findings, highlighting the different phases of the research using grounded theory strategies until a theory emerged. Future research directions are described, while contemplating some of the contributions of this study and its pedagogical implications as well as perceived limitations of this research. In line with AAE, it concludes with personal reflections on the importance of this study.

7.2 Review of the chapters

In this study, I used mixed methods research to examine qualitatively—complemented by descriptive quantitative data—the topic of Student Engagement *to Speak* in class (SEtS), a relatively unexplored area in the field of second language education. The results are predominantly grounded on the data provided by 388 undergraduate students of French, Spanish, German and Italian, at four different levels of instruction.

Chapter 1 set the study in context and presented the research design, underpinned by a blended inquiry method combining AAE with GT strategies. It highlighted the primary and secondary research questions and explained the main objective of the study: to document and analyse the reasons for Student Engagement *to Speak* (SEtS) in a language class.

Chapter 2 presented a theoretical framework that focuses on enablers of speaking—as well as impediments—from the lenses of three educational theories: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Student Engagement (SE), and Willingness to Communicate (WTC). Focusing on these theories, the chapter examined affective and behavioural aspects of SLA that could have an impact on SEtS, including student motivation, identity and investment, foreign language anxiety, and the teacher-student relationship. Following the guiding principles of GT, the relevant literature review was not confined only to this chapter but evolved through key chapters as the findings unfolded. Two important gaps were identified and discussed: (1) the notion of Student Engagement *to Speak* in the language class was not addressed in any of these three theories, and (2) the fact that the studies reviewed in the relevant fields were conducted primarily by language researchers, linguists and language curriculum developers, without always considering the opinion of the students themselves.

Chapter 3 discussed in detail the methodological approach used in this research. The study followed John Creswell's (2003) propositions of putting together information from multiple sources and collecting both qualitative and quantitative data through a process of triangulation, including focus groups, interviews, a survey, class observations, informal conversation with students and teachers, the relevant literature and self-reflective memos. I used mixed methods research from a constructivist viewpoint that allowed me to build knowledge, understanding and meaning from experience and to reflect on the data collected from the language students' learning journey, their teachers' feedback, and my own experience. It also gave me the opportunity to personally witness, in a dual participant-observer role, what triggers students to speak in a language class and in an informal environment. I chose analytic autoethnography as a strategy for inquiry, and to strengthen the analytical dimension of the research approach, I complemented it by using grounded theory strategies as a tool to further analyse the data, through coding, constant comparison and theoretical development.

Chapter 4 started by exploring the university students' primary reasons for studying a second language, according to language and level of instruction, and revealed a perceived disparity between students' expectations and teachers' intentions, and indeed perceptions. The

chapter then presented the preliminary qualitative findings obtained through the selected strategies of inquiry and in two different learning environments. These findings were grounded in the raw data collected and subjected to the complex process of sorting, comparison and analysis until clearer concepts and categories of SEtS and SDtS began to emerge in the process of theory building. The quantitative findings derived from the survey were discussed and contrasted with the initial assumptions developed from the qualitative analysis. The study identified that, from the student perspective, the three determining factors in SEtS are: who the teacher is or their personality, the students' familiarity with the topic or course content, and a fun and safe learning environment.

Chapter 5 discussed the influence students' connection to the teacher, the topic and the class environment can have on SEtS, and how it can affect the students' decision to speak in class or remain silent. It described the characteristics of an engaging-to-speak teacher's personality—as well as those of an opposite personality—from the students' perspective, and it further examined how a familiar topic and a fun class environment can make a difference. The discussion revolved around the importance of teacher-student connections, without dismissing affective and behavioural aspects of teaching and learning a second language. Student motivation, student identity and investment, and foreign language anxiety are affective and behavioural aspects of learning an L2. Throughout the chapter, key steps of the GT building blocks were illustrated, and the findings were compared and contrasted to a more focused review of the relevant literature, while highlighting the significance of the characteristics of the emerging theory.

Finally, Chapter 6 revealed the final stages of theoretical development which identified *maximising confidence* as the core category that materialised from the strategy of GT theory building and defined the Theory of Maximising Confidence. A discussion followed on how the evolving concepts around students' *connecting* to the teacher, the topic and the environment related to each other and provided the preconditions for students' confidence to speak in class.

7.3 Summary of the findings

Despite the challenges encountered in using GT and a mixed methods research approach, the study has generated thought-provoking and valuable findings. The main motivation of this research was to investigate an under-explored area in the field of language education that often challenges and frustrates language teachers: *What engages students to speak in a language class?* One of the first challenges identified was to define Student Engagement *to Speak.* Although not directly concerned with the topic of engaging students to speak, the literature on *student engagement*—particularly the works of Marzano and Pickering (2011), Schlechty (2011) and Schreck (2011)—was very helpful in reaching a conceptualisation of SEtS. Framing the study within a CLT approach was appropriate as it reinforces the importance of teaching oral skills without excluding attention to language form, and it focuses on a student-centred practice. The findings confirmed the issue raised by Richards (2006) that although the majority of language teachers when asked about the teaching methodology they use in class will insist it is a communicative approach, this is actually not what happens in the language classroom, particularly if the goal of CLT is that speaking be taught explicitly in L2 programs, as Rossiter et al. (2010) emphasised. The final theory to frame this study was Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which aimed to understand the different variables that can affect the precise moment when a student is ready to use the L2. While there are too many variables and unexpected situations that can impact the outcome of WTC, this study has identified a missing piece in the pyramid model. Even though learner's personality is included in one of the layers of the model as affecting it, nowhere in the literature was there mention of the influence that teacher's personality can have on WTC and Student Engagement *to Speak*, which is one of the findings of this research. This gap could be addressed in a study that further investigates the dynamic nature of L2 learners' situational WTC.

As described in Chapter 3, I used a triangulated approach to collect the data from multiple sources and through several instruments. The data analysis was done using modified GT strategies complemented by my reflections, through an analytic autoethnographic method of social enquiry. Phase I of the study started with a pilot focus group collecting and coding very rich and relevant qualitative data, followed by the first interviews and the simultaneous

writing of analytical memos. Phase II represented the core of the qualitative data collected from the student and teacher interviews, the class observations, and my own journal entries from observing the students' behaviour in the informal environment and contrasting it to the class environment. This phase included constant comparison and simultaneous analysis of the data, and it identified the preliminary emerging categories and properties. It also included memoing to capture important thoughts and insights from informal and relevant conversations with language students and teachers, and my own reflections on the experience. Phase III involved the launch of the survey that was designed to collect quantitative data, but it also allowed me to collect more selective qualitative data through the open-ended questions of the survey.

The findings revealed two key premises underpinning the notion of SEtS. The first emphasises the importance the students attribute to the teaching and practice of oral skills. A large percentage (74%) of the students who participated in this study were studying a second language in order to learn to speak the L2 and to communicate with people who speak the language, for the "sake of communicating", as suggested by Kramsch (2014, p. 302), and confirmed by Nazarova and Umurova (2016) who stated the following: "Being able to speak to friends, colleagues, visitors, and even strangers, in their language or in a language which both speakers can understand, is surely the goal of very many L2 learners" (p. 47). The students' desire to have more time in class dedicated to the teaching of speaking was a constant plea through the study. Most teachers when queried about their perception of their students' expectations were aware that what students wanted was to learn to speak the L2, and yet the curriculum and the class activities, as confirmed by many of the students, were not focused on the practice of speaking in class.

The second under-researched aspect underpinning the concept of SEtS is the impact that teacher's personality can have in enhancing students' self-confidence to speak in class. The coding, comparing, sorting and theorising of the data through GT analysis conceptualised an engaging-to-speak teacher's personality as one that maximises student confidence. When I elevated the findings to a more theoretical level, I found that connecting with the teacher and their personality is at the core of students' engagement to speak in class, and I was able to

determine that the emergent Theory of Maximising Confidence is based on an affective and social process where ideally a teacher who is able to genuinely *connect* with the students will build the students' confidence and lower their anxiety to a level where they will engage to speak. When looking at the opposite concept—that of SDtS—teacher's personality was also identified as a key reason for students' disengagement to speak. The study found that a *disconnection* from the teacher and from the class in general, coupled with an unfamiliar topic and a self-perceived low competence, affected the students' confidence and led to them remain silent.

The study also exposed other possible pedagogical elements of SEtS that were analysed throughout the chapters. Amongst some of the factors that the students identified as having a reasonable impact on their decision to speak or remain silent in class were error correction or just being reassured that making mistakes was acceptable, the importance of peer scaffolding, the pressure of feeling assessed even when that was not the case, and a self-perceived low competence. At the opposite end of the spectrum and contrary to the literature, teacher talk time (TTT) was not a factor identified to have any significant influence on whether students engage to speak or not.

7.4 Contributions of the thesis and pedagogical implications

The Theory of Maximising Confidence is grounded on the hypothesis that if students have a high level of self-confidence, their willingness to communicate will be enhanced and they will engage to speak in class. Self-confidence as a student personality trait having a positive effect on class participation and on the student's language achievement is not a new assertion in the field of SLA (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002; Clément et al., 1994; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Horwitz & Young, 1991; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Nazarova & Umurova, 2016). For example, Nazarova and Umurova (2016) maintain that enhancing students' confidence will "help them take part more actively in classroom oral activities" (p. 47). Furthermore, "the concept of linguistic self-confidence, in general, is a vital variant that promote[s] either failure or success in language learning. It is often argued that language learning entails much more than acquiring a body of knowledge and developing a set of skills; it is fairly crucial to consider the 'self' of the learners" (Djebbari, 2019, p. 31). What is novel

in the findings of the present study is the fact that students asserted that teacher's personality plays a key role in triggering the key affective connections with the teacher, the topic and the class environment that would enhance or hinder their self-confidence to speak in class. Based on this premise, I am not suggesting that teachers need to change their personality or their persona when they teach. They just need to be aware that who they are and their own personality traits—not just the students'—matter when attempting to engage students to speak in their language class. This self-awareness is important; however, being aware may not be sufficient if the teacher has a personality that leads to student disengagement to speak. Thus, another recommendation is that teachers make an effort to understand the consequences and the benefits of having an engaging-to-speak personality. One way of doing this is to become involved in a peer observation scheme as part of a formative process, in an attempt to better engage students to speak in class in the L2. Peer observation can be beneficial for both the observer and the teacher being observed. In this case, the observer would benefit from noticing how students react to a teacher who has a pleasant and fun personality and who creates a more active and engaging class dynamic, in comparison to how they react in a class taught by a teacher who seems uninterested, unfriendly, impatient and even rude at times. The teacher being observed would benefit from discussing those moments when the students were active and were speaking in the L2, as opposed to situations when the class was more passive and students were disengaged. Critical reflection by a teacher on their pedagogical practice can contribute to their growth as an individual and as an educator. This study contains the elements of a proposal for teacher development through personal reflective practice and group discussions in communities of practice. This could become the basis for an evaluative framework where teachers would be invited to reflect further on their curriculum and pedagogical activities and on how to improve these. Additionally, I have shown that AAE is a powerful research methodology that allows teacher-researchers to reflect on their own personal experiences and become closer not just to their data, but to their emotions, thoughts and beliefs in regard to second language learning and student engagement to speak.

The students themselves stated that when they are pushed into a collaborative and fun dialogue, they do interact with each other in the L2. Thus, teachers should be encouraged to

use scenario-based pedagogies—such as Strategic Interaction—to create a more relaxed and engaging class atmosphere. Teachers need to build genuine relationships with students and create learning spaces where students' inner confidence can be nurtured so they engage to speak in class without fear. When attempting to engage students to speak in class, teachers should consider giving the students a certain flexibility in choosing topics and tasks they enjoy. A further recommendation for teachers when selecting course content is to be aware of the students' group diversity in terms of their needs and sensitivities, and to ensure they give students choices and allow them to withdraw from the conversation if they feel the topic is too personal, intrusive or unpalatable. It was also noted that students' past experiences in class can directly affect their level of self-confidence. Hence, it is important for teachers to acknowledge that if students have had previous enjoyable class experiences when learning an L2, this will enhance their engagement to speak, and in turn lead to the development of their self-confidence (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The students in this study have added that a connection with an engaging to speak teacher personality—identified primarily as someone *fun, supportive and approachable*—within a fun and safe learning environment, can increase their level of confidence and engage them to speak. Even though in this study, the power dynamics in student engagement to speak seem to lean in favour of the teacher, it is important to highlight that, ultimately, students decide when to connect and with whom. Some of the strategies derived from the Theory of Maximising Confidence that can give solid agency to the students in their engagement to speak are to allow that connection with the teacher to happen, to familiarise themselves with the topic and to build relationships with other students. As students' self-confidence increases, they take the lead in their own language learning process and look for every opportunity to engage to speak in class.

From the literature reviewed and from experience, it is known that teachers continue to struggle to engage language students to speak in class (Barkley 2010; Cao 2009; Garcia Laborda 2007; Nazarova & Umurova, 2016), and yet it is also known that we "learn to speak by speaking" (Nunan, 1991, p. 51). Considering the importance that the students in this study attach to a teacher's personality and to how teachers and students connect with each other is one step forward towards understanding how to increase students' self-confidence and engage them to speak in class. As the importance of TP in SEtS varies according to the level of

instruction, as discussed in chapter 5, teachers should adapt their course of actions to the appropriate level. For students in the first three years of language studies, TP is very important and thus teachers should prioritise activities that increase teacher-student and student-student connections as part of their curriculum. In the case of advanced students, where TP is not the most important factor for SEtS, teachers should still focus on pedagogical activities that encourage that connection and build up students' confidence, as there are always new students in a class who do not have the advantage of being amongst friends, or students who are simply shy and have greater difficulty interacting with their peers in class. Teachers may wrongly develop some negative perceptions about advanced students who are less talkative in class, when in reality these students may still need some kind of buffer against stressful situations that prevent them from speaking in front of their classmates.

Another element of SEtS identified in this research that represents a challenge to language teachers and curriculum developers is to accept the element of fun as a pedagogical tool for learning a second language in the classroom. There was resistance among some of the teachers interviewed to the idea that *fun* could be used as an effective pedagogical incentive to learn a second language, and many language teachers insisted that teaching through theatre, scenarios or other "games" was not appropriate in a university academic degree context. Yet Renninger, Bachrach, and Posey (2008), amongst other scholars, were able to deduce from their research that when teachers incorporate both fun activities and personalised language use into the classroom, they may be able to trigger a sustainable level of interest on the part of the students, and that this may not only motivate and engage students to speak, but "may influence students to continue their study of the L2" (as cited in Bernard, 2010, p. 38).

This thesis makes a valuable contribution to existing research in the field of second language education by bringing two new paradigms to the attention of second language teachers and those responsible for university language teaching curriculum development and implementation: SEtS and SDtS approaches. It is an innovative study, in that it investigates *engagement to speak* from the perspective of the student, and the emerging Theory of Maximising Confidence complements the WTC pyramid model by placing language

researchers and teachers in a better position to understand some of the factors that engage students to speak in class and gives them the courage to "cross the Rubicon".

"There is a growing sense that language teacher education programs have failed to prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom" (Crandall, 2000, p. 35). Even though Crandall's thoughts were voiced two decades ago, this study suggests there is still a gap between students' needs and teachers' expectations in the area of teaching the speaking of the language in the classroom. My findings present a platform to explore the notion of *engagement to speak* in language teacher's education and propose a wider view of what engages students to speak in class. The Theory of Maximising Confidence offers teachers the possibility to examine their course of actions—from the students' perspective—when inviting students to speak and attempting "to pull them into class discussions" (Barkley, 2010, p.3). It may offer language teachers the opportunity to enrich their personality and make it easier to connect with the students. Teacher education is a life-long process of growth and practice, continually enhanced through training, experience and self-reflection. This study recommends that in that process, teachers consider students' views and expectations and become aware of their potential influence on students' confidence and how it affects the students' engagement to speak in class.

This research also highlights the value of using mixed methods research to explore an abstract concept in the field of second language education, by blending GT strategies and AAE in a single study. As seen in this study, GT is the leading methodology that studies the emerging patterns and constructs 'theory'; however, AAE complements that analysis with rich interpretations of the data and the findings by giving voice to the teacher-researcher perspective which is often silenced in more traditional methodological approaches. The area of language teaching and learning would benefit if more studies were to use these combined methodologies to investigate more closely what actually happens in the classroom by considering the teacher-researcher experience.

The theories framing this study added balance to the thought processing in the analysis of the data. For example, the literature reviewed in the field of student engagement supports the

view that the human encounter between teacher and student is crucial (Schreck, 2011) and that class environment is easily influenced by a teacher's positive personality (Marzano & Pickering, 2011). It also confirms the premise that when a student connects with the teacher, and when that teacher creates a fun class environment, it enhances students' confidence (Schlechty, 2011), which is an essential element for students to participate in the communicative practice. As Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) maintain, "students have to 'stick their necks out' and actively take part in what is a rather face-threatening and stressful activity, [if they want to follow] one of the key principles of CLT [which is] … 'the learning-through-doing' tenet" (p. 3). The findings of the present study propose an area in which to focus further research: engagement *to speak* in a language class, as a new dimension of student engagement. This would open a conversation about pedagogical constructs that could enrich the theory of WTC and broaden the parameters of a CLT approach. It would increase understanding of students of a second language and their needs, and enable re-assessment of both the factors that influence a learner's decision either to speak in class or to remain silent, and the role the teacher plays in nourishing students' self-confidence.

7.5 Limitations of the study and further research

Throughout this study, I constantly revisited the data, searching for evidence and reasons underpinning students' engagement to speak in class. As indicated, the survey generated qualitative and quantitative data that supported the findings that were emerging from the analysis of the data collected from the focus group, the interviews, the class observations, the memos and the autoethnographic reflections. This increased the reliability of the findings. However, I identified some areas that could represent limitations to this study.

The first relates to the use of GT strategies and AAE as methods of enquiry, since each has its own limitations as a method of research. GT offers a systematic approach to data analysis and theorising, while allowing for some flexibility and the possibility of gathering abundant and rich data, guided by the researcher's creativity and intuition. However, it can be an exhausting practice due to the very large amounts of data and the highly time-consuming and meticulous process of initial coding. To finetune a theory around the core category or categories, its subcategories and properties, may take months, or even years. The fact that there are

multiple approaches to GT (Charmaz 2014; Glaser 1978; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990) makes the research job more complex in attempting to determine which approach is more appropriate for the study. In my case, I went back and forth through all the approaches, until I finally decided to use some GT hybrid strategies to structure the inquiry of my research, though following Charmaz's constructivist and interpretative approach.

Using AAE as my other method of inquiry could generate resistance from more positivist-oriented researchers and be construed as a limitation by those who could consider my findings to be a subjective interpretation of the concern under study. However, this methodology suited my personal view of research from a constructivist perspective, since it gave me the opportunity to incorporate my own experience and thoughts as part of the research process and to get closer to the participants and interpret their experiences as a member of their world. This type of autoethnographic narrative is still not widely accepted in the research world. As Sparkes (2000) acknowledged, "the emergence of autoethnography… has not been trouble-free, and [its] status as proper research remains problematic" (p. 22). Most opponents of analytic autoethnographic research, despite Anderson (2006) having added the analytical dimension to the method, are not comfortable with the fact that it encourages the use of the first-person pronoun and makes the researcher visible throughout the study. In the same line, Méndez (2013) noted that "for some, using the third person gives a sense of distance from the events and the people being referred to" and adds objectivity to the research (p. 283). Many of the opponents of this type of analytic methodology claim that research within that context cannot assume an objective and independent position from the concern under study. They object to the emotional involvement that the researcher could have with the participants and even with the matter under study, and they do not agree with the subjective interpretations that could influence the findings of the inquiry. Despite the criticisms, analytic autoethnography is a valuable aspect of educational research since it gives the researcher access to the participants' private world as well as the researcher's own world as a valid source of data and analytic frames. It provides rich and relevant data, together with the opportunity to obtain a more intimate insight into the lives of the participants and to reflect on how teachers could possibly better address the students' SEtS-motivated concern.

In sum, “it shows people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live and what their struggles mean” (Bochner & Ellis, 2006, p. 111).

I mentioned at the outset that it is also difficult to draw broad generalisations from the results of this study without replicating the study in at least two other universities in Australia. This study strengthened the validity of the data analysis and its interpretations by using mixed methods research whereby the quantitative findings supported the qualitative assumptions and confirmed the relationship existing between the affective and the social factors that influenced the SEtS approach. However, these relationships cannot necessarily be generalised beyond the confines of the student population involved in this study and the context and timeframe in which the research was conducted. In terms of the reliability of the data collected, stimulated recall of students’ experience may not be *truth* but a perception of truth voiced by the students to satisfy the researcher’s inquiry. As Cunningham and Carmichael (2018) conveyed, “personal memory [can be] selectively biased towards certain experiences and forgetful of others” (p. 57). However, stimulated recall is one of the approaches used in SLA research to “gather learners’ accounts of their own thought processes” (Gass, 2001, p. 221) in an attempt to make the data-grounded theory as valid and reliable as possible. Moreover, according to Hussein, Hirst, Salyers, and Osuji (2014), “a theory is not an ‘absolute truth’ but rather a tentative explanation of a phenomenon” (p. 7). A proposition can be seen as truth if it explains an occurrence to a satisfactory degree. Constructivist theorists see “interpretation as the means of construction of co-created realities” (Hussein et al., 2014, p. 10). This interpretation of *truth* is subject to the voices and perspectives of the participants of research, and it gives the researcher—immersed in the world of the students, in this case—“the opportunity to partake in the interpretation of realities constructed [by the students] during the process of interaction [with others]” (Hussein et al., 2014, p. 10). Some scholars would disagree with this argument.

A further limitation of this study could be that the findings may be applicable only within a western cultural and educational context, since in other educational environments it may be appropriate for the teacher to maintain a position of classroom authority and it may be culturally and behaviourally problematic or unacceptable for the teacher to show empathy,

care and closeness to the students, or vice versa. In a study by Wen and Clément (2003), it was concluded that Chinese students may have the desire to speak and to interact with the teacher and with their classmates, however "having the desire to communicate does not necessarily imply a willingness to communicate" (p. 25). Furthermore, they would be less inclined to engage to speak with the teacher, whom they see in a position of authority that should not be challenged. The same study found that Chinese students will communicate only when they feel they are highly confident in their ability to speak the L2 to a level that allows them "to look good or smart in the presence of others" (Wen & Clément, 2003, p. 32). In another study, Lu and Hsu (2008) highlighted the fundamental differences in styles of communication between western and eastern cultures. In the western world, "individuals are encouraged to express their ideas precisely, explicitly and directly. In contrast, [in Asian cultures] direct confrontation is discouraged, and silence is valued" (Lu & Hsu, 2008, p. 76). It is true that some Asian students who are less prone to engage to speak in class will "remain silent in classroom discussions to show their respect to the teacher" (Shi & Tan, 2020, p. 252). However, I witnessed in some of the Asian students in my language classes, and in those who attended the CFC, an engagement to speak with the same enthusiasm and confidence as was evident among the non-Asian students.

The findings of this thesis, and the theory development within it, open up a range of areas for further study. For example, as my study focused on European Languages, and I did not differentiate the data on SEtS amongst students from diverse L1 backgrounds, it would be interesting to see if the characteristics of the Theory of Maximising Confidence would apply to students of Asian or less commonly taught languages. It would also be valuable for the field of second language education to conduct further studies in other universities in Australia to compare the findings of this study, test the importance that students attribute to their connections to the teacher, to a familiar topic and to a fun class environment, and to measure the influence of those on Student Engagement *to Speak* in class. If new findings were to match those of the present study, the Theory of Maximising Confidence and the constructs of SEtS and SDtS would attract the attention of language researchers and teachers in the field of language education. Further research could also include studies to investigate what other socio-affective course of actions teachers can develop to maximise students' confidence and

enhance teacher-student connections, with the goal of engaging students to speak in class. The concept of "teacher's personality" could be more specifically conceptualised within the appropriate context, and its importance in a tertiary educational environment could be investigated, in particular to determine what personality types or characteristics of a teacher could in fact have a higher impact in maximising students' self-confidence and in shaping a genuine affective dimension between teachers and their students. Research on the context of the language programs and its impact on students' aspirations is another area worth exploring.

7.6 An introspective conclusion

My main inspiration for embarking on this research was my passion for teaching and learning languages, and from there emanated a strong motivation to contribute to the field of teaching and learning a second language by listening to the students' voice, while remaining visible through their journey.

Students who want to learn to speak another language choose to include foreign languages in their degrees despite the challenges of the university curriculum, the time commitment it requires, and the known emphasis on both written and linguistic activities in class. The Theory of Maximising Confidence invites teachers to listen to the students, who frequently voice their frustration over becoming less confident in speaking in class rather than becoming more orally fluent in the language they are learning, as they progress in their studies. It calls on teachers to reflect on the importance of giving the practice of speaking in the classroom equal space to that of the other three skills, writing, reading and listening, while creating class activities that trigger enjoyment and other positive emotions in class to lower students' level of anxiety. It enables teachers to foresee the type of impact that who they are, and how they behave in class, can have on a student's decision to speak or remain silent.

When we teach languages—or any subject, for that matter—we often ask ourselves the what, the how and the why questions: What content should we focus on? How are we going to teach? What methods, techniques and activities will we apply? Why are we teaching and for

what purpose? What are the learning outcomes? If we care about our students, we will ask ourselves who the students are and what their needs and wishes are. However, as Palmer (2017) inquired, how often do we ask ourselves the other deeper *who* question: "Who is the self that teaches? [And] how does the quality of my selfhood form—or deform—the way I relate to my students?" (p. 4). Good teachers share one trait: "a capacity for connectedness" with the students (p. 11). Palmer suggested that when we try to evaluate the effectiveness of a teacher, we should ask ourselves who the teacher is, and what their identity and personality are. These are critical questions that are not addressed in primary and secondary schools, nor are they addressed generally in higher education:

> In HE generally, the who, the self, the subjectivity is swept under the rug. It is regarded as dangerous. It is regarded as something to be factored out so that we can be objective. But that's wrong. It is wrong not only because it creates "deformed" teaching and learning. It is wrong because it is not real. It is not the way life happens. The investment of self is how we know things in the first place. The investment of the teacher's self in the subject and in the students is how learning happens. (Palmer, 2018, Video)

Palmer's vision of the importance of *who the teacher is* resonates with the idea that openly discussing the impact teacher's personality can have on students' confidence—and thus their engagement *to speak* in class—should be considered when deliberating second language education issues and the foundations of a communicative language teaching approach in the higher education context. Maximising students' confidence by being aware of who we—language teachers—are and how we present ourselves in class will inevitably have an effect upon students' connections with us and with the class environment, and ultimately upon students' engagement *to speak* in class.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Focus group information sheet

Information Sheet

Title of the project: *What engages students to speak in a language class at tertiary level?*

Period of investigation: May 2011 – November 2011 (Pilot); February 2012 – March 2013

Investigator: Eleonora Quijada Cervoni, School of Language Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. This research is being conducted towards a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The researcher is conducting this study independently and the project is not funded by any external sources.

Supervisor: Dr Chantal Crozet, Convenor of French Studies at the School of Language Studies, Australian National University.

The goal of this study is to understand, assess and evaluate what engages students to speak in a second language class at an Australian University, and what is the role of the teacher in "engaging" the students to speak in the target language. This research will investigate what pedagogical and methodological approaches teachers use in the language classroom, and what really works—or not—to engage students to speak in class. It will examine different factors affecting the students' engagement to speak in the classroom, such as error correction, student personalities, teaching styles, etc. The researcher will collect the data through anonymous and voluntary questionnaires, interviews with students and teachers, focus groups sessions and class observations. The participants' privacy and confidentiality will be protected at all times and all data resulting for the study will be safely stored and kept in secure premises. Pseudonyms will be used at all times when reporting the findings.

The broad research objectives are the following:

- To investigate and document what engages students to speak in a language class from the students' perspective.
- To explore what prevents students from engaging to speak.
- To compare the students' perspectives on "engagement" to the teachers' perception of what is required for the students' engagement in the classroom to be successful.
- To identify and analyse what engages students to speak in a foreign language in two different environments: a formal environment, i.e. the language classroom; and an informal environment such as the French Conversation Circle and the Spanish Conversation Group, extra-curricular and non-compulsory activities held at the local pub.

This research and its findings will offer a better understanding of what engages students to speak in a language classroom, and it will hopefully set the foundations for the development of a methodology for teaching oral competence more effectively and with new pedagogical techniques at tertiary level.

Appendix B: Interview information sheet (student and teacher)

Information Sheet

Title of the project: *What engages students to speak in a language class at tertiary level?*

Period of investigation: May 2011 – November 2011 (Pilot); February 2012 – March 2013

Investigator: Eleonora Quijada Cervoni, School of Language Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. This research is being conducted towards a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The researcher is conducting this study independently and the project is not funded by any external sources.

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The goal of this study is to understand, assess and evaluate what engages students to speak in a second language class at an Australian University, and what is the role of the teacher in "engaging" the students to speak in the target language. This research will investigate what pedagogical and methodological approaches teachers use in the language classroom, and what really works—or not—to engage students to speak in class. It will examine different factors affecting the students' engagement to speak in the classroom, such as error correction, student personalities, teaching styles, etc. The researcher will collect the data through anonymous and voluntary questionnaires, interviews with students and teachers, focus groups sessions and class observations. The participants' privacy and confidentiality will be protected at all times, and the course programs will not be revealed at any stage. All data resulting for the study will be safely stored and kept in secure premises. Pseudonyms will be used at all times when reporting the findings.

The broad research objectives are the following:

- To investigate and document what engages students to speak in a language class from the students' perspective.
- To explore what prevents students from engaging to speak.
- To compare the students' perspectives on "engagement" to the teachers' perception of what is required for the students' engagement in the classroom to be successful.
- To identify and analyse what engages students to speak in a foreign language in two different environments: a formal environment, i.e. the language classroom; and an informal environment such as the French Conversation Circle and the Spanish Conversation Group, extra-curricular and non-compulsory activities held at the local pub.

This research and its findings will offer a better understanding of what engages students to speak in a language classroom, and it will hopefully set the foundations for the development of a methodology for teaching oral competence more effectively and with new pedagogical techniques at tertiary level.

Appendix C: Invitation to participate in focus group session (student)

Invitation to Participate in a Focus Group session

Dear Student: I would like to invite you to participate in my doctoral research. Your involvement would consist of your participation in a 90-minute focus group session. This interactive session will draw on your experience as a student of 2nd year (Continuing) French and on your participation in the extra-curricular activity called "Cercle Français de Conversation".

Participation

Participation is completely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw at any time. If you withdraw from the research, you do not have to explain why, and you can request that the record of your involvement be destroyed. Participation or refusal to participate will not impair any existing relationship between participants and any other institutions or people involved. You are welcome to request a copy of the summary notes from the focus group session. If you agree, I would like to audiotape the discussion.

Data protection

The data from the focus group will be recorded in a notebook and on audiotape, and this will be transcribed onto computer. Your name will not appear on this material, and the researcher, who will have sole access to the data, will securely store the information collected. It is important to note that pseudonyms will be used at all times when reporting the findings. After analysis, these materials will be stored at the Australian National University for five years and will then be destroyed.

Use of data

The material from the focus group will be analysed, and it will be presented in summary in a thesis. It may also be used in the preparation of other publications so that the findings of the research are available to others. Your name or any other identifying data will not be disclosed.

Questions about the research

Any questions about this project may be directed to the investigator, Eleonora Quijada Cervoni, School of Language Studies, Australian National University. You can contact me on 02-6125 5112, or by e-mail at Eleonora.Quijada@anu.edu.au.

If you have complaints or queries that I cannot answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the research supervisor, Dr Chantal Crozet, at the School of Language Studies, Australian National University, by e-mail at Chantal.Crozet@anu.edu.au.

If there are questions the supervisor cannot answer you may also contact:
The Secretary, Human Ethics Research Committee Research Office, The Australian
National University ACT 0200 Australia. Phone: +61 (2) 6125 7945.

Appendix D: Invitation to participate in interview (student)

Invitation to Participate in an Interview

Dear Student: I would like to invite you to participate in my doctoral research. Your involvement would consist of your participation in a 30-minute one to one interview. This interactive session will draw on your experience as a student of 2nd year (Continuing level) French and on your participation in any extra-curricular activity involving the language you are studying.

Participation

Participation is completely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw at any time. If you withdraw from the research, you do not have to explain why, and you can request that the record of your involvement be destroyed. Participation or refusal to participate will not impair any existing relationship between participants and any other institutions or people involved.
You are welcome to request a copy of the summary notes from the interview session. If you agree, I would like to audiotape the discussion.

Data protection

The data from the interview will be recorded in a notebook and on audiotape (if you give your consent), and this will be transcribed onto computer. Your name will not appear on this material. and the researcher, who will have sole access to the data, will securely store the information collected. It is important to note that pseudonyms will be used at all times when reporting the findings, and that the course programs will not be revealed at any stage. After analysis, these materials will be stored at the Australian National University for five years and will then be destroyed.

Use of data

The material from the interview will be analysed, and it will be presented in summary in a thesis. It may also be used in the preparation of other publications so that the findings of the research are available to others. Your name or any other identifying data will not be disclosed.

Questions about the research

Any questions about this project may be directed to the investigator, Eleonora Quijada Cervoni, School of Language Studies, Australian National University. You can contact me on 02-6125 5112, or by e-mail at Eleonora.Quijada@anu.edu.au.

If you have complaints or queries that I cannot answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the research supervisor, Dr Chantal Crozet, at the School of Language Studies, Australian National University, by e-mail at Chantal.Crozet@anu.edu.au.

If there are questions the supervisor cannot answer you may also contact, The Secretary, Human Ethics Research Committee Research Office, The Australian National University ACT 0200 Australia. Phone: +61 (2) 6125 7945, Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Appendix E: Invitation to participate in interview (teacher)

Invitation to Participate in an Interview

Dear Colleague: I would like to invite you to participate in my doctoral research. Your involvement would consist of your participation in a 45-minute one to one interview. This interactive session will draw on your experience as a teacher of languages at an Australian University.

Participation

Participation is completely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw at any time. If you withdraw from the research, you do not have to explain why, and you can request that the record of your involvement be destroyed. Participation or refusal to participate will not impair any existing relationship between participants and any other institutions or people involved.
You are welcome to request a copy of the summary notes from the interview session. If you agree, I would like to audiotape the discussion.

Data protection

The data from the interview will be recorded in a notebook and on audiotape (if you give your consent), and this will be transcribed onto computer. Your name will not appear on this material. and the researcher, who will have sole access to the data, will securely store the information collected. It is important to note that pseudonyms will be used at all times when reporting the findings, and that the course programs will not be revealed at any stage. After analysis, these materials will be stored at the Australian National University for five years and will then be destroyed.

Use of data

The material from the interview will be analysed, and it will be presented in summary in a thesis. It may also be used in the preparation of other publications so that the findings of the research are available to others. Your name or any other identifying data will not be disclosed.

Questions about the research

Any questions about this project may be directed to the investigator, Eleonora Quijada Cervoni, School of Language Studies, Australian National University. You can contact me on 02-6125 5112, or by e-mail at Eleonora.Quijada@anu.edu.au.

If you have complaints or queries that I cannot answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the research supervisor, Dr Chantal Crozet, at the School of Language Studies, Australian National University, by e-mail at Chantal.Crozet@anu.edu.au

If there are questions the supervisor cannot answer you may also contact, The Secretary, Human Ethics Research Committee Research Office, The Australian National University ACT 0200 Australia. Phone: +61 (2) *6125* 7945, Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Appendix F: Focus group consent form

Focus Group Consent Form

Title of the project: *What engages students to speak in a language class at tertiary level?*

1. I ……………………………………………. consent to take part in the above-mentioned project.
I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided, and any questions I have asked have been explained to my satisfaction by the researcher. My participation is strictly voluntary.

2. I agree to participate in this focus group session, realizing that I may withdraw at any time.
If I do so, I do not have to provide a reason and there will be no adverse consequences to me.
If I withdraw form participation, any information I have shared will be destroyed.

3. I understand that I may request a copy of summary notes from the focus group. I understand that if I agree to be audiotaped, I may request a copy of the tape. I agree that all information contained on the tape must be kept confidential.

4. I understand that any personal, sensitive or potentially incriminating data that I provide will be kept confidential so far as the law allows. I understand that this form, focus group notes, audio recordings and all other data collected throughout the duration of the interactive session will be stored in a locked office at the Australian National University, and electronic data on password protected computer devices.

5. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis, presented at conferences or published in journals on the condition that neither my name not any other identifying material is used.

6. I understand that although comments will not be attributed to me in any publication, it may be possible for third parties to guess the origin of the data, and I should therefore avoid making any defamatory statements or disclosing confidential information.

Research Findings
I would like to receive / do not want to receive (please circle) a brief summary document detailing the key research findings once the research is complete.

(If yes) I would like this document e-mailed to the following e-mail address:

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Signed: Date:

Audio Recordings
I consent to be recorded by the researcher. I agree to transcriptions being made of this focus group session for the purpose of this study only.

Signed: Date:

Researcher to complete

I, *Eleonora Quijada Cervoni* certify that I have explained the purposes and procedures of the research to ………………………………………………………………………., and consider that he/she has understood these and given informed consent to participate in this focus group.

Signed: Date:

Appendix G: Interview consent form (student and teacher)

Interview Consent Form

Title of the project: *What engages students to speak in a language class at tertiary level?*

1. I ……………………………………………. consent to take part in the above-mentioned project. I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided, and any questions I have asked have been explained to my satisfaction by the researcher. My participation is strictly voluntary.

2. I agree to participate in this interview session, realizing that I may withdraw at any time. If I do so, I do not have to provide a reason and there will be no adverse consequences to me. If I withdraw form participation, any information I have shared will be destroyed.

3. I understand that I may request a copy of summary notes from the interview. I understand that if I agree to be audiotaped, I may request a copy of the tape. I agree that all information contained on the tape must be kept confidential.

4. I understand that any personal, sensitive or potentially incriminating data that I provide will be kept confidential so far as the law allows. I understand that this form, interview notes, audio recordings and all other data collected throughout the duration of the interactive session will be stored in a locked office at the Australian National University, and electronic data on password protected computer devices.

5. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis, presented at conferences or published in journals on the condition that neither my name not any other identifying material is used.

6. I understand that although comments will not be attributed to me in any publication, it may be possible for third parties to guess the origin of the data, and I should therefore avoid making any defamatory statements or disclosing confidential information.

Research Findings

I would like to receive / do not want to receive (please circle) a brief summary document detailing the key research findings once the research is complete.

(If yes) I would like this document e-mailed to the following e-mail address:

……………………………………………………………………………………..

Signed: Date:

Audio Recordings
I consent to be recorded by the researcher. I agree to transcriptions being made of this interview session for the purpose of this study only.

Signed: Date:

Researcher to complete

I, *Eleonora Quijada Cervoni* certify that I have explained the purposes and procedures of the research to …………………………………………………………………………., and consider that he/she has understood these and given informed consent to participate in this interview.

Signed: Date:

Appendix H: Focus group participant partial biodata request

Invitation to Participate in a Focus group session

Dear Student: If you have accepted to participate in my doctoral research and would like to be involved in the 90-minute focus group session held during the month of June (exact date to be confirmed), please include your contact details in the following list.

I will be sending you by e-mail a set of questions to think about before the focus group meets, and any other questions, thoughts or ideas you may want to contribute with will be more than welcome. The interactive session will draw on your experience as a student of French and on your participation in the extra-curricular activity called "Cercle Français de Conversation".

Your name	Pseudonym	Gender	Course
1 -----------------------	Marc	M	French (3rd year)
2 -----------------------	Charlie	M	French (2nd year)
3 -----------------------	Isaac	M	French (2nd year)
4 -----------------------	Charles	M	French (3rd year)
5 -----------------------	Matilda	F	French (2nd year)
6 -----------------------	William	M	French (2nd year)
7 -----------------------	Caroline	F	French (2nd year)
8 -----------------------	Linda	F	French (3rd year)
9 -----------------------	Andrea	F	French (2nd year)
10 -----------------------	George	M	French (3rd year)
11 -----------------------	Beatrice	F	French (3rd year)
12 -----------------------	Nelson	M	French (2nd year)

Any questions about this project may be directed to the investigator, Eleonora Quijada Cervoni, School of Language Studies, Australian National University. You can contact me on 02-6125 5112, or by e-mail at Eleonora.Quijada@anu.edu.au. You may also contact the research supervisor,

Dr Chantal Crozet, at the School of Language Studies, Australian National University, by e-mail at Chantal.Crozet@anu.edu.au.

If you have any concerns about this research you may also contact:
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Phone: +61 (2) *6125* 7945, Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Appendix I: Focus group transcription

FOCUS GROUP – Friday, 03 June 2011 – 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm

BPB W 3.03 (video-taped and recorded)

PARTICIPANTS [pseudonyms]:

1. Marc (Intermediate French)
2. Charlie (Continuing)
3. Isaac (Continuing)
4. Charles (Intermediate)
5. Matilda (Continuing)
6. William (Continuing)
7. Caroline (Continuing)
8. Linda (Intermediate)
9. Andrea (Continuing)
10. George (Intermediate)
11. Beatrice (Intermediate)
12. Nelson (Continuing)

Students are sitting in classroom—warming up—coffee, tea, apple juice, and pastries (15 min)

(T) Désolée, mais on va parler en anglais aujourd'hui… Ça va être bizarre, n'est-ce pas? [laugh] You can correct me if I make mistakes [general laugh]

(10) I just realised that we have been speaking French all this time [laugh]

(8) I never heard you speak English anyhow… [laugh]

(2) Who? Me? [laugh]

(T) Have all read the questions? Yes? Oui? [laugh] OK. Thank you very much for being here…Let's just start by…We'll start by comparing the two environments where you speak French: the classroom and King O'Malley's. What engages you to speak in these two environments? …When you are at King O'Malley's you all speak in French, but when you are in the classroom it is not always easy to make you speak in French in class. …When you are talking now, just think about what engaged you or disengaged you to speak when you were in 2nd year (Continuing French). Many of you are now in 3rd year and of course it is easier now… (Note: (11) & (8) shake their heads negatively as in saying "no" it is not easier now).

So…what things engaged you to speak in class? And what do you think engages or disengages other students, your classmates? We are all individual. Some things that may engage one person, may not engage another. We are from different cultures also… And of course, then we have [Student] who is from another planet… [general laugh]

(1) Thank you [general laugh again]

(T) So, what engages you to speak in the language classroom? What happens in class? What disengages you?

(10) You kept yelling at me when I didn't. [general laugh]

(T) Really?

(10) I used to speak English in class all the time.

(T) That's true. That's interesting. When you were in 2nd year [Continuing], it was very hard to get you to speak in French in class and now [in Intermediate] you speak in French all the time.

(10) When you speak in a language class that's not coming naturally to you. You feel like if you take too long to try to find a word, other people are going to move on, and you are not going to get your ideas across anyway.

(6) Yeah…

(10) So, you just revert to your language to get your idea out there…quickly…and it's just a very bad habit to get into. It's so very easy to go with. I think the higher the level of French, it's easier to find a way to talk around a topic and just get your ideas out there.

(8) That's why it is important to have smaller classes in Oral, because if there are lots of people, you feel… if you are searching for words…you are wasting other people's time and you feel guilty.

(10) …a system of 4 people together, for 20 minutes you all speak, you all have an opportunity… Then you swap groups…

(6) I think a lot of people just give up in class. For example, I spoke always with (2) in French all the time. I don't even know what he sounds like in English [laugh]… But one thing I found when talking to other students is that they never really want to speak French in class… I think many of them study French because it's an obligation, rather than something they really wanted to learn.

(T) But do you think it's the majority?

(10) I think it's at least half at ANU.

(8) I think there are a lot of students, e.g. students of international relations, etc. where it's a requirement to do a second language.

(6) It's very intimidating for a lot of people. People don't like to make mistakes. If you are stumbling a lot to get your point out, you feel you're wasting other people's time.

(8) And you feel stupid.

(6) Yes, you feel stupid. And it's not a good feeling.

(10) You feel you're being assessed all the time. You feel like…am I meant to be speaking as well as these people around me? Am I behind so much in my French, it's ridiculous? You feel very bad about it. That's why I think *Cercle français* is better. You're not being assessed. You don't feel I'm having a bad month because I don't speak as well as the people around me.

(6) There's nothing wrong about me.

(11) I think as you are asked to speak in a group about a particular subject that you may not have any interest in. You say the minimum about it, and then you revert back to English and talk about what you did in the weekend. If students could choose the subjects of conversation with their partner, they probably would have much more to say.

(9) In 3rd year [Intermediate] French, people got to choose the topic they wanted to talk about, and it was useful to know a week before the topics other students were going to talk about, you look up the subject, or at least words, so then you can contribute, especially if you are interested in the topic. But some people choose topics you have no idea about, so if you have no idea, and you haven't looked up the topic or at least some words, it's very hard to contribute because you have no idea.

(6) I felt completely out of my league… When I was going to say something, someone else said it, and then when you gather your thoughts and you get the courage to say something, the teacher moves on and changes the topic… Then you give up. That is one the toughest things. When you don't know about the topic, how can you give an opinion?

(4) In class, in lower level language classes, they put you in a group and you don't know anything about the person next to you. You end up speaking with people with whom I normally would not speak. It's

people you have nothing in common with. I didn't care about them at all. In lower level classes you ask things like "What did you do on the weekend?" and I couldn't care less what this person did on the weekend. When you go to *Cercle français*, it's people you care about, you are interested in these people, and that is partly why you are there.

In 2nd year Spanish for example, you are wearing jeans and the person sitting next to you is wearing a suit and he may be a student of law, and you have absolutely nothing in common with that person. You know it from the outset.

(6) Yeah… It's very tough. You also need the vocabulary to be able to discuss a point. In debates, for example, you can't argue and say "Hey, I have a very good point, but I can't express it because I can't speak French."

(8) It's so much easier to speak in the later years because the intimidation is gone, and because of the progression you are friends now. When I started in 2nd year, and you don't know anyone, and once you have been making mistakes in front of these people for a while, then you get used to it…

(T) You started in 2nd year [Continuing]?

(8) Yeah…

(T) So, you started with me?

(8) Yeah…

(1) That's the same at the beginning of every year… people come in who speak with a perfect accent…

(9) Every year people come in and you know right away [they are new], because they don't know anyone, and they don't have the same confidence.

(8) How come we don't have "oral" in the placement tests? We often have students in our classes that shouldn't be there, they should be in a higher level and they are very intimidating.

(10) Isn't it possible to split the classes, like they are in 3rd year in speaking and writing, and in 2nd year in grammar and listening?

[Conversation digresses a little towards placement tests]

(T) to (8) You said that when you were in 2024 [Continuing French] it was harder to get engaged because you didn't know anyone. You were comparing it to now that you are in 3rd year, you all know each other, and when you go to *Cercle français*, it's easier to speak because you are friends…

(8) Yeah…

(T) And yet, when you were in 2nd year in my class you spoke a lot… Why?

(8) Actually, I may be atypical… I find that my spoken French and my confidence in speaking French were better when I first started than now. I actually feel less confident now.

(6) Really?

(11) [Agrees] Absolutely…

(8) I feel as if when I first started speaking French or learning French, it was let's say every week, every hour (meaning every class). In first year you do 5 hours. In 2nd year [Continuing], every class, you actually really multiply your knowledge by a lot. I felt really empowered, I can say this, I can say that…But now [in Intermediate] I feel more aware of my mistakes, and so when I started I didn't know I was making mistakes… I have a few francophone friends, and I find that when I first meet a francophone person, I feel very confident about speaking to them in French, and then the more I get to know them, I feel less confident about speaking French, because I get more embarrassed…

So, in *Cercle français*, I feel so safe… I feel very safe… If I make any mistakes, it doesn't matter because I have always made mistakes with these people…So…But I definitely felt more confident speaking in 2024 and 2025 [said in French] that in the other classes in 3rd year…

(T) What about the others?

(3) I realise now that I make mistakes…But I do speak more now… When I first came in I was more timid, I guess because I didn't know people… because you set topics that I was not particularly interested in, or you don't have the vocab, or you can't say the right thing. Now my vocab has expanded and I have learned my basic grammar, I am more confident now, but I realise now that I make mistakes, so it is like a double edge sword…

(T) to (5) What about you?

(5) Hum… I have always felt uncomfortable [general laugh]. It doesn't matter which year.

(T) But you are still here?

(5) Yeah, because I still really want to learn [French].

(T) So, what made you uncomfortable in 2024 [Continuing French]?

(5) Hum…Yeah…I guess making mistakes. I guess making mistakes and the fear of being corrected. Hum… And then… I would say at some point I just gave up, because I wanted to contribute, but I just was too slow for the speed of the conversation… So, I kept listening…

(T) So you think content is important to feel engaged?

(5) I think it is, but I think if you try to put very controversial topics in there, that a lot of people would have something to say about it.

(3) The thing is you need to have a broad range of topics, so we can expand our vocabulary… but initially it is difficult and it will discourage some people to speak. The teacher needs to encourage people to speak, and give them vocabulary, help people before they are trained to say things and stuff…I know you've done it very well [in Continuing], [Teacher] [Intermediate] as well…

(12) I think it depends on who is in your class too…because I went to an oral class [this year in Intermediate] because I was sick one day, so I went to another class…So, in my one there was a lot of quiet people, nobody really talks, so I felt like I can really talk because no one else talks, and a lot of people are quiet…But I went to this other one…and you guys were scary [general laugh] and very confident…

(10) I noticed these long awkward silences [in the class you are talking about]…

(12) I must have come in a good day, because they were all talking, and I didn't want to say anything, because…

(10) We had two girls who came from that school… [name of school]… So their spoken French was very good.

(2) But they hardly speak at all. They just sort of sit there. They don't contribute at all…They may have an awesome accent, but they don't speak.

(T) So, if everybody is talking, it's less or more intimidating?

(12) It's tough.

(6) It's harder. It's quite intimidating if you hear other people speaking very well to try and say something…

(3) The other thing is the pace of the conversation…If it is too fast…Sometimes you can't process your thoughts and think of the right grammar structure and say it…in time.

(8) So maybe it's good in a conversation class, that the teacher after every couple of questions stops and recaps what has been said, just very briefly, and so that all students can pick up what they didn't understand…

(6) And also addressing specific students rather than opening up to everyone…

(2) I think for oral classes, the topics are very important. They can't be things like…in my class (in 3rd year) they keep talking about politics and there will always be people who don't talk, because this topic is going way over my head and I have no idea what they are talking about. I've seen like [teacher] asks the 2 girls from [name of school] "So what do you think about something?" and they go like "Chais pas…" (laugh), because they don't know anything about the topic, so they just sit there. If some people start talking about politics in Afghanistan, that does not engage me, so I'll just sit there too and stare. That does not engage. It has to be topics that engage everybody.

[Everyone] But that is too hard, that's not easy…

(2) Like something really, really basic, I don't know…like…like food. [laugh]

[Everyone is talking about topics…]

(6) That is a good point, and the reason why it works so well, because we can all talk about it. It's like everyday life…

(2) Yes…Everyday life…things like that… [general laugh] Also school, for example…

(6) Yes. Just general conversation…

(8) But it does not give you much of a chance to increase your vocabulary…

(2) True. But it increases your confidence in speaking I guess…You need to engage some people…

(6) You need to start from the basics before…You don't learn to run before you learn to walk…

(2) It seems ridiculous sometimes…If all we can talk about is elections in France, culture, left and right political parties…It's strange…You can't talk about what you do every day…The progression is strange…

(8) [Teacher] [in Intermediate] gives 4 articles to read about a particular subject. We all have to read the articles, so we all know about the subject…

(11) Having said that the articles are again about politics. It's always some extreme subject about politics, whether some extreme right wing should be the president, or whether abortion should be legalised. There will also be two dominant people with two strong personal opinions and they will also talk and everyone else listen…

[General group reaction…everyone talks…]

(10) You can always take a political topic and turn it into a philosophical topic. Like…In general do you think that this sort of thing is OK?

[General reaction again…Agreements and disagreements…]

(9) I don't think the solution is necessarily not to talk about politics, because personally I find that really interesting… [general laugh]. I think you should have varied topics and not spend too long on each, maximum 15 minutes, so you can have food and politics [general laugh] in the same lesson. You can never find a topic that is going to engage everyone. It is unrealistic.

(2) Like something like what [Student] talked about iPods and iPhones or something. That's something people use and everybody knows about and you can complain about it…I mean complaining is very easy… [general laugh]

(T) Not easy in another language though. [general laugh]

(10) Technology, for example is a great thing, because a lot of the words used in technology are English-based words. So, you can express yourselves more fluently without having to memorise hundreds and hundreds of words.

[Silence… 5 seconds…]

(T) [to student 7 who has still not said anything] What about you? You are in 2024 [Continuing French]? What engages you in class, and what do you think engages or disengages other students in your class to speak?

(7) When you are put in the spot, it often makes you feel very uncomfortable, because if you're going around and people are just genuinely engaging in discussion, then you have time to think about your ideas…But if you are in a circle, it can put pressure on you, and make you feel as if you have to come up with something better than someone else, so you have to know the vocabulary and it is embarrassing if you have nothing to say. Also I think that when you are having fun, like in the Scenario classes, you are less shy and thus you get the courage to speak with more confidence.

(4) Yes, having fun in class is important. You forget about your fears and your inhibitions. You are more relaxed and you feel more comfortable to speak and it does not matter if you make mistakes. It's actually ok to make mistakes, like at *Cercle français*.

(T) What about topics? Is that something important? Would you feel more engaged if the topics interest you?

(7) Yeah…

(T) What about the other students, what do you think disengages them?

(7) I think…When I see people outside the classroom they always speak in English… So, when you see them in class, you speak in English to them about things you've been doing in the week, so when you're in class you don't have the motivation to speak to them in French, I guess…

(6) So, I think you've said all the things you could have said in English, and now you have nothing else to say in French [general laugh]… So, you just go back to English, cause it is easier…

(4) Yeah… Yeah…

(T) What about small groups, when you are split in groups of 2, 3, or 4?

(10) 4 is possibly a little big. That means, you are expressing yourself in front of 3 other people, who can jump in and finish a point for you when you are taking your time… 2 or 3 is possibly better.

(12) It can be dangerous though because you have people that don't say anything, so if you have a one on one thing and you are waiting for someone to finally say something…

(6) Yeah… True.

(10) So if you periodically swap the pairs, so you can have a chance to speak for at least 20 min in class…

(6) A lot of people don't know how to ask questions at all, even in English, people don't know…

(T) What about what [Student 10] said about swapping pairs: Do you feel more comfortable talking to someone you know all the time, or do you feel more comfortable going around and getting to know new people?

(6) You may feel more comfortable talking to someone you know, but I mean you can't be comfortable with everything you do in life, you have to get used to being in uncomfortable situations and unfamiliar situations, so it's not the worth thing if you get stuck with someone else you never talked to and…They may be very interesting, they may have similar points of view, or maybe not…

(2) I don't know if you are allowed to suggest something like this, but [general laugh] if you're speaking to someone that is sort of in the same level as you, you would feel comfortable because both of you can contribute in an equal amount. But if you are talking to someone that speaks really quickly or someone who speaks really slowly [general laugh], it becomes a little difficult…But I don't know how you would do something like this, like you can't say "You two suck, so you have to be together, and you two…" [general laugh]

(7) Yeah…That's another problem in 2nd level is that there are so many different levels of French, that some people don't feel comfortable speaking in front of other people that speak much better…

(12) I think also it varies from teacher to teacher…like in your courses it's always French, French, French…whereas in others the teacher is speaking a lot of English and if the teacher is speaking English then the students will also speak a lot of English…

(T) What would you prefer in 2nd year?

[All students] French. [General discussion about the subject: in 1st year a bit of English is OK; in 2nd year, only French; although grammar can be explained in English sometimes, but everything else should be in French.]

(11) My French started very well, speaking and all, and now it's awful and somehow I am considered an advanced student. Honestly! …I know that I have lost so much vocab, because we are concentrating on a specific topic [in Intermediate] or so much in writing, which is good because my writing is awful as well [laugh], but there is not enough oral practice. Compared with learning German, in German they combine everything in one lesson you would practice the 4 skills every day, 4 days…The progression seems to be better…

[All class discussion: some prefer the French way with the four modules; others prefer the 4 skills every day…]

(4) But you have an extra motivation to learn German… [the boyfriend]

(6) Also it is your 3rd language. I am also learning German and I find it too slow…

(11) Yes, probably. But in French [this year in Intermediate] at the end of the semester, you study for the exam, you get and OK mark, and I cannot for the life of me remember it now… I truly want to learn French, so I have the motivation, but there is no revisiting what we have already learnt. It's not done frequently enough…

(12) It is also very useful to learn the "common everyday language" like "Qu'est-ce t'as?" and "Chais pas".

(4) Yeah…When all you learn in class is Jean Paul Sartre and existentialism, and then you listen to a film or go to France where everybody speaks everyday French, you are lost if you can only talk about literature or says things with "vous"…

(T) What about the use of "vous" and "tu" in class?

(10) I love it…I think it's important that you learn the use of "vous" with your teacher, like in German we use "Sie"'…

(6) I prefer "tu", it feels less formal, and you feel more comfortable speaking. In general life, you use "tu" more often…

(2) In oral class, we should use "tu" and in all other classes we should use "vous"; otherwise we would never get the chance to practice "tu".

(3) I agree. In oral class, we should be able to use "tu" and in the rest we should use "vous". There is something about the oral class where you want to feel more comfortable talking, a bit more relaxed.

(10) Does the "vous" bother you there? Do you find it difficult to relate to someone if you have to use the more formal "vous"?

(3) I don't think now in 3rd year [Intermediate], but in 2nd year [Continuing], yeah…

(2) In writing, in grammar and in formal settings, we should be encouraged to use "vous", but in oral we should be able to use "tu"… in informal sort of settings.

(1) I think there is a difference between being very cold and using "vous".

(8) You use "vous" all the time. You still use "vous" with me. [general laugh]

(1) For example, if a teacher refuses to answer to you because you accidentally used the "tu" form, that's completely different to a teacher preferring that you use the "vous" form and being really nice using the "vous" form, like still being very friendly.

(T) So, you still prefer to use the "vous" form in all situations?

(8) Not in all situations…It would feel weird now to use the "vous" form in an oral class with you… [general laugh]

(11) You invited us to use the "tu"… but I had a strange experience with [teacher], where [he/she] invited me to call [him/her] [by the first name], so I called [him/her] "tu", and then [he/she] immediately said "don't tutoie me". So I reverted back to calling [him/her] [full name].

(T) Does anyone use the "vous" form at *Cercle français*?

[General discussion. Everyone agreed that the use of "tu" is mostly used.]

(11) At *Cercle français*, the other night 2 young French girls came to the *Cercle* and one of them said "tu" to the other, and this one said: "You're supposed to call me 'vous'". So the first one said sorry, and they continued with the "vous". I found that very funny and a little strange.

(9) I've never thought about it this much until now… [general laugh] I think I use whichever comes first.

(6) I use "tu" because it's easier.

(1) What about with [teacher]?

(6) I actually only use "vous" with [teacher] because [he/she] demands that we do it…

[General laugh and discussion about teacher's class…]

(T) What does the word "engagement" mean to you in this context, when I say "what engages students to speak in class?"

(1) I totally don't think it is for the lecturer to engage the students. I think the students are engaged or they're not. It doesn't matter what the topic is; it doesn't matter whether you know the vocabulary…

(10) A lecturer can help, they can facilitate…

(6) Yeah…

(10) … and make sure that you can get your thoughts out, and that you don't have to be afraid if someone else jumps in…that you can have your moment.

(2) It's up to the lecturer to prepare the atmosphere, so students can speak… and so whether they want to speak or not, then there's not much the lecturer can do…

(9) I think it's simple things like in an oral class, we sat like this facing each other…in other classes we are all facing the teacher…the lecturer has to facilitate that…the students are not going to move the chairs around…

(8) I can see myself pretty engaged to speak because I really want to practice…but I definitely can see that in some classes I am much less inclined to…like last year [Continuing] with some teachers I didn't want to speak…mainly in oral classes I didn't feel comfortable around them…or I didn't feel comfortable with whom I was speaking…

(1) In little groups everyone would speak even if the teacher was there, but in bigger groups or the whole class nobody would speak…

(2) Too many people watching, it's more stressful…

(6) Some teachers are more encouraging… like in Spanish [Continuing] I have two classes where the teachers speak Spanish all the time, so the students are encouraged to speak Spanish as well, whereas

in the other two classes the tutors don't speak in Spanish, they mostly speak in English, so the students also speak in English… I often was the only one trying to speak Spanish, and it was so odd…so, I'd give up… So, it's up to the teacher to create an environment where you do speak the language and to encourage the students to speak the language… It doesn't matter if you make mistakes… at least try.

(1) It depends on the class itself. If you are in a class where no one speaks in French, it's very difficult. We have 2 classes this year [Intermediate] with the same teacher: In one of them everyone speaks in French, so I find it easier to speak in French; but in the other class, no one speaks in French; so it's very difficult to speak French…

(T) Why doesn't anyone speak in French in that second class?

(8) I think because the content is too hard; the difference is that one class—the oral class—the topics are engaging, but in the literature class the content is really hard, and you're supposed to have done the readings, and most people don't do the readings [in Intermediate]. There is probably only one student that does the readings: Him. [pointing to (1)—general laugh]

(1) That is because students are not engaged.

(11) Sometimes you have read the book, but just have nothing to say because the topic is way over your head…

(1) It's like in 3rd year [Intermediate], we were asked to see this 3-hour documentary, and I did sit there for 3 hours and watched it, and then in class we spent about 1 minute on it!!

(6) I think teachers have to set realistic expectations for what they want us to do, and if we are asked to read something, then we should spend time discussing it in class.

(9) Yeah… I don't think the readings in our literature class this year [Intermediate] were unrealistic. The problem is that students don't do the readings… like I started doing all my readings at the beginning of the semester, but then you come to class and most people haven't done the readings, so you only spend 10 minutes on the readings. So, I then stopped doing the readings myself.

(6) Another problem is that a lot of the things I read, I just didn't care about, so I wasn't really interested… So, why am I reading this?

(10) The only reason I did the readings was because I was assessed; otherwise I would have not done it. [general laugh]

(3) If there were marks for participation in class that would engage people…

[All students] Hummm… not really… perhaps… Yes and no… I hate that.

(12) It's demeaning! You get a little tick for having done your notes and you get another tick or a star for having spoken in class… I think it's subjective and childish…

(6) I agree with [Student 12]. In my class [Intermediate] everyone would jump in to say something, just something really easy just to get in there, and get the tick; the problem is the timid people would get stuck in the end, and they either had to answer the hardest questions because they were not quick enough to answer the easy ones, or not get the mark or the tick, because they didn't say anything. I don't think that is a fair system…

(2) I think that is not a good system.

(9) I think if there was a mark for participation that would actually discourage people from participating.

(5) I never fill the page or take notes, so I don't get any stars; I think I only got ticks.

(T) Does that encourage you to speak?

(5) No, not really. In our class [Intermediate], nobody really speaks much anyway. There are only a couple of people who speak, because they went to France. Their French is good, which discourages me.

(T) Is it an oral class?

(5) Yes.

(1) I think we should have a participation mark, like 10% if you come to class; some of the students in our class only came once…

(9) It needs to be transparent…

(11) This year [Intermediate] I had to do some readings and even if I read the same thing 20 times, I didn't get the meaning; so, we had to grasp the language, but the content was too hard.

(6) In our oral class [Intermediate], the teacher had to speak all the time, because it was a quiet class, so if the students didn't speak, then the teacher had to speak…

[All students—General talk about debates… most students don't like them; only a few speak…]

(3) Small groups of 3, I find them really encouraging and more comfortable; everybody has a chance to speak and the other 2 people push you to speak.

(T) If you were to describe an "ideal" classroom to learn the spoken language, what would be that ideal classroom?

(10) The *Cercle*!

(4) Small.

(6) Exactly what we have in the *Cercle*. We sit down and just talk. Because we talk about things that we actually care about, we talk about things that interest us, we talk about daily life things, about things you like to do or you want to do.

(12) But if you are timid, you are still going to be quiet…

(6) But if you want to learn a language you have to start somewhere, and that is a good place to start…

(2) If you have again small groups with 3 students, and if one of the students is stronger than the other two, he/she can push the others to speak…

(8) But they probably will think they are not getting what they want out of it.

(10) I think what makes *Cercle français* successful is that we are surrounded by native speakers and you can ask them for a word or an expression…English is not the native language for these French speakers and if you start talking in English, they would drag you back to French.

(8) But it is not always the case…sometimes there are no native French speakers at all and yet we all speak French all the time.

(T) Can we do a *Cercle français* in the classroom?

(8) But at *Cercle français* we are not marked; people that go there, it's because they actually want to be there.

(6) Also you normally are talking one on one, and you don't want to let down the other person and you make the effort. Then you just change partners and speak with someone else.

(8) It works really well; you just speak to one person, and then turn to someone else and the conversation flows…

(4) But in class it doesn't work because you sit with someone you've never met before, or you have nothing in common with; so you just sit there and say nothing.

(6) But in oral in 2nd year, I remember sitting in small groups, and I didn't know anyone, and I'm quite happy to talk, so I just talked. [general laugh]

(12) But we were friends already.

(6) No. I didn't know you then. It was in 2nd year [Continuing], and I hadn't been here the semester before.

(T) Now to conclude, think back at when you were in 2nd year [Continuing], what engaged you or disengaged you to speak in that class?

(2) Topics. If someone was talking about some really obscure thing that happened in France, that I knew nothing about, I just gave some really lame response just to say something, but that really disengaged me.

(12) What engaged me is that I was in a class where most of the students were not intimidating. In that class, most of the students were at the same level or a bit lower. There were no students that were too impressive… [general laugh] in terms of speaking too well. That really puts me off.

(11) How the teacher presents him or herself right from the off and what manner and what style of class they are going to have… That makes a big difference, especially in the first week… nothing too bad has happened yet… they can't be too grumpy… If they come in smiling… "Hi, everyone"… Immediately there is a little bit of relax, of fresh air, especially if it is your first year at Uni. Starting with easy topics, and then expanding from there. Giving positive comments to the whole class, even if it is not absolutely right, at least it is not wrong.

(10) You'd be more likely to engage in a topic when you do have an opinion on something. Although in my case, if I don't have an opinion on something, I'll make everyone aware that I don't have an opinion on that topic. You are going to be more engaged, if the topic works for you. What disengages me: (i) when other people have a better level, it is so frustrating not being able to speak the language that I would drop back to English, (ii) and not understanding what the teacher said is also very frustrating.

(9) Definitely the topic. That would make me fire up. In 2nd year [Continuing], I remember being very disengaged with the oral presentations and just sitting there and not even listening. It was just a waste of time.

(8) The size of the class is also important, and also feeling uncomfortable around a lecturer is not engaging to speak. But not every lecturer has to be the same. I like your style, which was very relaxed and friendly, but I also like [Teacher's] class, which is very formal, but maybe because it is a grammar class. What disengaged me? Topics that I was not interested; also being forced to speak and pushing you to take a side in a debate or expressing a point of view when you don't have one. It's not very natural. If I feel people are too advanced, it is also disengaging.

(1) Yes, not to be able to say something is disengaging. Engaging: because of *Cercle français*, we got to know each other and we became friends, so then in class we knew each other and that was very engaging.

(1) Class atmosphere is so important.

(11) Sometimes [Teacher] had a hard time making us speak; [he/she] covered the topic on [his/her] own; but also [he/she] would improvise and say "ok, get together with a partner, and talk about whatever you want and then tell me what you spoke about". Suddenly everyone was talking in French, there was no pressure, and we felt a safety net there, because we were allowed to pick the topic, and the mood would lighten up. Sometimes, [teacher] speaks the most too.

(6) Class culture is the most important: if the culture is to actually speak in that language that would encourage the students. I hate it that I go to my Spanish class and nobody speaks in Spanish, so I don't feel encouraged to speak in Spanish because I don't want to be "that" guy. It's the same in the German class; nobody wants to speak German in the class. There has to be a culture where the teacher comes in and says we are not speaking any English in this class in 2nd year. Not in 1st year [Introductory], especially not if it is a grammar class. The teacher needs to encourage the students.

What disengages me is not having a chance to say something. The teacher needs to encourage those who are more timid, or not so confident.

(11) If when we say something that's wrong, if a teacher says that was great, even if it was wrong and then explains the right form that builds confidence.

(6) When she said that, [Teacher] in class tried to motivate people and said talk about anything you want, that's what *Cercle français* is all about.

(10) Very important, if two people are engaged in a conversation about a specific topic in class, it's very important to allow them the time to speak for a while, and not interrupt them and say ok, let's change the topic now, or let's do something else.

(4) I agree. It's important to build the students' confidence, and never say to the person you are wrong.

(5) In 2nd year [Continuing], the group was too big. I remember feeling very intimidated because other students spoke non-stop. It's very awkward to speak when you don't know the people, and talking about politics. In *Cercle français*, what encourages me are the people; you know everybody is there to speak French and to have fun.

(8) Also at *Cercle français* you can have a glass of wine.

(1) But I think not too many people drink at *Cercle français*; actually I think most people do not drink. [Approximately1/3 of the people drink.]

(10) It's true. I drink, but not at *Cercle français*.

(9) It's quite dim.

(2) Yes. No one can see your face.

(11) Yes. The lights… absolutely.

(9) Maybe you should say at the beginning of the semester to the students "It's ok to make mistakes; everyone does when learning a second language."

(8) Hearing my French teacher [teacher] speak English and seeing [him/her] struggle with my language when I struggle with [his/hers], made me feel very good [general laugh]. It was great. It is normal…

(6) At *Cercle français*, it's good to see some of the French or the Swiss people struggle with English. It makes us feel good, or not good, but feeling my French is better than her English… You know what I mean? It's gratifying.

(8) Also having fun is important. I had a teacher that made us over-exaggerate the accent and it was fun, and then it actually didn't really matter if we couldn't say something properly.

(10) In class, it's only a 50 minute-class, so by the time you get in, start the class, you only speak for 15 minutes if you are lucky or outgoing like me. At *Cercle français*, you arrive and everybody is already speaking French, and you get right in the mood, and then you stay for 2 or 3 hours and that is great.

(T) Last question really: What has been the hardest skill to learn in French?

[All students] [They have different opinions, but it corresponds approximately to 1/3 listening; 1/3 speaking; 1/3 writing.]

[…The conversation keeps flowing, and students keep talking and having some juice and the rest of the pastries. Researcher thanks the students for their interesting feedback and passionate participation.]

[1h30 of recording = 10 hours of handwritten transcription + 7 hours of typing]

Appendix J: Student interview questionnaire

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT *TO SPEAK* IN A LANGUAGE CLASS (SEtSiLANG)
STUDENT INTERVIEW 2012-2013

PARTICIPANTS: 47 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS FROM
LANGUAGE COURSES: FRENCH, GERMAN, ITALIAN, SPANISH
LEVELS: INTRODUCTORY, CONTINUING, INTERMEDIATE, ADVANCED

Research question	Response options
Q1. In which of the following groups do you consider yourself to be? A. I am a person who normally likes to talk a lot, and who is not embarrassed to speak in class in the language that I am learning. B. I am a person who normally likes to talk a lot, but in class I do not speak that often in the language that I am learning. C. I am normally a more reserved person who does not talk a lot, and I rather listen in class than speak in the language that I am learning.	Choose either A, B or C
Q2. What are you studying?	Open-ended
Q3. What languages are you studying?	Open-ended
Q4. Why are you studying the nominated language?	Open-ended
Q5. Did you study this language previously?	If so, when and for how long?
Q6. How would you define “student engagement to speak in class”?	Open-ended
Q7. Can you tell me three things that engage you to speak in class in the language you are studying?	Open-ended
Q8. Can you tell me three things that disengage you or disaffect you to speak in class in the language you are studying?	Open-ended
Q9. From 1 to 10, how engaged are you this semester in your language class?	Ranking: 1-not at all engaged 10- absolutely engaged
Q10. Can you finish the following sentence? I feel really engaged to speak in a language class when…	Sentence completion
Q11. Can you finish the following sentence? What really disengages me to speak in a language class is…	Sentence completion
Q12. Of the following 4 statements, with which one do you identify the most? A. I study (the nominated language) because I love the culture and I want to learn more about it. B. I study (the nominated language) because I want to be able to read books and articles in that language. C. I study (the nominated language) because I want to be able to speak the language and communicate with people who speak that language. D. I study (the nominated language) because I want to be able to write in that language.	Choose only one
Q14. In your current language class & relevant to your peers, in what group do you consider yourself to be?	A. Above class average B. At class average C. Below class average

Research question	Response options
Q15. Please give me your opinion on the following statements. i. I think what engages me the most to speak in my language class is the class content or topic. ii. What engages me the most to speak in my language class is the class atmosphere. iii. The camaraderie among my peers is what I believe engages me the most to speak in my language class. iv. I believe that my teacher's personality is actually what engages me the most to speak in my language class. v. What engages me the most to speak in my language class is my own personality. vi. Nothing really engages me to speak in my language class. If I am not engaged, I am not engaged!	a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Not too sure d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
Q16. Could you please read the following sentences aloud and finish the sentences? A. I feel really engaged to speak in a language class where the topic… B. I feel really engaged to speak in a language class where the class atmosphere is… C. I feel really engaged to speak in a language class where my peers… D. I feel really engaged to speak in a language class where my teacher…	Sentence completion
Q17. If you could change something in your current language class to be more engaged to speak during class time, what would that be?	Open-ended
Q18. Do you consider that there are any external influences affecting your ability to engage to speak in your current language class?	Open-ended
Q19. Think about an ideal language class that would engage you to speak in class, and tell me again what engages you the most: i. A topic of interest to me could DEFINITELY engage me to speak in class. ii. A relaxed class atmosphere is the MOST important element for me to be engaged to speak in my language class. iii. If I did not feel embarrassed in front my peers, this would DEFINITELY engage me to speak in my language class. iv. A teacher with a non-intimidating personality would DEFINITELY engage me to speak in my language class. v. If I were not so shy, I would DEFINITELY speak more often in my language class. vi. If everyone in class was always speaking in (the nominated language), that would DEFINITELY engage me to speak in class!	a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Not too sure d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
Q20. Do you think a "teacher's personality" can make a difference on whether you become engaged to speak in class or not?	Open-ended
Q21. Can you describe the personality of a teacher that would engage you to speak in class?	Open-ended

Research question	Response options
Q22. If you think back (or present) is there a language teacher that has engaged you to speak more than others? If yes, how did this teacher engage you to speak as opposed to others?	Open-ended
Q23. Can you think about a teacher that did the opposite i.e. that really disengaged you to speak in class? If so, why?	Open-ended
Q24. Do you think it is important to be engaged to speak in a language class in order to better acquire the language?	Please explain your answer
Q25. Of the 4 language skills, which one is the hardest for you to learn? A. Reading B. Speaking C. Listening/Understanding D. Writing	Choose either A, B, C or D
Q26. Of the same 4 language skills, which one is the most important for you to master first? And why? A. Reading B. Speaking C. Listening/Understanding D. Writing	Choose either A, B, C or D
Q27. What about Grammar and Culture? What importance do you give to these two expressions of language in the acquisition of [your nominated language]? Would you prefer Grammar to be taught in [the nominated language] or in English? And Culture?	Open-ended
Q28. When you attend that conversation club or group, what percentage of your speech is in [the nominated language]? And do you find it easier to speak in [the nominated language] in this conversation group as opposed to in class?	Open-ended
Q29. And what percentage of your speech is in [the nominated language] when you are in your language class?	Open-ended
Q30. Is there anything else you would like to add in terms of what gets you engaged to speak in a language class?	Open-ended

Appendix K: Teacher interview questionnaire

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT *TO SPEAK* IN A LANGUAGE CLASS (SEtSiLANG)
TEACHER INTERVIEW 2012-2013

PARTICIPANTS: 14 TEACHERS FROM
LANGUAGE COURSES: FRENCH, GERMAN, ITALIAN, SPANISH
LEVELS: INTRODUCTORY, CONTINUING, INTERMEDIATE, ADVANCED

Research question	Response options
Q1. How long have you been teaching [the nominated language]?	Open-ended
Q2. Have you taught other languages before?	Open-ended
Q3. Why are you teaching languages?	Open-ended
Q4. How would you define your role as a teacher of languages?	Open-ended
Q5. Have you taught [the nominated language] at high school before?	Open-ended
Q6. You know that my topic of research is "student engagement to speak in a language class". How would you define "student engagement" in this context?	Open-ended
Q7. Can you tell me 3 things that you believe engage students to speak in (the nominated language) in class?	Open-ended
Q8. Can you tell me 3 things that you believe disengage or disaffect students to speak in class in (the nominated language)?	Open-ended
Q9. In your training as a teacher, do you remember if there was a module on "how to engage students to speak"?	Open-ended
Q10. Can you finish the following sentence? My students are really engaged to speak in my language class when…	Sentence completion
Q11. Can you finish the following sentence? What really disengages my students to speak in my language class is when…	Sentence completion
Q12. Of the following 4 statements, with which one do you identify the most? A. My students study French because they love the culture and they want to learn more about it. B. My students study French because they want to be able to read books and articles in that language. C. My students study French because they want to be able to speak the language and communicate with people who speak that language. D. My students study French because they want to be able to write in that language.	Choose only one
Q13. In your current language class, would you say all students are at the same level in terms of their oral competence?	A. Approximately all at same level B. 50 - 50 C. Large discrepancies
Q14. Think about your current language class and tell me what do you believe engages your students THE MOST to speak in your language class.	Open-ended

Research question	Response options
Q15. Could you please read the following sentences aloud and complete the sentences without writing your response? A. I think students feel really engaged to speak in a language class where the topic… B. Students feel really engaged to speak in a language class where the class atmosphere is… C. In a language class, the students feel really engaged to speak when their peers… D. I believe students feel really engaged to speak in a language class where the teacher…	Sentence completion
Q16. If you could change something in your current language class to engage more your students to speak during class time, what would that be?	Open-ended
Q17. Do you believe that external influences can affect your students' engagement to speak in a language class? What about your ability to engage students to speak in your current language class?	Open-ended
Q18. Think about an ideal language class that would engage your students to speak in class, and tell me again what you believe engages them the most.	Open-ended
Q19. Do you think "your personality as a teacher" can make a difference on whether your students become engaged to speak in class or not?	Open-ended
Q20. Can you describe in two or three words the personality of a teacher that you believe engages students to speak in class?	Open-ended
Q21. If you think back through your experience in teaching, would you say you are a teacher who has a strong ability to engage the students to speak in class?	Open-ended
Q22. Can you now describe in two or three words the personality of a teacher that you believe disengages students to speak in class?	Open-ended
Q23. Do you think it is important for students to be engaged to speak in a language class in order to better acquire the language	Open-ended
Q24. Of the 4 language skills, which one do you think is the hardest for your students to learn? A. Reading B. Speaking C. Listening/Understanding D. Writing	Choose either A, B, C or D
Q25. Of the same 4 language skills, which one do you think is the most important for your students to master first? A. Reading B. Speaking C. Listening/Understanding D. Writing	Choose either A, B, C or D
Q26. What about Grammar and Culture? What importance do you think students give to these two expressions of language in the acquisition of [the nominated language]? Do you think students prefer Grammar to be taught in [the nominated language] or in English? And Culture?	Open-ended

Research question	Response options
Q27. In which language do you teach grammar? And do you believe culture should be taught in English or in the second language?	Open-ended
Q28. Which of the following activities do you think engages your students the most to speak in class? A. Oral presentations B. Interviews one on one between peers C. Interviews one on one with teacher D. Small group discussions E. In class debates F. Everyday conversation G. Role plays H. Scenarios	Open discussion
Q29. Do you think male students are more engaged to speak in your language class than female students?	Open-ended
Q30. Would you like to add anything else?	Open-ended

Appendix L: Student interview biodata

Biodata from demographic questionnaire - Student Interviews May to June 2012 Project Thesis Eleonora Quijada Cervoni

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Age bracket	Language level studied	Participant's L1	Nationality	Do you speak any other languages besides the one you are studying?	Length of time spent studying the L2 (including high school)	Travelled in the last 2 years to the country where L2 is spoken?	Currently living with someone who speaks the L2?	Attended conversation group in the last 12 months?	Personality Trait Category
Language: FRENCH											
1 Jacquie S76	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	3	no	no	yes	B
2 Maria S78	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	British/Aust.	no	4	yes	no	yes	C
3 Louis S79	M	22 - 25	Continuing	English	Singaporean	yes	2	no	no	yes	C
4 Alexia S81	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	6	yes	no	no	C
5 Arthur S83	M	18 - 21	Intermediate	Chinese	Chinese	yes	6	no	no	no	B
6 Constance S86	F	18 - 21	Continuing	Chinese	Chinese	yes	2	no	no	no	B
7 Fiola S95	F	18 - 21	Continuing	German	German/Aust.	yes	5	no	no	no	C
8 Tushi S96	F	18 - 21	Introductory	English	Singaporean	yes	2	no	yes	no	C
9 Nico S108	M	18 - 21	Continuing	Chinese	Malaysian	yes	2	no	no	yes	B
10 Robina S7	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	4	no	no	yes	A
11 Kim S13	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Sth Korean/Aust.	no	4	yes	no	no	A
12 Mary S14	F	16 - 17	Continuing	English	Australian	no	11	yes	no	no	B
13 Bec S21	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	5	yes	no	yes	B
14 Sam S27	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	4	no	yes	yes	B
15 Matt S33	M	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Danish/British	no	4	yes	no	yes	A
16 Moi S45	F	22 - 25	Introductory	Chinese	Chinese	yes	2	no	no	no	B
17 Estefania S51	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	2	yes	no	yes	C
18 Katalina S59	F	22 - 25	Continuing	English	Australian	no	5	no	no	no	B
19 Cornelia S60	F	22 - 25	Intermediate	Chinese	Chinese	yes	3	no	no	yes	C
20 Josefina S62	F	22 - 25	Continuing	Chinese	Malaysian	yes	2	no	no	yes	B
21 Rina S66	F	22 - 25	Continuing	Chinese	Malaysian	yes	2	no	no	yes	B
22 Lianne S67	F	18 - 21	Continuing	Vietnamese	Vietnamese/Aust.	yes	3	yes	no	yes	C
23 Catherine S68	F	18 - 21	Intermediate	English	Australian	no	3	yes	no	yes	B
24 Petra S64	F	40+	Continuing	English	Australian	no	3	no	no	no	C
25 Roberto S69	M	22 - 25	Intermediate	English	British/Aust.	yes	6	no	no	yes	A
26 Felipe S70	M	18 - 21	Continuing	Slovene	Slovenian/Aust.	yes	4	yes	yes	yes	A
27 Monique S73	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	British (Scottish)	yes	2	yes	no	yes	A

#	Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Age bracket	Language level studied	Participant's L1	Nationality	Do you speak any other languages besides the one you are studying?	Length of time spent studying the L2 (including high school)	Travelled in the last 2 years to the country where L2 is spoken?	Currently living with someone who speaks the L2?	Attended conversation group in the last 12 months?	Personality Trait Category
Language: SPANISH												
1	Jeremia S16	M	18 - 21	Continuing	French	French	yes	2	yes	no	no	B
2	Lisa S17	F	18 - 21	Continuing	Russian	Russian/Aust.	yes	6	yes	no	yes	B
3	Noemi S31	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	yes	2	no	no	yes	A
4	Jose S39	M	18 - 21	Advanced	English	Zimbabwean/Aust.	yes	4	yes	no	yes	B
5	Elena S52	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	2	no	no	yes	B
6	Lucia S57	F	22 - 25	Advanced	English	Australian	no	6	yes	no	no	A
7	Eulalia S63	F	22 - 25	Intermediate	Korean	Korean	yes	3	yes	no	yes	B
8	Sara S65	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	2	no	no	yes	A
9	Raul S75	M	18 - 21	Advanced	English	Australian	no	3	yes	yes	no	B
Language: GERMAN												
1	Anna S88	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	4	yes	no	no	B
2	James S10	M	22 - 25	Intermediate	English	Australian	no	3	no	no	no	B
3	Vladimir S11	M	18 - 21	Intermediate/	English	Australian	yes	6	no	no	no	B
4	Magda S35	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	yes	2	no	no	no	B
5	Kate S37	F	18 - 21	Continuing	Russian	Russian	yes	2	no	no	yes	A
6	Daniel S53	M	18 - 21	Intermediate	English	Australian	yes	2	no	no	yes	A
Language: ITALIAN												
1	Jack S9	M	22 - 25	Continuing	English	Australian	yes	2	no	no	yes	A
2	Giovanna S15	F	18 - 21	Intermediate	English	Australian	yes	3	yes	no	no	B
3	Alicia S46	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	no	2	no	no	yes	A
4	Laura S61	F	18 - 21	Intermediate	English	Irish/Australian	yes	6	no	no	no	B
5	Piera S74	F	18 - 21	Continuing	English	Australian	yes	2	no	no	no	C

Students of:		
French	27	**57%**
Spanish	9	19%
Sub-total	*36*	77%
German	6	13%
Italian	5	11%
Sub-total	*11*	23%
Total students	**47**	**100%**

Female	**72%**
Male	28%
	100%

Age range:	
16-17	2%
18-21	**70%**
22-25	26%
40+	2%
	100%

Participants' L1:	
English	**70%**
Chinese	15%
Other	15%
	100%

Level enrolled:		
Introductory	2	4%
Continuing	32	**68%**
Intermediate	10	21%
Advanced	3	6%
	47	100%

Questions:			Yes	No
1	Do you speak any other languages besides the one you are studying?		**58%**	42%
2	Did you Travel in the last 2 years to the country where the L2 is spoken?		40%	**60%**
3	Are you currently living with someone who speaks the L2?		9%	**91%**
4	Have you attended conversation groups in the last 12 months?		**57%**	43%
5	Personality Trait Category		%	
	A:	*I am a person who normally likes to talk a lot, and who is not embarrassed to speak in class in the language I am learning.*	28%	
	B:	*I am a person who normally likes to talk a lot, but in class I do not speak that often in the language that I am learning.*	51%	
	C:	*I am normally a more reserved person who does not talk a lot, and I rather listen in class than speak in the language I am learning.*	21%	
			100%	

Appendix M: Teacher interview biodata

Biodata from demographic questionnaire – Teacher Interviews August to November 2012 **Project Thesis Eleonora Quijada Cervoni**

Note: for privacy reasons, some of the demographic information collected has been excluded from this table

	Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Age bracket	Do you speak any other languages besides English and the language you teach?	Education/Experience/Training in Second Language Teaching or related field	Is this your first year teaching a language at this university?	Do you hold/ participate in conversation groups for students?
1	Carla T1	F	49 - 58	yes	DipEd, MA and PhD in linguistics & many workshops in general education and culture & language teaching	no	no
2	Mathilde T2	F	39 - 48	no	MA in L2 as a second language and many years of experience teaching at tertiary level	no	no
3	Edward T3	M	49 - 58	no	Graduate Diploma in Teaching and Evaluation & PhD in Linguistics	no	no
4	Maria T4	F	39 - 48	no	MA in L2 and English Literature and Language. Two years of teacher training & many years experience in language teaching	no	no
5	Michelle T5	F	39 - 48	no	MA and PhD in Applied Linguistics. Five years training as an EFL teacher	no	no
6	Pilar T6	F	?	no	MA in Linguistics. Training for tutors and many workshops on teaching	no	no
7	Josephine T7	F	49 - 58	no	MA in L2 Language and Literature, and PhD in Linguistics. Many years of L2 teaching experience	no	no
8	Kristina T8	F	29 - 38	no	BCA in Creative Writing, and PhD in English with a focus on L2 Literature. L2 Teaching experience at tertiary level	no	no
9	Flor T9	F	49 - 58	no	DipEd & Graduate Certificate in Higher Education, MA in […] Literature, and PhD in Applied Linguistics. Many years of experience teaching L2.	no	no
10	Bernadette T10	F	23 - 28	no	MA in L2 as a foreign language. Some pedagogy classes and some L2 teaching experience.	yes	yes
11	Claudia T11	F	49 - 58	yes	Graduate Certificate in Higher Education, MA in Languages, Translation and Interpretation, and PhD in Linguistics. Many years experience of L2 teaching.	no	no
12	Ursula T12	F	39 - 48	no	MA in Education and PhD in Applied Linguistics. Many years of experience teaching L2 in both Secondary and Tertiary Level.	no	no
13	Victor T13	M	49 - 58	no	MA and PhD in L2 Literature. Some L2 teaching experience at both secondary and tertiary level	no	no
14	Sofia T14	F	39 - 48	no	Many years of experience teaching the L2 at Tertiary Level	no	no

Teachers of:		
French	4	29%
Spanish	5	36%
Sub-total	*9*	64%
German	3	21%
Italian	2	14%
Sub-total	*5*	36%
Total teachers	**14**	**100%**

Participants’ L1:	
English	7%
French	22%
Spanish	36%
German	21%
Italian	14%
	100%

Female	**86%**
Male	14%

Age range:	
23 - 28	7%
29 - 38	7%
39 - 48	36%
49 - 58	**43%**
Unknown	7%

Appendix N: Student Engagement to *Speak* survey

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT *TO SPEAK* IN A LANGUAGE CLASS (SEtSiLANG) SURVEY 2013

PARTICIPANTS: 388 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS FROM
LANGUAGE COURSES: FRENCH, GERMAN, ITALIAN, SPANISH
LEVELS: INTRODUCTORY, CONTINUING, INTERMEDIATE, ADVANCED

Research Questions	Response options
Q1. What is your gender?	1. Female 2. Male
Q2. What is your age?	1. 16 to 17 2. 18 to 21 3. 22 to 25 4. 26 to 29 5. 20 to 40 6. 41 or older
Q3. Is English your native language?	1. Yes 2. No
Q4. What language do you mainly speak at home?	1. English 2. Chinese 3. Other (please specify)
Q5. Does anyone in your household currently speak the language(s) you are studying?	1. Yes 2. No
Q6. How many languages do you speak fluently?	1. English 2. Chinese 3. Japanese 4. Spanish 5. French 6. German 7. Italian 8. Other (please specify)
Q7. In the last two years, have you travelled to a country where the language you are studying is spoken?	1. Yes 2. No
Q8. Is this your 1st year at this university?	1. Yes 2. No
Q9. Is this your 1st year in a language class at this university?	1. Yes 2. No
Q10. In the past 12 months, have you attended a conversation club/group—outside class time—where you have been able to practise the language(s) you are learning?	1. Yes 2. No
Q11. If you attended a conversation group in the past 12 months, how often did you attend this semester?	1. As often as possible 2. Almost every week 3. Once or twice a month 4. Rarely 5. I wish I had more time to attend 6. Other (please specify)
Q12. What is your major?	Open ended

Research Questions	Response options
Q13. Which of the following statements best describes your personality?	1. I like to talk a lot and I am engaged to speak in class in the L2 2. I like to talk a lot but I am not engaged to speak in class in the L2 3. I am more reserved and I prefer to listen in class rather than speak in the L2
Q14. Overall, how would you rate your experience of learning a language at ANU?	1. Extremely rewarding 2. Very rewarding 3. Somewhat rewarding 4. Not very rewarding 5. Not at all rewarding
Q15. What languages are you currently studying?	French (1. Intro 2. Cont 3. Inter 4. Adva) German (5. Intro 6. Cont 7. Inter 8. Adva) Italian (9. Intro 10. Cont 11. Inter 12. Adva) Spanish (13. Intro 14. Cont 15. Inter 16. Adva) 17. Other level or other language (please specify)
Q16. How engaged are you in your current language class this semester?	1. Very much 2. Quite a lot 3. So so 4. Not really 5. Not at all
Q17. How engaged are you in your other courses (other than languages) this semester?	1. Very much 2. Quite a lot 3. So so 4. Not really 5. Not at all
Q18. Is there anything different about your engagement to speak in your language class(es) this semester compared to last semester?	Open-ended
Q19. Would you like to add any comments about your engagement to speak in your language classes this semester?	Open-ended

Research Questions	Response options
Q20, 22-24, 26, 27, 31, 32 & 36. What ENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK in your language class in the language you are learning? A relevant topic that works for you - Everyday life happening and issues as class content - A safe class environment - A feeling of being amongst friends - When you are having fun in class - The teacher's personality - If your teacher talked less in class - If you knew your teacher was listening to what you were saying and not just listening for your mistakes - If you didn't feel as being assessed all the time, even when it is not an assessment	1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree not disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Q21, 25, 29, 33-35 & 37. What DISENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK in your language class in the language you are learning? A topic you are not familiar with - If you don't have anything in common with the person you are supposed to be talking to - The teacher's personality - The fact that other students are a higher level than you (in terms of competence in the spoken language) - You feel silly and embarrassed in front of your classmates - You are normally a shy person - You rarely get the opportunity to speak in class	1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree not disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Q28. Can you describe a TEACHER'S PERSONALITY THAT ENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK IN CLASS?	Open-ended
Q30. Can you describe a TEACHER'S PERSONALITY THAT DISENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK IN CLASS?	Open-ended
Q38. Would you be MORE ENGAGED TO SPEAK IN CLASS if every language course had a dedicated oral module, i.e. one or two hours a week dedicated mostly to speaking in the L2?	1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree not disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Q39. Which of the following TOPICS makes you want to ENGAGE TO SPEAK IN CLASS in the language you are learning? - Culture and the arts - History and politics - Language and grammar - Everyday conversation and colloquial expressions - Literature: extracts, novels, poems, and other readings	Ranking from 1=the most engaging topic to speak in class to 5=the least engaging topic to speak in class in the L2
Q40. Which of the following ENGAGES YOU THE MOST TO SPEAK IN YOUR LANGUAGE CLASS? - Your own motivation to learn the language - The teacher's non-intimidating and caring personality - The camaraderie in class with other students - A relaxed and fun atmosphere in class - An interesting cultural or historical topic - A class where every day colloquial expressions are learnt and practised	Ranking from 1=the most engaging to speak in class to 6=the least engaging to speak in class in the L2

Research Questions	Response options
Q41. Which one of these statements represents the MOST DISENGAGING situation of all for you TO SPEAK IN CLASS in the language you are learning? - When I am exposed to the whole class - When I feel silly and embarrassed in front of my peers - When I feel uncomfortable speaking the language in front of others - When I feel I have nothing to say because I am not interested in the topic - When I feel I have nothing to say because I have nothing in common with the person sitting next to me - When I feel there are some student above the level of the class who should not be in my class - When I feel the teacher does not really care about what I have to say - When the teacher is too intimidating, i.e. too strict and serious	Choose only one response: the MOST DISENGAGING situation of all TO SPEAK IN CLASS
Q42. What do you consider to be the most accurate definition of an ENGAGING TEACHER, i.e. a teacher who engages you to speak in the language class? - A teacher who has a wealth of knowledge in the subject - A teacher who genuinely cares about the students' needs - A teacher who has the ability to make the class fun - A teacher who has a vast experience in teaching - Other (please give your own definition)	Choose only one response: the MOST ACCURATE DEFINITION OF AN ENGAGING TEACHER
Q43. What do you consider to be the most conducive class environment to ENGAGE YOU TO SPEAK IN YOUR LANGUAGE CLASS? - A class with a relaxed atmosphere - A fun and enjoyable class - A well-structured traditional class - A class where you feel safe and amongst friends - A class where everyone is speaking the language you are learning - A class where there is less distance between the teacher and the students	Choose only one response: the MOST ENGAGING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT
Q44. To what extent do you find the following class activities ENGAGING TO SPEAK IN CLASS? - Small group discussions in class (2 or 3 students) - Grammar exercises done and discussed in class - Fun oral drills practised in class - Practical (not necessarily fun) oral drills practised in class - Textbook exercises - Reading assignments discussed in class - Whole class discussions over a topic I like - Whole class discussions over a topic I am not really interested in	1. Extremely engaging 2. Very engaging 3. Somewhat engaging 4. Not very engaging 5. Not at all engaging

Research Questions	Response options
Q45. Which of the following statements is the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? - Because of my family origins - Because I intend to travel to the country where this language is spoken - Because I am interested in the culture and I would like to know more about it - Because I would like to be able to speak this language - Because it is a requirement for my studies - Because I think it is cool! - Other (please specify)	Choose only one response: the MAIN REASON why you are studying this/these language(s)
Q46. Could you please tell me - in order of importance - what you would like to be able to do with the language(s) you are studying? - Read books and articles in the L2 - Learn about the culture and appreciate it even more when I know the L2 - Communicate in the L2 and speak with people who can also speak that language - Write in the L2 - Understand other speakers of the L2	Ranking from 1=the most important skill to 5=the least important skill
Q47. Which aspect of the language study do you enjoy the most? - Learning about the grammar - Learning about the culture - Acquiring listening skills - Reading in the language - Speaking in the language - Writing in the language	Ranking from 1=the most enjoyable skill to 5=the least enjoyable skill
Q48. Are you attending or have you attended in the past 2 years, the following conversation clubs/groups? - Cercle français de conversation (King O'Malley's) - The French Collectif - The Spanish Club - The German Conversation Club - Other (please specify)	1. Yes 2. No
Q49. How often do you attend one or more of the above conversation clubs?	1. Almost every week 2. Every other week 3. At least once a month 4. Every now and then 5. Very rarely
Q50. Do you find it easier to speak in the language(s) you are learning in the conversation groups than in class?	1. Yes 2. No
Q51. Could you please tell us what engages you to speak in the language you are learning in that informal environment?	Open-ended

Research Questions	Response options
Q52. Why do you find it easier - if you do - to speak in the informal environment (the pub or conversation group) as opposed to the formal environment (the language classroom)? - Because I can have a drink or two. - Because I feel safe and amongst friends - Because the lights are dimmed and I do not feel so exposed - Because everyone is speaking in the target language - Because the conversation topics are not as boring as those in class - Because it is more relaxed and I don't feel as I am being assessed all the time - Other (please specify)	Choose only one response: the MAIN REASON why you find it easier to speak in the L2 in an informal environment
Q53. Would you be more engaged to speak in class if the ORAL language class was held in a more informal environment such as in the lawn outdoors or at a café?	1. Absolutely 2. Perhaps 3. Not sure 4. Not really 5. Not at all
Q54. Would you like it if MORE TIME WAS DEDICATED TO THE PRACTICE OF THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE in the language class?	1. Yes 2. No
Q55. Is there anything else you would like to add to this survey in terms of what engages you to speak in a language class?	Open-ended

Appendix O: Student Engagement to *Speak* survey responses

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT *TO SPEAK* IN A LANGUAGE CLASS (SEtSiLANG) SURVEY 2013

PARTICIPANTS: 388 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS FROM
LANGUAGE COURSES: FRENCH, GERMAN, ITALIAN, SPANISH
LEVELS: INTRODUCTORY, CONTINUING, INTERMEDIATE, ADVANCED

Research questions	Key results (percentages)
Q1. What is your gender?	1. Female (69%) 2. Male (31%)
Q2. What is your age?	1. 16 to 17 2. 18 to 21 (78%) 3. 22 to 25 4. 26 to 29 5. 20 to 40 6. 41 or older
Q3. Is English your native language?	1. Yes (85%) 2. No
Q4. What language do you mainly speak at home?	1. English (86%) 2. Chinese (4%) 3. Other (please specify)
Q5. Does anyone in your household currently speak the language(s) you are studying at this university?	1. Yes 2. No (80%)
Q6. How many languages do you speak fluently?	1. English (98%) 2. Chinese (7%) 3. Japanese (2%) 4. Spanish (5%) 5. French (10%) 6. German (7%) 7. Italian (3%) 8. Other (please specify)
Q7. In the last two years, have you travelled to a country where the language you are studying is spoken?	1. Yes 2. No (58%)
Q8. Is this your 1st year at this university?	1. Yes 2. No (57%)
Q9. Is this your 1st year in a language class at this university?	1. Yes (53%) 2. No
Q10. In the past 12 months, have you attended a conversation club/group—outside class time—where you have been able to practise the language(s) you are learning?	1. Yes **(34%)** 2. No (66%)
Q11. If you attended a conversation group in the past 12 months, how often did you attend this semester?	1. As often as possible 2. Almost every week 3. Once or twice a month 4. Rarely 5. I wish I had more time to attend (36%) 6. Other (please specify)
Q12. What is your major?	Open-ended

Research questions	Key results (percentages)
Q13. Which of the following statements best describes your personality?	1. I like to talk a lot and I am engaged to speak in class in the L2 (29%) 2. I like to talk a lot but I am not engaged to speak in class in the L2 **(43%)** 3. I am more reserved and I prefer to listen in class rather than speak in the L2 (28%)
Q14. Overall, how would you rate your experience of learning a language at this university?	1. Extremely rewarding 2. Very rewarding (56%) 3. Somewhat rewarding (28%) 4. Not very rewarding 5. Not at all rewarding
Q15. What languages are you currently studying?	French (1. Intro 2. Cont 3. Inter 4. Adv) German (5. Intro 6. Cont 7. Inter 8. Adv) Italian (9. Intro 10. Cont 11. Inter 12. Adv) Spanish (13. Intro 14. Cont 15. Inter 16. Adv) 17. Other level or other language (please specify)
Q16. How engaged are you in your current language class this semester?	1. Very much 2. Quite a lot (45%) 3. So so (30%) 4. Not really 5. Not at all
Q17. How engaged are you in your other courses (other than languages) this semester?	1. Very much 2. Quite a lot (49%) 3. So so (32%) 4. Not really 5. Not at all
Q18. Is there anything different about your engagement to speak in your language class(es) this semester compared to last semester?	Open-ended
Q19. Would you like to add any comments about your engagement to speak in your language classes this semester?	Open-ended

Research questions	Key results (percentages)
Q20, 22-24, 26, 27, 31, 32 & 36. What ENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK in your language class in the language you are learning? - **Q20 A relevant topic that works for you (87%)** - Q22 Everyday life happening and issues as class content - Q23 A safe class environment - Q24 A feeling of being amongst friends - **Q26 When you are having fun in class (93%)** - **Q27 The teacher's personality (92%)** - Q31 If your teacher talked less in class - Q32 If you knew your teacher was listening to what you were saying and not just listening for your mistakes - Q36 If you didn't feel as being assessed all the time, even when it is not an assessment	**1. Strongly agree** **2. Agree** 3. Neither agree not disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Q21, 25, 29, 33-35 & 37. What DISENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK in your language class in the language you are learning? - **Q21 A topic you are not familiar with (62%)** - Q25 If you don't have anything in common with the person you are supposed to be talking to - **Q29 The teacher's personality (75%)** - **Q33 The fact that other students are a higher level than you (in terms of competence in the spoken language) (65%)** - Q34 You feel silly and embarrassed in front of your classmates - Q35 You are normally a shy person - Q37 You rarely get the opportunity to speak in class	**1. Strongly agree** **2. Agree** 3. Neither agree not disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Q28. Can you describe a TEACHER'S PERSONALITY THAT ENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK IN CLASS?	Open-ended
Q30. Can you describe a TEACHER'S PERSONALITY THAT DISENGAGES YOU TO SPEAK IN CLASS?	Open-ended
Q38. Would you be MORE ENGAGED TO SPEAK IN CLASS if every language course had a dedicated oral module, i.e. one or two hours a week dedicated mostly to speaking in the L2? - **Strongly agree & agree (71%)**	1. Strongly agree (25%) 2. Agree (46%) 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Disagree (7%) 5. Strongly disagree (1%)
Q39. Which of the following TOPICS makes you want to ENGAGE TO SPEAK IN CLASS in the language you are learning? - Culture and the arts - History and politics - Language and grammar - **Everyday conversation and colloquial expressions (48%)** - Literature: extracts, novels, poems, and other readings-	**1. Extremely engaging** 2. Engaging 3. Somewhat engaging 4. Not engaging 5. Not at all engaging
Q40. Which of the following ENGAGES YOU THE MOST TO SPEAK IN YOUR LANGUAGE CLASS? - Your own motivation to learn the language - The teacher's non-intimidating and caring personality - The camaraderie in class with other students - **A relaxed and fun atmosphere in class (43%=Rank 1)** - An interesting cultural or historical topic - A class where every day colloquial expressions are learnt and practised	Ranking from 1=the most engaging to speak in class to 6=the least engaging to speak in class in the L2

Research questions	Key results (percentages)
Q41. Which one of these statements represents the MOST DISENGAGING situation of all for you TO SPEAK IN CLASS in the language you are learning? - When I am exposed to the whole class (17%) - When I feel silly and embarrassed in front of my peers - When I feel uncomfortable speaking the language in front of others - When I feel I have nothing to say because I am not interested in the topic (17%) - When I feel I have nothing to say because I have nothing in common with the person sitting next to me - When I feel there are some student above the level of the class who should not be in my class (13%) - When I feel the teacher does not really care about what I have to say - **When the teacher is too intimidating, i.e. too strict and serious (21%)**	Choose only one response: the **MOST DISENGAGING situation of all TO SPEAK IN CLASS**
Q42. What do you consider to be the most accurate definition of an ENGAGING TEACHER, i.e. a teacher who engages you to speak in the language class? - A teacher who has a wealth of knowledge in the subject - A teacher who genuinely cares about the students' needs - **A teacher who has the ability to make the class fun (62%)** - A teacher who has a vast experience in teaching - Other (please give your own definition)	Choose only one response: the **MOST ACCURATE DEFINITION OF AN ENGAGING TEACHER**
Q43. What do you consider to be the most conducive class environment to ENGAGE YOU TO SPEAK IN YOUR LANGUAGE CLASS? - **A class with a relaxed atmosphere (34%)** - A fun and enjoyable class (27%) - A well-structured traditional class - A class where you feel safe and amongst friends - A class where everyone is speaking the language you are learning - A class where there is less distance between the teacher and the students	Choose only one response: the **MOST ENGAGING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**
Q44. To what extent do you find the following class activities ENGAGING TO SPEAK IN CLASS? - Small group discussions in class (2 or 3 students) (41%) - Grammar exercises done and discussed in class - Fun oral drills practised in class (45%) - Practical (not necessarily fun) oral drills practised in class - Textbook exercises - Reading assignments discussed in class - **Whole class discussions over a topic I like (53%)** - Whole class discussions over a topic I am not really interested in	1. Extremely engaging **2. Very engaging** 3. Somewhat engaging 4. Not very engaging 5. Not at all engaging

Research questions	Key results (percentages)
Q45. Which of the following statements is the closest to your main reason for studying the language(s) you are studying now? - Because of my family origins (6%) - Because I intend to travel to the country where this language is spoken (15%) - Because I am interested in the culture and I would like to know more about it (9%) - **Because I would like to be able to speak this language (49%)** - Because it is a requirement for my studies (3%) - Because I think it is cool! (5%) - Other (please specify) (13%)	Choose only one response: the **MAIN REASON** why you are studying this/these language(s)
Q46. Could you please tell me - in order of importance - what you would like to be able to do with the language(s) you are studying? - Read books and articles in the L2 - Learn about the culture and appreciate it even more when I know the L2 - **Communicate in the L2 and speak with people who can also speak that language (74%=Rank 1)** - Write in the L2 - Understand other speakers of the L2	Ranking from 1=the most important skill to 5=the least important skill
Q47. Which aspect of the language study do you enjoy the most? - Learning about the grammar (18%) - Learning about the culture (18%) - Acquiring listening skills (7%) - Reading in the language (12%) - **Speaking in the language (41%=Rank 1)** - Writing in the language (4%)	Ranking from 1=the most enjoyable skill to 5=the least enjoyable skill
Q48. Are you attending or have you attended in the past 2 years, the following conversation clubs/groups? - Cercle Français de Conversation (King O'Malley's) - The French Collectif - The Spanish Club - The German Conversation Club - Other (please specify)	**1. Yes (34%)** 2. No (66%)
Q49. How often do you attend one or more of the above conversation clubs?	Almost every week (15%) Every other week (6%) At least once a month (10%) Every now and then (23%) Very rarely (46%)
Q50. Do you find it easier to speak in the language(s) you are learning in the conversation groups than in class?	**1. Yes (69%)** 2. No
Q51. Could you please tell us what engages you to speak in the language you are learning in that informal environment?	Open ended

Research questions	Key results (percentages)
Q52. Why do you find it easier - if you do - to speak in the informal environment (the pub or conversation group) as opposed to the formal environment (the language classroom)? - Because I can have a drink or two. (13%) - Because I feel safe and amongst friends (14%) - Because the lights are dimmed and I do not feel so exposed (3%) - Because everyone is speaking in the target language (20%) - Because the conversation topics are not as boring as those in class (6%) - **Because it is more relaxed and I don't feel as I am being assessed all the time (33%)** - Other (please specify) (11%)	Choose only one response: the **MAIN REASON** why you find it easier to speak in the L2 in an informal environment
Q53. Would you be more engaged to speak in class if the ORAL language class was held in a more informal environment such as in the lawn outdoors or at a café?	1. Absolutely **(20%)** 2. Perhaps **(38%)** 3. Not sure (16%) 4. Not really (19%) 5. Not at all (7%)
Q54. Would you like it if MORE TIME WAS DEDICATED TO THE PRACTICE OF THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE in the language class?	**1. Yes (78%)** 2. No
Q55. Is there anything else you would like to add to this survey in terms of what engages you to speak in a language class?	Open ended

Appendix P: Survey encouragement to complete

EXAMPLE OF SURVEY MESSAGES SENT TO 784 LANGUAGE STUDENTS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO RESPOND TO THE SURVEY

FIRST MESSAGE SENT 27 APRIL 2013

¡Hola! Hello! Bonjour! Buongiorno! Wie Geht's?

My name is Eleonora, a postgraduate student at ANU. We have probably already met in one of the language classes at [name of university]… As part of my PhD in applied linguistics, I am doing a research project on "What engages students to speak in a language class". You are studying a language at [name of university], so I would love to have your opinion.

This general survey is another step closer to my goal; therefore, I genuinely appreciate your time, your valuable feedback, and your participation. The questionnaire is anonymous, and it will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. Please answer all the questions below frankly and spontaneously.

Note: For those of you, who came to an interview last semester, I would really like it if you answer this survey as well.

A million thanks! Muchas gracias! Merci! Mille grazie! Vielen dank!

FOURTH AND LAST MESSAGE SENT 14 JUNE 2013

Hello! Anybody there?

I really need your help! This is the fourth - and last - time that I send this message to you! If you are reading this, it is because you have not responded to my survey. I know it is the end of the semester, but I do not have enough responses yet to be able to use the data effectively to support my findings. I am a student like you, so please give me a hand here! Please take 15 minutes of your time in the next couple of days, and answer the survey.

My research project is on "What engages students to speak in a language class". ***It is your opinion that I am after! It is your opinion that counts in my research!***

I honestly do need your feedback, and I appreciate your time and participation. The questionnaire is anonymous.

I will be happy to share the findings with you if you are interested (send me an e-mail at Eleonora.quijada@anu.edu.au).

¡Muchas gracias! Merci! Mille grazie! Vielen dank!

Appendix Q: Survey Q46. What do you want to be able to do with the language(s) you are studying?

SURVEY: What Engages Students to Speak in a Language Class (388 respondents) ***by Eleonora Quijada Cervoni - Sem 1, 2013.***

Q46. In order of importance, could you please tell me what do you want to be able to do with the languages(s) you are studying? Please rank your answers from 1 (the most important) to 5 (the least important).

Category choices: Read books & articles (**Reading**); Learn about the culture and appreciate it (**Culture**); Communicate with people & speak (**Speaking**); Write in the language (**Writing**); Understand other speakers of the language (**Understanding**).

Rating scale: From 1/the most important to 5/the least important.

	FRENCH (157 respondents)				SPANISH (109 respondents)				GERMAN (72 respondents)				ITALIAN (25 respondents)			
MOST IMPORTANT (1)	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv
Speaking	67%	**81%**	71%	76%	83%	74%	87%	89%	68%	72%	65%	78%	70%	67%	50%	50%
Understanding																50%
Observation: All students rated Speaking as the most important in terms of what they want to do with the L2.					*Note: See the very high percentage of students who selected Speaking as "most important" for this language!*								*Note: The same number of Advanced students of German, find Speaking and Understanding the most important.*			

	FRENCH				SPANISH				GERMAN				ITALIAN			
2ND MOST IMPORTANT (2)	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv
Understanding	48%	60%	54%	71%	70%	55%	60%	67%	61%	61%	41%	56%	60%	67%	50%	
Culture															50%	50%
Reading																50%
Observation: All students -except for Advanced Italian - rated Understanding as the 2nd most important skill in terms of what they want to do with the L2.													*Note: Intermediate students of German find Understanding and Culture the 2nd most important. Advanced students find Culture and Reading the 2nd most important.*			

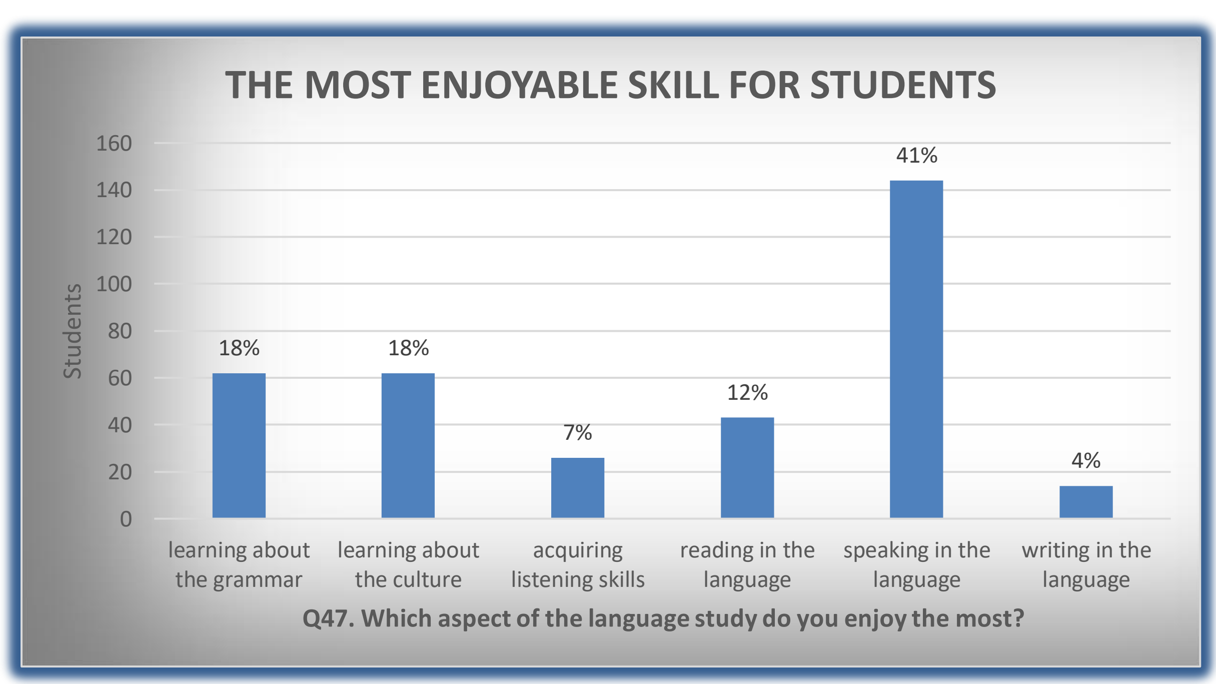
	FRENCH				SPANISH				GERMAN				ITALIAN			
LEAST IMPORTANT (5)	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv	Intro	Cont	Interm	Adv
Writing		43%	35%	38%	37%	45%	53%	56%			47%	33%	30%			
Reading									39%	39%			30%	44%		50%
Culture	**54%**			38%	37%							33%	30%			50%
Speaking															50%	
Observation: In most cases, students seem to be less interested in Writing and Reading. In some cases, Culture was ranked as the least important. And for students of Intermediate Italian, Speaking is the least important skill in terms of what they want to do with the L2.	*Note: Introductory students of French find Culture the least important.*				*Note: The same number of Introductory students of Spanish find Writing and Culture the least important. NOTE: A very high 78% of students of Advanced Spanish rated Reading as their #4 choice in terms of importance! (#5 is the least important rating)*				*Note: The same number of students of Advanced German find Writing and Culture the least important.*				*Note: The same number of students of Introductory Italian find Writing, Reading and Culture the least important. The same number of students of Advanced Italian find Reading and Culture the least important. INTERESTING: Intermediate students of Italian find Speaking the least important!!*			

Example 1:	Students of Continuing French who gave Speaking a ranking of 1 (most important)	81%
	Students of Continuing French who gave Speaking a ranking of 2	5%
	Students of Continuing French who gave Speaking a ranking of 3	10%
	Students of Continuing French who gave Speaking a ranking of 4	2%
	Students of Continuing French who gave Speaking a ranking of 5 (least important)	2%
		100%
Example 2:	Students of Introductory French who gave Culture a ranking of 1 (most important)	2%
	Students of Introductory French who gave Culture a ranking of 2	7%
	Students of Introductory French who gave Culture a ranking of 3	13%
	Students of Introductory French who gave Culture a ranking of 4	24%
	Students of Introductory French who gave Culture a ranking of 5 (least important)	54%
		100%
Example 3:	Students of Advanced Spanish who gave Reading a ranking of 1 (most important)	11%
	Students of Advanced Spanish who gave Reading a ranking of 2	0%
	Students of Advanced Spanish who gave Reading a ranking of 3	11%
	Students of Advanced Spanish who gave Reading a ranking of 4	78%
	Students of Advanced Spanish who gave Reading a ranking of 5 (least important)	0%
		100%

Note: In order to better understand this table, it is necessary to look at the graphs per language and per level, containing all the responses.

Appendix R: Survey Q47. Which aspect of the language study do you enjoy the most?

Q47. Which aspect of the language study do you enjoy the most? Please rank them in order of importance to you from 1 (the most enjoyable) to 6 (the least enjoyable).		
Answer Options	**The most enjoyable**	**Percentage**
learning about the grammar	62	18%
learning about the culture	62	18%
acquiring listening skills	26	7%
reading in the language	43	12%
speaking in the language	144	41%
writing in the language	14	4%
Total respondents	***351***	***100%***



Appendix S: Examples of selective coding and emerging categories

Excerpts of text transcribed from student interviews	Selective coding	Emerging categories
Q7. (Interviewer) Can you tell me 3 things that engage you to speak in class in (the nominated language)?		
When I am having fun. When I am interested in the conversation. That means I actually want to take part in it. If it is something I want to make a comment. If I feel I need to say something. (S9).	Having fun engages to speak; Having something to say; being interested in the topic.	• A fun environment • A relevant topic
Confidence in what you want to say. I find often that I would get through constructing a sentence in my head, and then I can't find the words or where the verb goes… Prompts from the teacher are always really good. (S10)	Being distressed about not finding the words; Expecting the teacher to help.	• Maximising confidence
The most important thing for me is for there to be an interesting question to answer. An interesting topic that you want to talk about, that engages me to talk a lot more. It also depends on the teacher. I am not entirely sure to explain how that happens, but I find that with certain teachers I feel more at ease speaking than with others. (S17)	Wanting to say something because you are interested; Feeling more empathy towards some teachers than others.	• A relevant topic • Teacher's personality
You don't want to feel like you are being judged. You want to feel comfortable. I think your peers are important and you have to feel comfortable with your classmates, and that they are not judging you either. (S33)	Fear of being judged; feeling comfortable engages to speak.	• Maximising confidence
Probably not a fear that the teacher will shut me down. Having an interesting subject matter or a topic we have fun talking about it. Enjoying a conversation and being in each other's company. (S7)	Fear that the teacher will shut her down; Having fun and talking about an interesting topic; Enjoying a conversation.	• Teacher's personality • A relevant topic • A fun environment
What engages me to speak is if I know the answer I will speak up. But if I am not too sure, I will keep quiet, just as not to embarrass myself in front of other people, I guess. In a language class, you are always afraid to make a mistake. It is not like maths, where it is either the right answer or the wrong answer. (S37)	Fear of being embarrassed; being afraid of making mistakes.	• A relevant topic • Maximising confidence
Informality, having a very informal setting. If it is just a conversation, it is much easier and much more fun. It means you are thinking constantly, rather than thinking just when you have questions. (S51)	Explaining how informality engages to speak; having fun engages to speak.	• Informality • A fun environment

Excerpts of text transcribed from student interviews	Selective coding	Emerging categories
If I know the teacher isn't going to correct me, but she or he is just trying to get me to speak, and not worry so much about the grammar. That engages me to speak, if I don't have to worry so much about my grammar, because that makes me lose my confidence. (S52)	Worrying about making grammar mistakes; losing self-confidence when worrying about mistakes.	• Maximising confidence
I think the relationship that the teacher builds with the students is really central to the process. So, if that relationship is more relaxed, more informal, sort of fun, then I think that encourages the students to speak more in class (S65)	Expressing the importance of the teacher role; engaging teacher-student relationships should be more relaxed, informal and fun.	• Teacher-student relationship • A relaxed, informal and fun environment
Definitely making things fun and enjoyable. There must be some emotional involvement so that you want to talk about it. (S69)	Making things fun and enjoyable; Expressing the importance of emotional involvement.	• A fun environment • Emotional involvement
If the topic we are talking about in the 'Tertulias', does not interest me, I can go the entire lesson without saying anything because the topic does not interest me. I also find that if the conversation is too formal and there is no humour, then that will not engage me to speak either (S75)	Expressing the importance of a relevant topic; expressing that formality and lack of humour are not engaging.	• A relevant topic • A fun environment
Q8. (Interviewer) Can you tell me 3 things that disengage or disaffect you to speak in class in (the nominated language)?		
People are incredibly nervous. Lack of confidence. Topics like the history of Germany disengage me totally (S10).	Having low confidence and irrelevant topics disengages.	• Lack of confidence • An irrelevant topic
When I am bored. I guess sometimes in classes we do sort of the same, like we do very similar topics and grammatical functions many many times. I feel less inclined to engage. That feeling of not doing it correctly. When you try to have a conversation, rather than just answering specific questions, I find it is good. (S17)	Complaining about boring repetitive class activities; Fear of making mistakes.	• Boredom • Lack of confidence

Excerpts of text transcribed from student interviews	Selective coding	Emerging categories
When you speak for the first time and the feedback you get from your teacher is quite negative. So, if you say something, and the teacher says “no, this is how you actually say it” and they don’t explain how and why. You are then very disinclined to try again, because you lost all confidence. When then are other people that speak better than you, that is also disengaging. There are always some people that are very confident and they should probably be a year ahead. So, you go, oh well, they are going to answer, so you just don’t bother. General lack of self-confidence. If you are naturally shy, and you normally don’t speak in tutorials, even in English, then in a different language it is even harder, it is like a whole new barrier. (S27)	Being discouraged by the teacher’s negative feedback; Losing the confidence to speak again; Having different class levels; Having low self-confidence.	• Maximising confidence
Not being familiar with the content. Not being prepared. It is kind of a collective laziness as well, because if you feel like you are responding all the time, they withdraw, and you think this lesson is moving very slowly, you see people not being motivated, it is like a vacuum of sucking each other’s motivation sometimes. Boredom will disengage me big time. Sometimes we are asked repetitive questions. Or very broad questions, like what do you think about this? I don’t think that that is a very constructive question. If I find the content boring, I tuned out for a few minutes. If you feel intimidated, you would be less disinclined to speak. (S31)	Not being familiar with the content; being bored; feeling intimidated.	• An unfamiliar topic • Boredom
When a teacher asks a question that is far too complex for me to answer in French. If the teacher seems a bit stern. I don’t want to make a mistake, because the teacher is going to get angry at me. If other people are doing so much better, and I haven’t prepared enough. I am going to look really stupid compared to them. (S7)	Lacking confidence in the topic; fear of making mistakes; perceiving different levels; fear of looking stupid.	• Maximising confidence
I find that if the teacher is explaining something and I find that there are one or two words that I don’t understand what they mean, then I won’t talk, because I think I am going to get this completely wrong and I am going to make the fool out of myself. Again if I don’t know what I am talking about in English, then I won’t speak in the language. (S35)	Fear of looking like a fool and making mistakes.	• Maximising confidence

Excerpts of text transcribed from student interviews	Selective coding	Emerging categories
When someone speaks better than me. That is definitely an issue for me. If I see a person that speaks better than me, and I am not quite there yet, I wouldn't be so confident. It is all about the mood. When I am not in the mood, like I am tired, I don't want to speak, and I am like I am going to sit here and wait till the end. When I am in that mood, maybe fun activities can make me speak, like in kindergarten or something. (S37)	Lacking in self-confidence; not being in the mood, although fun activities can engage to speak.	• Maximising confidence • A fun environment
When you feel like everyone else is fluent, and to try, you feel like you are stupid trying to go in a conversation. I feel like I am better off saying nothing, because I am going to sound like an idiot. (S46)	Feeling at a lower level of competence; Having a low self-confidence.	• Maximising confidence
If I have to worry about my grammar, I lose my confidence, and that disengages me from speaking in class. Depending on what students are in the class. If they are students who are very good at it, I normally want to say less, because I will feel embarrassed that they can understand my mistakes. (S52)	Fear of making grammatical mistakes; Feeling at a lower level.	• Maximising confidence
I suppose if the teacher is intimidating. Someone that would dismiss students 'comments without listening, or correct your language in a way that was derogatory or insulting. And made you feel bad about your language skills. (S53)	Being intimidated by the teacher's attitude.	• Teacher's personality
One of the worst experiences that I have had in speaking in language classes here at ANU with a particular teacher, I have done the advanced Spanish course twice, and in one of those, we had to do orals with short stories, and the teacher we had was really critical on how everyone spoke, to the point that by the end of the semester no one was speaking. If you made a grammatical error she would laugh at you, and immediately correct it, and tell people that that was wrong and that it sounded too simple like children. (S57)	Fear of making errors; Being discouraged by a very critical teacher that made fun of students!	• Teacher's personality
Politics. It is a topic I don't know about. It makes me angry. I want to learn French, not politics! (S60)	Being disengaged by a non-familiar and irrelevant topic.	• An irrelevant topic

Excerpts of text transcribed from student interviews	Selective coding	Emerging categories
Q20. (Interviewer) Do you think a "teacher's personality" can make a difference on whether you become engaged to speak in class or not?		
Yes. I think a teacher needs to be to a certain extent pushy, but at the same time they need to realise that a class is not just about learning the topic, it is about learning the language. So talking about the topic too much, from the students' point of view can be difficult. What is good is when a teacher uses personal stories, because you become interested in them and you get to know them. So, you think about them not just as a teacher, but as someone who is trying to share something with you. And obviously, if you don't like the teacher you will not want to talk to them. When they share personal information about their family or talk about their country, it is engaging once you know their personality. Once you know someone, you tend to want to respond to them, you want to please them. If you like someone, you want to be talking to them. (S15)	Choosing a relevant and personal topic; Identifying with the teacher.	• A relevant topic • Teacher's personality
Perhaps the teachers that engage more the students, they use more humour in class. Perhaps when there is more camaraderie between teachers and students, it is easier to engage in something that makes you vulnerable, like speaking a language that you don't know very well with someone who is not necessarily your peer, but who does not stand like very far away, and so when students feel like they can joke with the teacher for example, they feel more at ease to say something stupid in Spanish. (S17)	Creating a bond and a relaxing and fun environment; Creating an environment where students feel safe.	• Teacher-student relationship • A fun environment
Like if they are intimidating you are much less likely to want to speak. If you know they are going to make a correction immediately or if you feel like you will be shut down. If you already fear like what you are going to say is not right, it is much worse if you know someone is going to tell you it is terrible, it is so wrong. It is much harder if you have a teacher that is not as interested. You can clearly tell when a teacher is not interested, you can tell by their body language. Sometimes they would even say they are not interested! (S21)	Fear of speaking; Fear of making mistakes; Fear of teacher's reaction; Knowing when a teacher is not interested by their body language.	• Maximising confidence • Teacher's personality

Excerpts of text transcribed from student interviews	Selective coding	Emerging categories
When you meet a teacher, you know whether this is going to be good or not. A non-intimidating teacher points at students' mistakes in a polite way. The teacher has to be friendly, that is for sure. I personally—probably everyone does though—I prefer like funny teachers, one that makes jokes and everything. It just makes it more relaxed. And things sort of flow from there. When the pressure is put on the students to speak, you might not be able to engage them to speak though. That's why everyone speaks in French in the conversation club, but not in class. It is mystery to me. (S37)	Making up your mind since day 1; Preferring funny teachers; not being able to engage when you feel under pressure.	• Teacher's personality • Fun environment
I think that the teacher's personality and the class atmosphere are pretty much linked together. In one of my Spanish classes, the atmosphere is a lot tenser than in other classes, and people are less willing to talk, because of the teacher's personality quite often making corrections in the middle of what you are trying to say. (S52)	Attributing the responsibility to the teacher to create an engaging class atmosphere.	• Teacher's personality
Yes. You want to have a teacher who is prepared to have a laugh, who has a sense of humour, who doesn't take it too seriously, who can have a conversation and correct you without making you feel too embarrassed. Who talks about things that are of interest and is not challenging to understand. Who checks that you are keeping up as well. (S53)	Engaging with a teacher who is fun and does not make you feel embarrassed when you make a mistake; engaging with a relevant topic.	• Teacher's personality • A relevant topic
If the teacher is kind, it is always going to be easier to speak, because you are always vulnerable in a language class more so than in other classes. (S57)	Engaging with a kind teacher who makes you feel less vulnerable.	• A teacher's personality
For example, like you, if I sit there quietly and you encourage me to say something very friendly, not push me to do something, I will respond. Other teachers noticed that I sit there quietly, but they don't care about me. Other teachers will push me, and they will look at me all the time. I don't like it, because it makes me embarrassed (S60)	Engaging with the teacher who is friendly; feeling ignored; feeling embarrassed.	• Teacher's personality

Excerpts of text transcribed from student interviews	Selective coding	Emerging categories
Yes, if a teacher is friendly and does not make you feel embarrassed, it is much easier to feel confident and not be afraid of making mistakes. (S73)	Fear of making mistakes; Linking feeling confident to teacher's friendliness and not feeling embarrassed.	• Maximising confidence

Appendix T: Pilot feedback questionnaire 2010

PILOT FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE (N=50)
(FRENCH 2025, SEM 2, 2010)

As part of my doctorate degree in linguistics, I am doing a research project on "what engages students to speak in a language class". This "informal" questionnaire is a first step towards my goal.

I am genuinely appreciative of your feedback and participation.

So, what *engages* you the most to speak in French in class? Compare this semester's oral class to any other oral class you have attended in the past. *What made you tick?*

1. Do you feel that your speaking skills in French have improved this semester?
    a. **If yes, please continue.**
    b. If no, then thanks. That's all for now.

I. Open ended questions

2. According to your own experience, what happened in this class that contributed to your progress in speaking the target language?

3. Considering all aspects of your leaning experience in this class, what were the most beneficial strategies, situations, or facts that engaged you into producing the target-spoken language?

4. In your opinion, what makes a good and engaging language teacher in an oral class?

II. Multiple-choice questions

5. Which one of these aspects/elements is the most important for you to engage in language production in class (i.e. to speak in French)? (ONLY CIRCLE ONE, THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE)

    a. Your motivation to learn the language (16%)
    b. The teacher's non-intimidating personality (6%)
    c. The camaraderie in class with the other students (8%)
    d. The relaxed atmosphere in class created by the teacher's friendly personality (54%)
    e. The teacher's affective manner and empathy with the students (10%)
    f. The fact that you are an extroverted individual (4%)
    g. Other (please explain): (2%) (Some responses: the amount of preparation done before the class. If I have done my readings before the class).

6. Which one of these aspects/elements is the least important for you to engage in language production (i.e. to speak in French) in class? (ONLY CIRCLE ONE, THE LEAST IMPORTANT ONE)

    a. Your motivation to learn the language (6%)
    b. The teacher's non-intimidating personality (0%)
    c. The camaraderie in class with the other students (16%)
    d. The relaxed atmosphere in class created by the teacher's friendly personality (0%)
    e. The teacher's affective manner and empathy with the students (2%)
    f. The fact that you are an extroverted individual (72%)
    g. Other (please explain): (4%)

7. What do you consider is the most important characteristic of a “good” teacher (i.e. a teacher that makes a positive difference in your learning experience)? (PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING, IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, 1 BEING THE MOST IMPORTANT & 4 THE LEAST IMPORTANT)

RANK

a. ____ A teacher who has a wealth of knowledge on the subject
b. ____ A teacher who genuinely cares for the students’ needs
c. ____ A teacher who has the ability to make the class fun and enjoyable while the students are learning
d. ____ A teacher who has a vast experience (i.e. a mature teacher who has more experience in teaching than a younger one)

Results:

RANK 1

a. 12% A teacher who has a wealth of knowledge on the subject
b. 22% A teacher who genuinely cares for the students’ needs
c. 58% A teacher who has the ability to make the class fun and enjoyable while the students are learning
d. 8% A teacher who has a vast experience (i.e. a mature teacher who has more experience in teaching than a younger one)

RANK 4

a. 14% A teacher who has a wealth of knowledge on the subject
b. 10% A teacher who genuinely cares for the students’ needs
c. 4% A teacher who has the ability to make the class fun and enjoyable while the students are learning
d. 72% A teacher who has a vast experience (i.e. a mature teacher who has more experience in teaching than a younger one)

8. What do you consider is the most effective and the most conducive environment in a classroom to learn a foreign language (Oral skills)? (PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING, IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, 1 BEING THE MOST EFFECTIVE & CONDUCIVE & 5 THE LEAST EFFECTIVE & CONDUCIVE)

RANK

a. ____ A class where there is a relaxed atmosphere
b. ____ A fun and enjoyable class
c. ____ A class outside “the classroom walls”
d. ____ A well-structured traditional classroom
e. ____ A class where there is less distance between the teacher and the student

Results:

RANK 1

a. 56% A class where there is a relaxed atmosphere
b. 18% A fun and enjoyable class
c. 6% A class outside "the classroom walls"
d. 0% A well-structured traditional classroom
e. 20% A class where there is less distance between the teacher and the student

RANK 5

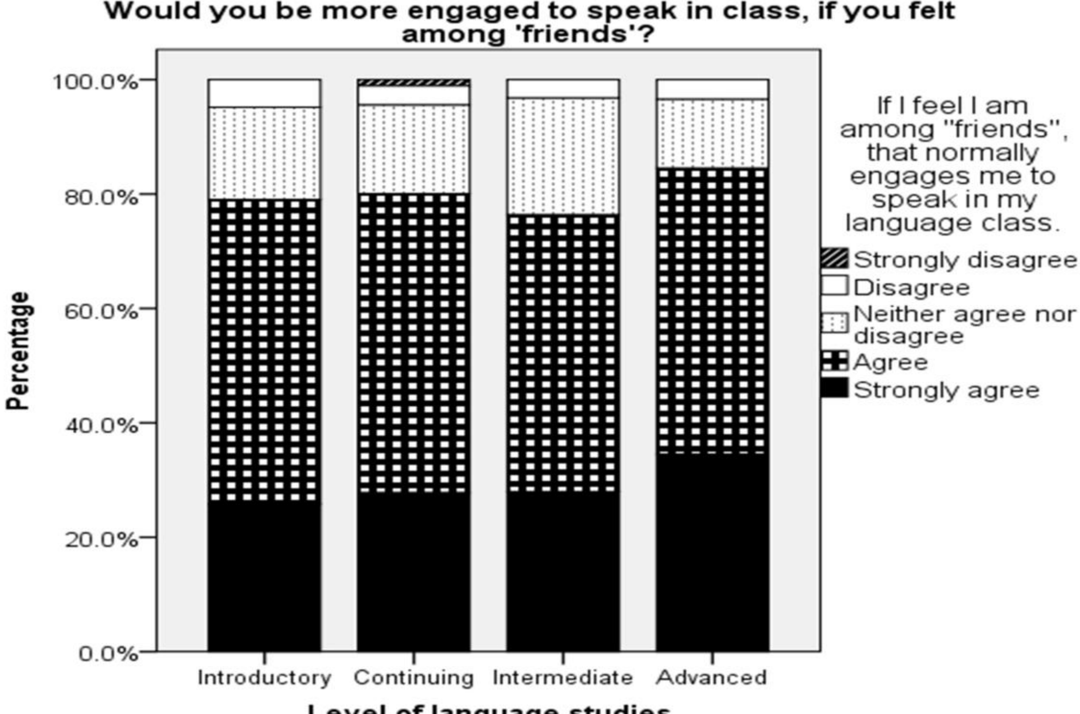
a. 0% A class where there is a relaxed atmosphere
b. 2% A fun and enjoyable class
c. 30% A class outside "the classroom walls"
d. 62% A well-structured traditional classroom
e. 4% A class where there is less distance between the teacher and the student

Appendix U: Teacher interview question 20 – Personality of an engaging teacher

Teacher interview – Question 20 (N=14)

QT20. Can you describe in two or three words the personality of a teacher that you believe engages students to speak in class?
You speak about something. In speaking there is much more involved. It is not just that you are nice and open, you understand where they come from. But you also engage their mind. It is something from inside that somehow you get them to want to get out, to participate. A teacher who creates an atmosphere, and that relationship with each particular student, and allows the student to make mistakes, to be themselves, to joke with the language, to be cheeky, and who does not penalise them. A teacher who allows them to be themselves. You sense that they check on you. Can they make a joke or not? The other day a student asked me in class in French whether it was ok to have a relationship with a teacher. The question was in the context of the topic, so I responded "no, you can't have a sexual relationship with a teacher". So, the student felt comfortable asking me that question, and he was engaged to speak about that topic. He was quite confident. (T1)
Happy and friendly. You want to make them feel that you want to be there. Making them welcome and making them feel safe. It is such a scary world out there with a foreign language. (T2)
Interesting. Clever. Motivating. (T3)
Enthusiasm. Interest in the student… to make the learning process personal is a huge one. Humour is also a great factor. (T4)
Inviting. I think you have to sort of seduce your students into speaking. To make them kind of see that speaking can be fun, and not frustrating or intimidating for them. That making mistakes is absolutely normal, it is expected, on the contrary errors are a manifestation of progress. So in that way, you have to provide activities where they feel comfortable. Seduce them into kind of speaking. Sometimes what you think is interesting, it is not for them. (T5)
A teacher able to let the students show their personality. A teacher who is not a star. (T6)
Showing respect to people, a professional approach to what you're doing. Taking people seriously, having an interest in people, I think. I think I am a strong teacher who does not like to separate the skills. (T7)
Intelligent, passionate, and humble. (T8)
Respect for other cultures. To be self-conscious and self-reflexive about the individual differences in class. To have initiative and creativity. (T9)
Friendly but not a friend. Approachable. Funny. (T10)
Funny. Lively. Respectful. (T11)
Knowledgeable. Organised. Approachable. (T12)
Respectful. Funny. Friendly. (T13)
Knowledgeable. Friendly. Experienced. (T14)

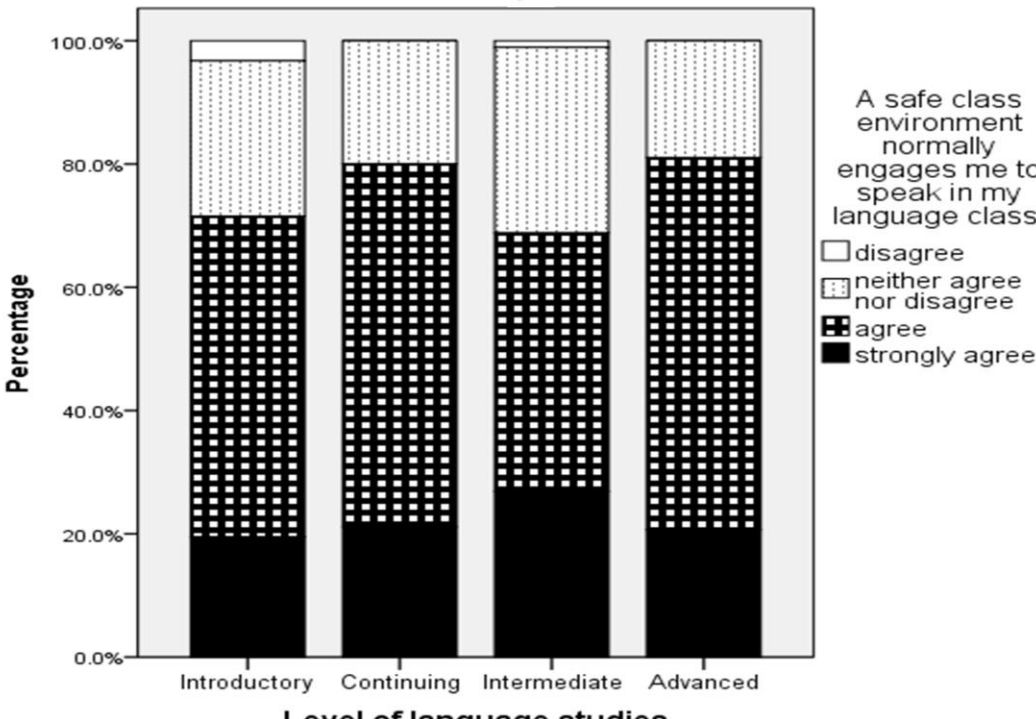
Appendix V: Q24. "Feeling among friends" and its impact on SEtS



Q24: The impact on SEtS of "feeling amongst friends"

Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q24 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)

Appendix W: Q23. "A safe class environment" and its impact on SEtS



Q23: The impact on SEtS of a "safe" class environment

Source: Student Survey June 2013 Q23 (Quijada Cervoni, 2013)