

# Directed Motivational Current Benefits to Second Language Learning: Can they Facilitate Future Learning?<sup>1</sup>

*Kadidja Koné<sup>2</sup>, École Normale d'Enseignement Technique et Professionnel (ENETP),  
Kabala, Bamako, Mali*

## Abstract

Directed motivational currents (DMCs) are a unique and intense motivational drive capable of supporting second language learning. Learners throughout the world can experience these unique motivational feelings regardless of their teaching and learning contexts. Therefore, researchers and language teachers have been exploring cases of DMCs since the phase of their conceptualization to facilitate their classroom application. Despite the growing interest in the field, very few studies have focused on DMC benefits. The present study is an attempt to fill the empirical gap by examining DMC benefits and their usage in learning English as a foreign language. Learner diaries were used to collect data from five students who had already experienced a purposefully facilitated DMC. A thematic analysis of the data revealed that linguistic competence; that is, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling were developed in addition to real-life skills, such as presentation skills and positive group work dynamics. Learners not only used their newly acquired knowledge in their English classes, but also took advantage of it in their content-based courses, such as organization and administrative methods, to achieve their learning goals. The findings of the present study can be useful for second language teachers, who want to explicitly teach their learners how to use the benefits generated from their DMC experiences so that they can reach their long-term learning goals when the motivational currents fade.

## Resumen

Las corrientes motivacionales dirigidas (DMC) son un impulso motivacional único e intenso capaz de apoyar el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma. Los estudiantes de todo el mundo pueden experimentar estos sentimientos de motivación únicos independientemente de sus contextos de enseñanza y aprendizaje. Por lo tanto, los investigadores y profesores de idiomas han estado explorando casos de DMC desde la fase de su conceptualización para facilitar su aplicación en el aula. A pesar del creciente interés en el campo, muy pocos estudios se han centrado en los beneficios de las DMC. El presente estudio es un intento de llenar el vacío empírico al examinar los beneficios de DMC y su uso en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera. Se utilizaron diarios de aprendizaje para recopilar datos de cinco estudiantes que ya habían experimentado una DMC facilitada. Un análisis temático de los datos reveló que la competencia lingüística mejoró; es decir, se desarrollaron la gramática, el vocabulario y la ortografía, además de las habilidades de presentación y dinámicas positivas de trabajo en grupo. Los estudiantes no solo utilizaron sus conocimientos recién adquiridos en sus clases de inglés, sino que también lo aprovecharon en sus cursos basados en el contenido, como la organización y los métodos administrativos, para lograr sus objetivos de aprendizaje. Los hallazgos del presente estudio pueden ser útiles para los profesores de segunda lengua que quieran enseñar explícitamente a sus alumnos cómo utilizar los beneficios generados por sus experiencias DMC para que puedan alcanzar sus objetivos de aprendizaje a largo plazo cuando las corrientes motivacionales se desvanezcan.

## Introduction

Learning a language that is not one's mother tongue or is not widely spoken in one's milieu can be a lifelong process (Koné, 2020a). Therefore, to achieve mastery over a foreign language, language learners need to be highly motivated. The construct of motivation is a core element that determines and predicts success in second language (L2) learning (Alrabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei, 2014; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). As the variable of motivation plays such an essential role in L2 learning, language teachers and researchers oriented their research toward the various motivational theories ranging from the social psychological period dominated by Gardner and Lambert's (1972) research on integrative motivation to the DMC theory conceptualized by Muir and Dörnyei (2013).

Directed motivational currents (DMCs) are worldwide recognizable motivational phenomena that can be found in all educational contexts (Muir, 2016). In other words, DMCs can be experienced by most language learners regardless of their gender, race, or social backgrounds (Muir, 2016). DMCs are intense motivational peaks that go beyond the normal motivational levels (Dörnyei et al., 2016). They are so intense that they can support long-term L2 learning goals (e.g., becoming fluent in a foreign language, integrating into a new community, or passing an exam taken in L2). Although DMC experiences can sustain L2 learning, they are not everyday motivational phenomena that can be triggered by a language teacher at any time (Ibrahim & Al-Hoorie, 2019). They are arduous and finite (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Ibrahim, 2020).

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<sup>2</sup> [kadidja\\_kone@yahoo.fr](mailto:kadidja_kone@yahoo.fr)

Recent research studies (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Henry et al., 2015; Ibrahim, 2016, 2017; Muir, 2016) in the field have lent support to the DMC theory by providing empirical evidence for its validity and applicability in language classrooms. Additionally, the results of these studies highlighted the DMC features and framework variants that can be used for classroom intervention. Despite their significant contribution toward the DMC research, which is still in its infancy, none of the previous studies scrutinized the DMC-related benefits after the motivational currents waned. Nor did they investigate whether they could support or facilitate long-term learning when the DMC experiences ended (e.g., Henry et al., 2015; Ibrahim, 2016, 2017; Muir, 2016; Sak, 2019; Zarrinabadi & Tavakoli, 2017). It is important to note that these studies did not specifically address the DMC benefits, although they argued that a DMC is a predictor of successful L2 learning because of its motivational intensity that can support L2 learning (Dörnyei et al., 2016). Moreover, they did not specify the extent to which a DMC can support L2 learning after the decline of a hyper motivational flow. For example, Dörnyei and Muir (2019) noted that language learners are able to successfully achieve a short-term learning goal, such as getting good grades in a test, even if the teaching materials are not engaging. However, in the case of long-term learning, such as obtaining mastery over a foreign language, they may lose their enthusiasm and engagement if a positive classroom atmosphere is not maintained. Therefore, it is necessary to explore DMC-related benefits before the motivational momentum completely vanishes and to examine how this facilitates L2 learning, which seems to be a lifelong process.

## Literature Review

### *Characteristics of Directed Motivational Currents*

Dörnyei et al. (2014) and Dörnyei et al. (2015) stated that DMCs are mainly characterized by goal/vision orientedness, a salient facilitative structure, positive emotionality, and generating parameters (See below). In addition, people experiencing DMCs are obsessed with completing their tasks whether they are enjoyable or not; that is, they pursue their goals despite fatigue and difficulties. Recent studies by Henry et al. (2015), Muir (2016), Safdari and Maftoon (2017), and Zarrinabadi and Tavakoli (2017) have confirmed the existence of these characteristics with respect to DMCs.

#### Goal/Vision Orientedness

A DMC is a unique motivational phenomenon that is empowered by a clear vision that a learner sets for their language learning goals and aspirations. For example, a vision may represent what a learner would like to become and what they fear (Muir & Dörnyei, 2013). In the case of group-DMCs, the vision or goal is collective and shared by the members of the group who will surpass themselves to achieve it. Group-DMCs are defined as intensive project work done in small groups (Muir, 2016). They are also described as exceptional motivational flows shared by a group of students while working on a collaborative project (Ibrahim & Al-Hoorie, 2019). The absence of a strong vision may weaken a DMC and block the establishment of routines, whether it is individual or shared by a group of learners. For example, one of the participants in the study by Selçuk and Erten (2017) did not experience individual DMCs because they had difficulty establishing a long-term goal for their language learning and maintaining it with behavioral routines. Based on the studies by Henry et al. (2015), Ibrahim (2017), and Zarrinabadi and Takovali (2017) these routines can range from studying for longer periods, going everywhere with flashcards, watching news or films in the L2, to cancelling trips to concentrate on students' L2 and achieve their language learning goals. Regarding group-DMCs, the group members must have a collective goal, such as achieving the goals set for intensive project work to be completed in their L2 or working together to win a school competition. In such a situation, group members explicitly set routines to engage in the various tasks contributing to the final goal achievement, such as an oral presentation or winning a competition (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Ibrahim, 2016).

#### Salient Facilitative Structure

A DMC is characterized by a recognizable structure that facilitates the establishment of routines which help the persons experiencing DMCs to maintain their intense, motivational flow until they achieve their goals (Dörnyei et al., 2016). When routines are successfully established, they will be noticeable so that a teacher or a relative can provide learners with quality feedback called positive progress checks. The fact of being closer to one's dream motivates a person under the influence of a DMC to reach their goals at all costs. For example, a participant in the study by Ibrahim and Al-Hoorie (2019) invited their group peers to work on their collaborative project in their kitchen after the regular class hours, which could not have been acceptable in a non-group-DMC situation. As they were obsessed with achieving their project goals at all costs, they accepted this compromise. The behavioral routine was so successfully established and shared by the group

members that it motivated them to change their attitudes; that is, they worked as hard as they could to deserve their place in the group. The participant's motivational current was so contagious that the other members of the group could not resist it.

#### Positive Emotionality

Positive emotionality refers to the positive emotions that people experiencing DMCs feel when they are getting closer to their desired goal or when the motivational currents start waning at the end of the DMCs. They may also experience positive feelings after achieving an important subgoal. These emotional feelings range from enjoyment, satisfaction, confidence to pride. For example, quality feedback received in the form of positive progress checks has a positive impact on a learner's motivation, as described by Dörnyei et al. (2014): "People may only continue in a DMC if they have a clear and ongoing perception that they are on track towards reaching their vision" (p. 15). Additionally, a recent study by Ibrahim (2020) has shown that DMCs are not only sustained by a clear vision, but also by positive emotions. The more positive feedback a language learner receives from their teacher, expert, or relative, the more motivated and confident they are to continue learning their L2. Appreciation, praise, good grades, positive classroom climate, cohesive groups with positive norms, and supportive teacher's behavior can therefore sustain language learners' motivation until they achieve their long-term language learning goals (Dörnyei & Muir, 2019). The effects of these factors, if well-established, can continue providing a learner with enough energy to reach their desired goals when the motivational currents fade.

#### Generating Parameters

Generating parameters are conditions or situations that favor or stimulate DMC occurrences. Ibrahim (2017) found that negative emotions, meeting people who share the same dream or ambition, and emergent opportunities could trigger a DMC. The author suggested positive group work dynamics, such as group cohesiveness, positive group norms, collective goals, teacher support, and teammates' support as conditions that could facilitate DMC experiences in a language classroom. In the same line, Ibrahim (2016) found that classroom DMCs were sustained by an inspiring leader, autonomy, group identity, and attachment to a topic shared by the group. In addition to these factors, a learner's DMC experiences can be launched when they perceive that they are capable of achieving their desired goals (Ibrahim, 2017). Perceived feasibility can therefore be considered as one of the conditions for a DMC to occur.

### ***Individual and Group-Directed Motivational Currents***

#### Individual Directed Motivational Currents

Persons experiencing individual DMCs usually live an exceptional motivational momentum that has the potential to support long-term learning, such as achieving fluency in L2. They have the impression that they are achieving their goal effortlessly, although they make a considerable effort. The investment of effort becomes automatic in DMC experiences. An individual DMC can be triggered by a positive or negative emotion (Ibrahim, 2017). As a result, a person caught up in the currents of motivation is generally driven by their desired vision that guides their learning path (Muir & Dörnyei, 2013). Most of those who experience individual DMCs are able to remember their intense, motivational periods because of their uniqueness and intensity. They strongly want to relive their motivational periods when the currents begin waning (Koné, 2020a). For instance, some narrated their exceptional and unique motivational momentum by describing the aspect that fascinated or impressed them. Bina, a participant in a study by Henry et al. (2015), explained that she spent long hours at school learning without feeling tired, although she was conscious of the considerable effort that she was making. Another participant in Zarrinabadi and Takovali (2017) described that she could see herself teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) when she was under the influence of DMCs.

#### Group-Directed Motivational Currents

Intensive project work that meets the expectations of a group of learners can stimulate a special and shared motivational flow called group-DMCs. The currents of a group-DMC are so powerful that they can ensure a successful DMC launch for a whole school, including the teachers (Ibrahim, 2016; Muir, 2016). A group-DMC can be triggered by intensive project work when the following conditions are established: positive group work dynamics (i.e., a cohesive group with positive group norms and an inspiring group leader), a collective goal, an interesting topic that increases learners' passion and curiosity, and a supportive teacher's behavior (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Ibrahim, 2016; Muir, 2016).

What is interesting is that intensive project work can be implemented in a language classroom to generate group-DMC experiences. Dörnyei et al. (2016) suggested seven framework variants that are used for focused interventions. Koné (2020a; 2020b) and Muir (2016) have recently used some of the framework variants or combinations of various elements in different frameworks for the group-DMC classroom interventions. The results of these interventions suggested that it was possible to intentionally facilitate shared, sustained flows that were identical to DMC experiences. When interpreting the findings, they give some alternatives to language teachers to facilitate their learners' long-term learning goal achievement because the construct of motivation is considered as one of the core elements in language learning. The purposeful generation of motivational currents in a language classroom may also give a new dimension to the process of language teaching and learning by maintaining long-term goal achievement, such as reaching fluency and accuracy in L2.

### **Research Studies Related to the Directed Motivational Current Theory**

The recent studies related to DMCs have explored their validity and applicability to classroom contexts through qualitative and quantitative research methods. For example, Henry et al. (2015) conducted the first study that focused on individual DMCs of three women. The authors used retrospective data collection methods to understand the phenomenon and to identify its characteristics for validity purposes. The results showed that the participants experienced DMC, unique motivational feelings related to salient behavioral routines, such as staying at school after regular courses to study, which confirmed the existence of DMC features described earlier by Dörnyei et al. (2014) and Muir and Dörnyei (2013). In support of the validity of DMC theory, Murillo-Miranda (2019) also found empirical evidence for individual DMCs with three English learners. However, the results of these studies cannot be generalized to other teaching contexts due to a small number of participants and the specificity that characterizes each teaching and learning context.

Zarrinabadi and Tavakoli (2017) collected qualitative data from two Iranian EFL teacher trainees using interviews. The results revealed that the subjects' intense, motivational periods were characterized by the main constituents (goal/vision orientedness, a salient facilitative structure, and positive emotionality) of the DMC construct. One of the participants' vision was so vivid that she could see herself exercising her future job. Her imagination reflects Muir and Dörnyei's (2013) description of a vision and its importance in stimulating DMCs.

Ibrahim (2020), Safdari and Maftoon (2017), Sak (2019), as well as Selçuk and Erten (2017) not only provided empirical evidence to the DMC theory, but also examined the factors that enhanced or weakened it. It was found that the DMC experiences were maintained by a clear vision, salient routines, and positive progress checks (Selçuk & Erten, 2017; Safdari & Maftoon, 2017). Exam pressure was also revealed as a major factor that could have a positive and negative effect on EFL learners' motivational levels (Sak, 2019). For example, one of Sak's participants was exceptionally motivated during exams while the other was anxious about grades. Therefore, the high level of anxiety prevented the anxious participant from feeling unique motivational peaks during the exams. In addition to these features, positive emotions such as satisfaction and confidence sustained DMCs. Consequently, people who experienced DMCs achieved their desired goals. Learners' valued goals include speaking a foreign language, succeeding in an exam, applying for a scholarship to study abroad, integrating into a society or a group, traveling to another country, or completing a project (e.g., school competition or an oral presentation project) (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Ibrahim, 2020; Muir, 2016).

Contrary to the previous studies that focused on individual DMCs, one of Muir's (2016) complementary studies explored the purposeful generation of group-DMCs using a framework variant developed by Dörnyei et al. (2016) to facilitate DMCs in a language classroom. The findings supported the applicability of DMCs in a language classroom. Moreover, Muir's study concluded that DMCs can be generated intentionally if intensive project work is successfully implemented.

Additionally, Ibrahim and Al-Hoorie (2019) examined the conditions that could facilitate and sustain group-DMCs. They used the term "shared, sustained flow" (p. 51) (SSF) to refer to DMCs. The results revealed that a group-DMC was maintained by factors such as group autonomy, an attachment to the topic, an inspiring leader, and a group identity. Learners would experience DMCs if these conditions were successfully established. The teachers in Ibrahim and Al-Hoorie's study also experienced group-DMCs. Along the same line, a study by Koné (2020b) with five focal participants lent support to the findings of Ibrahim and Al-Hoorie's (2019) study by indicating that group cohesion and its entity were factors that could facilitate group-DMCs in English as a foreign language context. Besides, Koné (2020b) showed that participants

experiencing DMCs were fully engaged in their project work; that is, they were obsessed with achieving their project goals at all costs. The presence of an inspiring group leader further favored the occurrence of group-DMCs.

In summary, previous studies (Henry et al., 2015; Muir, 2016; Safdari & Maftoon, 2017; Zarrinabadi & Tavakoli, 2017) investigated the DMC theory to corroborate its validity with empirical evidence. Most of these studies used qualitative methods, such as interviews and student diaries so that participants could reflect on their intense, motivational periods and recount them. The data collected from the diary entries and the interviews additionally allowed the authors to understand the DMC phenomenon and then characterize its main features, such as behavioral routines, exceptional engagement, and positive emotionality. Other studies (e.g., Ibrahim, 2017; Ibrahim & Al-Hoorie, 2019; Sak, 2019) examined the factors that could enhance or weaken individual and group-DMC experiences. It can be concluded that the studies mainly aimed at scrutinizing DMCs to identify their core constituents and the conditions that sustained them to facilitate their classroom application. Therefore, they did not specifically focus on the DMC benefits and their contribution to short-term or long-term learning. The current study attempts to fill the empirical gap by examining how the DMC benefits will facilitate or support long-term L2 learning when the motivational currents wane.

### Research Objectives

Previous research studies suggested that DMC theory can be implemented in second language classrooms. Moreover, people experiencing DMCs mentioned that they experienced most of the salient features that characterize individual and group-DMCs. However, very few of these studies explained how the DMC-related benefits could be materialized so that successful L2 learning could take place once the motivational currents faded. Therefore, it is necessary to orient the DMC research toward the investigation of its benefits so that the research paradigm can change and offer language teachers and learners something unique and tangible that can be used to improve language teaching and learning. To achieve this aim, the present study will first examine the benefits resulting from DMC experiences. Secondly, it will explore how they would facilitate long-term L2 learning. Thus, the study will answer the following research questions:

1. *What are the benefits related to the DMC experiences?*
2. *Can these experiences facilitate future L2 learning?*

### Research Methods

#### Research Design

I used qualitative methods, specifically learner diaries to design the study. The diary entries allowed the participants to reflect on and record their past DMC experiences so that I could examine the phenomenon and its benefits for L2 learning.

#### Participants

The sample was composed of five students learning English as a foreign language at a Teacher's Training School in Bamako, Mali. I gave them pseudonyms to keep them anonymous as can be seen in Table 1.

Names	Age	Gender	English Learning Goals
Aicha	19	Female	Wanted to be fluent in English to apply for a Fulbright scholarship and carry on her studies in the United States of America
Fatou	21	Female	Wanted to become a teacher of English
Ilias	19	Male	Wanted to pursue his communication studies in the United States of America
Mohamed	19	Male	Wanted to become fluent in English to study diplomacy
Paul	20	Male	Wanted to achieve fluency in English to work for one of the United Nations agencies (UNICEF or USAID)

Table 1: Participants' profiles

I used convenience sampling to select the participants since it takes into account "... certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, or easy accessibility. Captive audiences such as students in the researcher's own institution are prime examples of convenience samples" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 61). In other words, I used convenience sampling because the participants had already experienced DMCs based on the results of a previous study that I had conducted as part of my doctoral

dissertation project. As I continued teaching the class after the dissertation project, it was easier to have access to the participants. I also included the diary writing in my course, which facilitated the data collection.

Regarding the small number of participants (five), it is explained by the fact that these informants were the focal participants of my doctoral dissertation project, which aimed at investigating whether it was possible to purposefully facilitate group-DMC experiences in the EFL classrooms using intensive project work framed within the *That's Me!* and *All Eyes on the Final Product* (Dörnyei et al., 2016, p. 177) framework variants.

A project built around the *That's Me!* template reflects learners' identity. It also gives them a voice so that they can report their learning experiences. *Freedom Writers* film and *Freedom Writers Diary*, which was a New York Time best seller (Dörnyei et al., 2016) are good examples of a *That's Me* variant project. Students in the freedom writers diary were labelled as low-achievers who had difficulty achieving their learning goals. However, they succeeded in their learning when their teacher, Erin Gruwell, designed a project that allowed them to have their own voice on the world stage. The project required them to write about their values, dreams, fears, and hopes in a journal and the teacher responded to each of their entries. According to Dörnyei et al. (2016), an authentic project that is congruent with learners' learning goals and identities increase their curiosity and engagement.

Regarding the *All Eyes on the Final Product* project template, it allows learners to work on real-life projects (e.g., creating a video or blog) and present the results to a real audience (e.g., school leaders, community leaders, and relatives). It is the most widespread variant that can be found in all educational contexts (Muir, 2016). A project built around this framework must be clear with a strong vision so that learners can be involved in it (Dörnyei et al., 2016). Additionally, the completion of the project requires the use of the L2 during the preparation stage and the final presentation (Dörnyei et al., 2016). To reach the goals stated for the dissertation, the participants worked on a project that lasted eight weeks. It gave them the opportunity to participate in the establishment of peace in their country after several years of violence and insecurity by providing solutions or suggestions that could bring peace. When the government began negotiating with the rebels to establish peace, political leaders and religious leaders were involved, but university students were not invited to participate in the discussions. Therefore, the project valued them as citizens and engaged them in a real-life activity relevant to their lives. Its outcome was presented orally to the class in English. I also used interviews and learner diaries to collect data. Therefore, the participants made eight entries; that is, they made an entry each week for a total of eight weeks. The findings showed that the five participants' intense, motivational experiences were identical to group-DMCs (Koné, 2020b).

One year after the doctoral dissertation project, that is, one year after the participants' DMC experiences, I used learner diary to collect qualitative data from them to explore the benefits of DMCs and how they would facilitate long-term learning. I refer to the participants of the study as participants, learners, or students. They voluntarily agreed to be informants of the study, and the researcher respected their rights based on the laws regulating research study participants' rights in Mali. I refer to the researcher as teacher, teacher-researcher, or I.

### **Data Collection Instruments and Procedures**

#### Learner Diaries

A student diary allows a learner to record their learning experiences and share them with a real audience, such as a teacher or classmates. In other words, it is genuine communication between teacher and learners (Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Quirke, 2001). As the course spanned 15 weeks, the participants made three entries for a total of 15 entries; that is they recorded their learning experiences in their diaries once a month. I also read their entries and responded to them once a month. To increase the validity of the data and the ownership of the diaries, they were not given any writing instructions. It is important to mention that the use of the learner diary was twofold: a learning and data collection tool.

#### **Data Analysis**

I thematically analyzed the data collected from the participants' entries. The data analysis procedure was inspired by the guidelines suggested by Harding and Whitehead (2013) and Nimehchisalem (2018) when describing thematic analysis. According to Harding and Whitehead (2013), a researcher should read the data several times to have a general feel of them while carrying out a thematic analysis. I interpreted and grouped the central ideas or patterns that emerged from the analysis under different themes after I had a general understanding of the data. I repeated the process until I classified under the various themes all the

main ideas that contributed to a better understanding of a concept or phenomenon. In other words, I “move[d] back and forth over the data” (Harding & Whitehead, 2013, p. 134) until I developed all the themes. Thus, the data analysis process was iterative, and I did not follow any linear steps.

In addition to the free style analysis, I adapted certain phases of Nimehchisalem’s (2018) six-step thematic analysis, such as reviewing the themes and naming them to comprehend the benefits related to DMC experiences. Grouping the central ideas that emerged most and classifying them under different themes was also an inclusive part of the analysis process. I also revisited the data whenever it was necessary to get more information. The process was done manually to capture and reflect deeply on each piece of information that could contribute to a better understanding of DMC-related benefits and their use in L2 development or learning.

## Results and Discussions

After analyzing the data extracted from the students’ entries, I developed three themes: linguistic competence, real-life skills, and DMC benefits in further learning. These themes allowed the researcher to respond to the research questions in relation to the DMC benefits and their contribution to the development of L2 learning. It is important to note that the participants made their entries in English. The selection of the sample comments displayed to illustrate the different themes was motivated by their clarity and relevance, although the data set was used to determine the themes.

### **Directed Motivational Current-Related Benefits**

#### Theme 1: Linguistic Competence

The participants mentioned grammar, vocabulary, and spelling while referring to the linguistic competence as a DMC benefit.

**Grammar.** The participants negotiated the language form during their interactions in their small group. Slow learners or those students who had difficulty adjusting to the classroom speed learned and internalized new input through the negotiations. They studied certain grammatical points, such as transitional phrases, English tenses, and reported speech, as can be seen in Fatou’s comment, reported in her own words:

*To be honest, I did not know how to say what the others did in English because I have not mastered the reported speech even if I studied it at lycée [lycée means junior high school]. In the group my friends explained it and we had a grammar book too. I think that this group experience ameliorated my grammar. To speak correctly we need good grammar even if our teacher at that time forgave some mistakes if they were not very serious.*

The participants recognized accuracy as a benefit, although their teacher did not impose on them a perfect use of the English language. They explained in their entries that their teacher did not interrupt their speaking flow to correct every single mistake that they made. Their mistakes were only corrected and taught as mini grammar lessons when they interfered with the overall understanding. This technique not only favored the flow while they spoke, but also decreased their anxiety. As a result, the participants were motivated to focus on accuracy in addition to fluency. The finding lends support to some of the suggestions made by Oxford to reduce speaking anxiety (Oxford, 1999). It can also be considered as a motivational teaching practice because learners tend to be more interested in mini grammar lessons that lasted between 30 or 45 minutes in contrast to two-hour grammar lessons that can be boring. Consequently, the participants’ motivational currents supported their language learning one year after the DMC experiences, although they had lost their exceptional intensity. According to Alrabai (2014) and Dörnyei (2014), motivational practices (e.g., appropriate teaching materials and methods) can favor successful L2 learning and therefore encourage a language learner to produce out of expectation even if they are not experiencing a DMC. The more teachers’ teaching methods are adapted to learners’ desires and needs, the more such learners are determined to make a considerable effort to achieve the goals set for the course (Dörnyei, 2014).

When interpreting the DMC-related benefits to long-term L2 learning, it can be inferred that the participants continued enjoying their motivational currents one year after their occurrences because the classroom teacher did not humiliate them by correcting grammatical mistakes that were beyond their control, as explained by Aicha “I really felt happy because my teacher corrected my mistakes without making critics that could affect me badly. I just considered her comments like normal and helpful”. It is worth mentioning that humiliating a learner when correcting them is frequent in the Malian teaching context. Therefore, working with a teacher who corrected their grammatical mistakes without offending them was a great source of enjoyment and confidence. Teacher’s positive behavior helps to make the classroom atmosphere positive

where learners feel safe and comfortable. It additionally supports Dörnyei and Muir's (2019) hypothesis stating that there is an association between a positive classroom climate and learners' high levels of motivation. For example, I noticed an increase in the participants' motivational levels when they felt safe and respected. They were actively engaged in their long-term learning.

**Vocabulary and Spelling.** Participants mentioned in their entries that they were interested in several types of vocabulary (i.e., commonly used words and technical words). They not only concentrated their efforts on the usage of these words, but also studied their spelling, as described by Mohamed:

*I really obtained a long list of vocabulary without learning them by heart or for the grade. It was a natural process and I still remember most of these words and I frequently use them with correct spelling in my writing. I can say that I am well-equipped now to talk about many domains and use the right vocabulary for these fields. In the past I could only talk about a very small category of things and this reduces my desire and my pleasure in speaking. I was also more confident to speak in my English class and use the new words appropriately.*

Knowing a wide variety of words and their appropriate usage in real-life situations increased the participants' motivational levels while they were taking other courses after their DMC experiences. The result parallels the study by Kobayashi (2003), which revealed that learners carefully selected their vocabulary so that their audience could understand them. Although the motivational currents faded, the impact was salient, and it supported learners' future learning experiences. It also reinforced their oral production because they were able to apply a variety of words in diverse contexts.

#### Theme 2: Real-Life Skills

A thematic analysis of the participants' entries indicated turn-taking strategies, note-taking strategies, and the development of positive group work dynamics as real-life skills that they gained from their DMC experiences.

**Note-Taking Strategies.** Participants considered note-taking strategies as a technique that they could use for other courses. For example, their entries supported that they started taking notes when they were under the influence of DMCs. Whenever a group presented, they wrote about their strengths and weaknesses and the teacher's comments to improve their work in process, as Aicha and Fatou revealed:

*As I did not know how to take notes that I could use after the course, I asked my group friends for help and searched for appropriate techniques online. When I applied these techniques, I did not lose any important information from the course and my friends' participation. So, we avoided the same mistakes in our presentation. With these techniques that allowed me to take notes efficiently and quickly by using abbreviations and codes, I could progress although I had not taken the course about note-taking strategies. (Aicha)*

*Being able to take my own notes and use them at home to understand better the course was really important for me. It shows me that I am progressing and I could also work alone at home without my group. This really helps me to make a difference in my other courses. (Fatou)*

The participants have considered note-taking strategies as an advantage because learners in the Malian EFL context are used to receiving their knowledge from the teacher and then recalling it during the tests. Therefore, being able to take their own notes and use them efficiently was a new skill that could make a significant difference when taking other courses. It guaranteed some autonomy to them so that they could function outside the classroom and better understand what was done to improve their ongoing work. Moreover, it encouraged them to read books in English and take notes for use in real-life situations, as Paul explained "I enjoy reading long texts in English now because I know I can take note and use them in my future presentations or just to satisfy my curiosity".

Taking notes may be considered a normal learning behavior in other educational contexts, but it is a new skill in the Malian EFL context because learners are passive receivers of knowledge. The finding implies that acquiring new knowledge can stimulate positive emotions, such as confidence and satisfaction. It is consistent with the results of Muir's (2016) study, which revealed that participants were more enthusiastic about their language learning whenever they found new words related to their field. Enjoyment associated with the discovery of new knowledge induces learning and increases learners' motivation and concentration levels until they achieve their long-term learning goals, such as speaking fluently English. It can be deduced that learners' motivational surges were not identical to DMCs, but they were sufficiently powerful to sustain long-term learning. Ibrahim (2020) also found that language learners' motivation is maintained by satisfaction, confidence, and enjoyment generated from achieving a desired learning goal, such as completing a project in the L2.



**Turn-Taking Strategies.** During their DMC experiences, the participants were taught how to take turns while interacting. Some students had difficulty taking their turn because of their culture or other individual differences, such as shyness. Some would always wait for the teacher to ask them to intervene, as reflected in Fatou's comment:

*I can say without any doubt that before the project and this wonderful course in English, I did not know how to enter the debate. My classmates always intervene when I was speaking and provoked my anger because I speak slowly and they take advantage on me. But with the project, I organized the discussions and I learned to impose myself and I didn't pardon that they interrupt me when I am speaking and I will tell them this is my way of speaking, so wait I finish. I have imposed my style and I was not obliged to change my personality or to wait for my teacher to help me. I stay myself and I used my turn and I force them to follow me.*

It can be inferred that Fatou became self-confident following her project work, and was motivated to participate in the classroom conversation. As a result, her group peers who did not consider her as a proficient speaker respected her. The feeling of belonging to a group encourages learners to maintain their membership by surpassing themselves to achieve the collective goal. Besides, Fatou's feeling of self-confidence might explain why she continued benefiting from the DMC experiences after the waning of the motivational flows. The more initiatives a learner takes, the more they are aware of their learning capacities, and the more autonomous and motivated they are to learn. The result supports Dörnyei et al.'s (2016) hypothesis, which indicates that learners may engage in a project if they perceive that their competence allows them to achieve it. The fact that Fatou continued using her DMC benefits to regulate her turn-taking suggests that it is possible for a learner to use their DMC experiences one year after its occurrence. While the new motivational state may not be as intense or unique as DMCs, it is powerful enough to induce a change in a learner's behavior. The behavioral change can have a positive impact on the process of long-term English learning.

**Group Work Dynamics.** Positive group work dynamics (GWD) is defined as the friendly atmosphere that reigns over a group so that its members can feel safe and then work for the success of the group (Poupore, 2016). Group work dynamics not only involve the norms that govern a group, but also cover group cohesiveness and goal-orientedness (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Poupore, 2016). Similar to Chang's (2010) results, which showed the relationship between positive group work dynamics and learner performance, the participants in the present study explained that they performed better when their group became cohesive with positive norms. For example, the cohesion and maturity of their group allowed them to become friends and function as an entity outside the confined walls of a classroom to achieve their learning goals:

*That friendship was important because it maintained our group and forced everybody to give the best of himself. This philosophy stayed even after the project and its wonderful moments. The group permitted us to be motivated and continue working harder even if it was different this time. We use our group whenever a teacher gives us a group work even after the project and it permits us to be successful in English and the other classes. (Paul)*

The motivational currents generated by group cohesion, while not similar to those in the DMC experiences, were strong enough to help the participants achieve their desired goals. Moreover, they were so contagious that the members of the group could not resist them. The result is specifically important for language teachers interested in maintaining their learners' high motivation after the decline in the motivational flows. For example, the participants of the present study continued benefiting from their motivational experiences because they stayed together to protect their group and the positive norms established following successful project work. According to Dörnyei and Muir (2019), cohesive groups with positive group norms continue nurturing and offering their members a safe refuge after student life through clubs and meetings. Therefore, a teacher should give learners the opportunity to choose their group members based on friendship if they do not negatively impact the group life.

### Theme 3: Using DMC Benefits in Long-Term L2 Learning

Data analysis indicated that participants commonly used presentation skills, positive progress checks, and positive group work dynamics to facilitate their long-term learning goals after their DMC experiences.

**Presentation Skills.** I considered eye contact, speech rate, designing PowerPoint, and involving the class in the discussion as presentation skills. They are real-life skills that learners developed during their project, as Paul explained:

*Having a good presentation skill helped me a lot. For example, I could prepare slides that were more communicative and attractive. I also learned to reduce the content of my slide so that the other people could read and follow me at*

*the same time. I also got interested in my eye contact and I tried to be more enthusiastic and relaxed in front of my classmates and I could see that they appreciate my talent. I also received a lot great comments from my English teacher.*

Participants not only benefited from good presentation skills in English courses, but also used them in other courses, such as Organization and Administrative Methods:

*Even if my OMA [OMA stands for Organization and Administrative Methods] courses were not done in English, I used the English presentation skills. I became enthusiastic, inspired, and smiling during all my presentations and that way everybody was with me even the teacher. I stayed a leader in classroom work even with another group. (Aicha)*

Being able to transfer the skills acquired in the English course to other courses during the whole semester (a semester ranges from 12 to 15 weeks) increased the participants' motivational level. It showed them that English subject is as important as their content-based classes. Additionally, it generated a positive attitude toward English and made it legitimate in a context where learners generally see it as a mirage beyond their reach. The positive attitude increased learners' confidence and facilitated their English learning goal achievement. Although their level of confidence was not similar to that in the DMC experiences, it was sufficient to support them in long-term English learning and motivate them to test their new knowledge in other learning situations.

**Positive progress checks.** Positive progress checks are comments or constructive feedback that a teacher or another person gives to learners so that they can improve their work in progress during their DMC experiences (Dörnyei et al., 2016). They range from praise and appreciation, to grades and advice. For example, Aicha, Fatou, Ilias, Mohamed, and Paul were engaged in their learning after their unique motivational periods because they could use their teacher's quality feedback to improve their long-term learning:

*Whenever I was taking a new course, I tried to remember my English teacher's comments and I modified them to satisfy my needs. For example, her words stayed with me: Aicha, you can be a leader wherever you go. Don't be shy, just try to be influential in your team. I used this advice to handle group tasks with my friends. (Aicha)*

Mohamed also explained that the teacher's feedback gave him confidence. It showed him that he could become proficient in English and succeed in his future career:

*I did not only profit from the teacher's praise and comments in my studies, but I also used them to manage many things such as speaking in my youth associations or helping my friends who have presentations. Moreover, her advice gave me more pride and helped me attain the next stage because she explained to me that I could speak English fluently without going to an Anglophone country.*

The findings suggest that positive comments encourage learners to focus all their attention and effort on a task. They increase learners' levels of confidence or pride. The absence of positive feedback can have a negative impact on their performance and push downward their motivational level. However, students should deserve praise or grades so that they can have a positive impact on their performance. The success of a teacher's feedback does not depend on its numbers, but its quality (Dörnyei, 2014). The results are consistent with Ibrahim's (2020) study, which indicated that DMCs were not only sustained by a vision or goal, but also by positive emotions, such as confidence, pride, and satisfaction.

**Group work dynamics.** Participants continued using the positive group work dynamics established during their DMC experiences to stay motivated and focused on their learning goals for a year:

*I did not lose completely my motivation because I stayed with my group. We continued working and doing exercises together. This was really important and I stayed motivated and worked hard with my group to validate my English and other courses. So, I can say that the project work served even after the project. The spirit of hard work and success stayed with us. (Ilias)*

The desire to achieve their English learning goals at all costs did not completely vanish after their DMC experiences. They maintained some of their working habits to reach their English learning goals, such as speaking English while working in small groups, as Mohamed stated: "We continued using our English because our objectives were not attained and we worked for that in English even if it was difficult without our super motivation." The findings infer that the benefits resulting from DMC experiences can support L2 learning for a year, although the motivational intensity gradually decreases. The participants seemed to smoothly shift from a hyper motivational drive to a normal motivational state without being totally nostalgic

or frustrated. Therefore, they did not lose their enthusiasm and concentration, although DMC experiences are laborious:

*My motivation diminished a little bit, but my talents and desire were present to help me to be fluent and validate my English course for the year. My friends were also with me and we support the fatigue together and it was supportable like this. (Mohamed)*

The positive group work dynamics, such as friendship, established during the group-DMC experiences continued maintaining the participants' motivation so that they could endure fatigue and succeed in their long-term learning despite the decrease observed in motivational intensity. In other words, they remained motivated, although they were conscious of the decrease in their motivational level. The positive norms set during the group work did not disappear; that is they continued supporting learners in their collective effort investment. However, a question remains unanswered: To what extent would positive group work dynamics, such as friendship, cohesion, and maturity continue to sustain L2 learning after DMC experiences?

In conclusion, the findings imply that DMC benefits can support L2 learning for a year after the decline in motivational currents. They tend to support Dörnyei et al.'s (2016) theory stating that DMCs are exceptional and intense motivational phenomena that have the potential to support L2 learning. DMC benefits, specifically positive group work dynamics do not completely vanish when the currents fade. They can also be transferred to other learning situations (e.g., content-based courses). Therefore, being able to obtain a result that is countable and transferable might maintain the motivational currents after the DMC experiences.

## Conclusion

The findings of the study showed that the DMC-related benefits ranged from linguistic knowledge, such as grammar, vocabulary, and spelling to real-life skills, namely presentation skills and group work dynamics. The results further revealed that these benefits contributed to successful L2 learning despite a decrease in the learners' motivational levels. Group maturity and cohesion, a significant finding of the study allowed the participants to maintain their high level of motivation and to stay focused on their future English learning goals after the DMC experiences. The participants not only used their new knowledge gained from their DMC experiences to achieve their English learning objectives, but also used the newly acquired skills, such as oral presentation skills to improve their performance in other courses, specifically Organization and Administrative Methods.

However, it is necessary to mention that learners in the present study were prepared to function autonomously after their DMC experiences. Therefore, language teachers interested in facilitating group-DMCs in their classrooms must help their learners transition smoothly from an exceptional motivational state to a normal motivational situation so that they can stay concentrated after the DMCs. For example, they need to raise their awareness of the benefits gained from the DMC experiences and illustrate how they will be materialized in further learning situations.

Although the study has added a significant contribution to DMC research by exploring its benefits, it has some limitations related to the absence of interviews. Therefore, future researchers should use qualitative methods for data collection and analysis, specifically interviews and learner diaries, to explore DMC experiences among learners whose major is English and then examine their impact on their long-term learning.

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