The "Immersive Experience" in Language Learning: Student Perceptions, Experiences, and Transitions between Online and On-Campus Learning Environments

Die „immersive Erfahrung" im Sprachenlernen: Studentische Auffassungen und Erfahrungen in der Wechsel zwischen e-Learning und Seminarraum

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

In this thesis I examine the various ways in which undergraduate students of German as a Foreign Language experience different learning environments (on-campus vs. online). Previous research has focused on how to design online courses to resemble traditional on-campus ones; factors that influence online dropout and retention rates; and the effectiveness of new technologies by comparing learning outcomes and student perception of online vs. on-campus courses. However, in today's universities, more and more students are taking a variety of online and on-campus courses simultaneously and transition frequently between these two learning environments.

My project focuses on three research questions: (1) how do students perceive the value and effectiveness of an online language learning (OLL) environment and how do they think learning online affects (or *would* affect) their learning process? How satisfied did they feel with the course environments in which they studied? (2) How do they choose their preferred learning environment, and how do they see certain courses fitting into their study plans? and (3) how do they experience transitions between environments, and how prepared did they feel before and after the transition?

I distributed a survey (157 responses) to all current students in German at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, and completed 23 follow-up interviews. I have undertaken a qualitative study of the resulting data. Along with key findings from the wider "Geroline" project (incl. analysis of 10 years of student records) results indicate that the majority of students hold ambivalent or negative views towards OLL. This was primarily due to perceived deficits in the interactivity, feedback, and motivation potential online courses offer, while students highly valued (to the point of elevating the effectiveness of) the traditional face-to-face (F2F) learning environment. Students placed a strong emphasis on the acquisition of oral communication skills and a desire for teacher-led, social, learning. Students in the sample therefore chose F2F as their default learning environment, and saw online learning as a less-desired and/or backup option. Students who took

courses in both environments were much less satisfied with online courses, despite no detriment to long-term student success (i.e. grades) being found in the statistical data. Transitions also did not appear to pose any significant hurdles to students as they described them; rather they adjusted well to switching between course environments. Pedagogical implications for a program that combines both online and on-campus learning, as well as for course design in online environments, are discussed, along with suggestions for improving the perception by students and faculty of OLL as a viable course option.

Keywords: German, online language learning, face-to-face, trajectory, computer assisted language learning, transition, environment

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my partner Steve. Your love, support, and encouragement every step of the way allowed me to fulfill my lifelong dream of studying in Germany. You were there for me through everything, and I can't really describe what that means to me in just a few short words. I couldn't have done it without you.

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1. Introduction

1.1   Online Learning and Learning Environment Types

The new technologies of the 21st century have provided university instructors with a wide range of digital resources and technologies that can facilitate student learning, and online learning (also known as e-Learning) has exploded in popularity in recent years, especially at the undergraduate level (Bell & Federman, 2013). This growth has not been limited to simply using the Internet to research assignments or access discrete computer programs (software) in classrooms or at home to supplement traditional instruction, but has included the utilization and integration of a wide array of technologies in various learning environments. For example, online tools have been used to supplement traditional face-to-face (F2F) classes by offering additional practice of skills learned in class at home (e.g. online workbooks, exercises, and quizzes). They have also been used to facilitate contact between students and other people (e.g. digital pen pals), provide additional ways to access materials (e.g. online lecture notes, e-textbooks), or create spaces for students to connect and collaborate outside of the classroom (e.g. wikis, blogs, discussion boards). In addition, they have been used to implement mixed course environments (also known as *blended* or *hybrid* learning), in which a significant proportion of student learning or course teaching takes place both online as well as in a physical classroom. This can mean the use of laboratory sessions, where students complete coursework with the an instructor acting as a facilitator, or *flipped* classrooms, where certain types of content or tasks are reserved for students to work on outside of the classroom (e.g. grammar instruction, reading course texts) versus in the classroom (e.g. class discussion, oral communication). Finally, online tools have been used to place entire courses or programs of study completely online. In these environments, 100% of instruction is normally completed online, and may include various elements of synchronous (live or real-time) or asynchronous content or tasks. If the course is mostly asynchronous, then the instruction is often discussed in the tradition of distance learning (DL),

where students complete tasks independently and at their own pace. In contrast, fully synchronous online courses, in which students and instructors meet in a *virtual classroom* at a set time and place to learn together (similar to a business meeting held via videoconference), use online tools as a method of overcoming distance to conduct live, real-time instruction from afar. This type of environment often has more in common with traditional on-campus instruction, simply transplanted to the online space, although it may also include non-synchronous online elements that students access outside of the normal class time.

1.2   Online Language Learning and Terminology

As online education gains in popularity, learning foreign languages in an online environment is beginning to experience similar popularity to other fields which have long since experienced this trend towards online instruction (Blake, 2011). Online language courses come in a variety of formats and utilize a wide variety of technologies, with different proportions of the classes being conducted online or via computers, as discussed above. Many tools are currently in use, with new ones constantly under development. Guided online grammar or vocabulary exercises, tutorial programs that correct student input, videoconferencing software that allows synchronous or asynchronous verbal communication, social networks designed for language learners to connect with native speakers, and online reference materials related to language learning, are just a few examples.

When referring courses in this thesis I will use the term *online language learning* (or *online course*, *class*, *instruction*, etc.; OLL) to refer to a course design where the instruction is conducted 100% online and asynchronously, in the tradition of DL. This is in contrast to some researchers (some of whom I reference later in this thesis) who consider a course with 80% or more content online to be an "online course." Nevertheless, I recognize that students who take online courses may not be physically off-campus, unlike traditional *distance students*. Rather, they may very well be located in the same city as the educational institution, taking the course simultaneously with other F2F courses on-

campus, and/or be temporarily away due to work terms, etc. These courses could include some element of synchronicity, example skyping with the instructor for help, but this does not constitute the core instruction and learning activities. My reason for referring to these courses as *online* is that the course content and teaching are conducted 100% in the online environment, with no F2F interaction in a classroom outside of the final proctored examination. In contrast, I will use the terms *traditional*, *F2F*, *in-person* and *on-campus* (*course(s), learning, class(es), instruction*, etc.) interchangeably to refer to courses where the core of instruction is completed live and in-person in a classroom with an instructor present, even if such courses also include *online supports* for students (e.g. weekly language labs supervised by tutors, other examples below under "e-resources"). I have chosen this terminology partly because the courses I have investigated in this study follow these formats, but also because F2F courses that include zero online elements (even a syllabus placed online) are increasingly rare, and thus the distinction is less and less useful. For example, in one student survey, it was determined that 17.1% of the current classes on which students reported still made use of no e-resources at all, i.e. the course was conducted entirely in-person. Over two thirds (67.5%) of classes used at least "basic" or "moderate" e-resources, however, such as online lecture notes, syllabi, gradebooks, methods for contacting instructors, readings, and/or answer keys, and/or an interactive forum/discussion board. Furthermore, an additional 15.4% of classes used "advanced" e-resources, which were defined as the availability of "either video or audio recordings of lectures, live streams of lectures or online tests" that "offer [the] potential for replacing physical attendance altogether" or "involve interactive delivery of core material" (Kaznowska, Rogers, & Usher, 2011, p. 6-7). This means that 82.9% of all courses used some form of online supports, and it is likely that over time "traditional" courses will likely become even scarcer.

Finally, I have chosen to refer to these course types as learning *environments* as opposed to other possible terms such as course *mode*, *modality*, or *method* since this avoids confusion with

discourses related to theoretical models of communication (e.g. for *modes of communication* such as speech or writing) or specific instructional methods or task-types. As I will discuss later in this thesis, online learning in general is not a teaching method, and online courses involve a wide array of modes of communication between teachers, students, and the computer itself. The term *environment* encompasses the idea that the physical (classroom) or virtual (online) area designated for a course of study are "spaces" which are enacted to enable learning to occur; they do not embody such learning on their own.

1.3   Combining Course Environments

In universities today, traditional on-campus students increasingly take a variety of online and in-person courses simultaneously, and may transition quite often between these two learning environments, rather than staying exclusively within one environment. For example, one 2008 report found that 11% of 11,981 Canadian undergraduate students surveyed reported having taken a fully online course in the previous year and 16% had taken a blended or hybrid course (CUSC, 2008).

Previous research on learning languages using online tools, centred mainly in the CALL (computer assisted language learning) and distance education fields, has changed focus over time. Whereas a major early focus was on the question of whether online learning and/or CALL technologies are, or can be, effective to learn languages, it is now much more common to investigating how best to design online courses or technologies for optimal learning. Research has also examined factors that influence student or teacher success in online courses (e.g. dropout or retention rates, the types of students who enroll online, barriers to online success, teacher training for online instruction). This kind of research has often attempted to draw a clear line between online and traditional learning environments, not taking into account how students may fare when they have taken online courses in sequence with their on-campus counterparts in the duration of their studies of a particular subject. In other words, little to no research exists that examines how students

transition between online and on-campus courses and what potential effects this may have on students' learning and academic success over time. In a discipline like language learning, where researchers recognize the importance of intensive skill development and ongoing practice, as opposed to being a discipline typically taught in a lecture-based, information-delivery format of discrete units of knowledge[1], this gap has implications for how we evaluate the role of OLL as an instructional environment in language programs.

1.4   Why Waterloo?

In this thesis, I examine the various ways in which undergraduate students of German as a foreign language at the University of Waterloo (UW, UWaterloo) in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, experience transitions between learning environments and how they perceive the role of OLL in their undergraduate program. This research is particularly well suited to be carried out at UW, since they have offered online German courses for more than ten consecutive years and these courses have been designed to be parallel to their on-campus counterparts. Both course types use a task-based method of instruction, the same textbook, and have the same learning outcomes, and F2F learning activities have been adapted for the online environment. This equivalency in design was designed to allow full flexibility for students in their choices from term to term. Because UW has the largest co-operative ("co-op") education program of its kind in the world, with more than 19,000 students (approx. 60% of the student body) enrolled in more than 122 programs (Univ. of Waterloo, "About Co-operative Education," n.d.), there is a particularly high demand for flexible course options. The university year is divided into three equal-length trimesters (Fall: September-December,

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[1] To clarify, although there are a wide variety of theoretical approaches that attempt to understand the complex process of how students learn (or acquire) a second language, it is clear that practice, interaction, and input all play a role, which are difficult, if not impossible, to undertake in a traditional teacher-led lecture, where the instructor speaks, and students "learn" by taking notes. I would argue that it is also generally agreed that a discipline like language learning cannot be taught in discrete units, unlike a subject like history (e.g. by period, geographic location, etc.), and that it places a much higher focus on development by the learner over time (e.g. of competence or performance). For a discussion of SLA theories and how they relate to CALL research, see Chappelle (2009).

Winter: January-April, and Spring: May-August)[2], and students in the co-op program study the entire year, alternating work terms with academic terms in a prescribed sequence depending on their program of study (they are also permitted to take one academic course while working, which is usually done online or in the evening). Those in the regular (non-co-op) stream follow the traditional Canadian academic calendar, consisting of study in two consecutive four-month terms (Fall and Winter terms, as detailed above), with the Spring term taken off. All students can use this added course availability, however, and choose to study in the Spring term as well. To accommodate the traditional reduced availability of teaching staff in the spring/summer, as well as the reduction in enrollment by regular stream students, many departments offer fewer on-campus courses in the Spring term, whereas online course options remain available. Online courses are thus offered in many departments all year long to help ensure availability, continuity, and flexibility to all students. This is the case in the German program, offered by the Department of Germanic & Slavic Studies, and the setup allows students to continue learning German in the Spring term while they work, study, or undertake other activities (e.g. study abroad).

Because of this institutional setup and the fact that the online and on-campus courses at UW are designed to fit together, UW provides an excellent setting in which to examine the question of how students fare when transitioning between course environments. That is, have these online courses been enabling students to reach their intended learning goals? How have students fared in the program and has this "equivalency design" led to student success over the long term?

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[2] For more information on the study structure in place, see the UW website, including the pages "Systems of study" (2015-2016), "The co-operative education system" (2015-2016), or the definition of "term" in the "Glossary of terms" (n.d.).

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1.5   The "Geroline" Project

This thesis is part of a larger research project, entitled "Geroline,"[3] which was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the online language courses at UW. The researchers wanted to investigate whether or not the online courses are meeting their stated goals of offering course choice and flexibility to students as they work towards the primary intended learning outcomes of the courses, i.e. to raise students' language proficiency and intercultural awareness. The Geroline team believes it is necessary to take an all-encompassing approach and examine the academic *trajectories* (i.e. combination and sequencing of course taken in different environments) of all students who have taken the three language courses since the implementation of their online counterparts ten years ago. By examining these trajectories, it can be determined whether or not students who have transitioned from online courses to on-campus, or vice-versa, share similar academic challenges and successes. As these online language courses have been recently redesigned, the authors also want to determine whether the new pedagogical practices and technological affordances have resulted in better learning outcomes for their students. I will discuss further how my project fits into the broader Geroline project in Chapter 2.

1.6   Research Questions

In this thesis, I will focus in particular on three areas of inquiry:

1. First, how do students perceive the value and effectiveness of OLL environments and how do they think such an environment affects (or would affect) their language learning process? How satisfied did they feel with the various course environments in which they have studied?

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[3] The name is a play on the phrase "Ger(man) online" and is used as a reference to the name of the original development project of the first three online German-language courses, which were also investigated in a previous study by Schulze, Liebscher, & Su (2007).

2. Second, how do they choose their preferred language learning environment, and how do they see certain types of courses fitting into their plan of study?

3. Finally, how do students experience transitions between learning environments, and how prepared did they feel before and after such transition?

Concerning Q1, I first asked students in a survey how satisfied they were with online courses they had taken, both in absolute terms and in comparison to on-campus courses. In follow-up interviews, I then asked questions about students' experiences with, and opinion of, different course environments in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of how they perceive the value of these environments. I chose this method, rather than simply asking students to rate their opinion of online or on-campus courses on a scale (e.g. from *very valuable* to *not at all valuable*) partly because this has been done in prior studies, and partly because I wanted to be able to examine the underlying reasons behind such ratings. In other words, what aspects led to these student perceptions? Possible answers could be their personal experiences learning online or in a classroom, anecdotes from classmates, learning styles, influence by instructors, satisfaction, or level of success learning in different environments, or general perceptions not linked to specific experiences, etc.

Q2 focuses, then, on how these experiences and perceptions affected the course choices students ultimately made. That is to say, did students have a *preferred* language learning environment? Which factors did they base their choice(s) on? How much consideration did they give to online language courses compared to on-campus ones? Would they make the same choice(s) now? These types of questions examine the role that online learning plays for students in their programs, and whether online courses are seen as practically valuable, not just valuable in theory. That is to say, did students judge these courses valuable enough to actually enroll in one? I will answer this question mainly with the use of the interview data.

My final research question is designed to examine how students actually experienced *transitions* between learning environments. Did their perceptions of value and effectiveness match their experiences of transitions, as they articulated them? Did they think that the transitions would be more difficult or easy than they were, or vice versa? Did they experience anxiety or doubts about switching between learning environments, and did this affect how they made course decisions? Did their transition experiences colour their opinion of the value and effectiveness of language learning environments? This question will be answered with information from the student interviews I conducted, and all three questions will be examined in the broader context of the statistical data obtained in the Geroline project. The purpose of this is to triangulate the data collected, to examine not just how students perceive language learning environments (and how they themselves articulate their views), but if these perceptions are in accordance with long term data on student success.

1.7   Study Purpose and Goals

Aside from gathering perception data in a survey or comparing learning outcomes of student learning on-campus versus online, which has been done extensively in previous research, this study seeks to examine the broader role of online learning in the German program under investigation, as articulated by students themselves, in the wider context of the student data collected and analyzed by the Geroline project team. This means gathering and examining qualitative and quantitative data on student perception, satisfaction, experiences, and opinions as well as their individual course choices and the reasons they have expressed for these choices. I have compared and interpreted these data against a backdrop of student data from the university registrar's database, which includes 6,920 student records, detailing course selection, sequence, and final-grade outcomes. By investigating a snapshot of current students' experiences *along with* the wider context of the course choices students have actually made over time, and how this may or may not have affected their success in their programs, I aim to discern how the course environment is relevant for students when learning a

language (or thinking about doing so) online, on-campus, or both. This can assist with evaluating the course offerings at the university from students' perspectives and help teachers and administrators understand how combinations of "new" and "old" study environments might be affecting students' academic success. One of the wider goals of the Geroline project is to consider how to enable students to make informed choices about the early language courses that provide the best start into their program of study, and I seek to contribute to this goal with the work in this thesis.

2. Literature Review & Context

2.1 The Increase in Online (Language) Learning

It is clear that educational institutions have increasingly chosen to adopt online learning, and "the interest in teaching languages through . . . DL formats has [also] grown markedly as a direct result of expanded Internet use and a veritable explosion in social computing or computer-mediated communication (CMC)" (Blake, 2009, p. 822). According to Blake (2011), as of 2008 about one quarter of all post-secondary enrollments in the United States were online, with a precipitous growth rate in the prior decade of 19% for online enrollments, compared to a total growth rate of only 1.5% for enrollments as a whole. In Canada, the lack of a national education ministry or funding body makes comprehensive and analogous national statistics difficult to obtain, but one recent report by the Canadian Virtual University consortium (CVU, 2012) estimated that between four and eleven percent of registrations in Canada were online, based on various sources. This compared to 14% for the USA, by their estimation. Nonetheless, institutions who are focused strategically on online education have experienced significant growth, ranging from 16 to 126%, and the authors argue that even though "these figures are not representative of the situation at most Canadian universities […] the increases are indicative of the significant uptake by students in online education when it is a strategic priority of an institution" (p. 16). It seems the push to stay competitive in the field of online education is only likely to increase.

Bell and Federman (2013) cite a desire by post-secondary institutions to "generate new revenue streams, improve access, and offer students greater scheduling flexibility" (p. 165) as some of the reasons for this increase and Kanuka and Kelland refer to the many tempting promises and opportunities e-Learning has offered, such as research and collaboration unlimited by geographic constraints, the ability to "respond effectively to accelerating global competition," improved learning experiences and student access, as well as potential cost savings compared to traditional learning at

brick-and-mortar campuses (2008, p. 46). On the other hand, barriers to adoption of online learning

at universities still exist, including concerns about academic dishonesty, cost of implementation, and

challenges of access for some students. Low-income or underprepared students may not have equal

access to the technology and supports needed to learn online, a phenomenon referred to as the

digital divide, or more specifically *divides*, as earlier issues of simple access to the Internet have given

way to newer divisions, for example "between youth who use the Internet in diverse and engaging

ways, such as [for] social networking or searching for information about major life issues . . . and

[those] who use it as a more narrow and less engaging resource, such as [by] seeking entertainment

online through music or video clips" (Bell & Federman, 2013, p. 178-179). These inequalities usually

fall along income and ethnic lines, and can lead to lower technology skills and lack of confidence in

effected groups, which can go on to cause higher drop-out rates online for the exact disadvantaged

students for whom it is hoped eLearning will increase access.[4] In two recent versions of their yearly

report on the state of online education in the United States, Allen and Seaman (2013, 2015) found

that Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) continue to name faculty acceptance, the need for more

student discipline, lower retention rates, increased instructor effort needed to deliver online courses,

and lack of acceptance among potential employers as some the top barriers to implementation (for

further discussion of faculty views towards E-Leaning, see Kanuka & Kelland, 2008). When asked if

learning outcomes were comparable for online courses offerings versus traditional on-campus ones,

CAO support has increased over time, from 57% in 2003 agreeing that outcomes were the same or

superior, to 77% in 2012. Support plateaued, however, in 2014 and 2015 and then went down

slightly, settling on 74%, while a consistent one in four respondents still view the learning outcome

results achieved online to be inferior to those possible in F2F learning.

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[4] For discussion of this concept in the Canadian context, see Contact North, 2012; CVU, 2012; Haight, Quan-Haase, & Corbett, 2014.

Despite this resistance, universities are still seeing a push towards offering more courses online because they are seen to potentially provide students with new forms of social and learning interaction, widen access to education for students at a (geographic) distance and those with impeding time constraints, and offer students individualized learning experiences in large classes.

2.2   Online Language Learning Discourses

There have been many years of research into all aspects of DL and online education, but the subject of languages has only become a focus in the last fifteen years or so, likely because language learning has not been adopted as quickly as other subjects (Hurd, 2006). Hurd (2006) attributes this delay in moving language study fully into the online/DL[5] environment to a number of factors. First, to the "the recognition that languages are considered more difficult to learn in distance mode than other subjects [Sussex, 1991] and that distance language learners require a greater degree of self-regulation [White, 1994]" (Hurd, 2006, p. 304). Second, she refers to the commonly held belief that "learning in distance mode … [is] problematic for the acquisition, practice, and assessment of foreign language speaking skills, given the physical absence of a teacher, the isolated context, and reduced opportunities for interacting in the target language" (Hurd, 2006, p. 304). Especially in the language-based disciplines, an increase in the enrollment of students in online language classes likely necessitates a reconceptualization of language-learning processes in the early phases of a program, which have traditionally been focused on the experience of students interacting with a teacher face to face. Blake (2009) summarizes the challenge as follows:

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[5] While these study environments are traditionally distinct, they are increasingly becoming synonymous as online platforms become the environment of choice for providing education at a distance. That said, traditional paper and pencil distance courses still exist in some fields and countries, and some institutions may refer to courses which use a combination of the online environment with print or multimedia materials (or limited on-campus components) as "distance" instead of "online." One study that uses this set of terminology is Bailey et al (2015, discussed below). Because of this ambiguity in terminology, it is therefore important to be clear about course design when discussing research on course environments.

Even as the attractiveness of DL language delivery grows, no language professional, not even the most technologically enamored instructor or CALL researcher, would dispute the notion that, to approach advanced proficiency…, L2 [second language] students need to interact face to face with native speakers, preferably in a country where the language is spoken (Davidson, 2007). This experience is the only way to develop an appropriate sense of pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence, let alone advanced linguistic competence. Where does DL fit in, then, with the rest of the L2 curriculum given the time investment required to realize a measured level of professional competence in the L2? Despite the variety of DL formats, digital interactions constitute the very heart of today's DL delivery of languages (Blake, 2005; White, 2003), whether in an asynchronous . . . and/or synchronous form. . . . (p. 824-925)

Much of the research to date, however, has not focused on this question of how DL fits into the early second language learning curriculum, instead focusing on researching other, nevertheless important aspects of CALL, second language acquisition (SLA), online education, or DL. Researchers have examined issues of course design and how to assess quality in the OLL environment (Freire, 2013; Neumeier, 2005; Strobl & Jacobs, 2011), as well as dimensions of quality from student or instructor perspectives (Jung, 2011; Ward, Peters, & Shelley, 2010). In addition, there have been a significant number of studies examining factors that influence dropout and retention rates (Boton & Gregory, 2015; Lee & Choi, 2011) and how student characteristics, such as learning styles or backgrounds, affect success when learning online (Coleman & Furnborough, 2010; Diaz & Cartnel, 1999; Dutton, Dutton, & Perry, 2002; Johnson, 2015; Kruger-Ross & Waters, 2013). Finally, there has been research into various other student factors and how they are interrelated and relate to effective learning. These include, but are not limited to, studies on student perceptions, experiences, attainment (or achievement), performance, motivation, independence, autonomy, preparedness, or satisfaction in on-campus or online language courses (Afshar, Rahimi, & Rahimi, 2014; Beard, Harper, & Riley, 2004; Busse & Walter, 2013; Chun & Morrison, 2013; Eneau & Develotte, 2012; Felix, 2001, 2004; Fryer, Bovee, & Nakao, 2014; Hurd, 2006; Kaznowska et al.,

2011; Pena & Yeung, 2009; Russell & Curtis, 2013; Schulze, Liebscher, & Su, 2007; Sun, 2014; Ushida, 2005; Warschauer, 1995).

When it comes to course choice, there has been, as mentioned, a significant amount of research on the characteristics of online students, as well as students perceptions of these courses, which often includes explicitly asking students why they chose to enroll in an online course (see above, e.g. Dutton, 2002). There has been less investigation, however, of how students come to these decisions, i.e. which underlying factors might be influencing their choices, and how these factors may differ between students who study in different environments. The studies in this group (e.g. Bailey, Ifenthaler, Gosper, Kretzschmar, & Ware, 2015; Mohamed, Hassan, & Spencer, 2011) tend to focus on online learning in general, and not OLL or CALL, but are nonetheless interesting because they examine the question from a different angle – rather than looking at characteristics of online learners after they have enrolled online and what factors cause them to succeed or learn effectively once there, they look at the situation beforehand (sometimes with a follow-up as well), to see which factors have an impact on student intentions. For example, in their study of 257 students (three quarters undergraduate, one quarter graduate), Mohamed, Hassan, and Spencer examined the concept of perceived risk and how it could help explain student intentions to enroll in online courses (or not). They found that that "enrollment intention significantly and negatively correlated with all the five dimensions of perceived risk for online classes" examined in the study, i.e. performance, time demand, social, psychological, and source credibility risks (p. 9). There were also significant variations in different categories of risk perception between demographic groups, indicating that "if the administrators of online programs better understood potential students' fears and concerns, they could market certain attributes of their programs in a way that might alleviate such fears" (p. 11), and do so based on the student groups they are targeting for enrollment. As the authors state, it is clear that "even though OE is becoming much more common and well accepted,

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perceived risk still occurs and is associated with the decision of whether or not to enroll in such courses" (p. 11). Although these studies were not undertaken specifically with regard to language courses online, they still suggest that students make course choices about study environments in reasonably deliberate and measurable ways.

Online vs. on-campus: efficacy. A common thread in many of the studies on online (language) learning has been a focus on efficacy, and many of them have sought to implicitly or explicitly examine the effectiveness of the online learning environment by comparing these courses (or subparts thereof) to their traditional F2F counterparts (Bell & Federman, 2013). This focus has existed in the fields of online learning and DL in general, as well as in CALL and OLL in particular, though evaluative studies dealing with language learning specifically are still scarce (Blake, 2009, 2011). Researchers first asked if CALL technologies could effectively supplement or substitute for language teaching methods, and then whether it is it possible for students to learn a foreign or second language completely online[6]. *Comparison studies* (also called *media comparison studies*; Conger, 2005) assess the efficacy of online instructional software, tools, or entire courses in various ways. Many examine student records, including grades for single or multiple assessments in each class type, since this data is relatively easy to obtain (e.g. Dutton, 2002; Lapsley, Kulik, Moody, & Arbaugh, 2008; Schulze, Liebscher, & Su, 2007), which is often then combined with student demographic data (from surveys) to draw conclusions. In others, students complete proficiency assessments specifically for the purpose of the study (e.g. Voile, 2005). Finally, a number of other studies examine results obtained using an online technology or in an online course, and then compare these generally to previous research on F2F learning to see if the technology should be considered

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[6] For reviews of this debate (including discussion of various meta-analyses) in higher education in general, see Bell & Federman, 2013; Conger, 2005; for the debate centred in CALL, see Blake, 2009, 2011; Felix, 2005a, 2005b, 2008.

effective (e.g. Blake, 2005; for further information on/reviews of DL comparison studies, see Blake, Wilson, Cetto, Pardo-Ballester, 2008; Sanders, 2005).

Over time, it became clear that the simple question of efficacy is no longer a helpful or relevant question to ask, for a number of reasons (Bell & Federman, 2013; Blake, 2009, 2011; Conger, 2005). First, many comparison studies resulted in mixed results (some found new technologies to have positive effects for learning, others reported negligible, or even negative, effects), which has made it very hard to draw broad conclusions. This has been attributed to the design of many studies, which are often small and exploratory in nature, as well as to the fundamental problem of uncontrollable variables. Blake notes that, as with traditional classroom instruction, "online courses . . . differ wildly not only in terms of their format but also in terms of their use of particular technological tools and pedagogies, making comparisons with other online courses or other traditional courses extremely difficult" (Blake, 2011, p. 20). This is compounded by methodological problems, such as an overreliance on "single group pretest, post-test designs" and non-randomized groupings (convenience samples), as well as conflation of differences in environment with differences in instruction (Bell & Federman, 2013, p. 171). Finally, online and distance students are much harder to recruit for participation in studies, since they are not required to be in a physical classroom at set times, they are often older and more independent (e.g. working with families), and cannot often be recruited for longitudinal studies (Blake, 2009). Multiple meta-analyses have confirmed these mixed results (e.g. Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009; White, 2006), which indicates the need for a new approach. For example, a 2009 US Department of Education-commissioned meta-analysis (in Blake, 2011) found that:

> Students who took all or part of their classes online performed better than those in traditional face-to-face learning environments . . . [and] students involved in blended/hybrid [ones] did better than those in purely online courses . . . . The authors concluded that online learning offered a modest advantage over traditional classroom instruction, but the results appeared to be highly sensitive to the amount of time on task

and did not directly address the issue of OLL. Not surprisingly, learners taking online courses who spent more time working on their own did better than those in a face-to-face situation (with respect to language study only, see the online Iowa State database compiled by Grgurovic, 2007). Perhaps this last factor alone constitutes the most important value added with respect to online learning: The medium stimulates students to spend more time engaged with the second language (L2) materials, which ultimately promotes greater learning. (p. 21)

A consensus has therefore emerged that it is much more worthwhile to examine the pedagogical and technological design of online courses and software tools individually (if possible, in fully developed and implemented online courses rather than small exploratory pilots), with clear and detailed descriptions of their implementation and use in the real world. Their effectiveness can then be assessed in light of the specific institutional context in which they were situated, with a view to how students actually *use* these online technologies, as opposed to how software designers or instructors hope or expect them to be used (Bell & Federman, 2013; Blake, 2009; Fischer, 2007; Stockwell, 2012). As Stockwell (2012) states, questions about how "good" a given program is for learning a language, or which is the "best" platform miss the point:

These questions, while seeming valid at face value, fail to take into consideration a number of critical factors about the environment in which a program may be used. That is to say, people would be far less likely to ask "what textbook is the best for teaching a foreign language?" without including some kind of qualifier regarding language skills or areas, level of the student, the means of teaching, and so forth. Everything in CALL occurs within a context, and this context will have an enormous impact on the choice of the technology and how it is used. (p. 2)

"Learning online" is actually not a teaching method(ology) but a very wide and ever expanding spectrum of tools, models, and courses, and just as in a F2F classroom situations, many complex factors of course design and implementation come into play when examining student learning. It is often impossible to separate the effect(s) of online tools or delivery mechanisms from the wider complex system of a course, which includes factors such as the teacher (e.g. their knowledge, training, and actions), the students themselves (their prior knowledge, expectations, learning styles,

etc.) the quality and layout of the course content and learning activities, and other institutional or system factors which affect classrooms of all kinds (e.g. institutional rules, technology constraints, etc.). Research that is more recent has thus moved beyond "the 'does it work' question to examine how different instructional features and supports, such as immersion and interactivity, influence the effectiveness of e-learning programs." (Bell & Federman, 2013, p. 165; see also Blake, 2009).

This reconceptualization of the question of efficacy and the call to examine how online and CALL technologies/resources are used in the real world means changing the focus from the materials and instruction (teacher-focused) to their use and reception (student-focused). This has long been a goal for both the education field as well as CALL, beginning with Garrett's (1991) influential article outlining the case for focusing on "interactivity, process over product, learner-centeredness, and authenticity" (in Blake, 2009, p. 822). As Stockwell states, the "starting point for CALL should always be the learners" (Stockwell, 2012, p. 12). This has led to the problem of how to actually measure student learning in online environments if we are to go beyond using only grades, surveys, and unaccompanied pre- and post-tests. Fischer (2012) notes that "since the early 1990s, several prominent figures in the field have called for the collection and analysis of tracking data, notably Nina Garrett and Carol Chapelle (Garrett, 1991, 1998; Liddell and Garrett, 2004; Chapelle, 1997, 2001, 2007, 2009)" (Fischer, 2012, p. 15). What is meant here by the term *tracking data* is data on "what students do as they use CALL software (e.g. enter texts in fields, click on buttons, choose a particular kind of help device associated with hyperactive text), [with which] we can begin to understand the kinds of strategies students use (or lack thereof) as they work their way through CALL programs" (Fischer, 2012, p. 14).

In light of this view, it is important to be clear that simply asking students what they prefer or think about a topic, while valuable on its own, does not offer sufficiently reliable information about the processes that happen when students learn languages, especially in an online environment away

from the observations of instructors and researchers. Despite a historical interest in the topic, especially in the area of tutorial CALL (in which students interact with a computer that "teaches" them), research that includes tracking data has been scarce due to the precise planning and preparation needed to tackle the laborious, time-consuming nature of the task (Fischer, 2012). In his analysis of representative tracking data studies[7], Fischer (2012) argues that despite the difficulties in collecting tracking data, it is nevertheless a goal worth pursuing, since such studies have proven that students use technologies in a strikingly large variety of ways, which are "highly individualistic in nature" (p. 27). All things considered, Fischer (2012) found that different students tended to over- and underuse particular software components based on their perception of these components' immediate usefulness, and "lower-level students" (defined in various ways) appeared to approach software resources in a less organized fashion than "higher-level students" (p. 26-27). Beyond these general patterns, all students used the software components in such a wide variety of ways that further generalizations based on traditional student categories (such as "levels of proficiency, experience, and achievement") were extremely difficult (p. 27). Thus, Fischer suggests that new categories are needed in order to be able to predict and analyze student usage and that this diversity in learner approaches makes a very compelling case for learner training so that students can make better use of online language learning components.

Although Fischer did not examine these questions in the context of OLL, but rather tutorial CALL, it is nonetheless telling that what students think they do and learn often does not correlate to reality. For example, in one of a series of tracking studies comparing students' reported and actual use of CALL software, Fischer (2004a, in 2012) examined a multimedia program for learning French. When he compared students' responses to surveys (including questions on their use of available

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[7] Studies examined by Fischer (2012) as representative of the variability in student usage patterns include: Bland, Noblitt, Gay, & Armington, 1990; Brandl, 1995; Chun & Plass, 1996; Collentine, 2000; Davis & Lyman-Hager, 1997; Desmarais, Duquette, Renié, and Laurier, 1998; Ercetin, 2003; Fischer 1999, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Knight, 1994; Laufer & Hill, 2000; Noblitt & Bland, 1991; Pujolà, 2002.

components and their views as to their educational value) to their actual use of the component resources based on tracking data, he found there was either inconsistent or no correlation between them. He concluded that:

> students were, at best, not consistently aware of what they did as they used the program, which calls into question the reliability of their perceptions of the value of the program's components. If students' self-reports on the use of program features are unreliable, then their judgements of the instructional value of those features must be considered suspect, as evidenced by the absence of any relationship between perceptions of value and component use. (p. 24-25)

This is the main reason I have chosen to examine student's perceptions in the wider context of the data from the Geroline project. By counterbalancing qualitative student perception data from a current cohort of students with data on how they actually perform in the medium (course-level) and long (degree-level) term, I hope to be able to better explore the complex relationship between student perceptions, outcomes (grades), course choices, and experiences in (and between) different course environments.

Transitions between learning environments. If it is now generally accepted that students can perform just as well in well-designed online courses (Bell & Federman, 2013; Blake, 2011; Schulze, Liebscher, & Su, 2007), this raises the question: How does the combination of these very different learning environments affects student experiences, satisfaction, and success in their programs? While there has been significant research into the combination of environments in the sense of blended learning (Sun, 2014), there is a gap with respect to the longer-term combination (and resulting transitions) of/between discrete online and F2F courses. When one puts this question into the context of the oftentimes negative or doubtful view many instructors and students have of online (language) learning, or the significant challenges students sometimes face in adapting to this "new" environment (e.g. Fryer, Bovee, & Nakao, 2015; Hurd, 2006; Kaznowska, Rogers, & Usher, 2011; Sun, 2014), a number of questions arise, such as: Why do many students hold certain opinions

of OLL? Why would some students embrace OLL, when others shun it or are ambivalent? Is there any difference in outcomes or transition experiences between students who combine both learning environments within their program of study, and those who stay within only one or the other? Are there other transition experiences that are important for students, even within one course environment (e.g. between levels, language and content courses, etc.).

2.3   Context: Geroline and Online German at UW

Online German language courses. The situation at the University of Waterloo, where the online German classes use the same textbook, structure, and task-based focus as the on-campus classes, is unique – it offers an excellent chance to study the role of online classes as a key and flexible component of early second language learning in a university program. An informal survey[8] of the websites of over 30 of the largest brick and mortar universities in Canada who offer some form of studies in German turned up only three universities (other than UW) that offered any form of instruction online. The University of Calgary occasionally offers a reading course for academics with no prior knowledge of German, Memorial University has offered an introductory (English-language) culture course in the Spring term, and the University of Guelph currently offers an online advanced German language course in cooperation with the University of Waterloo (see UCalgary, 2010; MemorialU, 2016; UGuelph, 2015; respectively). In addition to this, some open/online universities, such as Athabasca University, offer German language classes completely online, but no ability for students to specialize by taking German as their major or minor subject (i.e. no study beyond the intermediate level), and there are often no F2F courses offered with which the online

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[8] I examined the websites of the 33 largest English-language or bilingual universities (other than UW) that offer German, according to the search engine of Universities Canada (UniversityStudy.ca, 2016). I searched both traditional (undergraduate, for-credit) course offerings, as well as any other online, distance, or continuing education courses that might be offered. University websites examined include the Universities of Alberta, British Columbia, Calgary, Guelph, Lethbridge, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Ottawa, Prince Edward Island, Regina, Saskatchewan, Toronto, Victoria, Windsor, and Winnipeg; as well as Acadia, Bishop's, Brock, Carleton, Dalhousie, McGill, McMaster, Memorial, Mount Allison, Queen's, Ryerson, Simon Fraser, St. Francis Xavier, St. Mary's, Trinity Western, Western, Wilfrid Laurier, and York Universities.

courses could be compared or contrasted (AthabascaU, 2015). Thus, despite these offerings, it is clear that the vast majority of university departments in Canada who offer German are very focused on providing traditional F2F instruction, and any online offerings are either not integrated into, or do not play a large role in, core programs of study.

In the Germanic & Slavic department at UW, students have a choice each semester: in the Fall or Winter terms, they can take language classes online or on-campus, and in the Spring they can choose to continue with an online German course, take part in a number of summer study abroad programs, or take a semester off from German and continue again in the Fall. The online language courses are synchronized with equivalent on-campus courses, and they have proven to be very popular. The analysis in the Geroline project shows that of the 12,429 students who have enrolled in all German courses during the 30 terms over the 10 years under study, 5,906 students (48%) have been enrolled in the first three (most-popular) courses, i.e. GER 101, 102, and 201 (Elementary German I and II, and Intermediate German I, respectively), and of these, 44% took it online. More specifically 45% of GER 101 students, 40% of those in GER 102, and 47% in GER 201 were enrolled online. Therefore, online students accounted for 21% of all students who have taken any of UW's German classes, showing the importance of both lower-level language learning and online learning to the program.

UW's online German courses have been offered for more than ten years and have undergone continual renewal, including a prior study in 2007 that examined student perception and attainment, finding that the courses examined "[gave] students the same learning opportunity as students in [the] on-campus groups" (Schulze et al., p. 22). Despite this, there is no information about how students transition *between* online and on-campus language courses and how the method of instruction might affect their success within a program or influence their program choice. In today's universities, as more and more students are taking a variety of online and on-campus courses simultaneously, it

follows that they will increasingly transition between these two study environments, and the lack of research examining the nature of these transitions leaves us with no information of what potential effects this new reality may have on students' academic success. The popularity of online learning, coupled with the importance of early language classes, provides a case for examining how online courses impact student achievement, and therefore how effectively they meet the learning outcomes for the program as a whole. According to the UW Germanic & Slavic Studies website, these could be articulated as a desire to:

- give [students] the ability to communicate with people throughout central and eastern Europe,
- not only provide [students] with a unique perspective into a new culture, but make [them] more aware of [their] own language and culture,
- let [students] appreciate the richness of other cultures,
- provide [students] with intercultural communication skills, and make [them] more effective and successful communicator[s],
- give [students] access to study and work opportunities throughout Europe, [and]
- equip [students] with skills that can make a difference when looking for work in Canada and elsewhere. ("Why study language?", n.d.)

Geroline project phases. This thesis, as part of the wider project, contributes towards answering these questions. The specific stated goals of the Geroline project were:

1. to determine how the medium of learning (virtual learning environment vs. classroom) impacts an individual student's academic success (i.e. grades, continuation with German) in these courses and subsequently in upper-year German courses that are offered on-campus;

2. to identify patterns in the students' trajectories of transitioning between online and on-campus courses and to gather evidence-based information about students' course choices and their decisions to study online vs. on-campus;

3. to produce an online module which will enable students to make informed choices about taking the appropriate language class at the beginning of their studies and to provide the same information to undergraduate advisors.

The project has been undertaken in three phases. In the first phase, a comprehensive statistical analysis of all class lists (with final grades) of the three courses (GER 101, 102, and 201 both online and on-campus) from the spring term 2004 to the winter term 2014 was undertaken. A team of instructors grade exams in these courses consistently by holding joint grading sessions, through which it is possible to achieve very high inter-grader reliability. The grades are thus a robust and valid measure of student success and the quality of learning outcomes. The other courses (GER 202, 203, 303, 304) are higher-level language courses, which will provide evidence as to which students continue their language studies at UW successfully. GER 431 has been included because it is the Senior Seminar, only taken by students who minor or major in German. This way, we can ensure that we pay particular attention to students who complete the whole program. After obtaining de-personalized records of this large group of students (30 terms, ~140 term courses, ~750 class lists, ~15,000 course students/individual enrollments) from the university registrar, which contain information about the student's course, the term in which they took it, whether or not it was on-campus or online, and what grade each student achieved, cluster analyses, correlation tests, and comparative time series graphs were performed in order to give us insight into students' learning trajectories and their relation to academic success in our courses. This phase was primarily carried out by the principle- and co-investigators with the assistance of an undergraduate research assistant.

In phase two, largely equivalent to this thesis project, I have engaged in a qualitative study of interviews with students currently enrolled in German courses. The data collected in the first phase is intended to provide a birds-eye view of student trajectories, and the information from 157 survey respondents, as well as 23 interviews of current students will provide in-depth information about

individual learning trajectories. The students' challenges and successes will be triangulated with the statistical findings of phase one.

The recommendations and results gathered from the first two phases will guide phase three of the study (currently in progress), serving as the underpinning to design an online module for students thinking about taking online vs. on-campus courses. Due to the challenges inherent in selecting course offerings, students may be unaware of their options, and may not realize that online courses could provide a rewarding learning experience. Thus, providing them with increased information about online learning could assist them in choosing the courses they are genuinely interested in, rather than those that simply fit their schedules. Furthermore, the results of the study may be used in the future to investigate if a further reconceptualization of not only the online courses, but also of the on-campus courses and their mutual alignment, is needed or worthwhile.

3. Methodology

The data collection for this study was undertaken in two stages. In the first stage, I designed and administered a one-page background questionnaire in classroom visits to all 14 sections of on-campus German courses held at UWaterloo in the Winter 2015 academic term (two each of beginner, intermediate, and advanced language classes, as well as four culture classes taught in English at various levels. See Table 1). I also distributed an online version of the survey to current students enrolled online, as well as to the wider departmental student email list. One hundred fifty seven students provided responses to the survey, an overall response rate of 70.0% of students in the F2F classes visited and 5.6% of online students.

The final item on the survey solicited student interest in participating in follow up interviews, which I collected and entered in a database along with the answers to the individual survey questions. I then performed a cluster analysis based on student responses, in order to target recruitment for the interviews at a manageable number of possible participants, while also being sure to include students from a wide variety of backgrounds, including stage of language learning and experience with various course environments. Out of the 76 students who expressed interest, I invited 41 students in the first round to participate, and 26 in the second. Twenty-four interviews were eventually conducted, leading to a participation rate of 35.8% out of 67 total invited.

Interviews were individual, semi-structured, and conversational in style, conducted in person (with the exception of two by videoconference), and the average duration was 30 minutes. I videotaped each interview for analysis purposes, and took field notes after each one for later use. I then completed a content analysis of student responses to the interview questions, and I will report the results for the interviews in summary, as well as analyzing four examples in detail. The four example interviews are representative of the trends in student perceptions and experiences that emerged in the interview sample.

3.1 Stage One – Survey

Survey design and content. Items on the survey were divided into three general parts. First, students were asked information questions, including their major/minor subjects of study (Item 1, open response), which German courses they had taken to date (Item 2, open response), if they had taken online courses (Item 3, yes/no), and if so, which of these course were taken online (Item 3a, open response). In the second part, respondents were asked more detailed questions about their online course experience, including their reasons for enrolling (Item 3b, multiple response) online, in which they were asked to check off all applicable reasons from a list of various scheduling, personal, work, or interest-related possibilities, or to enter their own reason under "other." They were then asked to rate their satisfaction with the online course(s) attended on a four-point scale (Item 3c, Likert scale), and finally, if they had attended both online *and* an on-campus, to compare their satisfaction with (the) online course(s) taken compared to (the) on-campus one(s) on a five-point comparison scale (Item 3d, Likert). In the final section of the survey, all students were asked if they had any plans to take German online (Item 4, yes/no/unsure), why or why not (Item 4a, open response), and whether they had taken *any* online language courses (not just German) from somewhere other than the University of Waterloo (Item 5, yes/no). The last item asked whether the students would be willing to be contacted to answer further questions about their experiences in an interview (Item 6, yes/no), and if so, to please provide their contact information (Item 6a).

In this way, a mixture of information could be collected in order to get a general profile of respondents' learning trajectory and experience, through various items on demographics, background (course history by environment), motivation (to enroll online), absolute and relative satisfaction (with online course choice[s]), and perception of the desirability of online courses going forward (future plans and reasoning therefor).

Target population and survey administration. In selecting the target population for the survey, I specifically chose to contact students from all courses in the department, rather than only language courses, in order to capture responses from as wide a sample as possible of current students in the department. Therefore, senior-level content courses in linguistics, literature, film studies, cultural studies, etc., as well as English-language courses on German culture were included in the population targeted, along with beginner, intermediate and advanced language courses. With the permission of course instructors, I visited the classes over a two-week period at the start of term (mid-January) to request students' participation and administer the paper surveys (Appendix A).

In addition to the classroom visits, I sent out two additional versions of the survey online. The first was sent through LEARN (see Appendix B), the university's integrated web-based learning management system, which can be used by instructors to manage content for their traditional F2F courses (e.g. by posting course notes, syllabi, links to external resources, etc.), stay in contact easily with students (e.g. by sending announcements to the class list), and implement other technology features in their courses if they wish (e.g. online quizzes, electronic assignment submission, collection of student materials into portfolios, discussion boards, etc.) (D2L Corp., 2015). LEARN also provides the platform for all online distance education courses at UW, including those in this study. Students in these courses progress through a series of modules/chapters, and all tasks on the module pages refer to the same textbook package used for the on-campus German courses. Using the built-in survey function in the assessments section (with the help of Kyle Scholz, of the Geroline team, who is the Faculty of Arts liaison in the Centre for Teaching Excellence), the survey was then made available to students to answer directly in their online course.[9] The online course instructors were also provided with an email announcement text to send to their students, which was a modified version of the recruitment speech I gave in my classroom visits.

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[9] For a more detailed discussion of the organization of these online German courses and the task-based model of instruction in place, see the previous study undertaken by Schulze, Liebscher, & Su (2007).

The second online version was created with Google Forms (see Appendix C), which was then linked to a Google spreadsheet where the responses were recorded and saved. A link to the survey form was sent via email by the department secretary to all undergraduate students on the departmental mailing list, to try to elicit responses from any interested students who have taken our courses during their degree, but may not be enrolled in one this term (or may have been absent on the day of my visit). Both online versions of the survey necessitated a number of practical adjustments based on the web format and the target audience, in order to adapt them from the paper format. Below is a summary of these changes and the format to which they apply:

- Questions were renumbered or split into multiple items as needed due to the inability to have sub questions and other technical limitations of the platforms (Items 3a, 3b, 4a, etc.) (LEARN, Google Forms)

- Students could not click through to the survey questions without answering the mandatory first question asking for their consent. On LEARN they could still select "no," whereas on Google Forms, a "no" answer would redirect them to the submission screen (branch logic), saying they had completed the survey.

- A note was appended to the top of the consent page on LEARN asking students to please not fill out the survey if they had previously completed it on another occasion (e.g. in-class). On Google Forms, the question about classes they had taken specified that they should also include any classes they were currently enrolled in (for the paper survey the current class was already known).

- Some items were reworded on LEARN since students in this group were already enrolled in an online course. For example, Item 3 was changed to "Which of these courses were taken online?" and 3a to "Why did you choose to take these course(s) online?"

- Google Forms allowed the use of branch logic, so students were only presented with items pertaining to their opinions of online courses (Items 3a-d) if they selected "yes" to Item 3. If they selected "no" they were taken straight to Item 4.

Applicable courses. Table 1 summarizes the courses offered at UW which are applicable to my results, including a description of their level, content, type (language, culture, or specialized content seminars), and if they were offered during the study period. All those listed are taught in German and only one section was offered in Winter 2015, unless otherwise stated. For the remainder of this thesis, courses will be referred to by their calendar numberings as given here.

Table 1
Selected UW German Courses

Title	No.	Type	Description	Environment (Winter 2015)
Elementary German I	**101**	Language	First class for students with no prior knowledge. "Emphasis is on speaking, writing, vocabulary, basic grammar, and German culture."	-F2F (4 sections) -online
Elementary German II	**102**	Language	"Continuation of 101."	-F2F (2 sections) -online
Intermediate German I	**201**	Language	Entry point for students with some prior knowledge, e.g. from high school, or a continuation of 102. Emphasis on "communication skills and grammatical knowledge."	-online
Intermediate German II	**202**	Language	"Continuation of 201."	-F2F -online
Integrative Lang. Seminar I	**211 (203*)**	Language	"Develops reading, writing, and oral skills, and intercultural competence."	(Normally offered only in Fall)
Integrative Lang. Seminar II	**212 (204*)**	Language	Continuation of 211.	-F2F
German for Prof. Purposes	**307**	Specialized Sr. lang.	German for business and professional environments.	-F2F
Exploring the German Language:	**331**	Spec. Jr. content seminar	Introduction to linguistics, focus on "developing the German language skills necessary for linguistic analysis."	(Normally offered every other year)
Exploring German Lit.	**334**	Spec. Jr. content sem.	"An introduction to the study of prose, poetry, and theatre."	-F2F

Senior Seminar	**431**	Spec. Sr. content sem.	"Topics in literature, cultural studies, and linguistics." Required for all majors.	(Normally offered 1-2 times/year)
Misc. (taught in English)	180, 272, 298, 359	Culture/ content	Courses on a variety of subjects related to German culture, film, language, and literature.	-F2F (all) -online (272)
Misc. (taught in English)	100, 271, et al.	Additional culture/ content	Courses on a variety of subjects related to German culture, film, language, and literature.	(Offered in various terms, not Winter15)

Note. All quotes in Table 1 come from the UW Germanic & Slavic Studies webpage entitled "Course offerings" (n.d.). Courses numberings in bold text in this and all later tables are language classes, while an asterisk denotes a former numbering for a prior version of a course that is no longer active.

Collecting results. Next, I compiled all data from the paper surveys, including reviewing all responses, coding responses to open-ended questions, reconciling/correcting any data errors (e.g. the student filled out online satisfaction data, despite not having taken an online course), and entering all data into a Microsoft Access database which I created, for ease of filtering and organisation. The results were collected from the LEARN and Google Forms surveys approximately one month after sending out the request for participation[10], and these data were then merged with the paper-based data-set. Blank paper forms handed back by students were not counted because at the time of collection it was difficult to tell if these were simply extra copies or students who in fact had chosen not to participate. Respondents who actively did not consent, however (i.e. by marking "no" on the consent form, or by not signing their name despite filling out the survey) were entered into the database as having returned the survey, but any answers they gave to the items were not recorded. Thus, they are not included in any of the descriptive statistics except for the response and return rates.

Participation rates. Altogether, 162 students returned surveys, of which 96.9% (*n*=157) gave consent to have their responses used in the study. Of these, the vast majority (93.6%, *n*=147) of respondents were from the classroom visits, and only a small number came from students currently

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[10] I left the survey open longer in case any students did access it later, but upon later inspection, no additional responses were received after the initial data collection period.

enrolled in online courses (4.5%, *n*=7) who responded via LEARN, or from other students who received the survey through the email mailing list and filled out the Google Form survey (1.9%, *n*=3). Based on a snapshot of enrollment numbers[11,12] near the end of the first month of term, this leads to an approximate return rate for the classroom visits of almost three quarters of on-campus enrollments (152, or 72.4%, out of a possible 210), and a slightly lower actual response rate (meaning the student both filled out the survey *and* gave consent to use responses) of 70.0% (147 out of 210).

The response/return rate for students enrolled in the online sections was much lower, at only 5.6% (*n*=7) out of a possible 125. It should be noted, however, that despite this low response rate, online students nonetheless make up a significant share of overall enrollments in the department for the term (especially at the early language learning stage), at almost 40%. What is more, this number would only increase in the spring term, when very few courses are offered on-campus versus in the Fall and Winter, making the yearly proportion of students studying online somewhat higher. This tendency is simply the natural consequence of the design of the study and the tendency for voluntary online surveys to have lower response rates in research studies (Nulty, 2008).

Figure 1 displays a breakdown of the student population enrolled in German courses in the Winter 2015 term by course number and environment. Online enrollments made up an especially large proportion for Elementary German I (101) and German Thought & Culture (272), at 38.5% and 85.3%, respectively. This distribution of online vs. on-campus enrollments is typical for a Winter term at UW due to the schedule of courses offered every year. In the Fall term, more on-

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[11] Based on enrollment numbers taken from the online student information system as of January 29, 2015. There was a small decrease in enrollments from the dates they surveys were administered to the end of the enrollment period, but this was a very small number (three students). Although this would slightly increase the response rate, this is likely offset by the fact that a number of students were enrolled in multiple classes (especially those majoring in German and enrolled in senior classes), and so only filled out the survey the first time they received it, thus artificially lowering the response rate somewhat in turn.

[12] When referring to *students enrolled*, what is meant are enrollments in the sense where one *enrollment* = one student in one class. Thus, one student in five classes would count for five enrollments. Because students take varying numbers of classes in different departments, this is a standard unit of measure that I will use for the remainder of this thesis.

campus sections of 101 are offered, and so fewer students take it online, whereas in the Winter term fewer on-campus sections are offered, so more students take it online. The reverse is true for 102, with more students enrolled online in the Fall term and on-campus in the Winter term. This is due to the fact that many students in Arts still follow the regular (non-co-op) study schedule, whereby courses are taken in a relatively linear order each academic year, e.g. 101 in the Fall and 102 in the Winter, 201 the next Fall and 202 the next Winter, etc. The combined overall response rate for both course environments is therefore just under half of all 335 enrollments (n=154, 46.0%; return rate: 47.5%, n=159). It is not possible to estimate the response rate for the mailing list since the number of recipients on the list is unknown, along with which (if any) German courses students were *currently* enrolled in.

Figure 1
Winter 2015 Enrollment by Course and Environment
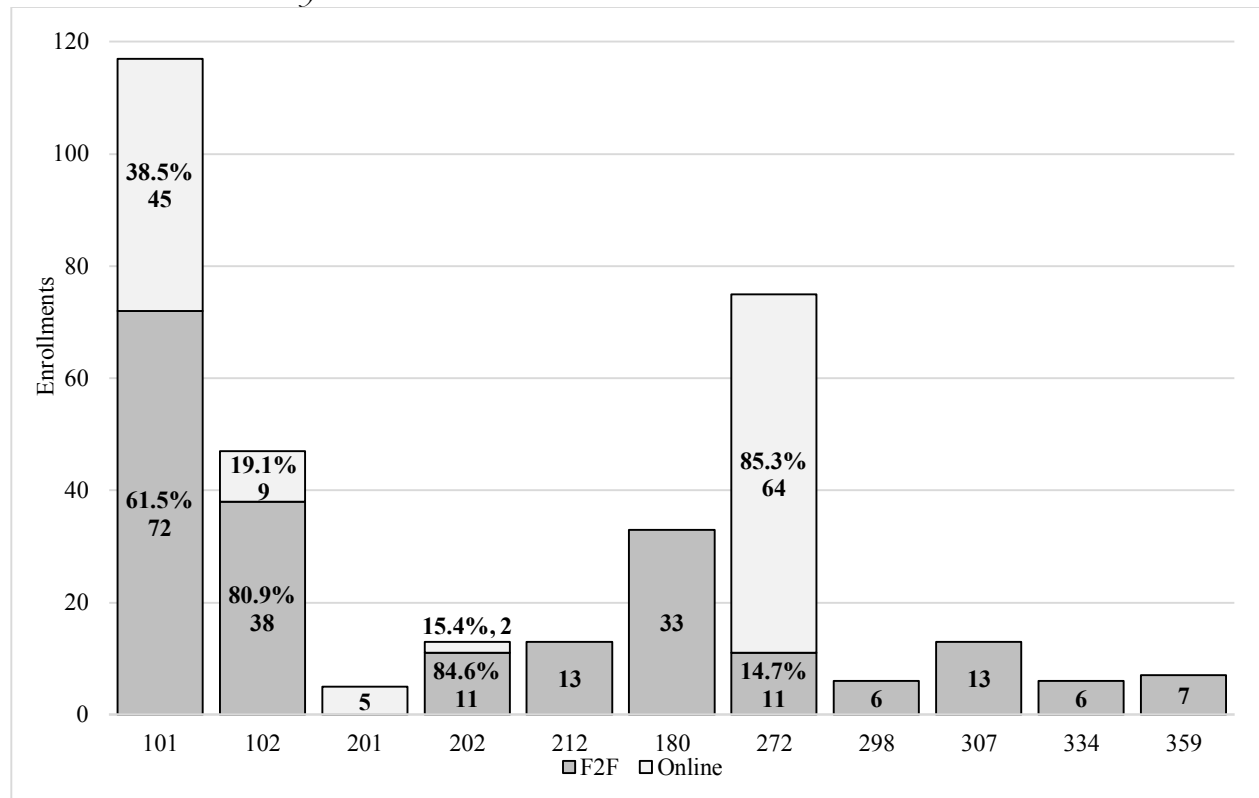
Note. Courses with n=0 online enrollment were not offered online during the term under study.

3.2   Stage Two – Interviews

Interview guides design and content. The planned interview questions focused on eliciting more information about students' personal learning situation, delving into more detail than was possible in the survey, while following the same general topic structure. In addition to the questions about the interviewee's language learning experiences that directly expanded on those asked in the survey, students were also asked about their level and type of involvement in learning German, both inside and outside of the course, such as the kind of learning activities they took part in in the four core skill areas (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), what they liked or disliked about the course(s), in what ways they interacted and communicated with other students or the instructor, their reason(s) for learning German, what they did on their own time to facilitate learning etc. In addition, a section of the interview asked for their general views on both language learning and German, such as what they see as the goal of learning a language, what they desire in a teacher, etc.

It was hoped that this additional information would help provide a fuller profile of the student's learning style and various motivations, which could help uncover some of the underlying reasons for their views on/preferences vis-à-vis course environment, and when combined with more explicit questions about their views of online vs. on-campus learning, how they experienced any transitions between course environments, and how they made choices about which courses to take (i.e. if the environment was a factor), this information would help directly address my research questions.

The interviews were semi-structured, in that I followed an interview guide, which had two very similar versions depending on the student's past course experience, but topics were also allowed to vary from the order in the guide depending on the flow of the conversation and answers of the student. I also asked students more information about their answers as needed, including probing questions about topics mentioned which seemed to warrant further inquiry, and offered more

information about the question if the student displayed lack of understanding. In this way, the interviews proceeded in a semi-conversational manner, with the aim of addressing the majority of questions on the interview guide in some form in the interview if possible.

The interview topics were also divided into two main sections. The first part was about course experiences, course environment, and their experiences at UW. In order to ease into the interview and help the interviewees feel at ease, more general, fact-based demographic questions were positioned at the beginning, then came questions about concrete course experiences, followed by perceptions and opinion-based questions, and finally questions about their future plans. The second part of the interview, in turn, was about students' views of language learning and German in general (since these influence their views of UW's courses specifically), and in the final, multi-part question, students were asked to think about these topics in general, not necessarily with regards to their specific experience in a single course. At the end of both sections, students were asked an open-ended question as to whether there was anything else not yet mentioned they wished to discuss.

Below is an abridged version of Interview Guide A (for students with online language experience) for reference. Version B (F2F-only) is very similar; references to past or current online course experience are simply changed to ask what students think about these course environments hypothetically, .e.g. "you haven't taken any German classes online … how do you think learning online would compare to learning in a classroom? … What do you think would be the advantages or disadvantages of online vs. in-class learning?" I did not create a separate version for online-only interviewees since there was only one student interviewed who fell into this category. Rather, some questions have sub-questions which were only asked if applicable (see below), and I modified any other questions as needed to reflect that the student was not learning F2F, e.g. by removing reference to taking F2F classes at Waterloo and talking about in-class experience as hypotheticals. For the full interview guides, see Appendix D.

Version A
1. Could you please tell me a bit about yourself and your background?
2. Did you have any prior knowledge of German before coming to UW? Have you learned any other foreign languages before German?
3. How do you feel about learning it?
4. So you have taken *number(s)* so far on-campus, and *number(s)* online. How have you found the on-campus course(s)/how are they going so far? Is there anything in particular you liked or disliked?
5. What about the online class? Can you tell me more about why you chose to take it online?
6. And how did the online class go? / How has it been so far? Is there anything particular that you liked or disliked?
7. What kinds of activities did you do for reading and listening in class? How much reading did you do? What types of listening activities were there? Did you do any extra activities on your own? What was the availability of materials?
8. What about speaking and writing? How much writing did you do in class? What types of speaking activities were included? How much practice did you get? Did you do any additional activities for self-study?
9. How much and in what way did you interact with your instructor and other people in your class? How satisfied do you feel about the level of communication you had with others?
10. IF ALSO TOOK A CLASS F2F: What has it been like learning German online versus in person in a classroom? Has it been the same or different than you expected? Have you found there are advantages or disadvantages for you to learning online?
IF ONLY TOOK CLASS ONLINE: How do you think learning on-campus would compare to learning in a classroom? How do you think it would be the same or different? What do you think would be the advantages or disadvantages of online vs. in-class learning?
11. IF APPLICABLE: according to your survey, you transitioned from course XXX online, to course XXX on-campus. How did you find the transition(s)? Did the online course(s) prepare you for the next level of in-class course and/or did the on-campus course prepare you to learn online? How did you feel about the transition?
12. What are your plans for the future, as far as learning German at UW? Do you plan on taking more classes at UW? If so, do you know if you'll take any of them online? Why or why not?
13. Do you remember how you made the decision to take this course originally? What influenced your decision? How would you make the decision now? Would you make the same choice or a different one?
14. Is there anything else about your experience in the German courses at UW that you would like to talk about?
15. IF APPLICABLE: According to your survey, you have taken another online language class before from somewhere other than UW. Could you please tell me about it? How did that class(es) compare to the one you took here?
16. I'm going to ask a few question now about language learning in general and German in particular. There are no right or wrong answers, I am just interested in your opinions.
    - What do you associate with "German"? What about the language in particular?
    - What do you want to learn when you learn a language? What do you want to be able to do? What is the most important aspect of learning a language for you?

- What are your goals for learning German in particular? Why did you choose German?
- What do you think makes a good language teacher? What do you expect of a professor? In the classes you've taken at UW, did you feel the instructors met your expectations? Were you getting the support you needed?

17. Is there something I missed that you think I should have asked about, or that you want to comment on?

Cluster analysis and subsampling. Seventy-six students (48.4%) expressed an interest in being contacted for a follow-up interview, and of these 31.6% (*n*=24) were eventually interviewed, or 15.3% in the entire 157-student survey sample. It is interesting to note that students who had some online course experience were more likely to express interest in an interview: 19 out of the 27 respondents with some online course experience expressed interest, a rate of 70.4%. It could be that students in this demographic were more eager to share their opinions with their online course experience, perhaps due to their relative dissatisfaction with the online environment (see Results chapter).

In order to assist in finding an appropriate subsample from the 76 students to target my recruitment for the follow-up interviews, I performed a cluster analysis (Table 2) based on the different student trajectories through the sequences of German courses. These clusters consisted of the combination of students' stage of learning German (i.e. Elementary, Elementary II, Intermediate, or Advanced, according to their highest level of language course registration), along with the combination of course environments in which they had experience (i.e. on-campus/F2F only, online only, or some combination). As the course level became higher, the clusters themselves became smaller and the trajectories more varied, so that after the intermediate course level, almost no two single trajectories were exactly the same. In this way, I was able to identify the distribution of students into rough groupings by trajectory (i.e. the combinations of courses they took).

Table 2
Student Trajectory Clusters by Course Type

Type and name	Description	*n*	%
Language			
1. Elementary I F2F only	**101** on-campus	30	39.5
2. Elementary I online	**101** online	4	5.3
3. Elementary I mixed	Took **101** both online and F2F (switched between them)	1	1.3
4. Elementary II F2F only	**101** and **102** on-campus May start directly with **102**, skipping **101** (likely due to prior knowledge)	14	18.4
5. Elementary II online only	**101** and **102** online only	1	1.3
6. Elementary II mixed	**101** and **102**, each in a different environment	1	1.3
7. Intermediate F2F only	Student(s) currently at intermediate course level who have usually taken both **201** and **202**, but may also have started earlier (e.g. with **101** or **102**) or later (with **202**), likely due to prior knowledge. All classes taken on-campus	4	5.3
8. Intermediate F2F + study abroad	Same as Cluster 7 with the addition of 299[13] (study abroad)	1	1.3
9. Intermediate mixed	Student(s) at intermediate course level, who have taken at least two intermediate courses each in a different environment, normally **201** and **202** (also possible: **203*/211** or **204*/212**.	1	1.3
10. Advanced mixed	Student(s) at advanced course level (on-campus), who have taken one or more courses online as well (at the beginner and/or intermediate level)[a]	5	6.6
11. Advanced F2F only	Student(s) at advanced course level who have taken only on-campus course(s)	6	7.9
Culture (English)			
12. Culture F2F only	Students took content/culture class(es) taught in English on-campus only	7	9.2
13. Culture online only	Students took content/culture class(es) taught in English online only	1	1.3

[a]There are no advanced language courses offered online, so in this cluster any online courses were by necessity taken earlier.

If a student had taken only content courses taught in English (regardless of course

environment), but no language classes, then they were placed into Cluster 12 or 13, and are not

included in any further analysis. If, on the other hand, students had taken *any* language classes, they

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[13] GER299 is an intensive study abroad language/culture course (mix of classroom and experiential learning) taught in Germany in the Spring term. This thesis does not directly address the situation of transitioning to this third environment (study abroad), since no students who took part in this course responded to the interview recruitment. If students had studied abroad in other ways, however, then it may be discussed in the Interview Results chapter, as applicable.

were categorised according to these course enrollments, and their experience in the content classes was set aside. I purposely chose to focus my main clusters on the language classes students had taken online or on-campus for a number of reasons. First, because those in the content-only categories were a small number of students in actual terms, and second (and more important), because this study is focused on student transitions in language courses, not on courses taught completely in English (which many students nonetheless take to fulfill a language requirement in their degree program at UW). Including the content course experiences as a new category or subunit of analysis within the language clusters would have further subdivided the already small groupings into four to five further subcategories, which in my view would not add value to the analysis and would create too many very small clusters. Almost nine out of ten (89.5%, n=68) of students fell into the language clusters.

Based on the clusters identified, I targeted my recruitment efforts (personalized emails[14]) to all students in Clusters 2-3 and 5-11[15] since the students in these groups either included online students or those with "mixed" (both online and F2F) trajectories, or for those with only F2F students, were small enough that targeting the whole group was possible within the scope of the project (the goal was to complete about 20 interviews). My aim was to obtain responses from the point of view of traditional on-campus students as well as those at different levels of learning German, with varying trajectories. Clusters 1 and 4 were the largest (57.9%, n=44), which was not surprising considering the heavier enrollment in the early language courses, and that the majority of students were recruited from classroom visits. From this group I contacted a subsample of students in my first round of recruitment emails, choosing nine students from each of these groups, who came from a variety of faculties and had varied responses to the Item 4a (open—response): "Why or why not [do you plan

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[14] All students who participated in the interviews were offered remuneration of $10 as an incentive for their participation.
[15] The sole exception was an exchange student (Cluster 11), who I did not contact until the second round, due to limited experience with German at UW.

to take any online German classes at UW in the future]?" (Item 4). This last question, though responses were short, provided a hint at the types of views students held about OLL in general, which I will discuss in further detail in the Results chapter of this thesis.

Interview administration and participation. In the first round of recruitment, I contacted 41 students, or 60.3% of the total who expressed interest on their surveys, and 22 of these were interviewed. Later in the term I undertook a second round of recruitment in which I extended invitations to all of the remaining students (39.7%, *n*=27) who had indicated an interest, to offer a fair chance to any remaining students who still wished to participate. Two additional interviews were conducted from this round of recruitment, making for 24 interviews total, or a participation rate of 35.8% out of 67 total invited. Twenty-two interviews were done in person and two were done via Skype. One of the students interviewed by Skype did not return the consent documents, and so for the purpose of this study 23 interviews will be analyzed.

It should be noted that I have chosen not to use gender as a category of analysis in this study, for a number of reasons. First, respondents' gender (identification) was not a question on the survey, and so it is not possible to determine with certainty for those students who did not participate in follow-up interviews, not to mention for the wider (total) population who were recruited to fill out the survey. Those respondents who expressed interest in a follow-up interview did provide their names, but using them to determine gender is a fraught process due to a variety of unisex and non-English names, and at best this would be an educated guess with a significant margin of error (a rough estimate yields ~60% with feminine-appearing names, ~25% with masculine-sounding names, and ~15% unclear). One third of the final 24 interviewees were male and two thirds were female (*n*=8, 33.3% and *n*=16, 66.7%, respectively). This over-representation of women matches the general trend observed in language classes and the humanities, whereby a larger proportion of students are women (see, e.g. Charles & Bradley, 2002, 2009; Sunderland, 2000).

In order to minimize any possible bias based on student gender or cultural origin when deciding who to recruit for interviews, I initially chose solely based on the clusters respondents fell in, and the spreadsheet for this purpose had student identifiers (names and email addresses) removed.[16] When choosing the subsamples for Clusters 1 and 4, I selected a cross-section of students from various faculties, with various views (based on Item 4a) of OLL. Furthermore, the sample is not intended to be representative of the population at large, but was a convenience sample of students in UW's German courses who then fell into different groups based on their course experience. Because this is the population I was interested in examining (undergraduate second language learners of German) a convenience sample made sense; a random sample would not only be impossible, since students cannot generally be told in which environment to take a course just for the purpose of a research study, but also because in the normal course of their degrees, students have choice in their course environments. Indeed, how students choose course environments in the real world is an element of interest in the study. In addition, because I visited classes at all levels and all course environments being offered during the study period (thus casting as wide a net as possible of students who could have participated), and received a wide array of responses of students from different groups, in my opinion the chosen sample is therefore large enough to equate to a large degree to the target population which I wished to examine.

Interviews lasted an average of 30 minutes, with a range of 15 to 60 minutes. I videotaped the in-person interviews and recorded audio as a backup in case of equipment failure, and used screen-capture software to record Skype interviews. Immediately after the interviews were completed I

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[16] I acknowledge that it is nonetheless likely impossible to completely eliminate unconscious bias; one possible source remaining could be the faculties students came from, since women are generally concentrated in the humanities and men in the STEM-fields, or the fact that I had done some work with other versions of the spreadsheet that still included student identifiers, and could have become familiar with individual respondents' data. This notes, I did my best to only look at the identified factors when choosing potential interviewees, and I felt choosing students from various faculties was a useful as a way to ensure a diverse sample, despite the possibility for bias. I also extended invites to all remaining interested students in the second round of recruitment to ensure an equal chance to hear the views of any additional students who might be interested.

recorded field notes about my first impressions and recollections about the interview and the interviewee. Unfortunately the video camera was very visible to students on its tripod, and may have made some students nervous, but I endeavoured to make students comfortable by first offering them water and snacks, going over the consent forms and information thoroughly, asking if they had any questions about any aspects of the study, and informing them that there were no right or wrong answers, rather that I was simply interested in their opinions and point of view, all before starting to record. Over time, I feel I became more skilled and comfortable myself with the interview process, so the first few interviews were stiffer and less comfortable than the ones conducted later on. Students in the earlier stages of language learning tended to have shorter interviews, whereas more advanced students tended to be more forthcoming with answers, causing the interviews to be longer.

Collection and analysis of results. Finally, I collected the results of the interviews by undertaking a content analysis of all of the videos. I watched all recordings (and listening to one audio recording due to a video failure) and took notes on student responses to all questions/categories, in my own words, while trying to preserve any unique phrasing of the interviewees as needed, for later citations. I focused on the items related to perceptions of online and on-campus learning, satisfaction, and perception of these learning environments, any transitions between them, and reasoning for past, present, and future choices of learning environment. For these items I took more comprehensive notes than for other questions, but I decided to take notes on all questions nonetheless, because the additional responses gave a fuller profile of the student's motivations, learning and participation style, engagement with the material in classes, and other factors that could perceivably have an impact on the student's responses about the core items. If the interview went somewhat off-topic for a period, then I did not take notes on this interaction unless I judged it relevant to the main topic of the interview. Lastly, some students gave much more comprehensive answers than others did, so the notes for some interviews were naturally more

detailed. Interviews with advanced students tended to be longer, and the notes more comprehensive, because the students gave more detailed responses.

In the writing of my field notes, as well as upon later review of the interviews, I also reflected on the course of each interview, and I felt that over time I became more comfortable with the interviewing process, which in turn seemed to make the students more comfortable as well. I became better at not asking too many questions/sub-questions at once (which made it harder for the student to answer the entire question), allowing time for the student to think and not rushing them unintentionally, and asking probing questions to get more information on a given answer that was interesting or unexpected (rather than letting it stand as is). This also contributed to the fact that some interviews were more comprehensive, especially those conducted later in the interview period.

I then looked at the groups of students based on the clusters identified in the initial analysis, and selected students from each of the on-campus only, online only, and mixed trajectory clusters as an example/representative example, which will be discussed in in the Results chapter, while all other interviews will be summarized as a group, with highlights mentioned as needed in the Discussion chapter. In the following Results chapters, I will discuss both the results obtained in the questionnaire and interviews in detail. In order to address my research questions I will also make use of statistical data obtained from the larger Geroline project, of which my thesis forms one part. I will therefore analyze the student perception data that I gained from my interviews in the context of the data on the effectiveness of the different environments, patterns in student trajectories through courses, and the "quality" of their transitions (i.e. effect on their academic success). This should provide insight into the differences between how students perceive what they do and what they actually do (since these can differ greatly), in regards to how they prefer to learn or learn best, how successfully they proceed through class transitions, and how OLL compares to F2F.

4. Results – Geroline & Stage One

4.1 Geroline Results

The statistical analysis for the Geroline project examined course records for all enrollments (*n*=6,920) by students in the selected German classes at UW from 2004 to 2014, a period of 30 terms or 10 years. The sample consisted of all enrollments in one of the three elementary/intermediate online language courses and their on-campus equivalents (101 102, 201[17]), as well as in five higher-level language courses on-campus for reference and to gain a robust sample. Together, this sample accounts for 55% of all students enrolled in German courses during that time (*n*=12,429, Canadian University Teachers of German [CAUTG], 2014). The records included the course the student enrolled in, whether it was taken on-campus or online, and the final grade achieved. Of these 6,920 records which were pulled from the registrar's database, 6,841 were valid for the purpose of analysis (i.e. had numerical grades). Table 3 displays a breakdown of the distribution of enrollments by course level and environment:

Table 3
Geroline – Enrollment Distributions by Level and Course Environment

Level	F2F	Online	Total
First three language courses (101, 102, 201)	3,302	2,604	5,906
Five higher-level courses (incl. 431)	935	0	935
Total	4,237	2,604	6,841

Below is a summary of the key findings of our statistical analysis as they pertain to this study, which I will use as the backdrop for my discussion of my thesis results. All information is from the work of the Geroline project team (of which I am a member) and come from joint conference presentations. Full results and analysis will be provided in the later report on the entire Geroline project.

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[17] Intermediate German II (202) is also now available online, but has only been offered since Winter 2014. Therefore, it was excluded from the long-term analysis since it is a new course.

First, it is clear that elementary language learning is an important part of the department's total enrollment: just under half (48%, *n*=5,906)[18] of the 12,429 enrollments were in these first three courses. Furthermore, OLL covers a large portion thereof, with 44% attending online (*n*=2,604), more specifically 45% in 101, 40% in 102, and 47% in 201. These 2,604 online students account for 21% of the entire 10-year enrollment. When progression rates were examined, or the number of students who continue from one course to another, we found that enrollment experiences a large drop after 101 (one third of students continue to 102), and continues to drop over time, but at a lower rate. For example, there were only about half of the number of students enrolled in 201 compared to 102, despite the fact that this course is the entry point for students with prior knowledge (e.g. high school). We conclude that many students only take one language class, and that decreased enrollment at the higher levels is probably a result of various institutional factors, such as the lack of a true language requirement at UW (students may take culture classes taught in English to fulfil requirements that do exist), curricular constraints of other programs, and low number of students entering above the elementary language courses (likely due in part to a decrease in students taking high school German in the university's core catchment region).

When continuation/progression rates are broken down by environment, they were often somewhat or much lower for online courses than F2F courses. For example, only 8% of 101 online students continued with 102—much lower than for on-campus 101 students, who progressed at a rate of 36%. Almost one-third (28%) of 102 online students continued with 201, which is only slightly lower than that for on-campus students (31%). In addition, most of these students (going from 102 to 201) continued in the online environment (23% did so and 10% did not). Together with the overall low continuation rate pattern addressed above, we then conclude that not only do most

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[18] Data note: all statistics for the Geroline project were calculated to the nearest integer, which I have preserved here for consistency. My own descriptive statistics, given later in this chapter, have been calculated to one decimal point.

students only take only a single language course, but this second result suggests that students who do only take one course often take it online, probably to fulfill a breadth requirement.

When examining students who continued learning German, eventually going on to major in the subject, we found a significant number had taken an online course at some point. An estimated 16% of 201 online students continued their language learning at the 200-level (on-campus ~45%) and 8% continued at the 300-level (on-campus: 24%). Despite the fact that these figures are lower than the on-campus rates, they show that many students nonetheless took 201 with the intent to continue at the intermediate level, and almost one in ten went on to the advanced (third-year) level. I found it interesting that an estimated 15% of 400-level students (majors) and about one third of 300-level students (minors and majors) had taken some German language online; of those who took both 201 and 431 (senior seminar needed for majors), 17% took 201 online.

Table 4
Geroline – Continuing Students' Environment Choices/Transitions (%)

To/From	101_F2F	101_OL	102_F2F	102_OL
102_F2F	80.7%	35.1%		
102_OL	19.3%	64.9%		
201_F2F	60.0%	13.8%	64.9%	17.7%
201_OL	40.0%	86.2%	35.1%	82.3%

Considering the progression rates over 10 years, 65 students needed to be enrolled in German 101 to have one major graduate, and without the elementary online courses, there would be 15% fewer students completing the German program. This led us to conclude that online language courses are integral to supplying majors and minors to the German program. Most students, however, had an apparent preference of learning environment, and the number who switched between environments was relatively small. Most who continued with German did so in the same learning environment (online or on-campus; 75%), which suggest they were at least content with their experience. Thus, 26% learned German both online and on-campus, but this only accounts for

7% of all 12,429 students enrollments, in part due to the aforementioned low continuation rates. How continuing students transitioned between learning environments is broken down in Table 4.

Various analyses also showed that students with better performance (i.e. higher grades) were more likely to continue studying German: of those finishing Bachelor of Arts degrees (*n*=36), 77% were above the 10-year group average. Learning outcomes (as determined by grades) were stable across learning environments, though online courses were slightly more challenging.[19] However, students who had *both* online and on-campus experience maintained their standardized grade level better; because courses get more challenging from level to level, average grades tended to drop by 10% over time, but the grades of students who transitioned between environments dropped less than the average (5% for online to F2F, 7% for F2F to online). We therefore concluded that students are well advised to switch between the two. As will be discussed below, my survey found that 68.4% of students surveyed were *very* or *somewhat satisfied* with their online language course experience, and these results from the Geroline study back up this number.

4.2 Survey Results

Items 1-3a: Information questions. Based on their declared major subject (Table 5), the majority of respondents (just over half) were studying in the Faculty of Arts, where the Germanic & Slavic department is housed, and many students had minors in Arts.[20] The second most common home faculty was Mathematics. Approximately one third of respondents came from various other faculties or student demographics, such as students studying in multiple faculties at once, who had no declared a major, etc.

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[19] It is possible that these slightly lower grades could be the result of lower motivated students self-selecting into online courses, for example breadth requirement-seekers who may have less interest than on-campus students in language learning. This is impossible to control for, however, since students are free to select the environments in which they study.

[20] Minors were not included since they are optional depending on academic program. Thus, while many students have a minor, others have double minors (or further sub-specializations), or no minor at all.

Table 5
Item 1 – Main Faculties with Example Disciplines

Faculty	Disciplines (e.g.)	*n*	%
Arts	German, business, social development studies, fine arts, languages, legal studies, misc. humanities and social sciences	86	54.8
Mathematics	Computer science, actuarial science	20	12.7
Engineering	Civil, environmental, management, chemical, computer, management	11	7.0
Science	Physics, chemistry, biology, biomedical, environmental	10	6.4
Environment	Planning, geomatics, knowledge integration	8	5.1
Undeclared, post-degree, blank		8	5.1
Multiple faculties, inter-disciplinary/jointly-administered programs	Software engineering, nanotechnology engineering, various combinations from other faculties	6	3.8
External[a], exchange		5	3.2
Applied health sciences	Recreation & leisure, tourism & parks, kinesiology	3	1.9
	Total	57	100

[a]External students came from Wilfred Laurier University, which is located nearby to the University of Waterloo. Students at Laurier may take many courses at UW for direct transfer credit.

In addition to a heavy weighting towards current on-campus students resulting from the nature of the data collection and response rates, a higher percentage of respondents in the sample came from those in the lower-level language courses, as can be seen in Figure 2. This is unsurprising due to higher enrollment in first year language courses overall—as shown in Figure 1 in the Methodology chapter, just about half (*n*=164, 49.0%) of the total 335 enrollments in Winter 2015 were in German 101 or 102. Furthermore, as mentioned in the review of the Geroline results, it has been shown that enrollment tends to go down over time, with more students consistently enrolled in 101 than in 102, which drops again at 201, etc., so that any survey of this student population would by its nature be more heavily weighted towards the lower level language courses.

When analyzing students language learning level and course experience in the remainder of this chapter, I focus mainly on *all* of the courses respondents had taken (i.e. their trajectory), as opposed to the course in which the student was currently enrolled, for a couple of reasons. First, it was impossible without class lists to know which students were enrolled in more than the single

course in which they filled out the paper or LEARN survey (and on Google Forms students' current enrollment status was not known at all). More important, even if that information were readily available, the distinction is not very useful; because a number of students in the on-campus sections have also taken one or more courses online, and vice versa, their current registration is not as relevant as their overall course experience.

Figure 2
Item 2 – Language Course/Learning Level
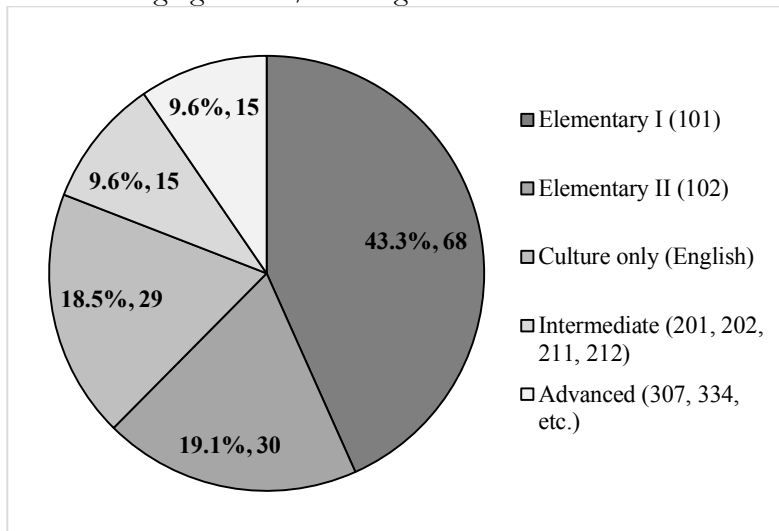
Based on the highest level of language course in which the respondents were (or had been) enrolled, just over 60% were at the Elementary I or Elementary II levels and the remainder of language learners were evenly split between the intermediate and advanced levels (almost 10% each). Just under one in five had only taken English-language German culture course offerings. It is unclear why more of the respondents than their proportional share (60% versus 50%) came from the students in the lower-level courses, but it could be that junior students felt implicit pressure to participate, more so than the upper level students, or were simply more eager to share their views. For the purposes of this chart, I have grouped students in the intermediate and advanced courses[21]

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[21] Because students were asked to name *all* classes they have ever taken in German, there were additional advanced classes named which are not given in Table 1 in the interest of space. For the purposes of discerning language level, all classes taught in German at the 300 (third-year) level and up were considered to be advanced, based on

together after the first year due to the class sizes being small; I also use this categorization in the trajectory clusters later in this section.

If students answered yes to Item 3, they were then asked to name which specific courses they had taken online. As previously mentioned, due to low response rate by current online students, the overall survey sample was made up of mostly current on-campus students. Despite this, almost one in five (17.7%, n=27) had still taken at least one course online at some point. Of these respondents, almost six in ten had taken one or more *language* course(s) in the online environment (n=16, 59.3%), almost one third had taken only English-language German culture courses (n=8, 29.6%), and about 10% had taken some combination thereof (n=3, 11.1%).

An area of the survey design that could have been improved was the wording of items asking for respondents' reasons for taking, and opinions about, online courses, which did not specify any difference between online courses on German culture taught in English, and language courses taught in German. In retrospect, it would have been better to specify that we were interested in students' opinions related to only online *language* courses, even if they had taken both kinds online, since this introduced some ambiguity to the results. I.e. it becomes unclear as to how much of the respondents' answers on the following items (3b to 3d) had to do with online learning in general, versus OLL in particular. Luckily this was only a small number of students in the sample (three out of 19, as noted), which helps mitigate the level of error introduced, and one student wrote a note on their form that they were giving the satisfaction marks "for 201…(271 was a culture class)," indicating they understood the intended aim of the study. For the remainder of this thesis, I will refer to these 19 respondents as OLEs (those with Online Language Experience), and the remainder as OCOs (Online Culture Only). Combining these two subgroups into one group (OLE) should not only avoid reducing the units for analysis to being too small to be useful, but more important,

their descriptions on the UW Germanic & Slavic department website (see the page "Course offerings," n.d.), as well as the author's knowledge of the level of prior versions of courses with older course numberings.

include those having taken at least one online language class together, so as not to exclude any opinions on language learning (even if there is a small risk their responses were somewhat affected by the experience in the online culture course(s)).

Of the 19 OLEs, a large majority (*n*=17, 89.5%) only took a single course in the online environment and the remaining two students (10.5%) took two courses each. Almost two thirds had taken Elementary I (63.2%) and 10-20% of the respondents had taken each of the other three online courses (102: *n*=3, 15.5%; 201: *n*=2, 10.5%; and 202: *n*=4, 21.1% [multiple response data]). As illustrated in Table 6, the online courses were taken in a variety of different combinations with F2F ones, but the majority of respondents did have some experience with both environment types: almost 70% of OLEs (*n*=13, 68.4%) had transitioned between the environments, whereas only one in three had enrolled exclusively online (*n*=6, 31.6%). Two thirds of the latter took German 101 online and nothing else (*n*=4, 66.7%).

From this sample at least, it seems as if very few students at UW complete their language learning process entirely in the online environment beyond the 101-level, though this is difficult to extrapolate to the population at large due to the survey responses from higher-level students coming mainly from on-campus students, while more junior students were those who had taken courses online (as mentioned prior). This fits with the findings from the Geroline project, however, which found that most students who took German online only took one course and vice versa, leading to the conclusion that students who took German to meet a breadth requirement are more likely to do so online.

Table 6 displays a complete listing of students in this group, including the courses they took and their corresponding environments. A few patterns emerged vis-à-vis the course sequencing and in which environments these courses were taken. These could be identified as:

a) early language-learning students who study only online;

b) students who start out online and then switch to F2F only going forward;

c) those who complete mainly on-campus courses, but take one online course "along the

   way" and then continue with their F2F trajectory (in other words, they are "F2F-oriented");

d) those who continue with German but stay in the online environment exclusively; and

e) those who intended to study online and switched to on-campus due to dissatisfaction.

Table 6
Item 3a – Course Trajectories of OLEs

ID	Online	F2F	Pattern
159	**101**		a)
157	**101**		a)
158	**101**		a)
160	**101**		a)
136[a]	**(101)**	**101**	a)
135[b]	**101**	**101**	e)
134	**101**	**102**	e)
128	**101**	**102**	b)
121	**101**	**102**	b)
132	**101**	**102**	b)
13	**102**	**101, 307, 431**	b)
14	**201**	**101, 102, 202, 211**, 214*, **307**	c)
12	**202**	100, **101, 102, 201, 211, 307**	c)
162	**202**		d)
161	**101, 102**		d)
11	**101, 202**	**307**	b)
22	**201**, 271	**202**	b)
156	**102**, 271, 272	**101, 201, 202, 211**, 311*, **334, 350, 431**	c)
2	**202**, 271, 272	**203***, **211**, 216*, **261, 262**, 311*, **331, 334,** 343*, 359	b)

Note. ID = Unique identifiers assigned to each respondent in database.
[a] This respondent was enrolled in the online class for one week, then switched to on-campus, but wanted to give their opinions of the online class as they had experienced it so far. Therefore, they have been included as an OLE, since other students who participated may have also only just begun the online course – their initial impressions (in my estimation) are still relevant.
[b] This respondent first started out in a F2F class, then switched to online due to initial difficulties he had with the instructor (he has a hearing disability and could not understand her speech). Then he also struggled with the online course, however, saying he needed a tutor to do well, and so he ended up dropping it as well. Finally, at the time of the survey were now re-taking 101 F2F, which he found better with a new instructor.

This will be discussed in more detail in the Discussion chapter when considering the effect of

student trajectories on course success, and will be looked at along with the data from the wider

Geroline project, which should provide more context as to the trajectories of students who take courses online across the entire 10-year study period.

Item 3b: Student reasons for enrolling online. As displayed in Table 7, the most common type of reasoning cited in Item 3b for taking classes online (almost half of all responses combined) had to do directly with timetabling, e.g. the on-campus course did not fit into the respondents' schedule, taking the course online allowed students greater scheduling flexibility, or the course was not offered on-campus that term. Family/time constraints, on the other hand, only had three respondents (4.9%).

Table 7
Item 3b – Reasons for Online Enrollment by Subgroup

Reason	All		OLE		OCO	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Timetabling: scheduling flexibility, class schedule, family/time constraints that make F2F course impossible, other: course not offered that term	28	45.9	18	43.9	10	50.0
Off-campus: work/co-op term, distance student	16	26.2	12	29.3	4	20.0
Online learning benefits: flexibility of OL, independence of OL	13	21.3	8	19.5	5	25.0
Curiosity re: online learning	1	1.6	1	2.4	0	0.0
Other: disability	2	3.3	1	2.4	1	5.0
Other: miscellaneous	1	1.6	1	2.4	0	0.0
Total	61	100	41	100	20	100

Note. Multiple response data; percentages are as a proportion of the total reasons given. The average number of responses given by each student was 2.8, and there was very little overlap in the combinations (only four students out of 19 gave the exact same combinations of reasons).

The next largest theme, at a quarter of all responses, was reasons related to students being off-campus, due either to work/co-op or enrollment as a distance student. Least common were reasons related to the benefits of online learning itself, such as the flexibility or independence it offered. In other words, the ability to work on coursework in any location and at the student's own pace did not rate highly with respondents. In this group, flexibility was a slightly more popular response than independence, but the number of responses in each category was still low for both.

I found it worth noting that two students who chose "other" wrote that they have a disability (in both cases hearing difficulties) which made F2F learning either more difficult (the student enrolled in a language course) or impossible at that time (the student enrolled in a culture class). This reason for studying online had not occurred to me as an able-bodied person, and raises important points about the role of online learning for opening up access to students that may not be well-served by traditional F2F classes, which can often be fast-paced and focused primarily on speaking, or traditional university lectures, which rely on students taking notes based on audio input (sometimes with added visual aids such as lecture slides).[22]

Only one student (who took an online culture course) selected "curiosity about online learning" as a reason, among others, they had for enrolling in an online course, although their written explanation focused on the desire for a very flexible schedule, saying, "I really like the time flexibility. Depending on how heavy my workload for other courses is for that week, I had hoped to be able to plan my week to maximize time." This suggest that this respondent's curiosity was perhaps more about how they would be able to benefit from the online format time-wise, as opposed to stemming from an interest in online learning itself.

As for differences between the subgroups, they were overall quite close in their responses but OLEs were somewhat more likely to choose "off-campus" and miscellaneous reasons, whereas the OCOs were slightly more likely to select reasons related to timetabling and the benefits of online learning. The differences however, were not large, and because the OCO group was half as large, it is somewhat difficult to draw conclusions. This could hint at the fact, however, that students learning languages (from this sample) favour on-campus courses where possible, and only chose

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[22] It also has implications for considering whether online courses are accessible for students with disabilities. For example, the online German culture classes rely on "Prof Talks," or short recorded video lectures, which (to my knowledge) have not been made accessible, for instance by the addition of subtitles. It is thus worth considering that such changes would be simple to make, and would not only assist students with disabilities (providing increased equity of access, reason enough on its own), but could also benefit students who prefer visual to auditory modes of communication (i.e. who have different learning styles).

online because of the complete inability to study F2F (e.g. being off-campus, having a disability preventing F2F study), whereas those in the OCO group valued the attributes that online learning offered for more content-focused courses. What is clear is that these courses fulfill a practical need for students, allowing them to enroll in courses of interest regardless of scheduling or other external barriers.

Items 3c-3d: Satisfaction with online courses. Despite this initially quite pragmatic reasoning for enrolling in online courses, between half and 90% of respondents (both OLE and OCO) nevertheless expressed positive (i.e. *very* or *somewhat satisfied*) satisfaction with the content, delivery, and overall experience in the online courses they had taken (Item 3c). Figures 3 to 5 contain the complete satisfaction ranking results for respondents' satisfaction in each "aspect" of satisfaction (content, delivery, and overall). In both subgroups, the most numerous response was consistently *somewhat satisfied* over all aspects, with the exception of the content rating by the OCO subgroup (though it was very close). Indeed, the results of the OCO subgroup were almost identical for all three aspects, showing a consistently positive satisfaction level for this demographic, with no negative ratings (i.e. *very* or *somewhat dissatisfied*) provided.

The satisfaction of the OLEs, on the other hand, was not only less positive, the ratings differed markedly by aspect, with significantly fewer students expressing satisfaction with the course delivery than with course content, with the results for overall satisfaction falling somewhere between the two. For example, positive satisfaction with course content was a full 31.6% higher than with course delivery (89.5% versus 57.9%, respectively), and 21.1% higher than for overall satisfaction. Some level of dissatisfaction, in turn, increased from 10.5% to 42.2%, a difference of 31.7%. The results for overall satisfaction were in between the first two aspects, with 68.4% giving positive ratings (*n*=13) and 31.6% giving negative reactions, which was 10.6% lower than for content. All of the changes/shifts in the group labelled "all" (far left bar) are accounted for by these differences of

opinion in the OLEs, since the OCO results were so consistent, providing a nice baseline for comparison.

Figure 3
Item 3c – Online Course Satisfaction by Subgroup: Content
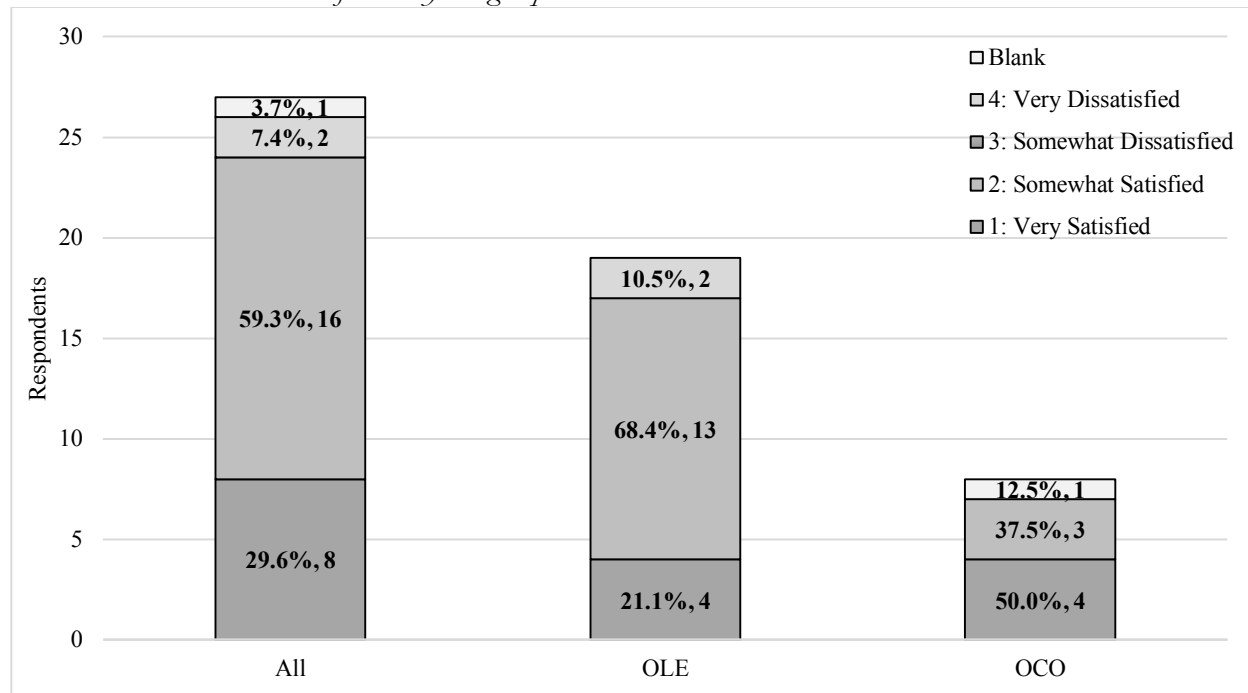
Although this trend could be a natural product of the sample being weighted towards on-campus students in general (in this case, many who had taken online classes and were now enrolled in an on-campus course when given the survey), it is also worth noting that this subsample is more balanced, in that six of the OLEs respondents (ID157-162 in Table 6) were those who responded to the survey on LEARN, and they had all never taken a F2F German class. In other words, this third (31.6%) were true "online-only" students who had no exposure to the on-campus version of German classes at UW. Therefore, there was a more even weighting in this subgroup between these online respondents and what could be called "F2F-oriented" students.

Of the 27 students with any online course experience, 13 OLEs and 6 OCOs (48.1% and 22.2%, respectively) or 70.4% continued to the next section to answer Item 3d, which asked

students to compare their satisfaction with the online course(s) they took compared to those in class (Figure 6).

Figure 4
Item 3c – Online Course Satisfaction by Subgroup: Delivery
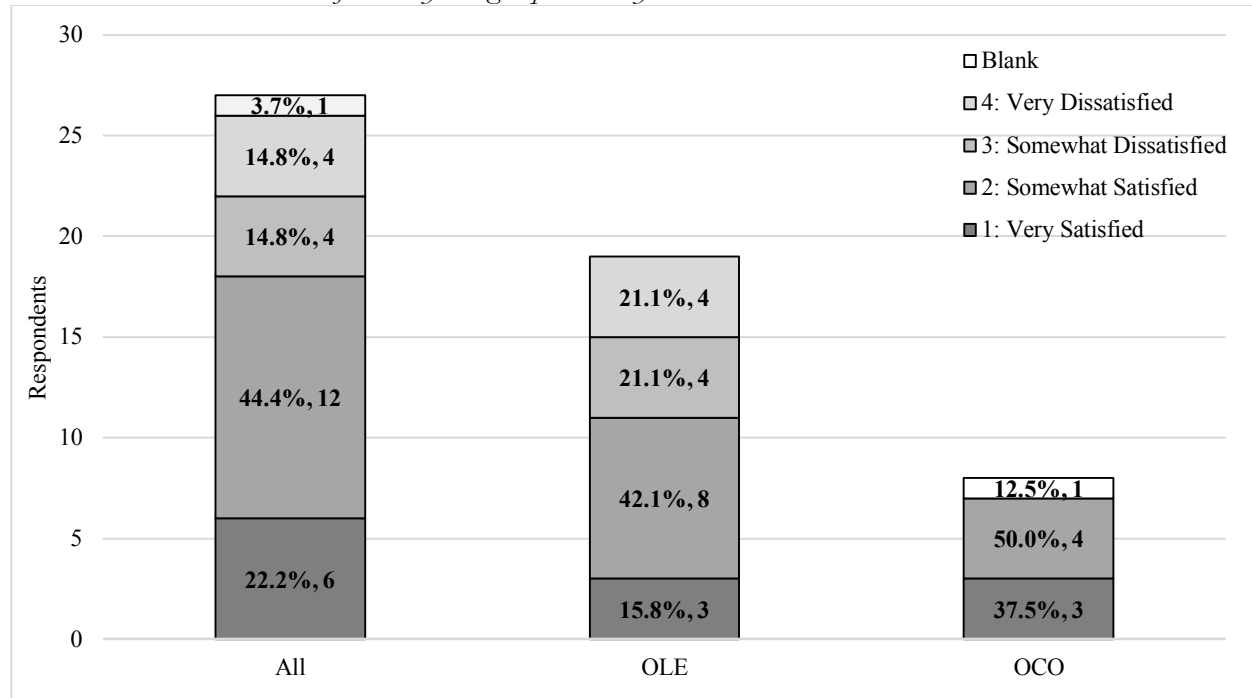
One quarter (*n*=5) of all respondents in the entire online group expressed the same level of satisfaction as with their F2F courses and almost six in ten (*n*=11, 57.9%) were either *somewhat* or *much less satisfied*. When broken down by subgroup, almost all of the OCOs' responses were split almost evenly between the different answers, with a slight tendency towards the neutral and negative responses. The small numbers in real terms make it difficult to judge the significance of this slightly negative result; however, it mirrors a much larger trend for the OLEs, i.e. high levels of neutral (same level of satisfaction) and dissatisfaction ratings, as noted. This leaves the majority of the shift in the left-hand "all: column attributable to the OLE subgroup, of whom almost 70% (*n*=9, 69.3%) gave a negative rating (*less satisfied* or *much less satisfied*), one fifth (23.1%, *n*=3) gave a neutral rating, and only one student was *somewhat more satisfied* with their course experience (none were *much more satisfied*).

Figure 5
Item 3c – Online Course Satisfaction by Subgroup: Overall
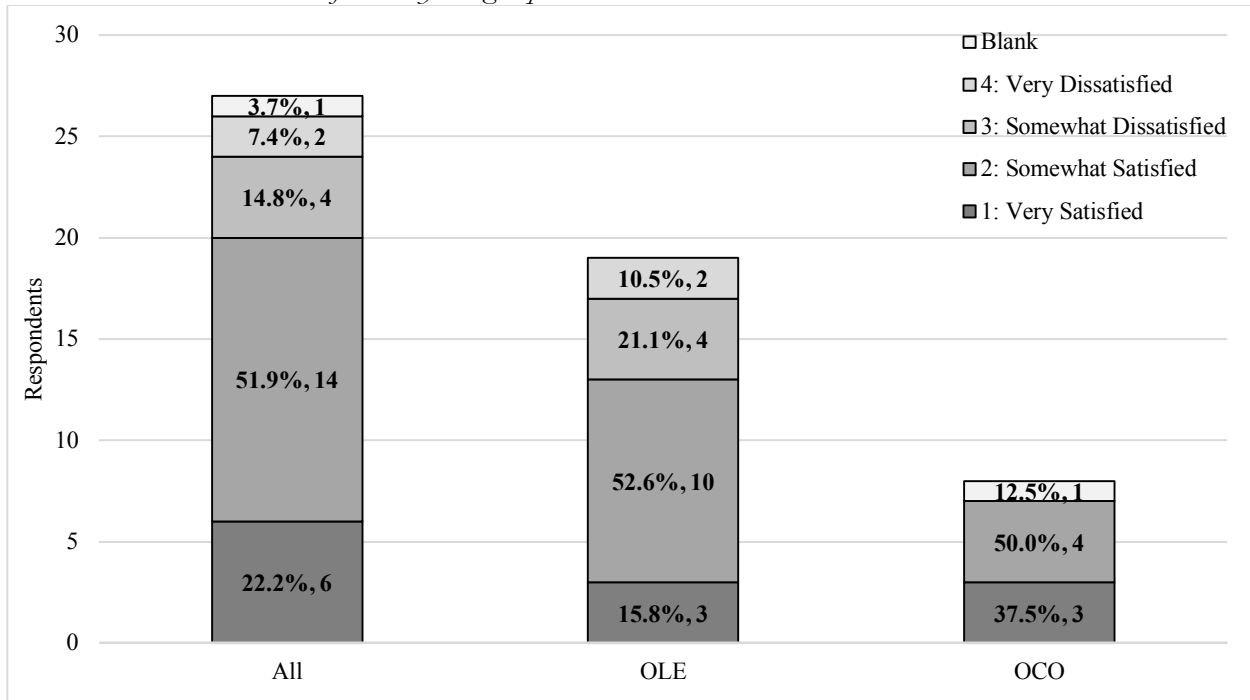
As in Item 3c, the OLE group was less satisfied than the OCOs in all areas, but this represents quite a significant negative turn and is a phenomenon that only appears in the OLE subgroup. Whereas approximately 70% of OLE respondents reported being *somewhat* or *very satisfied* with their online course experiences in Item 3c, almost the exact same proportion still said they were *less satisfied* with the online courses they had taken, which would indicate that they judged them as less valuable overall than traditional, on-campus, F2F language courses involving interaction with an instructor and other classmates. Although this sub-subsample is made up of F2F-oriented students, making this result somewhat predictable, the level of the shift is still stark and will be discussed further in the Discussion section, where these trends can be put into context with the interview results. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why I chose to conduct follow-up interviews with as many respondents as possible; I hoped to uncover the source of any preferences towards language learning environments that students may have expressed. In this case, we can see a preference towards F2F

courses displayed, to varying degrees, in these data across the various groups and subgroups surveyed, which I could then follow up on in my interviews.

Figure 6
Item 3d – Online Course Satisfaction by Subgroup: Relative to F2F
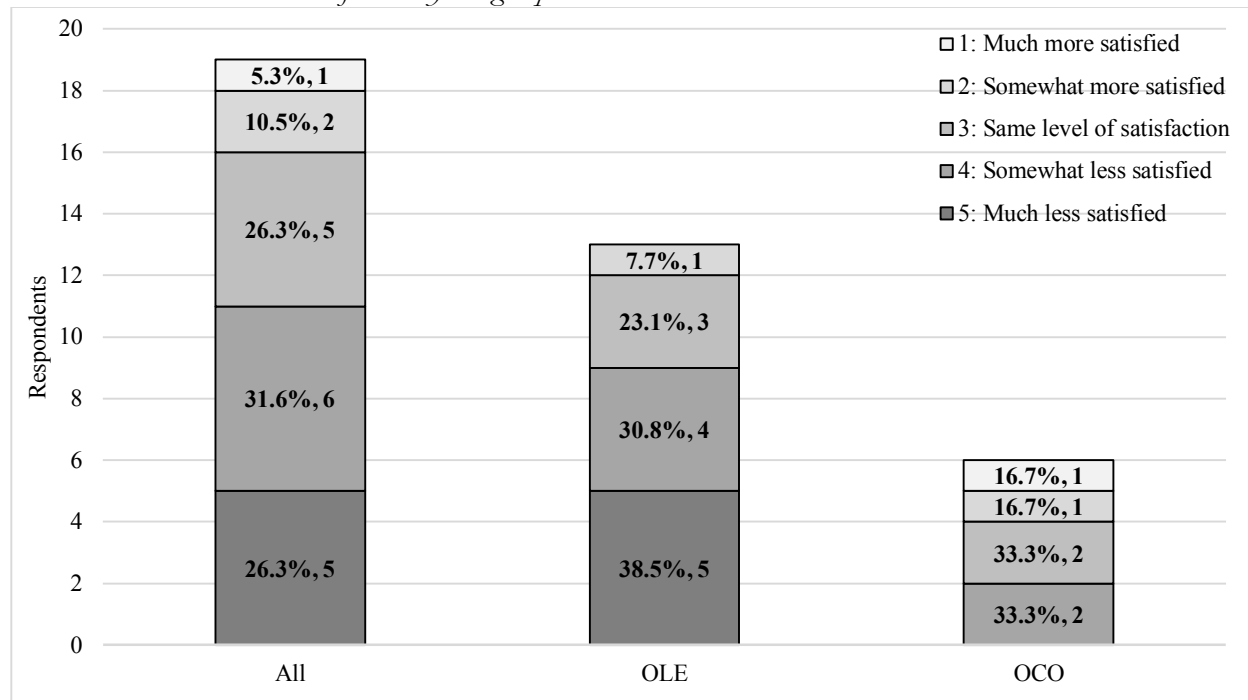
Items 4-4a: Future course plans. Item 4 asked students "Do you plan to take any online German classes at UW in the future?" Upon collection of the survey, I realized that it would have been preferable if this question were more specific in its wording. Many students answered "no," but it quickly became clear when reading the subsequent explanations given in Item 4a (open response), in which respondents were asked why they selected this answer, that this was in fact because they did not plan to take *any* German at all, and not because they did not plan to take German *online*. With this in mind, the initial result—in which almost 60% out of 157 students responded "no," one third were unsure, and only one in ten selected "yes" (n=90, 57.3%; n=51, 32.5%; and n=16, 10.2%, respectively)—needs to be broken down further to see how much of the negative responses really had to do with the course environment, as was originally intended, and how much had to do with other factors.

When the results are further analyzed, about one in ten respondents (11.5%, n=18) who answered "no" to Item 4 specified that they did so because they were in their last semester or graduating soon. Around the same proportion (n=15, 9.6%) said they had already fulfilled their breadth requirement, were not studying German, or otherwise had no more interest in taking more German courses. Twelve respondents (7.6%) selected "unsure" because they were not sure if they could/wanted to continue learning German, and one student in that category was graduating. Because these reasons have nothing to do with the question of online versus F2F learning, rather with whether the students will take any German or not, I have left them out of the remainder of the analysis. Although it was not possible to determine the reason(s) that all students had for being uninterested or unsure about OLL, removing these unrelated responses leads to more clear results about students' views of online versus F2F learning of German. Thus, when examining the responses to Item 4 from the remaining 111 students, this means that half of these students responded that they did not plan to take any German courses online (n=57, 51.4%), one third were unsure (n=38, 34.2%), and approximately one in six planned to enroll (or were open to the possibility of enrolling) in an online German course (n=16, 14.4%).

Even though the space to respond to Item 4a was small, the responses also valuable, because they provide some insight into students' views on online (language)[23] learning, and at the same time offer a preview into student viewpoints that I will discuss in the Interview Results chapter. I coded the responses to this item, which are shown in Table 8, into categories based on patterns in the responses (for a full list of written responses, see Table E1).

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[23] Another issue that arises is that the item was not very specific in its wording about the type of course that were meant, simply asking "Do you plan to take any online German classes at UW in the future." It did not specify which kind of course (language vs. culture) was meant, making it somewhat difficult to determine how much of the reasoning for these choices were related to online learning in general versus online *language* learning specifically. Luckily, the responses to Item 4a make clear the proportion that had to do with a negative perception of OLL versus online learning in general.

Table 8
Item 4a – Reasons for Future Course Plans by Subgroup

Responses	ALL		NOE		OLE		OCO	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
"No"								
Dislike of/doubt about/preference against learning online	44	39.6	38	40.4	6	46.2	-	-
Combination of reasons above/miscellaneous	4	3.6	3	3.2	-	-	1	25.0
Blank	9	8.1	8	8.5	-	-	1	25.0
Subtotal	57	51.4	49	52.1	6	46.2	2	50.0
"Unsure"								
Prefer F2F/doubts about learning online	10	9.0	9	9.6	1	7.7	-	-
Depends mainly on scheduling/offerings	8	7.2	7	7.4	-	-	1	25.0
Prefer F2F but will take online if necessary	5	4.5	5	5.3	-	-	-	-
Will see how current online course goes	1	0.9	-	-	1	7.7	-	-
Combination of reasons above	2	1.8	-	-	1	7.7	1	25.0
Blank	12	10.8	12	12.8	-	-	-	-
Subtotal	38	34.2	33	35.1	3	23.1	2	50.0
"Yes"								
To fit schedule while abroad/on-co-op/other scheduling reason	6	5.4	3	3.2	3	23.1	-	-
Want to continue with German	5	4.5	4	4.3	1	7.7	-	-
Only option next term/no choice	2	1.8	2	2.1	-	-	-	-
Curious if learning language online is easier	1	0.9	1	1.1	-	-	-	-
Combination of reasons above/miscellaneous	2	1.8	2	2.1	-	-	-	-
Subtotal	16	14.4	12	12.8	4	30.8	-	-
Grand Total	111	100	94	100	13	100	4	100

Note. Columns sum vertically, and subtotal percentages are as a percentage of the whole column (grand total). NOE = "No Online Experience" (German at UW), i.e. 82.8% (*n*=130) of the survey respondents. Hyphens indicate zero responses, and are used instead of blanks to aid in reading the table.

When these results are further examined at the subgroup level, a few key observations arise. Although the OCOs were about equally likely to select "no" as the other groups, the differences in reasons is noticeable; the vast majority of OLEs and NOEs gave a dislike of online learning as their stated reason, whereas zero OCOs did so. Similar results occurred in the "unsure" category, with a dislike of online learning category being given by the NOEs and OLEs, but not the OCOs. This

could indicate the source of the split in satisfaction ratings that arose in Items 3c and 3d. It seems OLL in particular is not well regarded compared to online learning of culture classes taught in English.

In addition to this, OLEs were 2.4 times more likely to answer "yes" than the NOEs (31% vs. 13%), whereas none of the OCOs selected "yes" at all. The NOEs, in turn were 2.7 times more likely to select "unsure" than "yes" (35% vs 13%). This shows that there was more uncertainty in the group who had no online course experience compared to those who had some, but that within the group who had taken online courses, the results shifted to being more polarized—more students in online language classes chose reasons related to a dislike of online learning, but were also more likely to choose "yes." In contrast, those in the culture classes chose "no" or "unsure," corroborating the hypothesis that many students in the online courses, especially the culture ones, take them to fulfill a breadth requirement only, and do not plan to continue with German. This suggests that even though a consistent 50-60% of students have set views or preferences against online (language) learning, there is also a portion who are unsure, and these could be the students who are shifting in this case; in other words, it could be that they change their minds once they actually have some experience with OLL. This makes sense considering that 44.1% of students who take German 101, 102, and 201 do so online (as per the Geroline results), suggesting that the 56% who did not take these courses online probably did not consider it, which could corresponds to this 50-60% portion who have negative views of online learning.

Item 5: Other online language experience. The final item on the survey asked respondents if they had ever taken any other online language courses from somewhere other than UW, and was intended to provide extra background information about perceptions and where they could be originating (Item 5, yes/no). Of the 157 survey respondents, 23 (14.6%) had taken such a course and 85.4% had not (n=134). Of these 23 students, 3 (13.0%) went on to take an online language course

at UW, which is about the same proportion of the entire survey sample who had taken such a course at UW (Item 3, 12.1% OLE). Only one of the 23 students with prior OLL course experience indicated that they planned to take a UW OLL German in the future, however, while the rest answered "no" or "unsure" to Item 4; when this is adjusted to remove graduating/non-continuing students (as in the previous section), this means 60.0% (n=9 from 15) were "unsure," 33.3% (n=5) said "no," and 6.7% said "yes" (n=1). This is an overall much less negative result than in the previous section, suggesting, as before, that those students who have some OLL experience are not as negative about the experience, but they are often still unsure about the usefulness of this type of course to them in the future.

5. Interview Results

Over a two-week period in January 2015, I interviewed 23 students (16 female and 6 male) from a wide range of trajectory clusters (Table 9). All clusters have some representation in the interviewees except Clusters 6 and 8, which each only consisted of one student (students from these clusters did not respond to my recruitment efforts). First, I will briefly summarize all of the interviews, and then I will discuss one example interview from each of four different cluster groupings that emerged in the data, along with any patterns in their responses that emerged within them:

- Elementary F2F-only (Clusters 1 and 4)

- Intermediate/Advanced F2F-only (Clusters 7 and 11)

- Online-only (Clusters 2 and 5)

- Mixed trajectories (Clusters 3, 9, and 10)

All student names and possible identifiers (e.g. locations) have been changed for privacy reasons.

Table 9

Interviewee Data by Trajectory Cluster

Cluster	Name (ID), Subject(s) of study	Course(s)	Item 4a	Item 5
1.	**Cara** (79), Psychology, French	**101**	unsure	no
1.	**Eric** (149), Computer science co-op	**101**	unsure	no
1.	**Meifeng** (144), Geomatics	**101**	unsure	yes
1.	**Olivia** (104), Engineering	**101**	unsure	yes
1.	**Yongrui** (141), Environmental engineering	**101**	no	no
2.	**Vicky** (160), Biomedical sciences	*101*	yes	no
3.	**Dustin** (136)[a], Undeclared	*(101)*, **101**	unsure	no
4.	**Faye** (119), Computer science	**101, 102**	no	no
4.	**Shengyi [Eva]** (72), Computer science	**101, 102**	yes	no
4.	**Julie** (117), Psychology, possibly German	100, **101, 102**, 383	unsure	no
4.	**Matt** (126), Music	**101, 102**	yes	no
4.	**Samantha** (73), Psychology or English, German	**101, 102**	no	no
5.	**Maryanne** (161), Social development studies	*101, 102*	yes	no
7.	**Alyssa** (17), English, German, psychology	**201, 202, 211, 212,** *271, 272*	unsure	yes
7.	**Seth** (28), Post-degree student	**202**, 298	unsure	no
9.	**Katrina** (22), Mechatronics engineering	*201*, **202**, *271*	no	no

10.	**Artur** (14), Economics, German	**101, 102, *201*, 202, 211**, 214*, **307**	no	no
10.	**Jennifer** (156), German, peace & conflict studies	**101**, *102*, **201, 202, 211**, *271, 272*, 311*, **334, 350, 431**	no	no
10.	**Jinglei** (11), Management engineering	***101*, 202, 307**	no	no
10.	**Rachelle** (2), German, International studies/peace & conflict studies	*202*, 203*, **211**, 216*, **261, 262**, *271, 272*, 311*, **331, 334**, 343*, 359	no	no
11.	**Andrea** (6), German, management studies	180, *271, 272*, **309, 350**, 359, **431**	unsure	no
11.	**Anna** (154), German, peace & conflict studies	**101**, *102*, **201, 202, 211**, *271, 272*, 311*, **334, 350, 431**	no	no
11.	**Daryl** (10), History, economics	**101, 102, 201, 202, 204*, 211, 307, 334**	no	yes

Note. Online courses are indicated by italics, language course by bold type, and outdated numberings by asterisks.

[a]See Note a, Table 6, for an explanation of this student's trajectory.

5.1 Summary of All Interviews

Interviewees were studying a wide range of subjects in the fields of engineering, humanities, social sciences, fine arts, languages, computer science, and physical and applied sciences. Almost all students had prior experience learning one or more foreign languages, most commonly high school French for domestic students and English for international students, with some also having experience learning one or more additional languages (e.g. Dutch, Spanish, Turkish, Korean, Russian, Italian, and Japanese). Six interviewees were international students (mostly from mainland China or Hong Kong), and the remainder were Canadian[24] students, three of whom were bilingual since youth, in a German dialect (Samantha), Portuguese (Cara), or Cantonese and Mandarin (Olivia). Most of the interviewees had no prior formal experience with learning German before beginning their

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[24] I acknowledge that students' backgrounds are not always easy to categorize, and any categories are always blurry, e.g. one of the international students came to Canada in high school, and may or may not be a Canadian citizen, and one of the Canadian students lived in Germany and other locations during her upbringing, before settling in Canada at some point as a teenager (but identified herself as Canadian). Thus, the chosen terms *Canadian* and *international student* are meant only to provide a general idea of students' backgrounds as the students described themselves, notwithstanding citizenship or other formal factors (such as place of birth). I also draw no conclusions in this thesis based on these factors.

studies at UW, though three mentioned experience with a few phrases or words learned from friends, parents, or grandparents who had visited or lived in German-speaking countries. One interviewee was a native speaker of German (Andrea), three were heritage speakers (i.e. had learned and spoken some German from a young age; Rachelle, Maryanne, and Katrina), and three students had started learning German prior to attending UW (Alyssa and Maryanne in high school, Seth at the Goethe Institut). Three interviewees also specified that they have Germanic (Mennonite, Dutch, and German) heritage that contributed to their interest in learning German, but no knowledge of the language. Three interviewees were mature students (Rachelle, Andrea, and Maryanne) and one student was a post-degree student (Seth), who had returned to school a couple of years after graduation. The remainder of the interviewees appeared to be in the typical undergraduate age range of 18-23 years old. All except two of the students had been studying primarily on-campus, i.e. one distance student was interviewed (Maryanne, located in the Greater Toronto Area) by Skype, and another (Rachelle) had recently switched from the distance mode to being on-campus, and thus was interviewed in person.

The students I talked to expressed a wide variety of reasons for wanting to learn German. Some were purely intrinsically motivated (e.g. they stated simply they found German interesting or that learning languages was fun), and others indicated instrumental or integrative motivational reasons, or a combination of motivational factors (see Afshar, Rahimi, & Rahimi, 2014 for a discussion of motivation types). For example, a number of students expressed an interest in German technology and engineering, and the future employment doors learning German could open in this area. Others had a desire to connect with their heritage/family background, travel to Germany as a tourist, read texts in their original form (e.g. Canadian historical newspapers, German literature and philosophy), or intended to continue with German Studies at the postgraduate level. One student

(Shengyi) was an avid European football fan who had wanted to learn German since her teen years so that she could watch sports broadcasts and talk to friends and other fans in German.

Fifteen of the students had not taken an online German course at UW, while a few had taken online language classes in other languages, such as French or Japanese, or online courses in other subjects (e.g. English, political science). Students described a range of learning styles and participation levels, with some undertaking a lot of additional practice outside of the classroom (e.g. reading news, watching videos, speaking or writing to friends or classmates in German, listening to music), while many only took part in the planned course and homework activities (which are nonetheless extensive, requiring almost daily work).

In addition, most students said that they experienced at least some level of uncertainty, nervousness, or apprehension about speaking in class. Some students preferred to listen to the teacher or other students before speaking because of this, whereas others were much more willing to take part in spite of such uncertainty and were not so worried about making errors. Quite often, students in the latter category had studied abroad in Germany or had prior experience speaking a form of German at home, which they said had reduced their nervousness. Almost all of the students expressed overall satisfaction with the level of communication, interaction, and feedback in their on-campus courses, and they felt their instructors were available for help if they needed it. Furthermore, almost all students showed some form of preference for F2F/on-campus learning. Even those students who expressed a level of dissatisfaction with an element of their F2F course still preferred this course environment to the online one.

Indeed, the vast majority of the interviewees expressed doubts about OLL and the value it could offer for learning German, which is not surprising in that the sample was made up of mainly F2F-oriented students. The students who had actually taken an OLL course were mostly satisfied, although they expressed a desire for some improvements in the structure or content of their courses

(see below). However, almost all of these OLE students also expressed the view that a fundamental problem they felt existed in their courses (and often with OLL in general) was that they did not have enough interaction. They felt sufficient interaction was not possible since there were no other students or a teacher to speak to F2F, and speaking and pronunciation were therefore difficult. The second major problem they articulated was with feedback: they found the lack of immediate feedback on tasks to be a problem, or felt that the feedback or help they received was inadequate. Some students also thought the class was either too quickly paced or had an overly ambitious workload for the average undergraduate, and most spoke about the trouble they had motivating themselves to complete the activities every day. A number of the students did not understand the reasoning behind the order of tasks or the combination of materials, and found them "repetitive" and "formulaic," (Katrina), "sterile" (Jennifer), or "confusing" (Vicky). When I asked F2F-only students about any possible advantages they could see that online learning might offer, most were either hesitant or unsure of their answers, gave limited responses, and/or needed extra time to think before responding. I interpreted this difficulty, in combination with their body language and speech patterns (e.g. shrugs, frowns, many "ums" and "ahs", use of terms like "maaaybe")[25], to be signs of doubtfulness about the topic, and the search for answers to be related to the interview format (where there is intrinsic pressure to try to find an answer to satisfy the interviewer). Some of the answers students eventually suggested included scheduling flexibility, added grammar and vocabulary practice, or improvement in writing and reading skills. Fewer students referred to opportunities for added listening practice (e.g. due to the ability to re-listen to audio or visual recordings) or to factors related to possible benefits inherent to online learning, such as flexibility or learning at one's own pace.

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[25] For an example of a quote that displays these characteristics, see the quotation by Matt below

Concerning course choice, most on-campus students had either specifically chosen to take a F2F course, dismissing online courses for the reasons mentioned above, or had simply not known about or considered the option of an online course. A few students were adamant that they would never take an online course, no matter how difficult it made their schedules, and it was common for students at the advanced level who held this view to have made significant accommodations or sacrifices to fit in F2F learning, e.g. by taking other courses online or changing their entire course schedule or degree program. All of the students who studied on-campus said they were happy with their choice to take German on-campus, and would make the same choice again, while those who studied online had mixed opinions. Two students said they wished their schedules could have accommodated an on-campus course and three more said they would strongly recommend against online courses to other students and/or would not take one again. One student (Vicky) said that even though the online course was fine and a logical idea at the time, in retrospect she would take it F2F instead, since she felt this would have helped her retain the content more effectively, the examples she gave being pronunciation and vocabulary. Finally, one interviewee (Maryanne) felt that a blended course would be ideal, since it would be an ideal combination between the benefits of online and F2F learning. Only one student (Rachelle) was satisfied with her online course and did not think an on-campus course would have been better, although she considered the course she took (202) to be primarily concerned with writing. It therefore met her expectations in that it helped her to improve her writing. She said that she would not consider taking any further OLL courses, however, since in her view this would not make sense at the advanced level; she could not see the value in taking any more than one online course.

When students were asked what they saw as the most important aspect of language learning in general, i.e. what they wanted to be able to do/achieve when learning, they usually responded with

reference to their goals for learning German in particular. One major theme was oral communication; students' said their goal would be to:

> "ultimately have a conversation" (Vicky)
> "speak fluently" (Dustin)
> "be[] able to communicate with others" (Jennifer)
> "go [to Germany] and understand the language" (Julie)
> "speak standard German without thinking about it" (Samantha)
> "just be able to communicate" (Shengyi)
> "be able to say basics, be able to communicate needs" (Cara)
> "confidently communicate at an everyday level" (Olivia)

Many students spoke of the possibility of conversing with native German speakers in various contexts (e.g. family, romantic partner, while travelling). Three students intended to use German academically in further studies of history, literature, or linguistics; four beginner-level students said they had no particular goal when learning a language; and one student said he saw grammar as the most important aspect of language learning. In her interview, Alyssa gave an interesting answer about the intercultural competence which language learning fosters, and the usefulness this could have:

> I think knowing *of* another language is, um, it's hard to explain, but, um, I think, as an individual it, it, exposing yourself to these *other* languages, that, like aren't your *mother tongue*, really shapes you into the more, more *international* person, if that makes sense? Umm. So also it um [*pause*] it, I don't want to say *sensitizes* you [*pause*] but, hmm . . . it's more of an awareness of other cultures, and how to interact with them. Um, like that could even benefit you professionally, so say if, um, you're working with a group, um, or like a team that has different cultures, um you know how to *diffuse* problems that arise there, or you're more sensitive to cultural issues. But I think we're touching on that in [German] 212 more, were talking about stereotypes and stuff like that.

Finally, when asked what they thought were the qualities of a good language teacher and what they hoped for in their instructors, students provided a range of characteristics, with the most common having to do with the teacher's demeanour in the classroom towards students. For example, patience was a very common response, along with qualities such as the ability to encourage

students to actively speak and participate, to get the class excited to learn German, to engage them in what they were learning, to give feedback/corrections in a positive and non-judgemental manner, and to be understanding of the difficulties that students experience. For example, Olivia said she would like a teacher to be "someone who's very engaging, tries to get the class to . . . [be] very comfortable speaking and making mistakes" and Cara talked about her shyness speaking and how this connected to the role of the teacher:

> I know that *I* get really shy pronouncing stuff, so I hope that, like, they'd correct me, but like maybe not in a very harsh way [*smile voice*]. Um, also maybe like encouraging like di-, like um *conversation*, cause that'd be better, for the pronunciation too" (*emphasis added to show stress by speaker*).[26]

Several students mentioned that they found non-native speaker teachers could be more effective in this regard, for example through sharing the experience of having learned German as a second language and thus being able to explain grammatical and other concepts from a learner's perspective. For example, Anna put it thus:

> When you learn a second language it's different from learning it as a native language. So when I had a TA who was a grad student who learned German as a second language, I found they were the best person to teach me because they *understood*, oh yes, this is a common struggle, this is what you run into, this is how *I* remembered it, type of thing. The [native speakers], they were obviously fully fluent, knew what they were *talking* about, but they didn't necessarily know, I had one [teacher] in particular who, she didn't quite how to explain things, but then she'd get stuck at explaining it, and [*makes motion of throwing up her hands*] say "this is the just the way it *is*". But then, I like, I didn't like that nearly so much as the TA who explained to me, oh yes, I found there's a general grouping *here*, there's a general pattern for *this*. . . . while they were all great and enthusiastic teachers whether they were a native German speaker or not, the native Germans just *didn't* understand the struggle to learn German the same way.

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[26] Quotation formatting methodology: In this and all further interview quotes, italics are used to show particular emphasis (e.g. sentence or other noticeable stress) by the student speaking, while normal (non-italicized text) in square brackets indicates edits to the quotes for clarity or to make them fit the syntax of the sentence they are embedded in. Commas are used to show brief pauses (micropauses) that are integrated into the flow of speech, while periods indicate slight downward intonation followed by a micropause. Question marks similarly show upwards intonation followed by a micropause. Any longer pauses, along with other indicators of body language or speech style that I felt were significant, are indicated in square brackets in italic text (e.g. nodding, smiling/laughing voice, shrugging). I have chosen to follow this basic format since I have used the Content Analysis method.

Other qualities that were mentioned as valuable were experience in a country that speaks the language (i.e. knowledge of the culture), being a native speaker of German, or having extensive background (expert) knowledge. These answers were much less common, however, with one to two students each. The fact that the majority of students either focused on, or at least mentioned, affective factors, could indicate one reason why they reject the idea of OLL; perhaps this social, affective role of the teacher, in which the focus is on making students comfortable and encouraging them to get past their uncertainty using the language, is the key factor they see as being necessary in a language course, beyond just delivering the content. This will be discussed further in the Discussion chapter.

5.2   Example Interviews and Cluster Group Analyses

Example Interview 1. "Cara" is a Canadian first year student who was enrolled in German 101 on-campus at the time of the interview (she falls into Cluster 1). She was taking a Bachelor of Arts and hoping to major in Psychology and French. She was bilingual, having spoken both Portuguese and English since childhood, and took French throughout high school. She chose to learn German since she wanted to learn another second language for fun, and the only ones offered that fit her schedule were Greek and German. In addition, a Greek friend told her it was quite a difficult language (e.g. the alphabet) and she had heard that German was not that hard due to its similarity with English. So far, she was enjoying learning German, even though she found it quite different from second language learning at her high school. In her view, this difference in teaching style was due to a different focus, i.e. on "interpret[ing] German," and she preferred teaching styles where the focus was on grammar and in which there was more use of explicit grammar rules and resources like grammar tables. In her words, a course where they tell you "what is what" instead of learning rules inductively. I interpreted this as the difference between the predominantly

communicative teaching styles in use at UW, where the classes are conducted almost entirely in the target language, versus a form-focused method that Cara described in her previous experience.

Some difficulties she experienced included following along with the classroom tasks, being shy pronouncing new words, and keeping up with learning vocabulary, but she especially liked the small class size, which she felt offered an important opportunity for students to communicate. She was more hesitant to participate at the start of the term, due to insecurity about pronunciation and whether her utterances were correct, but over time, she became more interested and able to participate as she gained knowledge and confidence in decoding what the instructor was asking. To aid in her learning she would practice German with a student from her dormitory, and they worked together on a video project.

With regards to what makes a good language teacher, she felt that they should be good at encouraging conversation, able to correct mistakes in a kind way, recognize when students are lost, know which topics should be reviewed, and ask guiding question to help students along in the process of figuring out what their errors were. Overall Cara was happy with the level of communication in the class, satisfied with her current teacher, and felt that the classroom environment that had been established was open and accepting. This was important because she then felt able to ask questions and get help when she needed it.

When asked about her views of OLL (in this case, to imagine what it would be like, since she had never taken a language course online), Cara expressed the view that she thought it would be much harder than F2F learning, because there is no instructor standing in front of students, guiding them through the material. Instead, she thought it would mean only: "reading what someone posts or listening to audio files that have been posted." The main reason she thought this would be harder than in class is that there would be no fellow students with whom she could collectively work together to "figure out" what the teacher was saying, or what the task is that they are supposed to

complete. Rather, these tasks would need to be done alone. This is an interesting view, because it seems she did not take into consideration at all that she would be able to listen to the posting or other audio (or read the posted text) as many times as she wished, and be able to make use of instant resources, like an online dictionary. Instead, her focus was very much on understanding instant audio communication in a group setting, with the aid of peers and likely the teacher's body language.

Cara's response to Item 4 was that she did not plan to take any German online in the future, saying, "I'm not sure if I'd be able to learn a language w[ith] online teaching." When prompted if she thought there could be any possible advantages to OLL, after some thought she said she could see that there would be a benefit to the immediacy of being able to look up words, concepts, etc. as she came across them; because students were alone, they could then use the language in ways they understand. She appeared to hold a narrow view of OLL, in which she thought students would be learning all alone, without a teacher's or peer's help, essentially teaching themselves the language. Although she was uncertain whether she would enroll in more German in the future, more importantly she said she was sure that she would enroll in a F2F course, because she had always taken all of her courses in this environment, and therefore would make the same decision now.

When asked about what she felt was important when learning a language (e.g. what should someone be able to do, know, etc.), she said that it would depend on how passionate someone is about a language. For her, the goal for a language like German, which she was learning for fun, would be to be able to say basic phrases, communicate needs, etc., for example at the level appropriate to future travel in a German-speaking country. If, on the other hand, she were "passionate" about a language, then she would want to gain a higher proficiency, e.g. sufficient for carrying out a conversation with some fluency with a native speaker. Even if there were still mistakes or some words were unknown, the important thing would be the ability to communicate in the target language.

Clusters 1 and 4: comparisons. Cara's views were typical of students in Clusters 1 and 4, who were in their first or second term of learning German. All of the students in these clusters had not seriously considered (and/or would not consider) taking an online language class; were uncertain and nervous about participating in class; focused on getting feedback and validation of their speech by their instructor; and preferred to learn in a group with other students than on their own. Their views about OLL were also often quite undefined or inconsistent; they often expressed uncertainty about their responses, for example, Matt said that his instinct was that he would just not be able to communicate after learning German online:

> Ummm. [*longer pause*] well, well I mean I, I *suppose* [*pause*] maybe not at a university level, but if you're taking it, um kinda like a Rosetta Stone thing, um, I think that, *yeah*, because you're working at your *own* pace, you're not, kind of, work to meet the deadline. You can do your own investigation. *But*, I don't *know* how, *much*, like [*pause*] in terms of vocab, like you'll actually, *retain*? Umm, so [*pause, shrugs, interviewer interjects with* "maybe"] *maybe*, yeah, I would-t-, my gut instinct says *not really* [*shakes head*]. *So*, if you're gonna learn a language, then, som-, and a language is *communication*, how are you gonna *communicate*, without having someone to communicate *with*.

This concurred with other interviewees, who expressed the opinion that OLL as a concept just did not make much sense to them. With the exception of one student (Olivia) who had taken took an online course in Japanese, an experience with which she was unhappy, none of the students had prior OLL experience, and they found it difficult to think of advantages this learning environment could offer, though some offered being able to learn at your own pace or look up words. Yongrui was very negative, saying he would "never" take an online German course, while another (Samantha) said she could imagine taking an advanced course focused on literature online, but not a language course. Even students who said they enjoyed and learned well from written texts—e.g. Matt, who said you have to read in order to learn—still had a preference for F2F learning. Indeed, Matt was more concerned about reading in the context of being unhappy with the L2-focus of his F2F class, i.e. the textbook being all in German, there not being enough readings that were translated, etc.

Thus for him, he meant more that he was frustrated with not being able to understand all of the materials provided, which, in my person experience, is a common reaction for many students when they enter a communication-focused language class. Despite this focus on reading, and the fact that an online environment would allow him to look up words and phrases while reading, as well as spend as much time as needed on different types of tasks (reading, speaking, writing, listening), Matt still said he would not consider taking German online because students are "exposed" much more in the classroom, i.e. they have the opportunity to speak more often and ask questions. Only one student out of the ten in these two clusters (Julie) said she would consider taking an online course. She had no current plans to do so, but the main obstacle in her view would be pronunciation. She felt that if she had a good grasp of this skill ahead of time, then she would perhaps be able to study online, but was still very uncertain about such a possibility, and would prefer taking a F2F course.

Example Interview 2. The second interview I will discuss is that of "Anna," a Canadian student from Ontario who responded to the survey through Google Docs. Anna started learning German in 101, and continued on to the intermediate and advanced levels. Her interview provides a good example of the interviews from advanced on-campus-only students, in Clusters 7 and 11.

Anna was in her final term of university when interviewed, about to graduate with a German minor and history major. She started out enrolled in science and switched to studying German after taking her first language class. She took part in a two-month study exchange to Germany the summer before her first class, which is what first got her interested in learning the language. Anna said she really enjoyed learning languages. She was in French immersion[27] in school and really enjoyed learning German. She was planning to undertake postgraduate work in pre-confederation Canadian history with, for which she felt German would be useful language to know, along with

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[27] In the Ontario school system, this refers to a course of study in which "students learn French as a subject and French serves as the language of instruction in two or more other [school] subjects. At the elementary level at least 50 per cent of all instruction is provided in French" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015).

French and English (many early Canadian newspapers were written in German, for example). She planned to maintain her proficiency as best she could by continuing to talk to German friends and revise topics as needed.

Regarding her in-class experiences at UW, Anna related that things she disliked or had difficulty with in general were pronunciation, learning Grammar, and learning vocabulary or other concepts by rote, such as verb conjugations, genders of nouns, etc. She liked that the classes she had taken were small and not taught in the large lecture hall-style format, and thought that a good teacher was someone who made learning the language fun and interactive. As mentioned above, she also considered a teacher who could understand the learner's perspective to be valuable. She felt that the projects, speeches, and presentations they had to complete for homework or in class, despite being time-consuming, were effective for practicing and constantly forced her to practice her oral communication skills. Although she found her classes to be sufficiently interactive overall, Anna also thought that the degree of interactivity was significantly dependent on the classmates who happened to be in that particular group. For example, she noticed that in early morning sessions it was more difficult for the teacher to get students to engage. Nevertheless, she said most instructors she had had were quite skilled at getting students to participate. She felt that there was a level of personal responsibility involved however, in that students who were more willing to participate actively seemed to gain higher levels of competency. She felt her learning style was quite participatory and engaged; she would actively take part in classes, talk to the teacher or other students outside class to help her grasp concepts, and listen to other students in class. For example, if they pronounced a word incorrectly and were then corrected by the instructor, then she would attempt to make use of this new knowledge when it was her turn to speak. Altogether, she felt the opportunity for this kind of learning experience helped her learn German much better than would have been possible on her own from a book. Furthermore, she felt this kind of learning experience was not just dependent on

having an understanding teacher and engaged peers, but also on having a small class size. In her estimation, this meant much greater chances to participate (and therefore learn), which only increased as she moved up to senior level German classes, in which the class sized were even smaller, and she was also less nervous due to knowing almost all of her fellow students by that point. This meant she was more comfortable making mistakes and speaking to other students at various skill levels. Overall, she was satisfied with the level of opportunities she had to communicate, participate, and get feedback in her F2F classes.

In addition to classroom activities and homework, on the advice of her instructors Anna also took time on her own to supplement in-class learning. For example, she would watch German TV shows with subtitles to aid her comprehension and fluency speaking (by listening and attempting to imitate speech patterns of native speakers in these shows). She found this to be a useful activity, although she felt it did not assist very much with grammar knowledge or skills that would be needed for writing. Outside of class, she also did some writing and speaking with her former exchange partner in Germany. They would skype and chat on Facebook, and she felt that having someone to talk with and help with her German was beneficial for her learning. She also felt it was important that she knew this person socially, which made her comfortable talking with them. She had heard about websites where you could find a speaking partner, but thought that speaking with another student who she already knew was more desirable, because they had shared interests and life experiences, and she also knew that this person would not be a teacher-like figure who would constantly correct her grammar. This meant she could be relaxed with speaking German with them, and not be fearful of making mistakes or being judged.

When asked about her view on OLL, and how she thought it might compare to learning German in the classroom, Anna responded that she thought it would be very different, for various reasons:

I think it's *very* different, I've sort of, on my own, looking at different languages and things, looking at programs like Duolingo, or Memrise, and things like that – I would sometime use them, as an *addition* to class, to make sure I'm studying properly, kind of thing. But I think they're, the main difficulty with *online*, and it is improving now, with things like Skype and whatever, is that, you can't have somebody *correct* how you're saying something. Especially for me, my accent is always atrocious [*smile voice*] in any language, I *really* need to know, you know, "you're saying this word *horribly wrong.*" I need to *know* that part, so I think for the online learning, while it could be just fine for a grammar class, that's easy, you're set – but for actually, sort of, the *conversational* language, you need this *back* and forth, of you know, "you're saying this wrong", or "you're saying this *right*," *or* even just to have somebody to say to you "hello, how are you?" and then you have *respond*, "I am fine, how are you?" And if they say, "what did you do today?" versus if they said "what colour is your *shirt*?" you need to have that back and forth, so that you're not just following *rote*. You need to follow by rote to learn *grammar*, but not *all* the language.

Thus, Anna placed a high importance on the interplay between reacting instantaneously to spoken language, being exposed to it every day (even with something as simple as greetings), and the feedback and correction on pronunciation that she felt the presence of an instructor or other language partner could offer. For this reason, she felt that the main value of online learning lies is in the possibilities that CMC technologies like Skype can offer, i.e. synchronous F2F communication undertaken via the Internet. In this way, she shared the same essential view (pro-F2F, doubtful of, or holding a preference against, OLL) as the majority of the students who studied only in the F2F environment, although her explanation and reasoning were much more nuanced than the beginning-level students.

When first asked if she could see any possible advantages for OLL, she said that the only one she could think of would be for someone taking specifically a grammar or writing class, or wanting to learn specific vocabulary (which I interpreted as meaning something like a business, science, or other specialized German course). On further thought, she also mentioned possible benefits for students who were by necessity off-campus for a period. She gave the theoretical example of a student completing a co-op work placement in Germany, who could take an online grammar class.

She felt this would be a positive setup, since the student would be practicing and developing their conversation skills in their everyday interactions, while having the flexibility to learn grammar on their own schedule by completing assignments and having no set class times.

I found it interesting that Anna discussed this flexibility, because early in the interview she mentioned that one of the biggest challenges she had experienced during her studies learning German was timetabling. She said it was often very difficult to fit in all of the German classes she needed to take with the history classes for her major. She reported that she had considered taking online classes because of these difficulties, but she made a conscious decision only to take German F2F, because the issues mentioned above in the quoted passage were so important to her. Instead, she opted to take some history courses online, because she felt reading and writing online for history was sufficient to learn the material, whereas when learning a new language, F2F interaction was not only necessary, but actually primary; in her view, learning German online would have been "pointless."

Moreover, these scheduling issues were sufficiently limiting that they even forced Anna to have to change her study plans. She had hoped to take a double major in history and German, but was forced to downgrade German to a minor subject due to the inability to fit all needed courses into her timetable. Despite this, she said that she still did not regret this choice because she felt she gained much more knowledge in class than ever would have been possible online. Unlike French, which she had learned more slowly over a 12 year period, she recognized that she had much less time in which to learn German (a 4 year degree). Even though she recognized that her German proficiency was lower than that the level she had acquired in French, when comparing the two she felt strongly that her interactive in-class experiences learning German had allowed her to gain a reasonably high level of proficiency during a relatively short period of time. She was quite proud of

the progress she had made, saying "I feel like my accent is still atrocious and my grammar is half bad, but I'm ok with that!"

Clusters 7 and 11: comparisons. Anna's interview makes clear some trends that appeared in the intermediate and advanced level F2F-only clusters in the interviews. These students had well-formed, well-articulated, and strongly held opinions about language learning and their learning styles, and very often voiced a decidedly negative opinion of OLL. Three of the five interviewees (Seth, Daryl, Anna) said they would not consider an online course, one student said she would (Alyssa), and the final student, Andrea, was a native speaker of German who was not enrolled in language classes.[28] The students in these clusters were very involved in their classes and enthusiastic about learning German in spite of difficulties they experienced. They often undertook a variety of activities to get extra practice outside of the course requirements that were more intensive than undertaken by more junior students (e.g. practicing German often with family or friends, going on exchanges, reading extensively about German culture on their own time, attempting to read complex source texts, attending community events). Whether it was decreased confidence speaking in front of other students who had studied on exchange (when that student had not done so), an "atrocious" accent(Alyssa), or difficulties with grammar terms, these students were very clear on what they saw to be their weaknesses, as well as the fact that they desired a communication-focused, interactive, and immersive experience. For example, Seth was displeased with prior non-UW German courses he had taken because he said they focused too much on explicit grammar instruction, saying:

> Whereas I think what I'm looking for is probably a bit more, uh, like a practical, just a straight *immersive* experience, so that I can develop more of a natural, um, *understanding* of the language.

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[28] Because Andrea's experience differs from the other students, I will discuss this cluster with reference only to the students who are learning German and/or have taken language classes.

Although one of Seth's stated long-term goals was to be able to read advanced political and philosophical source texts in the context of graduate level studies in German, he also placed a heavy emphasis on the so-called immersiveness of learning. He also thought that the classes at UW could be more interactive as well; it seems that interaction was something that could not be overdone, in his estimation. He discussed his theory that study abroad (which he hoped to undertake soon) would be the ideal way to gain confidence, day-to-day language skills, and get the exposure needed to allow deep cultural learning. Indeed, this search for deep cultural learning was his ultimate goal, which he was continuously working towards, and he hoped his other goals (such as reading advanced texts) would lead to this result.

Another trend in this group was that most of the students in these clusters were willing to rearrange their schedules significantly to make room for F2F German classes. Learning F2F was so important to them that they often made sacrifices in other areas to make this possible. Although most were no longer as nervous about speaking and oral production compared to the students at earlier stages of learning, they felt they needed continued immediate and in-person feedback, along with the added writing and reading practice that come with higher-level courses, to maintain and continue to improve their proficiency.

Only one student, Alyssa, spoke about OLL in a positive way. An advanced learner of German, she had taken a French course online at UW during a co-op term, and she has highly valued the flexibility it offered. Instead of working all day and taking evening classes, she could study at any time or place she wanted, thus "sav[ing] time and sanity!" She said that even though the course was quite grammar focused, which made it more difficult to achieve a good mark on the exam, given the chance to go back she would still choose to take the course online. Because I was interested in course transitions between online and on-campus courses, I also prompted Alyssa as about how she experienced the transition from her online French class to studying back on-campus

(even though it was not a German course, I felt this could be a useful line of questioning). She responded that she had found the transition quite difficult, but she thought this was mainly due to the time gap between these two courses (one year), and not due to the course environment. During that year she did not practice any French, watch any French media, etc. After a transition period, she said that she became reacclimatized to the classroom environment, though she still reported being nervous speaking and having trouble remembering vocabulary after this time gap.

Due to her prior experience learning German in high school, Alyssa began taking German at UW with 201, and this gave her little chance to consider taking any German online (When she first came to UW she did not know about 201 being offered online, and at that time German 202 was not yet available online). When asked about if she had a preference, she said that despite having an overall positive experience in her online French course, she still felt that learning F2F was better, and she connected this idea both to the perceived grammar focus of OLL classes (as with her French course), as well as to a lack of motivation:

> Uh, I th- well any online class, you need a lot of self-discipline [*laughs*], um, and I that, um, online language courses especially, um, more emphasis is on, like the *grammar* theory? versus, um, the *spoken* language. So, um, there's not many opportunities to practice uh, German *orally*, or any language orally, when you're in a online environment. Um, *unless* they have like the special *recorder* thing [*makes motion like holding a tape recorder*], where you record some phrase or sentence, um, and then submit it. Uh, but, yeah you do get a lot of *grammar*, and um, yeah it's just a lot of self-discipline [*smile voice*] just to keep up with it, and sort of, uh, *practice* it on your own. Um, whereas in a in-, in a in-class environment, that stuff's sort of easier [*nods*], easier to comprehend.

Similar to other respondents who had previous experience with online language courses, Alyssa assumed that a German course would have a very similar focus (in this case, on grammar topics), this showing a limited knowledge of the possible variation in online learning formats. Furthermore—although she displayed more knowledge than the other interviewees in Clusters 7 and 11 of some of the technological resources that were available for oral communication and practice in

the online environment (i.e. with her mention of dictation tools)—she still felt that these kinds of opportunities were by necessity limited. In other words, even if oral practice was *possible* in an online course (a point which many more junior students could not really conceptualize), it was not as plentiful and comprehensible, and therefore useful, as the practice one would get in the F2F environment.

Overall, Alyssa thought that while online language courses can be valuable for filling gaps in which on-campus study is not possible, staying motivated and keeping up is much easier in a F2F-setting, and therefore F2F was her preferred option. She showed an openness to online study, however, that none of the other so-called F2F-oriented students presented. She planned to take Dutch 101 online in in the upcoming summer term for fun, and was interested in how the experience would be learning a completely new language online. This indicates that perhaps because the course was just for fun, there was less risk in taking it online, versus taking a French or German course for her degree, in which she knew she had to succeed in order to move on to the next course. I will discuss the link suggested here by Alyssa's quote, between F2F interaction and motivation, further in the Discussion chapter.

Example Interview 3. "Vicky" was a Canadian student in her fourth year of studying biomedical sciences, with the career goal of attending medical school. At the time of her interview, she was enrolled in German 101 online. She chose to take German as an elective out of interest after learning French in high school and completing all of the Korean courses at UW during her degree. She had no specific plans for using German in the future, though she said she hoped to be able to understand some German media (music, TV), perhaps travel to Germany someday, and have a conversation in German. Vicky was interested in gaining culture insights, which she saw as integrated into the language, and she was interested in anthropology and the study of culture and languages.

She said that her experience learning German was mostly positive at the time of the interview, and she used her experience learning French and Korean, as well as her knowledge of English, to help her learn. Similar to many of the other respondents, she identified pronunciation as a particular an area of difficulty. For example, she found the concept of the German umlaut difficult to grasp. In order to remedy this difficulty, she had developed personal strategies, such as listening carefully to all recordings a minimum of two to three times and then trying to imitate the sounds. Despite an overall positive experience with the language, she did have some criticism concerning the online course itself. First, for the workload expected, as well as the focus on learning vocabulary:

> Um, so I kind of read the logic behind how the course was structured, and how many *hours* were given per week, right? [*pause*] Um, and it seems a *little bit*, to be *honest*, for like 101, it seems a little bit, uhm, I can't think of the word I want. Uhm, *aggressive*? [*laughs*]. Not aggressive, but very, like very *busy*, because on top of doing all the work, which *is fine*, like, the work is actually kind of *fun*, but then, on top of that we have to go and learn like, 200 words a week. [*pause*]. And, and like, it's just the glossary right, so trying to learn all those words, plus the um, feminine, masculine, neutral [*pause*] is, it's, it, it's just a little much on *top* of the work. . . . I didn't realize [it would be that much], my friends are taking other, like, languages online, like Dutch, and it seems a *lot* less [*pause*] *aggressive*. [*laughs*]. A lot less *intense*.

She went on to discuss how she found she spent a lot of time on her German work, and she thought this could be a deterrent to other students, especially since for many German is an elective course. She liked how the material was broken up into little chunks, but thought that the scheduling of tasks was restrictive. Even though she spent time working on the tasks every day, she said that she found the time commitment to be overwhelming at times, and found that it was not possible to do all of the work for the course along with that for her other courses. She struggled to understand many of the tasks in the textbook at first, which are laid out as if to be used in a classroom setting, as well how, or if, she should be supplementing the tasks in the main list of activities. In addition, when she needed help, she was not sure where she could find reliable supplemental information. She said that other students were confused as well, for example, someone asked on a discussion board about

chapter-end (review) activities, which were not mentioned as required activities, and she reported that they were then told they should have been doing these tasks all along. She also ended up buying a grammar book for help due to her initial confusion with many of the tasks.

Vicky was positive concerning the possibilities for oral communication in the online course, saying, "I was surprised by how much speaking we had to do, and I thought it was nice. But I sound so bad," displaying a similar anxiety about pronunciation as the first year students in the F2F-only clusters. She said she liked that students had to participate in the discussion boards as part of the course, which often included recording themselves speak, in addition to writing. The writing was often in the form of dialogues, which she felt was an appropriate way to learn communication online. Students were then able to listen to each other's recordings and respond, though she was not sure how many students actually listened to each other's posts. Overall she really liked the participatory elements of the course—she felt that since they were done for completion marks (i.e. if completed, full marks were given) it was a low-stress way it to further explore parts of the language, and in doing so to challenge herself, much more so than she would have felt comfortable with if she were just trying to get a good grade and was nervous about making too many mistakes. She did listen to other student's postings on occasion, but felt it did not help her in any meaningful way. Rather, she much preferred to listen to the occasional recordings by the instructor:

> I think there's, for an online course, I think there *is* a lot of interaction with other students. Not so much with the *professor*. Um, she posts Prof Thoughts, that we have to listen to. And, I, I get *really excited* for Prof Thoughts because all of a sudden, things become *really clear*. Um, I wish she would post more.

Overall, Vicky was satisfied with the possibilities for communication between students (they could send each messages, in addition to posting on the discussion boards), but wished there was more chance to communicate with the instructor, especially live. There was one hour a week where the students could chat or Skype with the instructor for an online office hour, but because this was

during a time when she had class, she was never able to participate. She said that even though she recognized it was an online class, she still wished there was another option for communication, though she was not sure what that might be. She felt that the chance to ask questions to the instructor live somehow would have been extremely helpful.

Another important theme that arose in Vicky's interview was that of feedback. Vicky desired more feedback as she worked through the material, rather than just on the end-of-chapter assignments. For example, she struggling with figuring out the German cases, and when she thought she was using one correctly, upon checking the answers she found she was usually incorrect, but she did not understand the source of her misunderstanding. She reported that she did her best to get past this, and would try to search sentences on Google in hopes it would show up, in order to see if she had chosen the right case. Unfortunately she reported that his method did not usually help much, and this shows how students are often not aware of how or where to search for help online, which supports the arguments in the research for learner training in CALL and OLL, which I discussed in the literature review (e.g. Fischer, 2012; Blake, 2005)

With regard to how she found learning online to be different from in class, Vicky drew on her experiences learning Korean, which she took on-campus (and she later worked as a TA in a Korean 101 class):

> I think, with learning it online, it's a lot more *self-study*, but not in the fact that we just have to, kind of [*pause*] do the work, it's more, kind of, trying to figure *out*, what we should be *getting* from the sentence. Which, I find really *difficult*. Because, I'm good with *learning a rule*, learning the *exceptions* to the rule, and then *applying* that rule. Um, which is what a lot of what Korean was, and Korean didn't, kind of, give so much emphasis *on*, the um, vocab? They-, he kind of really wanted us to learn the *structure*, and then supplement that with, like, a *significant* amount of vocab, but not, kind of, overload [*pause*] and scare us with vocab.

The main advantage she saw with learning online, on the other hand, was being able to go back to an elements of the material (e.g. a recording) as many times as she wanted, which she recognized was

not the case in a F2F course: if a student missed something the professor said in class, then they would not be able to easily go back and listen to it as many times as they wanted.

When it came to a possible transition to an on-campus course (102), Vicky first mentioned that she might worry about the social aspect of entering a close-knit language class where the students were already acquainted with each other, and she would stand out as being new. She also wondered about what the level would be in a following course, since she had found in her previous experience that there was often a noticeable jump in difficulty from the first to the second language course, whereas after that the difference between courses was no so great. Overall, however, she did not seem seriously worried about a possible transition, saying, "it's nothing that I'd really, be, too worried about." She said that she liked to speak and interact with others and would be excited to get additional practice and work on her pronunciation.

Vicky's idea of a good language teacher was someone who is able to correct her without making her feel as if she is being put down, i.e. with no judgement; she stated that she loves feedback as long as there is no negative judgement attached. She also thought it was important for a teacher to be patient and understanding when students forgot or could not retain a recently covered concept, and disliked when teachers dismissed their questions by saying that something had already been covered the previous week. She felt that most students are fearful or embarrassed of asking questions when they know the instructor has explained something already, and if a teacher is encouraging in this regard, it can help them get past their hesitations.

When I asked about Vicky's motivation for taking German online versus F2F, she discussed how she had recently taken an English course online and "had a really good experience with it." She thought the course was well structured and the workload manageable. The course included participating in online discussion, writing essays, and reading texts, and she found the material to be well organized, engaging, and easy to work through on her own. Nevertheless, she said if she could

go back and make the decision again, she would choose to take German on-campus instead. She detailed how her aforementioned confusion with the layout, tasks, and workload of the course were not the only reasons for this decision, however:

> In, retrosp-, going back *now*, If I had the [*pause*] option to choose, at the beginning, I'd take it in *class* [*laughs*]. I would, I think that would help with the, like, remembering how to say things. But um, . . . it's a neat *idea*, but it's *a lot*. It's [just too much], yeah and the *words*. Like there's the words that we keep using, over and over again in the assignments, but then they'll be a word on the quiz and it's like ohhh *shoot*, I didn't see this, I just *scanned* through the glossary.

Thus, she also places emphasis on pronunciation, as mentioned, and when combined with the other problems she experienced, she felt that this made the online environment less effective for learning. She also discussed in her interview how these issues negatively affected her motivation in the course. She said she often found it difficult, despite daily work, to complete all of the tasks in a timely manner and not let them accumulate before the end of chapter assignments. Vicky's experience provides an interesting insight into the experience of on-campus students when learning in a fully online language course. While this is only the experience of one student, it makes clear that in an online course, there needs to be extremely clear directions for students, not just in the tasks that should be completed, but also how and when students can or should supplement their learning, in order not to cause them to become frustrated and demotivated. Unlike most other interviewees, Vicky showed a moderate level of awareness of the features and benefits that online learning could offer, and was much more open to the concept than others were. She also persevered despite difficulties she experienced, and felt that she learned a lot of German over the course of the term, and I inferred from her interview that with some key changes to the course layout and conception, she would have been quite happy learning German online.

While some students may enroll in an online course because they think it is easier (as was hinted at in the survey results), Vicky at least did not seem to have this expectation. If a seemingly

hard working student such as Vicky had these troubles, then it is worth considering how students less motivated and perseverant than her, or less experienced with the daily work and self-awareness needed for effective language learning, would fare in an online language course that is so intensive. While it is true that the on-campus courses at UW are also rigorous, with almost daily homework, weekly vocabulary quizzes, multiple chapter tests, frequent writing assignments, a video project, etc. it could be that students are less able to juggle and cope with this kind of workload in the online environment, in part due to the motivational issues mentioned. Thus, giving students all of the information they need in a clear and concise manner that is carefully tailored to the realities of the online environment (and to students who are often used to F2F learning, not just distance-oriented students), could help empower them to better learn autonomously.

Clusters 2 and 5: comparisons. The two online-only clusters only had one interviewee each, so it is somewhat difficult to speak of a trend, but I will compare Vicky's views and responses to the other student interviewed, "Maryanne." Maryanne had previously taken German 101 online and was enrolled in 102 at the time of her interview. She was a DL student from the greater Toronto area who was working full time while taking all of her degree courses online. This meant she was much more experienced with online learning than Vicky, but taking German 101 online was also the first time she had taken an OLL course. She had previously learned Japanese at a local community college (F2F) for two years, and wanted to learn German to connect with her family heritage.

Maryanne was what could be considered a heritage speaker and false beginner, in that she had learned some German as a child, her mother was bilingual (having immigrated to Canada as a child), had been to Germany a number of times, and had taken some German in high school. From this background, she could understand some spoken German, and had retained quite a bit of everyday vocabulary. Therefore, unlike Vicky, she did not have as much difficulty learning vocabulary in the course, although she stated that she thought it would most likely be too much to handle for a

student without her prior experience, describing it as "scary" and saying "because I had some previous *knowledge*, If I [hadn't've] had *any* knowledge, I probably would've been crying every night, trying to, um, trying to learn it." Her largest difficulty with the language, in contrast, was with learning grammatical structures, describing her grammar knowledge as "very poor" because her mother was unable to help with this, and she had forgotten most of what she learned in high school.

Like Vicky, Maryanne also really enjoyed the participatory elements of the course, though she participated in additional communication outside of the required interactive tasks. She reported that she was in a group of students who would email each other to discuss topics, and some even organized study groups in Waterloo and Toronto (which she was unfortunately unable to attend). She thought the large size of the 101 class (approximately 50-60 students) was excellent, since students could always find someone at the same level as them with whom to converse, and she found this social aspect made studying online much more personable and interesting. In contrast, because her 102 online class was much smaller (she did not state the number of students enrolled), she felt that this element was often lacking, which made learning the material more difficult. This was compounded by the topics and concepts being at a higher level, so overall she found 102 to be a much more difficult course. Maryanne's experience shows how, in contrast to the perceptions of many students, online learning can be an enjoyable social experience, depending on the course participants, group size, and students' comfort level in communicating with each other. Whereas it appears that Vicky only communicated with other students in German as part of the assigned tasks, Maryanne was able to communicate and interact with her peers in a social manner, and they collectively engaged with the material.

Similar to Vicky, Maryanne found the course workload to be very high; the number and type of activities meant that they could not be done in less than five days per week, though in her opinion the approximately one hour per day needed was appropriate and manageable. Indeed, she thought

this was actually better than her experience learning Japanese, because having the activities spread out, and truly requiring daily work, meant she was more motivated and focused on the tasks, and therefore learned the material better. She also felt this was preferable to the time commitment needed for a once-weekly three-hour night class, which many other institutions offered. In her words:

> When I had it *in* class, even though they'd, they'd *say*, 'do it every night,' I, I *didn't*. I mean, it [*pause*] you didn't *have* to, and because I didn't *have* to, I just didn't do it. And I think, uhm [then] you don't learn as well [*pause*] if you do it that way.

Maryanne did not have the same trouble understanding the course structure as Vicky, rather she thought that the two courses (101, 102) were well organized and laid out and the activities were thoughtfully prepared. She had worried when enrolling in the course that it would simply entail rote learning, but was pleasantly surprised when this was not the case:

> It was laid out, uhm, *a lot better* than I expected. Um, *because* [longer pause] I'd taken online cour- course-, like, in a, in a different subject, and it's very like, read_chapter_1, do_question_1_to_10, read_chapter_2 [*makes voice sound bored, draws out these phrases and enunciates in a sing-song matter*] [*pause*] so it was very like, I'm, I'm kind of felt like, even *though* it was good like they had they would have lectures you would watch, but the actual *reading* part, was [*pause*] I'm like, well okay, *I* could do *that* if I had the textbook, uhm. Whereas I found the German classes, it [*pause*] it *really* seemed like someone put in a lot of effort to make *sure* that, they kind of grouped all the activities together, that were *similar*, um. That, the, the layout was *really well done*. Um, so in *that* respect it was, much better than I *expected* cause I was kind of worried it's gonna be like, ok, open the book, do page 1 to 5. Then do, page 6 to 10, ... anything that kind of, was *controllable*, um, I thought was done very *well*. . . . there's certain things online that you can't, you know, you can't *control*. Uhmm, you, you don't, kind of like the, the interpersonal rea-, uhm, action between *students*, y-you, you can't *have* in the same way. . .

Here, Maryanne argued that such social interaction between students, while desirable, is difficult for course instructors and designers to "control," which is one of the reasons why she felt that the online environment still had some disadvantages as well. She spoke earlier in her interview about how she found OLL to be more difficult in some ways:

> It is *harder*, I find it *harder* to do online learning than in class . . . mostly because you don't have the same interaction with other students? [*pause*]. And I find, this will sound, kind of maybe strange but [*pause*] other students make common *mistakes*, that it's easier to catch them when you have other people, making [*pause*] mistakes, instead of, if it's just *yourself*? Uhmm, you don't necessarily have the *correction*? The same type of correction, so you keep doing the same thing.

Thus, like Vicky and many other interviewees, she identified peer interaction and instant feedback from a teacher as something that was missing online compared to F2F. She discussed how she though some element of live interaction would be beneficial, and that the best option, in her view, would be a course setup that was somewhere in between:

> I mean for *me*, what would be really ideal is if you could have something, that [*pause*] it was like, every *other* week? Where you did, like one week *online*, one week *on-campus*. Uhm, just because [*pause*] you wouldn't have to have the, *time commitment*, um. For me, that's the bi-, like that's really *big*. But I'm sure that's for a lot of people. . . . but if you could . . . kind of *intersperse* them, then you could do [*pause*] you know you wouldn't have to have that time commitment [*pause*] but you would still get the, in-, in-person [*pause*] uhmm, *experience. . .*

Maryanne was not able to attend an on-campus course due to her work and family commitments, but thought a blended or hybrid course would be optimal, since it would combine the benefits of both environments, i.e. the increased time on-task of online learning with the socialized feedback and teacher interaction of F2F learning. She said that if this type of course were offered, she would be willing to travel to Waterloo (about 100km away) for periodic classes.

When asked about whether she would make the same choice again, and whether she would continue learning German online, Maryanne reported that she did not regret taking 101 online, rather she enjoyed the course and learned a great deal, and so would do so again. Despite this, she said she would not continue after 102, since she found that at the higher level it was simply too difficult for her to keep up with the material on her own, without the motivating factor of having other students to converse with or some kind of live component to supplement the material learned on her own. For this reason, she said that she would not recommend that students take any more

than two OLL courses, which fits in with my previous discussion of what the role of OLL when integrated into an on-campus university program should be (e.g. see discussion of Blake, 2009). This will be discussed further in the Discussion chapter. Maryanne and Vicky's interviews provide interesting insights into the very different experiences of students studying online who are either primarily on-campus versus distance learning/online students, and also makes an argument for carefully considering the student target audience for online courses, and ensuring that the possible range of student experiences are taken into account when designing an online course.

Example Interview 4. Lastly, "Jennifer's" interview provides a good example of the views and experiences of students in the mixed trajectory clusters, i.e. 3, 9, and 10. Jennifer had started learning German in 101 and gone on to take advanced-level courses, including language courses and content seminars. She took all courses in the on-campus environment except for 202, 271, and 272, and was enrolled in a double major in German and peace and conflict studies. Jennifer came from southern Ontario and said she was inspired to learn German because of her Mennonite family background, as well as a trip to Germany that she took in high school. She ultimately decided to make German one of her majors after learning it for one year and going on an exchange to a city in Germany. Jennifer had no plans to use her German skills right away, other than for keeping in touch with acquaintances in Germany, but she hoped someday to work for an extended period in Germany. She had some prior experience with online learning, having taken a computer science course online, as well as with language learning (she took French Immersion in high school, as well as two years of Spanish). When discussing her experience learning German at the start of the interview, she said:

> I *hate* learning, grammar. I've hated learning gra-, like I did French Immersion, so I *hated* learning grammar in French Immersion as well. Uhm, I like t-, I like [*unintelligible*] to talk to *people*? So my focus is more like, *can* I get to the level where I can, *have* a, some sort of conversation with them.

This initial focus on oral communication was a unifying theme throughout Jennifer's interview, and she connected this to her strong preference for F2F learning. When discussing why she took 102 online, and why it was not her preference to do so, she said:

> It *didn't* fit in my schedule . . . so I took that one online . . . I wanted to be able to re-maintain it, cause, I felt like if I *took* a whole winter term and then the *summer* term [off] [*pause*] and then went *back*, I wouldn't, remember anything. So, [I] *did* that. It was [*pause*] yeah I didn't feel like [*pause*]. I *felt* like I probably would have, learned *more*, had I stayed in class, but it didn't fit. Uhm, so, it *wasss* [*pause*]. Cause I *feeel* like, when you hear, the tea- the prof speaking to you it's easier to [*pause*] just, kind of *assimilate* [*smile voice*] the knowledge that you're learning, versus *reading* it, and then having then to like, *remember* it and stuff.

This indicates that Jennifer, at least at the time she made the decision to take 102 online, prioritized maintaining her proficiency level over her preference for F2F learning, which is in contrast to the interviewees I discussed in the prior section, who had very strong view about *only* studying F2F.

In on-campus courses, Jennifer reported that her participation style was more reserved; she mostly listened and did not speak up much in class, though after returning from her exchange in Germany she became more confident speaking and was less fearful of making mistakes. She felt more comfortable in the advanced content seminars because they were not as form-focused as the language courses that she had taken. She wished that these courses were completely in German, however, instead of allowing some English, saying:

> I *kind* of wish there was a bit more *German* spoken I feel like . . . I think it was, the problem was that, sometimes people would be in higher-level classes having only taken, some of the *lower* levels and other people were at the *high* level, and so [*pause*] it, there was people that *would've* been able to take the full class in that, like, in *German*, and then there were people that would need, more *English*. Uhm, but it would've been *nice*, if it had been conducted more in German I felt like, in *Germany*, even though people might not have understood, [the courses were] still in German, um, and it's kind of like "you'll-you'll *figure* it out" [*smile voice*]. Um, so I wish there a *little* bit more German spoken, by the prof, and encouraged, amongst the *students*, like, in, in *high school* and stuff, when I was in *immersion*, like in French Immersion, like we got points *deducted* if they heard, English spoken, um, so, it would have been nice to have had an incentive to speak to people around us in German, versus, reverting back to *English*.

She felt that focusing much more on immersion-style communication in class, i.e. students only speaking German, although it would have been difficult for some students at first, would have been more beneficial to everyone's comprehension and oral production skills in the long term.

Outside of her German courses, Jennifer undertook various activities to supplement her learning, including reading parts of German books, studying together with classmates in the student dormitories, speaking some German with her grandparents, and writing short letters or messages in German to friends around the world. Somewhat predictably, given her focus on oral skills, she was not very satisfied with her experience learning German online in 102, mainly due to the lack of motivation she felt the environment caused:

> I think I really, just like, tried to, *blow through* that class [*laughs*], like I didn't do very *much* [to supplement] like, I don't like, I felt, and I feel like that's why I didn't *get* very much out of it was like, I just *did* the necessary things to get *through* it. Um, it wasn't really motivational, to [*pause*] *speak* German, to like, do *anything* [*smile voice*], but learn_exactly_what_they_wanted_you_to_learn [*draws out these phrases and enunciates rythmically*].

Jennifer went on to discuss how she felt the communication with an instructor in online courses (not just for language courses) was not just a disadvantage because they were not speaking and practicing German orally, but also because it meant she had difficulty getting the assistance she needed. For example, she mentioned that at one point during 102, she did not understand a grammatical concept, and inquired about meeting the instructor on-campus to get help. She reported that she received the reply that communicating online was recommended, however, and that in the end she did not get the help she needed. Similar to other interviewees who had taken online courses and who were primarily on-campus students, Jennifer felt that having a chance to get help in-person (for example at an office hour or tutorial) would have been very valuable to her. She stated that ultimately, the online language course was "as [she] expected and [she] did not expect much."

When I asked Jennifer if she had found there were and advantages to the online course, she reported that she appreciated the ability to work through concepts at her own pace and to consult other sources online while doing tasks if more explanation was needed. Whereas, in class:

> If a prof just tells you something, and then you're, expected to *do* [*pause*] a bunch of [*pause*] work with *that*, als- and then the class time's *up*, and you kind of have just have filled it out [*makes writing motion*] [*pause*]. Um, then [*pause*] you may not have gotten, like figured out the *concept*, and enough time to write the whole *page*, and then, you have to leave so like online you can go back to it [*pause*] and look up all the resources online, to see if there's someone else that *explains* it better . . . but, in general, I'd rather just be *in class*.

Thus, Jennifer felt that any benefits that online learning offered in the area of learning independently or flexibly were not outweighed by the downsides that she saw, namely the lack of F2F communication, immersion in the target language, and ability to obtain timely assistance from an instructor in person.

Jennifer described how she found the transition between taking German 102 online and the next course (201) on-campus to be difficult, for a number of reasons. First, when transitioning from 101 F2F to 102 online, she thought that the online learning management system was confusing because it was set up differently than for on-campus courses, and this caused her to have difficulty finding information (e.g. due dates of assignments were on a different page than assignment descriptions). She acknowledge that the format was likely standardized so that online students always knew where to find things, but that for her as an on-campus student, it was a big change. She preferred a F2F class, where each instructor designed their own personal syllabus, explained it, and the students were given a paper copy that they could always refer to and which included all of the information they needed. She also had trouble keeping track of which tasks she had completed, since pages on the site would show a checkmark when a topic was *viewed*, but not necessarily when it was complete, and there was no ability herself to choose which topics where checked off to help her

track her learning progress. When making the transition from 102 to 201, Jennifer said she was less

confident having taken 102 online, though she candidly recognized this was partly due to her lack of

motivation when learning online and a feeling of being overwhelmed as a first year student:

> I think, I would have [*pause*] *learned* more, had I been in 102 and therefore I ha- *would* have, en- [*pause*]I wouldn't say I *didn't* enjoy 201 [*pause*] but I would have felt more *prepared* for it, uhm. [*pause*]. That's kind of my own fault, for just kind of, doing the bare minimum [*smile voice*], in *102* [*laughs*]. Um, but I didn't feel like I *had* to learn more? So I didn't, *really* [*shrugs, pause*] it was my second term, of *first year* [*smile voice*] so, I was like *overwhelmed!* with this *stuff* and yeah, um [*interviewer interjects with* "there's always one class that ends up suffering"] yeah, and it's usually the *online* class [*nods*] that suffers, cause, you don't remember about it until the end.

Jennifer concluded by reporting that she had not taken any other OLL courses online since 102

(though she had taken online courses in other subjects to fit her schedule) and that she would not

consider taking any more OLL courses in the future.

Overall, Jennifer felt satisfied with the proficiency level of German she had achieved in four

years of study, and she hoped to be able to keep up her skills by finding way to practice speaking

whenever possible. When I asked about what she thought was the single most important aspect of

leaning a second language, she responded that for her, it was all about developing functional

communication skills, i.e. acquiring enough proficiency to communicate her intended message

without fear of making mistakes, since she felt most interlocutors would understand that mistakes

are inevitable:

> I want to be able to *communicate* with people. So like, I don't really care if I'm, saying the wrong [*pause*] *pronoun* or, like [*pause*] if I say, a dog is feminine [instead of masculine], like [*laughs, throws up hands*] I don't care, like, they'll figure it out! . . . I feel like, going to Germany and being like, yeah ok, they really don't care, and like *learning* that [*pause*] then made my confidence better, later on when I came back I was like, as much as these grammar classes have said they're really important, they're really *not*.

Finally, when I asked Jennifer what she felt made an ideal language teacher, she responded

that the most important thing for her was that the teacher spoke the target language the entire class,

because she felt that immersion-style teaching was the best way to gain the type of proficiency she desired. This meant that "if they [spoke] slow enough, and, with 'dumbed-down words'" then the students would eventually be able to understand enough of what the instructor was saying to participate in class, though she notes that this might not be the best possible method for full beginners in 101. By the second course, however (102), she felt that "speaking mostly in German *really really* helps" and that even in 101, with careful planning, exposing students to as much spoken German as possible was both doable and worthwhile. She drew on her experience learning French in French Immersion courses starting in the first grade, and how her teachers speaking only in French, though frustrating at first, made her learn that much more. She wished that they had done more of this in her German courses, since then she thought she would be able to learn the vocabulary more naturally, rather than having to study lists of words at home. In addition, she disliked when instructors would put students "on the spot" and expect them to produce utterances immediately using a new language form that they had just learned; rather, she felt that it was best when they understood different students' learning styles, i.e. that some students would want to practice new forms learned right away, while others might need more time to process new information.

Clusters 3, 9, and 10: comparisons. In the clusters of students with mixed course trajectories, there were five students interviewed other than Jennifer. One beginner student (Dustin) who switched between the course environments (see Footnote 6 for trajectory explanation), one intermediate level student (Katrina), and three advanced students (Artur, Rachelle, Jinglei) All of the students had taken one online language course, with the exception of Jinglei, who had taken two (101 and 202, with courses taken while on exchange in Germany in between). All of the interviewees in these clusters went on to take on-campus courses after their online course(s) and all expressed a preference, to varying degrees, for the on-campus learning environment. On Item 3d in the survey, two said they were *much less satisfied* with their online course experience than the on-campus ones

they had taken, two were *somewhat less satisfied*, and three selected that they had the *same level of satisfaction*. They were overall more negative about OLL than the students in the online-only clusters, though they had many of the same common criticisms as the online only students, which also aligned with some of the problems which F2F-only students anticipated or imagined would affect an online course: lack of live interaction or oral communication, insufficient quantity or timeliness of feedback, lack of direction in finding additional resources, trouble keeping up or staying motivated, isolation, dissatisfaction with the offered options for contacting the instructor, etc.

Most interviewees in these clusters had mixed views of the courses overall, in that they recognized some benefits (e.g. scheduling flexibility, working at their own pace), but also had specific criticisms of the online course(s) they had taken, and some were more negative about their experiences than others were. As mentioned in the summary of all of the interviews, Rachelle felt an OLL course was only valuable if it had a limited scope, for example an advanced writing course, but that taking any further online courses would not be valuable for her. Jinglei said that although she had learned a lot in her online course, she felt the learning environment was not ideal because of the lack of interaction; her section of 202 only had five students enrolled, and all of them would do the interactive tasks (discussion board postings) last-minute, and there was no feedback received on what students posted. Katrina felt that the sole advantage of the online course she took (201) was scheduling flexibility; she felt it took too much self-motivation, and that the grammar tasks were time consuming compared to what she learned from them (in other words, unlike some previous interviews discussed, she did not like the task-based layout where topics were broken down into many small chunks to be learned gradually and incrementally). She felt that online learning was not as enjoyable as F2F learning, which made a significant difference when it came to motivating herself to do the activities every day. Similar to Jennifer, she highly valued speaking and interaction, and felt that the students in her current 202 course (F2F) did not participate actively enough due to fear of

making mistakes. Dustin disliked German 101 online because in his view, learning just from the textbook package involved too much memorization, and was something he could have done on his own if he purchased the textbook and translated the activities. He felt that students did not have the information and resources they needed to work through the exercises successfully on their own because they were all in German and "a lot was not explained." He suggested that there should have been more explanation given as to why the course was designed in the manner it was (the logic behind it), because he did not understand the rationale at all, and had been told by other students by email that they also felt the same way. Furthermore, he felt dissatisfied with the possibilities for communication between the instructor and the students (e.g. he disliked the asynchronicity of online discussion boards) and therefore with the possibilities to get timely feedback and assistance from the instructor. Artur held a very negative view of the online course he took (201), saying it was "useless," and that he had not learned anything at all. None of the students interviewed said they would take another German course online if given the choice, and all but two said that if they could go back and were able to truly choose (not based on their schedules), that they would rather have taken all of their courses F2F.

Concerning those students who transitioned between on-campus and online learning (all except Dustin), opinions were mixed and differed a great deal between interviewees. Most seemed to think the online course did not necessarily hurt them at the next level, but that it also did not really help them either. Artur felt that he did not learn anything useful in his online course because it was actually too easy (he reported that could easily do all the assignments on the day they were due). Because of this, he found the transition to the next course (202) to be very difficult, both because it required a more intensive workload and because there had been a two term gap (eight months) between these courses. In general, however, he felt that language learning in universities in Canada was not ideal because it was not as intensive compared to instruction received in dedicated language

schools, which was the preferred format for language learning in his home country of Georgia. Katrina found the transition to be manageable, but thought that there was too much writing in the online course that was not applicable in her everyday life, and so this did not prepare her swell enough for the next on-campus course where they did much more conversation (which she felt was useful day-to-day). Jinglei took German 101 online, then some beginner/intermediate F2F courses while on exchange in Germany, and then she continued with 202 online back in Canada. Finally, she took German 307 (business German) F2F. She felt that 101 online prepared her well for her stay in Germany (and the courses she took there), because the sufficient vocabulary and grammatical concepts (e.g. the present perfect tense) were covered, but that returning to take 202 online was disappointing, since the class size was so small that it did not allow for much useful interaction on the discussion boards. The main difficulty she experienced in 202 was inconsistent grammar instruction due to her fractured course trajectory (which was complicated by the time spent in Germany taking courses there). The transition to 307, however, she found to be much easier, because she thoroughly enjoyed the interactive classroom environment created by the instructor, and that the other students were all highly motivated and eager to participate and speak German to each other. Thus, even though she continued to struggle with writing, she did not find the transition to be an issue. When asked about her transition experiences, Rachelle, in contrast, spoke about the social aspect of adjusting to the on-campus environment (she previously studied only online as a distance student, and began by taking one course F2F) and to being a mature student among her younger peers. Because of this, she experienced some initial confusion getting used to the expectations and norms of studying on-campus. In addition, she was used to interacting with classmates in the online environment, and enjoyed the flexibility and anonymity it offered, since she could safely make mistakes without facing other students or the instructor directly. In the online environment she was very involved in her classes (communicating with peers, making additional postings, etc.), whereas at

first she felt self-conscious engaging with other students in German F2F. Over time, however, she felt that she adjusted well and she enjoyed her first on-campus course so much that she decided to make German her major and switch to the F2F from then on. This is similar to Vicky, who was also worried about the social aspect of entering a course where most of the students already knew each other and therefore felt comfortable interacting with each other.

All of the students in this group expressed the common opinion that being in a classroom with other students who were engaged and excited to learn, having a good teacher who was encouraging and provided good feedback, and having the chance to constantly hear and speak German was the ideal situation in which to learn, and that this was the kind of environment that motivated them to work towards achieving their desired proficiency in German. Like the F2F-only students, they placed a high value on F2F interaction and oral communication, and they mostly had taken online courses out of convenience or necessity. They generally regretted this decision, however, or felt that while the course(s) was/were sufficient as a way to fill a time gap or scheduling need, they were not ideal for learning, and thus they would not recommend them to other students. Similar to other interviews I have discussed, many of these students recounted the view that online learning was most useful as a tool to supplement in-class learning, e.g. through the use of mobile applications for added practice on the go or by accessing the Internet as a source for authentic media, a way to get extra grammar explanations, a resource for researching German culture or learning vocabulary, or a platform for communication with others (CMC) in German.

6. Discussion

6.1   Student Perceptions of Learning Environments (Q1)

I will first address the research question "how do students perceive the value and effectiveness of an OLL environment and how do they think such an environment impacts (or would impact) their language learning process? How satisfied did they feel with the various course environments in which they had studied?" What I found in the surveys, and confirmed in the interviews, was that students held a mostly negative and sometimes ambivalent view of OLL, some of it stemming from prior negative experiences, but most of it coming from students who had little to no experience learning a language online (17.7% had taken German online at UW, and 14.6% had taken a course from somewhere else, as per Item 5) This signals that for many students in this target population—which, due to the nature of the data collection and the low response rates for current online students is heavily weighted towards the views of traditional F2F students—the concept of learning German, or any language, online is still a relatively foreign concept.

Students who had experience in UW's online courses, on the other hand, were much more likely to have a positive view of them, as evidenced by the satisfaction ratings in Item 3c (Figures 3-5), with some important caveats and wishes for improvement. For example, among other things students mentioned the pace of the course(s) being quite fast, making for a heavy workload. This meant that they could not really learn at their own pace, since the courses are aligned with the on-campus schedule, whereby each course is completed over the standard term period, and assignments and modules are regularly scheduled with tasks due every week. In addition, they also expressed a wish for more immediate and relevant feedback, which will be discussed in more detail below. While those students who did have online language course experience were more likely to say they would consider taking an online course in the future, about half still did not plan to do so, and despite rating their satisfaction with courses taken online as being positive, the relative satisfaction students

expressed compared to similar on-campus courses they completed was much lower (Figure 6 in the first Results chapter).

It is difficult, however, to pinpoint the exact reasons for the shift in absolute versus relative satisfaction, as well as the higher satisfaction of OLEs with content versus delivery, based only on the survey data—as previously mentioned, most of these students had only taken a single online language course, (89.5% of all OLEs, and 69.2% [*n*=9] in the case of Item 3d), making their views very often dependent on one single course experience at UW[29]. This means that an issue with the instructor, dislike for a certain small aspect of the course, or a personal problem could lead to a negative perception of a course. To be more confident, it would be better to be able to compare overall satisfaction for *all* UW online language courses with the on-campus versions, for example using course evaluation data (end of course student surveys collected each semester), if these were available and comparable. That said, within the data I have collected, the fact that the negative turn in satisfaction was sizable hints at the issue being not so much that the students had personal issues with these courses specifically, but rather that they have a preference for on-campus language courses that is rooted elsewhere. In the following sections, I will discuss the reasons for this preference that emerged in the interviews, and which are supported by the survey data. Three overarching and interrelated themes emerged as to what aspects students perceived as important when evaluating the value and effectives of OLL: *interactivity*, *feedback*, and *motivation*.

Interactivity. The first, and I would say most prevalent of the three themes, is the perceived lack of *interaction* in an online language course, which greatly affected students' views of the potential for a valuable and effective course. When speaking about interactivity, the students in the interviews did not normally refer to what in the CALL field are thought of as possible interactive features in a

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[29] Of those who had taken an external online language class (Item 5) only three out of the 23 went on to take German online at UW, meaning they most likely also held opinions largely based on a single online course experience.

course, e.g. interacting with the instructor or other students on discussion boards or in live chats, completing online machine-graded workbook tasks (i.e. interfacing with the computer), completing reading tasks with the help of interactive resources (e.g. a clickable dictionary to look up words or hear them as the student reads), completing dictation tasks, etc. Following are some examples of responses from Item 4a that express this pervasive view. Only a small number of the students quoted below had any online language course experience at UW (n=3, OLE) or planned to take German online in the future (four were "unsure," the remainder chose "no"). Each line is a quote by a different student, and their Respondent ID's (unique identifiers) are provided in parentheses:

> "Communicating with others is the best way to learn a language, hard to do online" (24)
> "How can I learn a language to its fullest if I don't hear a person constantly speaking it" (125)
> "I can't really learn a language independently…" (133)
> "I can't imagine learning a language online. I need the conversation aspect. And someone to correct my pronunciation" (100)
> "I can't practice conversation skills online" (134)
> "I feel as though an in class setting would benefit me more. Asking a prof questions – talking German with the classmates, etc." (152)
> "I feel that online course[s] do not provide the immersion needed to grasp the language" (86)
> "I find it easier to learn (a language in particular) through in-person interactions" (150)
> "I find it easier to learn a language by interacting" (Faye)
> "I have to have face-to-face interaction when learning a language" (99)
> "I learn from talking to professors and interacting with them" (93)
> "I like to be able to work with people on coursework etc. Harder to do with online courses, plus questions easily answered in-class" (94)
> "I prefer classroom learning as well as being able to interact/socialize with the prof in person" (88)
> "I prefer to take language classes in [a] classroom, there are more opportunities to communicate in [the] language I study" (120)
> "I think it is imperative to be in a classroom setting for lang. courses" (41)
> "I think speaking a language in person is too important" (84)
> "I want to be able to practice my oral skills which is better in person" (Rachelle)
> "I'm not sure if I'd be able to learn a language [with] online teaching" (79)
> "In-class seems like I'd learn more, and be better at speaking" (89)
> "Lack of interactive sessions" (77)
> "Need to practice speaking in class" (62)
> "There is little or no interaction to learn the language" (Artur)

"We could be able to talk more in class" (143)
"Won't learn anything, very difficult to communicate" (Yongrui)
"Would rather take in person or immersed in Germany" (57)

These responses display a number of interesting viewpoints. The students overwhelmingly articulated the importance they placed on oral communication as key skill they wished to learn when learning a language, and they clearly connected this to the on-campus environment. Because of this view, they saw features of the F2F environment, i.e. interacting with a teacher and/or classmates in-person, listening to the language being spoken live (as opposed to audio or video recordings, which can be plentifully provided online), practicing and learning with others, etc. as being integral to their learning. They seemed to recognize and emphasize the inherent social aspect of learning a language, that is to say, they saw F2F learning, with a teacher in a classroom as the most desirable way to learn (if immersion in a German-speaking country were not possible). They often discussed speaking with and bonding with other classmates, studying together, being able to ask the professor questions in person, etc.

Both the survey respondents and interviewees repeatedly stated that they did not think they would be able to learn online; indeed, some could not even imagine it, because this key component ("interaction") would be missing. Some of the above responses to Item 4a hint at the fact that this view was not necessarily extended to other subjects of study, but that language learning in particular was different. This was backed up by responses in the interviews, in which a number of students explicitly stated this view, saying they found the possibility of studying other subjects online to be perfectly acceptable, but not for learning a language. Quite a number had taken other online courses, such as German culture courses, computer science, English literature, political science, etc. This idea of the social aspect becomes clearer when the interviewees' responses to the question about what they hope and look for in an excellent language teacher are considered. As mentioned in the Interview Results chapter, the most popular responses to this question across all of the clusters had

to do with the demeanour of the teacher towards the students (for example, that they were patient, encouraging, non-judgemental, understanding, empathetic, etc.), followed by their ability to get the class engaged (e.g. able to get students talking and interacting with each other, enthusiasm and excitement for the subject that rubs off on the students, eagerness, etc.). Relatively few responses focused on the teacher's content knowledge or personal background (e.g. knowledge of German grammar, being a native speaker, and having experience living in a German-speaking culture). Although many interviewees said they were eager to hear native German spoken, and students often considered their instructor to be the primary source of this input, quite a few also said they thought non-native speakers of German could be better at teaching because they could more easily empathize with students' and understand the difficulties they experienced learning certain concepts or the anxiety they had speaking. This is another example of how students prioritized affective factors/qualities in a teacher over their factual or content knowledge, which was usually mentioned second, if at all.

I found this focus on a combination of affective, facilitative, and input-related features to be very enlightening. It suggests that the lack of an instructor (and to a lesser though still important extent, fellow students) who learners can physically see, get to know, and interact with, could be linked to the difference in student satisfaction that appeared in the surveys between the "delivery" and "content" aspects of online courses. It could be that in a world connected by the Internet and overflowing with online resources, these students recognize (consciously or unconsciously) that the content needed to learn a language is ubiquitous and readily available online, and they therefore enroll in a (F2F) language course because they are seeking out the social *experience* of language learning, i.e. it is important to them that the "delivery" be in-person. Thus, they are looking for a teacher to guide them through the content, provide reliable information and curate resources, help them make sense of difficult topics, facilitate communication and group interaction in the class, and

give them immediate feedback on their progress. In addition, they value having classmates present with whom they can practice and collectively experience the social aspect of language learning.

While a few students' responses to Item 4b refer to a general dislike of *all* online learning, e.g. "really hate online courses, German or not," (146) or to past experiences with OLL that were not ideal in their view, e.g. "I have taken online courses for French, and preferred the classroom setting," (71) the majority of responses to this item, as well as in the interviews, referred to this lack of interaction as the fundamental problem. Samantha put it thus, when asked if she could see any advantages that online learning might be able to offer: "maybe, more cause, there would be more reading and writing. But then again, like [*shrug*], what's the point of knowing a language if you can't speak it, right? [*smile voice*]." She considered it obvious that learning online would necessarily mean not being a good speaker. It is also interesting that Samantha in particular expressed this view, considering that she was a heritage dialect speaker who grew up speaking German at home, and a major reason she said that she wanted to learn "proper German," as she put it, was because she did not know how to *read or write* any German. Even though developing reading and writing skills was a major goal for her, and the reason she initially enrolled in a German course, she still saw speaking as crucial. In her case, she said her ultimate objective was to become more comfortable with speaking standard German—including codeswitching between standard and dialect forms, which she saw that her family in Germany were easily able to do—so that she could interact with people in Germany outside of her family (i.e. non-dialect speakers). This kind of response, with its focus on conversing orally, consistently arose when students were asked to describe, in general times, what to them was the most important aspect of learning a(ny) language.

This is backed up by the survey results and Geroline results, which showed that although most students only take one language class (progression rates experience a large drop after 101), those students least likely to continue are those who choose to study online. In other words, there is a

lower continuance rate to the next course among online students. This indicates that most students who are studying online have no intention of going further with German, and based on my results I would suggest that they likely do not value oral communication as highly as the F2F-oriented students I interviewed/surveyed. Although many students also naturally enroll in F2F courses to fulfill a breadth requirement, they did not focus on this when I asked why they decided to learn German. Only one interviewee (Eric) explicitly said that he took a German course for this reason, and although he said he thought breadth requirements should not be required for his engineering program (he appeared not to be aware of the option to take a German culture class in English to fulfill the requirement instead), he nonetheless chose German due to an interest in German language and culture.. Indeed, he thought that half of each class session should be about culture and that if the course were only taught "more efficiently" then the class could learn German in the other half of the instructional time (I can only speculate how one would increase so-called teaching "efficiency" in this manner).

Some students in the surveys (Item 4b) as well as in the interviews expressed the view that they thought taking an online class might be easier than on-campus, and this could be one reason driving this segment of students (breadth-seekers) to enroll online; students who are averse to speaking, think it will be easier to learn online, and have some interest in German (but not as much in eventually speaking it) could be self-selecting into the online courses at a much higher rate, since they are mainly focused on getting the course requirement out of the way. It seems that students who study on-campus, however, overwhelmingly wish to be able to *speak* German, even if only at an elementary level (e.g. ordering food at a restaurant while on holiday).

An interesting theme that I noticed is that students in the study appeared to idealize or venerate the F2F learning environment model and the interactivity it provides, even though there can be downsides to learning in a classroom, and in doing so they are either unaware of, or do not

value, the benefits online learning could offer. For example, in a classroom with 20-30 students (or more) and only one instructor, any single student's access to the teacher is by necessity limited; either there are whole group activities, in which only one person can speak at once, or partner/group work, where students speak and interact with each other and the teacher acts as the facilitator on the side. In these situations, the students are not really "interacting" (in the sense of one-on-one F2F oral communication, as the students quantified it) with the instructor directly very often. Students then complete homework at home to reinforce what has been taught in class, and only the most general whole-class differentiation is possible. Topics continue at the scheduled pace, and more or less time can only be spent on them if the whole class needs it. For example, the instructor might review a topic that caused difficulty for the whole class on an exam, but then the course schedule dictates moving on to the next subject.

This kind of learning setup relies on students being able to follow the instructor (if they speak in the target language), listen and learn from feedback given to the group as a whole or to other students (including pronunciation corrections), and also that they are able and willing to work constructively together. In her interview, Olivia described the problem she had with her on-campus course when asked if she had enough chances to communicate and interact with her peers:

> I wish there could be even *more*, because mostly it's just [that] you communicate with the people who sit around you. And other times it'll be like everybody get up and let's mingle, but that gets messy very easily . . . and the people who sit around me are very closed *off* . . . like I'm sitting at the end of the row, and they'll have a physical *barrier*, as in like they'll put their backpack there. And they're two close friends and they never talk to me.

Despite this experience, Olivia still said she would not consider taking an online German course because of a bad experience she had had with an online Japanese course taken in high school. She languished in that course for two years, never getting past the midterm material. She considered this issue in her F2F class not to be so much a problem with the learning environment itself, but rather

just an unfortunate by-product of the fellow students in her class not being interested in engaging with her. In contrast, she attributed the issues she had with online learning in the Japanese course (overreliance on listening tasks; trouble adapting to the Japanese keyboard; lack of motivation; lack of immediate feedback; wish to not have to curate material independently, but to be able to rely on a teacher presenting it) as a problem with online learning itself. Other students fit this pattern, for example Katrina. It seems that there is not much recognition by students that online course environments can vary just as widely as on-campus ones, and that in this student's case the lack of success in the previous course could be attributable to a badly-designed or implemented course, rather than OLL itself.

While a number of students reported that they had tried online courses, disliked them, and therefore would not take more classes online, the thought of the reverse being done (i.e. trying an on-campus course, disliking it, and never taking another one) seems highly unlikely, showing that on-campus learning is still considered the default environment in which to learn. As discussed in the results chapters, there was one interviewee (Dustin) who did in fact enroll in a F2F course, and when he experienced significant difficulties (he struggled to understand the teacher's accent), switched to the online environment instead. However, when he did not particularly like the online environment either, saying he needed to get a tutor to be able to do well, he later ended up dropping that course as well. Finally, he retried taking 101 on-campus with a different instructor, reporting that this time around he was much more satisfied. This caused him to say, however, that he would never take an online language course again, even if the content or layout were changed. Although this experience is admittedly rare, it illustrates how students tended to form opinions about online courses based on a single bad experience, and then to attribute the source of the problem to the course environment itself. In contrast, students seemed much more likely to perceive on-campus courses as intrinsically worthwhile and valuable. Indeed, F2F learning was the default choice, always

deserving of a second chance. This meant problems with F2F courses were considered a result of the instructor, course design, learning materials, fellow students, etc., as opposed to being an issue inherent to the environment itself. Blake (2005) discusses the issue of interactivity and the idea of the "classroom locus," which indicates that this focus on the classroom as the main site of learning is not a preoccupation just of students, but also of foreign language instructors:

> When one thinks about face-to-face exchanges in the classroom, it is hoped that students are negotiating meaning, noticing gaps, working collaboratively, and directing the discourse in ways that satisfy their own particular learning concerns of the moment. However, the reality of the classroom is often very different, especially since many [foreign language (FL)] curricula continue to endorse teacher-centered rather than student-centered approaches. At the beginning levels, the asymmetric power relationship between the teacher (a.k.a. the all-knowing expert) and the rank beginner can also pose a significant deterrent to the necessary interactions that prime the SLA pump, over and beyond the usual learning barriers engendered by worry over public embarrassment. Still, many FL professionals hold dear the idea that the *classroom locus*, the *physical presence* of all participants being in the same time and place, affords students an inherent advantage for language learning (no matter what pedagogy is employed)— something that distance-learning language courses have to do without. Beliefs need no proof in order to be widely held and defended; most language professionals continue to be skeptical about the efficacy of online courses precisely for this reason. More to the truth would be to recognize that each instructional modality has its own strengths and weaknesses. (p. 508, *emphasis added*)

With this in mind, then, it is not surprising that students hold negative views of OLL when many instructors also consider it inferior in its possibility for human interaction. Although Blake argues against such a narrow view, stating "that CMC can play a crucial role in stimulating linguistic interactions in a fashion that produces similar benefits to those generated by face-to-face collaborations," (p. 508) he also recognizes that "both students and instructors need training in how to profit from bimodal CMC; it is not an activity that comes naturally to most teachers or students" (p. 509). With this kind of careful, considered use, however, "CMC is one of the only channels available [in an exclusively distant language-learning course] to establish the type of human interactions that help motivate us all to learn" (p. 509).

Feedback. A second theme that emerged in my analysis, which is closely related to the idea of interactivity, is the concept of *feedback*. Students who had taken the online courses stressed that they often felt the speed with which they received feedback was too slow or that the feedback was insufficient in some way, while those without OLL experience often imagined there would (or could) be no feedback at all, since their focus was on oral skills (not considering, perhaps, the possibility of online dictations, which are used in the UW courses, and on which students receive personalized feedback from their instructor).

Many of the responses to Item 4a quoted above display this close relationship between student conceptions of interaction and feedback, and Katrina summed it up very succinctly: "Not enough instant feedback or interaction," while another said "I find online difficult and hard to get help/slow" (80, NOE). This in spite of the fact that much of the feedback in a traditional course is customarily also delayed, e.g. receiving back corrected and graded homework, tests, writing assignments, or evaluations of oral presentations/exams days or even weeks after they have been completed. In many online courses, however, depending on the course design, certain interactive features could give instant human feedback on students' use of language forms, such as via live chats or video conferences, while machine-graded tasks could give instant feedback on a wide range of task types. Although it could be argued the issue is partly that students who had not taken a German class online had very little specific knowledge of the kinds of activities which could be included (often assuming it to be similar to rote learning from a book), it was also clear that they considered the concept of interactivity described in the previous section as being the *key method and mode* for providing feedback. They very often assumed that this live F2F interaction is the kind of feedback they needed, and any other feedback—if mentioned at all or even thought possible—would by necessity be inferior, because it was not *instant* and given by a *live person* whom they could see and ask questions. This view was especially prevalent when it came to the issue of oral pronunciation;

students expressed the view that they could not expect to be able to achieve good pronunciation in an online setting, since live speech by a teacher (input) is an important way they learned pronunciation. This leads to the separate question as to whether or not the feedback students *think* they get (and need) from F2F teacher-student or student-student interaction in order to learn oral skills is actually what occurs in the classroom. In other words, does the research into foreign language learning pedagogies/SLA back up students' perceptions of the function of interaction and feedback and do they truly help them learn these skills in the ways students think? Investigating this question is out of the scope of this thesis, but I find it worthwhile to mention for consideration in future research. In particular since, at least from my experience, students do not actually speak that often to the teacher directly in a language class (this seems impossible given the student to instructor ratio in most classes), which in my view casts doubt on the idea that the teacher is in fact constantly correcting students and helping them with their pronunciation.

Similar to the previous theme of interactivity, even students who had problems with the feedback level offered in their class still said they would not consider taking an online course, since they thought an online course would be even worse in this regard. For example, Faye stated multiple times in her interview how she thought that the size of her class was somewhat too large to be able to get good feedback and interaction (her prior class only had 10 students, while her current class had over 20). She then went on to talk about how despite this, she would not consider an online course:

> If you go to the office hours, there's just me and my friend, not many people go to [them] I guess, so then there's definitely the opportunity to get more interaction, to get the help that you need, to get any feedback you want as well. You just have to actually go *get* it, because you're not going to get it in class with the twenty something people . . . you just have to actually stick yourself out there [to participate] . . . but I do get the chance to participate, everyone does get to talk at least *once* in class, it's just not very *often*. . . . I was considering [taking an online course] for this term, but I decided not to because I was worried that I wouldn't *speak* the language as much, and I figure that's

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kind of an important part of the language as well. I mean you can learn it in *theory*, but if I can't pronounce the words and people aren't going to understand what I'm saying, then if I ever do want to *speak* German, um I mean I'm sure they do have listening exercises and stuff, but it's still not the same as speaking *and* getting feedback. Cause I can speak all I want to *myself*, but I might be saying it wrong and *I* wouldn't know. So I like having someone there to give me feedback about, um, *how*, like my pronunciation and stuff.

A common desire uniting students with online language course experience, including those who were overall satisfied as well as those who were dissatisfied, was a wish for some way to integrate an in-person component into the course(s), for instance a once-weekly session with a TA where students could ask questions and get oral practice/feedback, either live or digitally via videoconference. This suggests that for many students, it could be the element of complete asynchronicity (or perception thereof, since those who did not have this online course experience usually had no idea what elements the online courses at UW really entail) that was dissatisfactory to them, whereas something like a virtual class (synchronous, mediated by the Internet/computer [CMC]) or blended class offering might be more desirable because it would offer the benefits of feedback and interactivity which students felt was insufficient or lacking in an online course.

Motivation. These foci on instantaneous, F2F feedback and oral communication skills coupled with the lower prevalence of the responses to Item 3b relating to a desire to learn independently (as a reason for enrolling online) could indicate that the students in the sample group are generally not as interested in learning on their own, preferring a teacher to direct their activities and keep them on track. This leads to the third concept that emerged in my data, that of *motivation*. Example responses from Item 4a again summarize the issue nicely (as before, each line is a quote from a different student, and students all responded "no" to Item 4 unless stated otherwise):

"Because I'm not motivated enough to self-regulate" (Respondent 47)
"Difficulty dedicating time to online format" (Respondent 135)
"Don't know if I could motivate myself" ("unsure") (Julie)

Most of the students in the mixed trajectory clusters mentioned specifically how they found it difficult to motivate themselves in the online class, leading them to cram tasks in on the day they were due, which they felt had a (predictable) negative impact on their learning. Students who tried very hard to do the work every day expressed that even though they liked the work being spread out into many small chunks, since they thought this helped them retain the material better, it also made for a sometimes punishing workload. For example, the interviewee Vicky felt that the online class took away from her other classes (made up an outsized proportion of her workload), while Amanda thought that even though this was not the case for her, she thought she only found the workload manageable because of her previous vocabulary knowledge; she thought that for most students the pace would be too intense and they would drop the course upon seeing the pace it entailed.

While it is of course very possible, and even likely due to the sampling method, that students who were more able to motivate themselves online were the ones who indeed self-selected and enrolled online, more information about the attrition rates of online versus on-campus courses would be useful to provide a comparison (e.g. do more online students drop out before the end of the term than on-campus, perhaps because of lack of motivation?). The Geroline analysis found that students in the online courses tended to achieve slightly lower average grades than those in F2F ones, indicating the former were slightly more difficult. In addition, those students who continued with German after taking an online course tended to have grades above the 10-year average. This indicates that to some degree, getting a good grade is a motivator for students to continue with a subject (and motivation and performance are surely closely linked), but it is also interesting that those students who switched between different course environments during the course of their degree saw *less* of a decline in their grades over time. This suggests that these students were motivated to continue learning German, even if it meant switching course environments. The students who I interviewed in this group (those with mixed trajectories) were mostly negative about

online learning, but seemed to fit this pattern in that their motivation to learn German was stronger than their dislike of or doubts about OLL, at least at the time when they had chosen to enroll online. They therefore chose to take (a) course(s) online rather than having a one to two term gap learning German and risk seeing a drop in their hard-earned proficiency. Several of the students in this category also studied abroad to improve their proficiency further, indicating the extra motivation or desire that they brought to their pursuit of learning German.

The question then arises, why are most students not as motivated (or think they would not be) by an online class as much as an on-campus one? Considering the importance expressed in the previous sections about the social aspect of language learning—i.e. how students connect this with interaction, oral communication, and "instant" feedback, which all ties into the role of the language teacher and learning in a group—I suggest that the lack of these elements leads students to struggle with motivation, more so than they would in an online course on another subject. Because the students see the courses as lacking the potential to teach them how to speak German, they see limited value in studying online, in turn causing them to not be less motivated to complete the online activities in a timely manner. I would also suggest that the issue of motivation is also closely linked to the idea of independence and independent learning; while some interviewees explained that they liked the concept of being able to learn the language flexibly, e.g. by reviewing topics as often as they needed to, they did not express the wish to learn on their own. They all placed a high value on learning in a group, communicating with other students (including by email or discussion boards for those actually in the online courses), and having the teacher there to guide them and structure their learning for them, by clearly laying out tasks and giving them appropriate feedback. In contrast, students across all categories discussed the fear or dislike they felt (or think they *would* feel) for learning a language alone. These social factors thus seemed to motivate them to learn, and when combined with the structure that physically attending an on-campus course provides (some

interviewees spoke of how having class four days per week "forced" them to keep up with the content), it made for an ideal learning environment, in the students' opinions. It is likely that the undergraduate students in the target population are busy and distracted much of the time, and it could be that even though they like using the Internet for other purposes, the thought of learning independently online is too daunting; rather they prefer the structure a F2F course provides them, since they are accountable to a real live person and group. This furthers the arguments discussed above for explicit learner training in OLL and CALL; it cannot be assumed that students in the so-called "digital generation" will automatically have an affinity or preference for online learning, especially when most have still grown up with F2F learning as the default learning environment, and are therefore accustomed to motivating themselves in that environment. Especially when one considers the aforementioned teacher-focused instruction that still prevails in many school systems, it is not surprising that students are used to looking to their instructor (and to a lesser degree, to the student peer group) as the key driver of their motivation—indeed, students' focus on affective factors in their ideal teacher suggests to me that they primarily look to their instructor for emotional validation, which is a very important role in a subject like language learning that seems to cause so many students such ongoing nervousness and performance anxiety. Thus, the idea of suddenly learning in what seems like a teacher-less environment could be stressful for many students. The fact that most students will have experience with online tools, communicating online (in social contexts) and excellent computer skills (especially at the university level), however, suggests there is a good possibility that with the proper training, online learning and CALL could open up new possibilities for many students who are currently learning languages in the F2F environment and might enjoy learning online, or who do not have access to F2F learning, but are discouraged by their misperceptions of OLL.

6.2   Choosing a Language Learning Environment (Q2)

The second research question I asked was "how do [students] choose their preferred language learning environment, and how do they see certain types of courses fitting into their plan of study?" When it comes to course choice, it was clear that almost all students in the surveys and interviews considered on-campus courses to be their default course environment, unless they were a DL student or otherwise had to study online. Only one student interviewed (Vicky) chose an online course despite the fact she could have taken the course on-campus (and she said looking back now she would change her mind). In contrast, another (Rachelle) switched to on-campus study completely after taking her first F2F course and finding it so enjoyable. This is despite the fact that it meant a significant commute (about 100km every day) from her place of residence. Even though Rachelle had previously enjoyed her online German course (which focused on writing) along with other courses in her degree taken online, once she had tried the on-campus experience she found it to be much more engaging.

This common preference for on-campus learning is likely rooted in the fact that all of the interviewees (except two online-only students) in the sample were F2F-oriented students who were mainly recruited directly from the Winter 2015 on-campus courses (the exceptions being Vicky and Maryanne, and Jennifer and Anna, who were recruited from their online courses/LEARN and by email/Google Docs, respectively). In addition, those interviewees who had started out learning German online had also then gone on to study F2F, while the rest took an online course "along the way." Even though I hypothesized that these groups of students would prefer F2F courses, I nonetheless was surprised at how they held at best ambivalent, and at worst very strongly negative, views of OLL in particular. For those students who did take an online course, the vast majority did so for practical scheduling reasons, as corroborated by the survey results (the on-campus option was impossible or very inconvenient for them), rather than out of an interest in learning German *online*.

Students who were at the beginner levels had less strongly formed opinions and often had not considered learning online at all, most likely because they had not thought that far ahead in their study programs and the beginner level courses (101 and 102) were offered more often on-campus (thus, scheduling issues would not yet have commonly arisen) Advanced students, on the other hand, had put much more thought into their course choices, since most had reached a point in their programs of study where they were facing a trade-off: take a course online to make their schedule easier to manage, or delay/rearrange their schedule to fit in an on-campus German course. Indeed, three interviewees had made significant sacrifices in their study plans (i.e. not taking a desired double major in German, taking other courses online instead, having a course schedule that was very inconvenient) so that they could avoid having to take an online German course at all costs.

In contrast, none of the F2F-only students interviewed expressed regret about taking their German course on-campus; they felt this was the right choice for them and that they would have had less success learning online. This group likely reflects well the 50-60% of students in the surveys who said they did not plan to take German online in the future, with the most common reason given being a dispreference towards, or doubts regarding, OLL. Although most of those students who had taken German online were satisfied with their experience in absolute terms, they expressed a much lower satisfaction with the online versus on-campus experience (Figure 6 in the Survey Results). The reasons for this were quite clear in the interviews—most students with mixed trajectories said they either regretted their choice to take an online course, and given the chance now would change their mind, or that despite being satisfied with the course(s) taken, they thought that taking any more than one to two online language courses was not recommendable (due to the perceived deficits of learning online, mentioned above). This suggests that students had different (usually lower) expectations of an online course that an on-campus one. This fits in with my findings on students'

tendencies to idealize the on-campus environment, and three interviewees explicitly expressed this lowered expectation in their interviews in some form. For example, Jennifer said the following:

> I *think* it was what I expected [*pause*] basically I didn't expect very much [*laughs*]… I wasn't too excited about having to take it online, it was kind of like a necessary thing. So I did it. But, if I had the choice, then I would have taken it in person. And so I just kind of went in going, *weeell*, it's what it will be, and I need to get this credit to be able to go to the next [course], and I need to keep up somewhat of-, some sort of German.

All in all, the results indicate that students choose the learning environment that they think will best suit their learning style and personal notions of how and why one best learns languages—which, according to this study group, is overwhelmingly F2F, through live (synchronous) social interaction—and the main reasons for deviating from this preference are due to convenience or scheduling reasons. Those most likely to sacrifice by taking an online course, in turn, were students who were highly motivated to maintain the proficiency they had gained. Most of these students saw the online courses as a supplement to their primary on-campus experiences, something non-ideal that would "hold them over" until their next on-campus course. If they saw any role for online learning outside of this, it was only in the sense of the Internet providing a resource where they could find extra information and resources on certain topics, or as a platform for getting extra practice. For example, reading online grammar explanations or using the mobile language learning application Duolingo were mentioned, but both were primarily seen as supplementary to what was taught on-campus.

This "default-view" is not surprising, considering that at UW, like many other large universities, on-campus courses are still the default mode of instruction for many students. It is also predictable considering that if scheduling requirements are the main reasons students who want to learn German give for enrolling online (as opposed to those online-only, primarily breadth-seeking students), such timetabling issues mainly arise as students make their schedule each year for the upcoming one to two terms, and it is therefore probably difficult, if not impossible, to predict in

detail ahead of time. Thus, many students would likely not say they *plan* to take such a course, even if in the end they do end up taking one for scheduling reasons. These results clearly indicate, however, that many students would prefer not to need to do so.

6.3 Transitions between Learning Environments (Q3)

Finally, I will address the research question "how do students experience transitions between learning environments, and how prepared did they feel before and after the transition?" When it comes to the transitions between online and on-campus courses, and vice versa, students articulated a range of different experiences and outcomes. Even though the students placed such a high value on oral skills, as discussed, and often did not think online courses prepared (or would prepare) them well in this regard, when asked about transitions they spoke mostly about other topics, such as shifts in workload, fitting in socially, changing study mode (distance to on-campus), inconsistent grammar instruction between environments, and knowledge attrition due to month-long gaps. Some did speak about the trouble they had adjusting to speaking German again regularly and participating in a class, but none of the interviewees expressed much fear or anxiety about the transition that occurred before, during, or afterwards, and none expressed the view that online learning affected their proficiency in the long term; the students all indicated that they managed the transition and got past it successfully. Discussions of other types of transitions also arose in the interviews, such as going to, or coming back home from, an exchange to Germany (most students felt nervous but excited beforehand, and more confident speaking and interacting afterwards) and moving between course levels, even in the same course environment (e.g. some perceived a jump in difficulty from 101 to 102 due to a higher grammar focus and less basic vocabulary and fun topics, and from 102 to 201 due to the entry of students with prior German knowledge). Finally, two students mentioned the transition from more junior language-focused courses to more content-focused upper-year seminars (where the focus is more on analyzing media or discussing cultural topics), which most found

positive—despite attempting to read more difficult texts, they reported that the focus no longer being exclusively on the language caused their anxiety about speaking to be reduced, allowing them to focus on delving into the content, while they improved their German on the side. For me as a researcher this was unexpected; my expectation was coloured by personal experience, since the latter transition was one of the hardest for me as a language learner who learned German in university. I found the expectation of reading longer authentic texts, as well as speaking about them mostly in German, to be very anxiety-inducing, and enjoyed language classes much more. These various types of transitions appeared to be just as important to the students I interviewed as that between course environments; that is to say, just a normal part of the journey and nothing about which they were extremely worried.

When asked about their goals for learning German, almost all intermediate and advanced-level students expressed satisfaction or even pride about the level of German proficiency they had been able to achieve over the relatively short time of their Bachelor degree, and most hoped to be able to continue using their German in some capacity, whether it was in academic studies, work, travel, interpersonal relationships, or by engaging with German media. Of course this does not apply to the elementary-level students who were at the beginning of their language learning journeys, but it fits with the Geroline finding that over the long term, students who took one or more online courses in their degree not only did not suffer academically, rather had a lower reduction in their average grades over time compared to students who had studied exclusively F2F. When one considers that online course marks were often slightly lower than on-campus ones, it is even more notable that these students did better over time. At the very least, it shows that it is certainly possible to for OLL to be successfully integrated into a university program.

It is difficult to tell if this finding—that students reported managing transitions without major problems and that those who took both kinds of courses often had slightly better outcomes long

term—is due to some advantages of the UW online German courses themselves, the reduction in single or multiple semester-length gaps between language study, or the increased motivation of these mixed trajectory students (which, as discussed above, caused them to set aside their dislike of OLL to keep up their German online), or some combination thereof. What is clear, however, is that in the long term, these students' learning outcomes were equal to or better than other students who continued studying German online or on-campus only, and that therefore the online courses at UW provide a valuable option for students, giving them the opportunity to succeed in their studies on an equal footing with F2F-only students.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis I examined the question of how undergraduate second language learners of German in Ontario, Canada perceive the value and effectiveness of online and on-campus (F2F) language learning environments and what effect they may have on these students' learning success; how students choose in which environment to study and see online courses fitting into their study plans; and finally, how students experience transitions between these environments. By examining survey data from 157 responses to a paper questionnaire and 23 video recordings of interviewees with students who were enrolled in German in the Winter 2015 term at the University of Waterloo—in concert with longitudinal statistical enrollment and grade outcome data from the wider Geroline project—it emerged that students in the survey sample, which was made up a majority of on-campus students for both the survey (over 80%) and the interviews (~90%), had an overall negative perception about the value and effectiveness of OLL. While those students surveyed or interviewed who had some experience learning a language in such an online course at UW were less negative than students who did not have this experience, a consistent 50-60% of respondents in all categories did not plan to take any online German courses in the future, with the most common rationale being perceived or actual deficiencies in the interactivity, feedback, and motivational aspects of these courses. Students who had enrolled in online courses were most likely to give scheduling reasons as their reason for doing so (i.e. a F2F course was inconvenient or unavailable). When asked to rate their satisfaction with their online course experience, 50-90% of students gave a positive (*somewhat* or *very satisfied*) response with regards to the course content, delivery, and overall satisfaction, but their satisfaction with the delivery aspect was significantly lower than for content. In addition to this, those who had taken both kinds of courses expressed much less satisfaction with their online courses when compared to their on-campus experiences. This suggests that the students in the study group overwhelmingly prefer F2F-learning and likely have lower (or at least differing)

expectations of online versus on-campus courses; although they were mostly satisfied with the content provided online, they found the "delivery" system to be lacking, which I argue based on the interview results is often analogous to the lack of a live F2F instructor and peers with whom they can interact in person. Thus, the problems with OLL (interactivity, feedback, and motivation) were seen to be largely inherent to the course environment itself, as opposed to any specific course design or iteration, and this made OLL less desirable than F2F learning.

When interviewed to delve deeper into the reasons behind the trends uncovered in the survey, students who did not have experience in the online environment had more generalized or ill-defined negative views, while those who had solely taken courses online were much more positive, although they still did not think online learning was ideal in the long term and/or considered the courses to be lacking in some key features. Furthermore, these students' specific criticisms quite often aligned with the views of students who had not taken the online courses in question (i.e. they had to do with feedback, interactivity, motivation) with the addition of pacing/workload and course design issues (logic of tasks, clarity of directions). Students who had taken both types of courses (and were mostly F2F-oriented) expressed the most negativity about OLL and usually considered their experiences dissatisfactory. Almost all said they would not recommend these courses to other students, would not take them again in retrospect if they could have helped it, and that they did not feel online learning was a good fit for them. Similarly, beginner students held more general views, and had usually not considered the possibility of learning a language online, while more advanced learners had usually reached a point in their degree where they had had to choose between prioritizing scheduling flexibility or their F2F-preference in their course choices. In sum, students appear to choose the learning environment they see as the best for language learning (F2F), and the decision to do otherwise was most often taken for reasons that did not have to do with learning online itself, but rather external (institutional) pressures to do so.

How the students expressed the issues of interactivity, feedback, and motivation displayed a very specific conceptualization of language learning and how languages are best learned and taught. The fundamental problem students saw with online learning was a lack of "interactivity," by which they meant live, F2F, spoken interaction with a teacher with whom they could speak in the target language, listen to for input, and get feedback from (as well as classmates with whom they shared the immersive experience of language learning). The interviewees focused less on the desirability of the content knowledge of the teacher and much more on his or her social (affective) role as a facilitator and coach, someone who is encouraging, non-judgemental, and engaging and gets them involved and comfortable overcoming their fear of speaking in the target language and working together to learn as a group. Furthermore, students saw F2F contact with the teacher as the *primary* source of feedback by which they learned these all-important oral communication skills and received feedback on their pronunciation. This social aspect, in turn, appears to be what causes the students to be motivated to learn the language, all of which would not (or was not/could not) be possible in an online environment, in their views.

Student experiences of transitions between course environments were highly individualized, probably at least partly resulting from the fact that after the intermediate level, students had very heterogeneous course trajectories, taking a wide variety of combinations of different courses in different environments (including a third environment not discussed in this study, the study- or work-abroad context) and at different times in their courses of study. Although some students expressed that they had been somewhat worried about such (a) transition(s) or experienced some difficulties, these were just as likely to be related to social, workload, or other factors than the transition from a "non-interactive" to an "interactive" (i.e. speech-focused) classroom. The vast majority of interviewees reported ultimately adjusting well as they progressed, and no students explicitly expressed the view that the course(s) they took online had any long term negative effects

on their learning outcomes. This supposition is backed up by the findings of the Geroline project, which found that students who took one or more online courses in addition to F2F ones earned better grades over the course of their BA degree programs than those who studied exclusively in one environment. It is difficult to conclude which specific factors led to this result, though my data suggests some combination of mixed trajectory students being more highly motivated to learn than others (and thus willing to set aside a dislike of online learning to maintain their proficiency online), a reduction in semester-length gaps between language study, and possible advantages of the UW online German course environment itself and/or its successful integration in sequence with the F2F courses.

7.1 Limitations & Areas for Further Research

Some limitations of the study were that the sample of students was weighted in favour of on-campus and early language learners, as well as female students, and very few true "online-only" students responded to recruitment efforts. This is not a significant disadvantage in my judgment, however, since this balance reflects the approximate composition of the student population in the German department at the University of Waterloo, in which enrollment goes down over time, is weighted towards F2F courses (though online still plays a significant role), and has a higher enrollment of female than male students. Some of the survey questions, as mentioned in the Survey Results chapter, were, in retrospect, not specific enough in their wording to elicit the desired responses directly, but by triangulating these responses with other items or sub-items on the survey, it was still possible to isolate the information needed for the analysis, albeit with slightly reduced clarity of some results. In future, I would undertake a pilot test of my surveys and interview questions to reduce the probability of this reoccurring. The results uncovered also fit with the statistical findings of the Geroline project, indicating that the survey and interviews were reasonably valid.

One area that could have been better addressed in the study, though it would have increased the length of the survey, relates to the satisfaction ratings elicited from students who took the paper surveys in their classrooms. Students were only asked to rate their satisfaction with their *online* courses in absolute terms and relative to on-campus courses, but not to do so for their F2F courses. Although this data could be inferred for those students who responded to Item 4d (i.e. had studied in both environments), there was no baseline against which to compare the data, since students who took only F2F courses were not asked to rate their satisfaction. In addition, the fact that students were asked to reflect on one or more course transitions after the fact is a limitation that could explain the mixed results regarding the third research question. It would be interesting in further research to see if students' recollections after the fact matched feelings expressed before, during, and immediately after such a transition occurred. Finally, it would be interesting in future research to examine how research on learner identity, autonomy, motivation, learning styles or social interaction online versus on-campus might relate to my findings. For example, how do students who had different longer-term course trajectories perform on oral communication tasks? Are there any measurable differences in the learning styles, motivation levels, or desire for/degree of learner autonomy between students who choose to learn a language course online versus on-campus, or in both environments? Is there an optimal point in a student's language learning trajectory when learning in a specific course environments is more or less beneficial? Would implementing additional CALL features in UW's online courses (see recommendation below) lead to an increase in motivation in online students or in interest in online learning by F2F-oriented students? Which factors influence dropout from both course types by students, and how do these factors relate to the course environment trajectories? Although some of these questions have been examined in the context of online learning in general, there is very little research on how they might figure into a context where there are intersections between both online and on-campus learning.

7.2 Implications

In this section, I will discuss some of the pedagogical implications of this study, and my suggestions for using the results to improve online language course offerings. Even though prior studies (and the Geroline data) have shown that UW's online courses provide students with an equal opportunity for learning success (with some indication the online courses may be slightly more difficult), the majority of the study group held negative views of this learning environment, which were often based on generalizations, prior experiences in online (language) courses that were not designed or conceptualized in the same way as our courses, or other anecdotal evidence. This leads to the question of whether UW should consider eliminating OLL, changing these courses because they are deficient, or simply finding a way address the perception of students. The first option, eliminating the courses, does not recognize that they provide a useful option for many students; despite half of students perceiving their value negatively, one in five survey respondents and four in ten interviewees had taken an online course, many due to a real scheduling need, and the Geroline team estimates that without the elementary online courses there would be 15% fewer students completing the German program. The online courses therefore provide a valuable study alternative, not just for those looking to fulfill a breadth requirement or enrolled by distance, but also for on-campus students whose schedules sometimes do not allow on-campus study.

I would therefore suggest a combination of approaches. First, I would recommend gathering additional data on satisfaction and specific issues students may experience when studying online from a larger sample of online-only students (e.g. by accessing existing course evaluation records, or completing a new survey) to see if the problems I identified are unique to the mixed trajectory students and/or the small number of online-only participants I interviewed, or also widespread in UW's online German courses. If using course evaluation ratings that are pre-existing, this might then make possible a like with like comparison between student satisfaction in both types of courses. It is

likely, however, that the normal end of term student surveys (course evaluations) would be difficult to obtain, since they are collected with the express promise to students of discretion and limited use of the data (i.e. for evaluating the course and the instructor only). To get around the problem of low responses to voluntary online surveys, then, some other method would need to be devised to ensure participation. For example, getting student's express permission at the start of an online course to use their eventual end of term surveys might be one way to undertake such a study. In this case, a response to this consent question (a "yes" or "no" response to participating in the study) could be required for the student to participate in the course, with the benefit that this would mean students would not have to fill out an extra survey, just complete the normal end of term evaluation.

Second, I would recommend providing more information to students about the nature of our online courses, since they often lacked specific details about what these courses entail, or could not imagine how online learning might "work." This is in fact the goal of phase three of the Geroline project, and I believe directly addressing student fears and misconceptions about OLL will go a long way towards giving them the opportunity to make better informed decisions about the course environment in which they wish to study (e.g. "will I really be able to learn German online? What about speaking? How will I interact? Will I be able to stay motivated?" etc.). Giving a demonstration of the interactive features of the course, an explanation of what our research has shown about long term benefits (i.e. effects on grades), a description of the intended pace of the course (e.g. that they are designed to require daily work to keep students motivated and learning every day), etc. all *before* students enroll, since many do not even *consider* learning online, would all be beneficial. These materials could be made available online and/or be presented in F2F courses as a short presentation each semester (e.g. in a short video or PowerPoint). One aspect to be considered is also the role that F2F instructors can play in promoting online learning as an option for students. It is my view, like Blake (see quote above, 2005) that if students hold negative views of OLL, it is likely that faculty do

so as well, and offering more information to them could also be valuable indirectly to students who are unsure if taking an online course could help them to continue learning German.

An effort could also be made to rebrand the existing online elements that are already in place in some of UW's F2F courses, such as the weekly computer lab sessions ("guided self-access", GSA) in which students complete online tasks (such as online scavenger hunts) in partners and an instructor facilitates from the side. From my personal experience as an instructor, I can say that even though many students may enjoy these sessions, a substantial number of others considered them supplementary to their normal in-class work, and thus did not seem to place as high of importance on them. This indicates that students do not automatically recognize the kinds of skills these tasks are designed to help them develop (e.g. working together on a task while speaking German, finding and synthesizing information from authentic websites), and was reflected in the attendance rate for such sessions, which was often lower than for traditional class lessons as the term progressed (and students became more stressed and likely to skip classes they viewed as less important). Perhaps by explicitly labelling these courses as blended or hybrid courses and encouraging students and faculty to see online activities as a valuable part of their course, this would encourage all parties to consider OLL in a different light.

Finally, I would suggest considering making some changes to the online courses (if the additional data collected in a survey of online students bears out the need for them) to address the perceived lack of a social component, as well as the wish for live feedback that students felt would be (or was) missing online. Some kind of synchronous component, such as increasing the instructor's online office hour beyond the one hour per week currently offered, adding additional instructor video lectures (Prof Thoughts) where students can see and "get to know" the instructor, organizing live chats or tutorial sessions, or facilitating opportunities for students to form study

groups (online or in-person) are all potential steps in this direction.[30] Because students may be afraid to contact and speak German with someone they have never met, these kinds of tasks would need to start small and build up over time to get students comfortable with the interaction, similar to the process of getting comfortable speaking in a F2F language course. Furthermore, reassessing the feedback and assessment practices in the online courses, perhaps to incorporate different types or amounts of feedback (hopefully with more "instant" feedback, if possible), is worth considering. For example, there could be additional feedback done during each chapter on the tasks students complete, rather than only at the end of each chapter and for pass/fail participation marks, although additional teacher resources (instructor hours, a TA) would likely be needed to undertake such a task.

Along with the live features I mentioned above (since students think interaction is how they best get feedback on their pronunciation and can best get answers to their questions), adding interactive CALL features (e.g. a machine graded workbook, clickable dictionaries, self-tests or extra resources when students need help, etc.) or multimedia or other web content beyond the tasks from the core textbook package (e.g. online scavenger hunt, like with the GSAs) could improve student satisfaction due to the instant feedback received, while simultaneously generating interest in the features that make online study different from on-campus study. For example, Blake discussed the benefits to students of bimodal (audio and written) chat sessions in a distance-learning Spanish course, which gave students "ample opportunities to focus their attention on gaps in their interlanguage, direct the flow of their own learning on an equal footing with that of the teacher, and, subsequently, carry out intensive practice of these new structures both in writing and in speech with the real expectation of adding them to their growing L2 arsenal" (2005, p. 508). Although the

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[30] It would be important to consider if such elements should be mandatory, to encourage participation, or optional to give students' choice, keeping in mind that such a course design might inadvertently punish distance-learning or interaction-averse students, who may be unable or unwilling to participate in such activities (e.g. these students could do written or other tasks in lieu). Despite this risk, I would argue that such a step would be very useful if the primary target audience for these courses is on-campus students, since this perceived lack of social interaction was the main reasons F2F-students gave for not considering online study.

"equivalency design" envisioned by the course designers is well-intentioned in providing easy transferability between course environments and levels, and has been proven to provide equal possibility for academic success as the on-campus courses, it is worth considering whether there is a way to maintain this design, while also making use of the myriad possibilities for enrichment that OLL and CALL can afford. It seems to me that the online environment could offer much more than simply a way to direct students to learn from a textbook/audiovisual materials and to interact with each other using CMC tools.

Lastly, it is worth considering if additional explanations or resources should be made available to students taking German online, to help them understand how the course is conceptualized, why the materials are all in German and organized in a certain manner, and where they can find reliable supplemental materials to complement their online learning. It could be that the communicative task-oriented design is not well-understood by many students, and based on my experience, many undergraduates, even in F2F courses, struggle with this style of learning at first, especially if they have come from previous language courses that were focused on form-focused way and not taught in the target language. Thus, students taking German for the first time online, who are not familiar with this teaching style, could easily become very confused or frustrated, and the data gleaned from my (albeit limited sample of) interviews of online-only students indicates that for some students this is certainly the case.

In addition to considering changes to the online courses and providing students and faculty with more information about OLL at UW, CALL features could also be implemented in F2F courses as a way to enrich the on-campus course offerings. These features could be designed as an add-on to the existing GSA sessions, or on their own outside of class time. Adding elements of online learning to F2F classes could increase engagement of students with the target language outside of class, which would be worthwhile if successful. Indeed, Blake (2011, quoted in Literature

Review) points out that the advantage shown in some research and meta-analyses of online learning is likely attributable mainly to students' increased time spent on task. It could also offer an alternative mode of interaction for students who may be more hesitant to participate in class. Such technologies range from simple to complex and could include anything from designating an online discussion board in LEARN for students to get help and chat with each other about course content outside of class (since many will have similar questions while doing their homework); to subscribing to an online workbook software package that gives immediate feedback on grammar tasks (and saves the teacher marking them); to making use of any one of a host of emerging technologies such as mobile, gaming, virtual, or place-based technologies to create immersive non-classroom-based learning experiences (for examples, see Holden & Sykes, 2011; Schwienhorst, 2002; Sykes & Reinhardt, 2012). If implemented in a pedagogically thoughtful manner and not just for their own sake, the Internet, CALL, and CMC offer unique affordances that can contribute much to student learning in both course environments.

To conclude, examining students' perceptions and views of course environments provides interesting insights into not only how students view the value and effectiveness of these environments, choose in which environment(s) to study, and experience transitions between them, but also into such myriad topics as how the role of the teacher and the class group fits into students' views of language learning, which skills they consider important when learning a language, and what they hope to achieve by doing so. By examining these views in the context of long-term statistical data of student outcomes, the juxtaposition between student perceptions and actual outcomes over time also offers insight into the role that OLL can play in traditionally on-campus-oriented institutions of higher learning. With online learning likely to play an ever-larger role in the future, and the increasing likelihood that more and more courses will include some form of online supports,

it is worthwhile examining how students experience both new and old study environments and the intersections between them, as articulated by the students themselves.

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9. Appendices

Appendix A – Paper Survey

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

"Geroline" Project – Student Questionnaire

1. What are your major and minor subjects? _____

2. Which German courses have you taken at UWaterloo so far? (*Please list*)
_____

3. Were any of the above courses taken online?   ❒ Yes ❒ No

   If you answered <u>No</u>, please skip to question 4

   3a. If you answered <u>Yes</u>, which ones? (*Please list*)_____

   3b. Why did you choose to take these course(s) online? (*please check all that apply*)

   ❒ The on-campus course did not fit into my class schedule
   ❒ The option to take the class online gave me more scheduling flexibility (e.g. I could fit more/different classes into my schedule)
   ❒ I was working/on a co-op term
   ❒ I am a distance student (not located in Waterloo), so am unable/it is difficult to attend on-campus
   ❒ I have family or other time constraints which make it difficult/impossible to take on-campus courses
   ❒ I was curious what taking an online language course would be like
   ❒ I like the flexibility of learning online (e.g. at my own pace, in whatever location I choose)
   ❒ I like to learn independently (e.g. practice German on my own, with less interaction with others)
   ❒ Other (*please specify*):_____

   3c. Please rate your satisfaction with the following elements of the online course(s) you have taken at UW, on a scale of 1 to 4, as follows:

	1: Very satisfied	2: Somewhat satisfied	3: Somewhat dissatisfied	4: Very dissatisfied
The course **content** (e.g. topics covered, learning activities, course materials…)	❒	❒	❒	❒
The course **delivery** (e.g. online platform, ability to interact with instructor and peers…)	❒	❒	❒	❒
Overall level of satisfaction with the course	❒	❒	❒	❒

   3d. If you have taken both an online and an on-campus course, please rate your level of satisfaction with the online course(s) as compared to the on-campus course(s):

1: Much more satisfied	2: Somewhat more satisfied	3: Same level of satisfaction	4: Somewhat less satisfied	5: Much less satisfied
❒	❒	❒	❒	❒

4. Do you plan to take any online German classes at UW in the future?   ❒ Yes ❒ No ❒ Unsure

   4a. Why or why not? _____

5. Have you taken **any** online language courses (not just German) from anywhere other than UW? (e.g. the Goethe Institut, another University, etc.)?   ❒ Yes ❒ No

6. May we contact you in the next few weeks for a follow-up interview to ask further questions about your experiences in our German courses?   ❒ Yes ❒ No

   6a. if you answered <u>Yes</u>, please state your name and e-mail and/or phone number where we may contact you: Name: _____ Email and/or Phone: _____

Thank you very much for your participation in our survey!

</div>

Appendix B – Online Survey 1 (LEARN)

Page 1

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Information

NOTE: Please do not fill out this survey if you have previously completed it on another occasion (e.g. in-class).

I agree to participate in a study being conducted by Mat Schulze, associate professor of German, Kyle Scholz, PhD Candidate, and Sara Marsh, MA Candidate, in the University of Waterloo's Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies. I have made this decision based on the information I have received in the information letter. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and request any additional details I wanted about this study.

As a participant in this study, I realize that my responses to the questions below will only be used in the study if I provide my consent, and that I may choose not to respond at all if I wish, or to only respond to some questions.

All information that I provide, and the data that is recorded, will be held in confidence, and I will not be identified by name in the paper. If I agree to have my responses to the questionnaire included in the research, I am aware that I will be de-identified from my responses. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

I am aware that this project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is mine. I am aware that if I have concerns or questions about my involvement in the project that I may contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

Question 1 (Mandatory)

I agree to have my responses to the questionnaire below be analyzed and used in this study.

○ Yes

○ No

| Previous Page | Next Page |

Page 1 of 3

| Save | Submit |

Page 2

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Question 2

What are your major and minor subjects?

Question 3

Which German courses have you taken at UWaterloo so far? *(Please list)*

Question 4

Which of these courses were taken online?

[ ]

Question 5

Why did you choose to take these course(s) online? *(please check all that apply)*

[ ] The on-campus courses did not fit into my class schedule

[ ] The option to take the class online gave me more scheduling flexibility (e.g. I could fit more/different classes into my schedule)

[ ] I was working/on a co-op term

[ ] I am a distance student (not located in Waterloo), so am unable/it is difficult to attend on-campus

[ ] I have family or other time constraints which make it difficult/impossible to take on-campus courses

[ ] I was curious what taking an online language course would be like

[ ] I like the flexibility of learning online (e.g. at my own pace, in whatever location I choose)

[ ] I like to learn independently (e.g. practice German on my own, with less interaction with others)

[ ] Other: If there is another reason behind your choice, please indicate it in question 6

Question 6

If you chose Other above, what other reason did you have for taking an online course?

[ ]

Information

Please rate your satisfaction with the following elements of the online course(s) you have taken at UW, on a scale of 1 to 4, as follows:

Question 7

The course **content** (e.g. topics covered, learning activities, course materials...)

( ) 1: Very satisfied   ( ) 2: Somewhat satisfied   ( ) 3: Somewhat dissatisfied   ( ) 4: Very dissatisfied

Page 2 Continued

Question 8

The course **delivery** (e.g. online platform, ability to interact with instructor and peers...)

- ○ 1: Very satisfied
- ○ 2: Somewhat satisfied
- ○ 3: Somewhat dissatisfied
- ○ 4: Very dissatisifed

Question 9

Overall level of satisfaction with the course

- ○ 1: Very satisfied
- ○ 2: Somewhat satisfied
- ○ 3: Somewhat dissatisfied
- ○ 4: Very dissatisfied

Question 10

If you have taken both an online and on-campus course, please rate your level of satisfaction with the online course(s) as compared to the on-campus course(s):

(if you haven't taken both, please leave this question blank)

- ○ 1: Much more satisfied
- ○ 2: Somewhat more satisfied
- ○ 3: Same level of satisfaction
- ○ 4: Somewhat less satisfied
- ○ 5: Much less satisfied

Question 11

Do you plan to take any online German classes at UW in the future?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure

Question 12

Why or why not?

[text box]

Question 13

Have you taken **any** online language courses (not just German) from anywhere other than UW? (e.g. the Goethe Institut, another University, etc.)?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

| Previous Page | Next Page | **Page 2 of 3** |

Save   Submit

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Page 3

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Question 14

May we contact you in the next few weeks for a follow-up interview to ask further questions about your experiences in our German courses?

○ Yes

○ No

Question 15

If you answered **Yes,** please state your name and e-mail and/or phone number where we may contact you. Please input your name in the first space, and your contact information in the second space.

(If you do not wish to be contacted, please leave this question blank.)

Blank # 1

Blank # 2

Information

Thank you very much for your participation in our survey!

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Save   Submit

Appendix C – Online Survey 2 (Google Form)

Page 1

"Geroline" Project – Student Questionnaire
*Required

Consent

I agree to participate in a study being conducted by Mat Schulze, associate professor of German, Kyle Scholz, PhD Candidate, and Sara Marsh, MA Candidate, in the University of Waterloo's Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies. I have made this decision based on the information I have received in the information letter. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and request any additional details I wanted about this study.

As a participant in this study, I realize that my responses to the questions below will only be used in the study if I provide my consent, and that I may choose not to respond at all if I wish, or to only respond to some questions.

All information that I provide, and the data that is recorded, will be held in confidence, and I will not be identified by name in the paper. If I agree to have my responses to the questionnaire included in the research, I am aware that I will be de-identified from my responses. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

I am aware that this project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is mine. I am aware that if I have concerns or questions about my involvement in the project that I may contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

I agree to have my responses to the questionnaire below be analyzed and used in this study: *

◉ Yes

◯ No

Continue »

20% completed

Submission Page (If student selects 'no' on page 1)

Click submit to finish.

« Back   Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

100%: You made it.

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Page 2

1. What are your major and minor subjects?

[   ]

2. Which German courses have you taken at UWaterloo so far?

(Please list, including any classes you are currently enrolled in)

[   ]

3. Were any of the above courses taken online?

○ Yes

○ No

[« Back]   [Continue »]   [▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭]
                                      40% completed

Page 3

3a. Which of these courses were taken online?

(Please list)

[   ]

3b. Why did you choose to take these course(s) online?

(please check all that apply)

☐ The on-campus course did not fit into my class schedule

☐ The option to take the class online gave me more scheduling flexibility (e.g. I could fit more/different classes into my schedule)

☐ I was working/on a co-op term

☐ I am a distance student (not located in Waterloo), so am unable/it is difficult to attend on-campus

☐ I have family or other time constraints which make it difficult/impossible to take on-campus courses

☐ I was curious what taking an online language course would be like

☐ I like the flexibility of learning online (e.g. at my own pace, in whatever location I choose)

☐ I like to learn independently (e.g. practice German on my own, with less interaction with others)

☐ Other: [   ]

3c. Please rate your satisfaction with the following elements of the online course(s) you have taken at UW, on a scale of 1 to 4, as follows:

The course content (e.g. topics covered, learning activities, course materials...)

- ⊙ 1: Very satisfied
- ⊙ 2: Somewhat satisfied
- ⊙ 3: Somewhat dissatisfied
- ⊙ 4: Very dissatisfied

The course delivery (e.g. online platform, ability to interact with instructor and peers...)

- ⊙ 1: Very satisfied
- ⊙ 2: Somewhat satisfied
- ⊙ 3: Somewhat dissatisfied
- ⊙ 4: Very dissatisfied

Overall level of satisfaction with the course

- ⊙ 1: Very satisfied
- ⊙ 2: Somewhat satisfied
- ⊙ 3: Somewhat dissatisfied
- ⊙ 4: Very dissatisfied

3d. If you have taken both an online and an on-campus course, please rate your level of satisfaction with the online course(s) as compared to the on-campus course(s):

(Please leave this question blank if you have not taken both types of course)

- ⊙ 1: Much more satisfied
- ⊙ 2: Somewhat more satisfied
- ⊙ 3: Same level of satisfaction
- ⊙ 4: Somewhat less satisfied
- ⊙ 5: Much less satisfied

« Back   Continue »

60% completed

Page 4

4. Do you plan to take any online German classes at UW in the future?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Unsure

4a. Why or why not?

[   ]

5. Have you taken any online language courses (not just German) from anywhere other than UW? (e.g. the Goethe Institut, another University, etc.)?

○ Yes

○ No

[« Back] [Continue »]

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6. May we contact you in the next few weeks for a follow-up interview to ask further questions about your experiences in our German courses?

○ Yes

○ No

6a. If you answered Yes, please state your name and e-mail and/or phone number where we may contact you.

(If you do not wish to be contacted, please leave this question blank)

[   ]

[« Back] [**Submit**]

100%: You made it.

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Appendix D – Interview Guides

After the main questions, there is more information (in italics) that could be used as probing

questions or suggested responses (if student is unsure what is meant by the question).

<u>Geroline Project – Student Interview Questions</u>

Version A – Online class experience at UW

1. Could you please tell me a bit about **yourself and your background**? *(E.g. hometown, studies, etc.)*
2. Did you have any **prior knowledge** of
3. German before coming to UW? (*e.g. high school, family, travel, in the community*). Have you learned any **other foreign languages** before German? *(in brief)*
4. How do you **feel** about learning it? *(E.g. is it fun, frustrating, interesting, boring, disappointing, easy, difficult, etc.)*
5. So you have taken ____*class number(s)* ____ so far on-campus, and ____*class number(s)* ____ online. How have you found the **on-campus course**(s)/how are they going so far? Is there anything in particular that you **liked or disliked**?
6. What about the **online** class? Can you tell me more about why you chose to take it online? *(E.g. scheduling, flexibility, independence, curiosity, time/location restraints)*.
7. And how did the online class go? / How has it been so far? Is there anything particular that you **liked or disliked**?
8. What kinds of activities did you do for **reading and listening** in class? How much reading did you do? What types of listening activities were there? *(E.g. listening to dialogues, songs, watching videos; reading texts, dialogues)*. Did you do any extra activities on your own? *(E.g. reading German news, watching YouTube videos, researching topics)*. What was the availability of materials?
9. What about **speaking and writing**? How much writing did you do in class? What types of speaking activities were included? *(E.g. recording yourself and others talking, writing texts and dialogues)*. How much practice did you get? Did you do any additional activities for self-study? *(E.g. speaking German with friends or classmates, writing German on social media)*.
10. How much and in what way did you **interact** with your instructor and other people in your class? *(E.g. did you read/listen what other students produced to help gauge your own progress? Did you participate in discussion boards or chats? Did you meet up with other students f2f or online outside of LEARN? Did you contact the Professor to get help?)*. How satisfied do you feel about the level of **communication** you

had with others? *(E.g. was it enough, too much, just right? Did you like it? Were there enough opportunities to interact, participate, and get feedback?).*

11. IF ALSO TOOK A CLASS IN-PERSON: What has it been like learning German **online versus in person** in a classroom? Has it been the same or different than you expected? Have you found there are advantages or disadvantages for you to learning online?

    IF ONLY TOOK CLASS ONLINE: How do you think **learning online would compare** to learning in a classroom? How do you think it would be the same or different? What do you think would be the advantages or disadvantages of online vs. in-class learning?

12. IF APPLICABLE: according to your survey, you **transitioned** from course XXX online, to course XXX on-campus. How did you find the transition(s)? Did the online course(s) prepare you for the next level of in-class course and/or did the on-campus course prepare you to learn online? How did you feel about the transition? *(E.g. nervous ahead of time, overwhelmed when back in class, totally fine, adjustment period).*

13. What are your **plans for the future**, as far as learning German at UW? Do you plan on taking more classes at UW? If so, do you know if you'll take any of them online? Why or why not?

14. Do you remember how you made the **decision** to take this course originally? What influenced your decision? How would you make the **decision now**? Would you make the same choice or a different one?

15. Is there anything else about your experience in the German courses at UW that you would like to talk about?

16. IF APPLICABLE: According to your survey, you have taken **another online language class** before from somewhere other than UW. Could you please tell me about it*? (E.g. language, level, institution offered, success, opinion of it).* How did that class(es) compare to the one you took here?

17. I'm going to ask a few question now about **language learning in general and German in particular**. There are no right or wrong answers, I am just interested in your opinions.

    - What do you associate with 'German'? *(E.g. Germany, history, culture, music, German language).* What about the language in particular? *(E.g. difficulty level, how it sounds, stereotypes).*

    - What do you want to learn when you learn a language? What do you want to be able to do? *(E.g. speaking, communicating, reading, grammar/correctness, vocabulary).* What is the most important aspect of learning a language for you?

- What are your goals for learning German in particular? Why did you choose German? *(E.g. future study/job goals, general interest, travel, heritage, relationship, breadth req., negative/anything but French. If they say breadth requirement, ask why German and not another language).*

- What do you think makes a good language teacher? What do you expect of a professor? In the classes you've taken at UW, did you feel the instructors met your expectations? Were you getting the support you needed?

18. Is there something I missed that you think I should have asked about, or that you want to comment on? *(E.g. technology in online or on-campus classes, suggestion for improvement, thoughts about the future, etc.)*

Version B – No online class experience at UW

1. Could you please tell me a bit about **yourself and your background**? *(E.g. hometown, studies, etc.)*

2. Did you have any **prior knowledge** of German before coming to UW? (*E.g. high school, family, travel, in the community*). Have you learned any **other foreign languages** before German? *(in brief)*

3. How do you **feel** about learning it so far? *(E.g. is it fun, frustrating, interesting, boring, disappointing, easy, difficult, etc.)*

4. So you have taken ____*class number(s)* ____ so far. **How have you found course**(s)/how are they going so far? Is there anything in particular that you **liked or disliked**?

5. What kinds of activities did you do for **reading and listening** in your classes? How much reading did you do? What types of listening activities were there? *(E.g. listening to dialogues, songs, watching videos; reading texts, dialogues).* Did you do any extra activities on your own? *(E.g. reading German news, watching YouTube videos, researching topics).* What was the availability of materials?

6. What about **speaking and writing**? How much writing did you do in class? What types of speaking activities were included? *(E.g. recording yourself and others talking, writing texts and dialogues).* How much practice did you get? Did you do any additional activities for self-study? *(E.g. speaking German with friends or classmates, writing German on social media).*

7. How much and in what way did you **interact** with your instructor and other people in your class? *(E.g. did you read/listen what other students produced in class to help gauge your own progress? Did you meet up with others f2f or online outside of class to study? Did you go to any Nachhilfe or to the Professor's office hours?).* How satisfied do you feel about the level of **communication** you had with others? *(E.g. was it enough, too much, just right? Did you like it? Were there enough opportunities to interact, participate, and get feedback?).*

8. So on your survey you said you haven't taken any German classes online at UW. How do you think **learning online would compare** to learning in a classroom? Do you think it would be the same or different? What do you think would be the advantages or disadvantages of online vs. in-class learning?

9. What are your **plans for the future**, as far as learning German at UW? Do you plan on taking more classes at UW? If so, do you know if you'll take any of them online? Why or why not?

10. Do you remember how you made the **decision** to take this course originally? What influenced your decision? How would you make the **decision now**? Would you make the same choice or a different one?

11. Is there anything else about your experience in the German courses at UW that you would like to talk about?

12. IF APPLICABLE: According to your survey, you have taken **an online language class** before from somewhere other than UW. Could you please tell me about it*? (E.g. language, level, institution offered, success, opinion of it)*. Would you try taking another online language course in the future?

13. I'm going to ask a few question now about **language learning in general and German in particular**. There are no right or wrong answers, I am just interested in your opinions.

    - What do you associate with 'German'? *(E.g. Germany, history, culture, music, German language)*. What about the language in particular? *(E.g. difficulty level, how it sounds, stereotypes)*.

    - What do you want to learn when you learn a language? What do you want to be able to do? *(E.g. speaking, communicating, reading, grammar/correctness, vocabulary)*. What is the most important aspect of learning a language for you?

    - What are your goals for learning German in particular? Why did you choose German? *(E.g. future study/job goals, general interest, travel, heritage, relationship, breadth req., negative/anything but French. If they say breadth requirement, ask why German and not another language)*.

    - What do you think makes a good language teacher? What do you expect of a professor? In the classes you've taken at UW, did you feel the instructors met your expectations? Were you getting the support you needed?

14. Is there something I missed that you think I should have asked about, or that you want to comment on? *(E.g. technology in online or on-campus classes, suggestion for improvement, thoughts about the future, etc.)*

Appendix E – Responses to Item 4a

Complete written responses to Item 4a (not including those students graduating or not continuing

with German), categorized by the coding given, and including students' responses to Items 4 ("yes,"

"no,' or "unsure").

Table E1
Item 4/4a Responses by Coding Category

Item 4	Item 4a
Dislike of/doubt about/preference against learning online	
"I find it difficult to learn with the internet"	No
"I want to be able to practice my oral skills which is better in person."	No
"I can't practice conversation skills online"	No
"Taking the course in class would be more helpful"	No
"Prefer in-class teaching"	No
"Learning a language is much easier in a classroom"	No
"I think it is imperative to be in a classroom setting for lang. courses"	No
"Because I'm not motivated enough to self-regulate"	No
"Would rather take in person or immersed in Germany"	No
"Need to practice speaking in class"	No
"I don't believe the experience would be as good online"	No
"I have taken online courses for French, and preferred the classroom setting"	No
"Lack of interactive sessions"	No
"I find online difficult and hard to get help/slow"	No
"I think speaking a language in person is too important"	No
"I feel that online course do not provide the immersion needed to grasp the language"	No
"I prefer classroom learning as well as being able to interact/socialize with the prof in "person"	No
"In-class seems like I'd learn more, and be better at speaking"	No
"I learn from talking to professors and interacting with them"	No
"I have to have face-to-face interaction when learning a language"	No
"I can't imagine learning a language online. I need the conversation aspect. And someone to correct my pronunciation."	No
"I don't think I'll learn as well taking German online"	No
"Not personal enough for my learning needs"	No
"I don't like online courses"	No
"I find it easier to learn a language by interacting"	No
"I prefer inclass lectures"	No
"How can I learn a language to its fullest if I don't hear a person constantly speaking it"	No
"You can't interact"	No
"I can't really learn a language independently…"	No
"Do not like online courses"	No
"Online learning seems like it wouldn't suit my learning style"	No
"Won't learn anything, very difficult to communicate"	No
"We could be able to talk more in class"	No

"Learning in person"	No
"Really hate online courses, German or not."	No
"Difficulty dedicating time to online format"	No
"I prefer attending classes in real life"	No
"I feel as though an in class setting would benefit me more. Asking a prof questions – talking German with the classmates, etc."	No
"There is little or no interaction to learn the language"	No
"Communicating with others is the best way to learn a language, hard to do online"	No
"Don't like online courses"	No
"language is best learn w/ people I think"	No
"Not enough instant feedback or interaction"	No
"Not as effective for me as an in class course"	No
Prefer F2F/doubts about learning online	
"It wasn't very enjoyable the first time"	Unsure
"Unsure if I will be able to comprehend online"	Unsure
"Past negative experiences in online courses"	Unsure
"I'm not sure if I'd be able to learn a language w/ online teaching"	Unsure
"I like to be able to work with people on coursework etc. Harder to do with online courses, plus questions easily answered in-class"	Unsure
"I would prefer to take class on campus"	Unsure
"Don't know if I could motivate myself"	Unsure
"I prefer to take language classes in classroom, there are more opportunities to communicate in language I study"	Unsure
"Harder to practice speaking"	Unsure
"I find it easier to learn (a language in particular) through in-person interactions"	Unsure
Depends mainly on scheduling/offerings	
"Depends on scheduling, I will take a course for its materials"	Unsure
"If they are offered, sure!"	Unsure
"If it is required to fit my schedule and there are suitable options I will."	Unsure
"I haven't looked to see what's available"	Unsure
"It depends on what my schedule is like"	Unsure
"Depends on my schedule and what is available when I want to take GER 102"	Unsure
"It depends on my schedule. But I do like German."	Unsure
"Depends on my schedule"	Unsure
Prefer F2F but will take online if necessary	
"If there are conflicts, I may try an online course"	Unsure
"I learn better in a classroom (lecture style face to face). But if a course I want is only available online I would"	Unsure
"depends on timetables; much easier to learn in-person"	Unsure
"I'll take online classes if they are (not) available on campus"	Unsure
"If necessary, I will take it online. Prefer in class."	Unsure
Will see how current online course goes	
"I do need one more language course. I will decide at the end of GER 101 if I found the course worthwhile."	Unsure
To fit schedule while abroad/on-co-op/other scheduling reason	
"Take at home in summer"	Yes
"does not conflict with other classes I may want to take	Yes
"Because of co-op term"	Yes

"I want to do part of my degree over in Germany or Austria"	Yes
"Because of a future co-op term"	Yes
"Learning online allows me to have a flexible schedule"	Yes
Want to continue with German	
"I need them to graduate."	Yes
"interest, well taught so far"	Yes
"To continue my German education"	Yes
"A culture course is required for the UW Global Experience Certificate"	Yes
"I find it to be a very interesting language that I've not had much exposure to previously. Thus far I've enjoyed what I've learned. Also, I really enjoy language learning."	Yes
Only option next term/no choice	
"GER 201 is only offered online next term, I have no choice"	Yes
"Spring Term only offered online (taking German 102)"	Yes
Curious if learning language online is easier	
"To identify if learning culture classes online would be easier"	Yes
Combination of reasons above/miscellaneous	
"No time, prefer in class"	No
"online language course is strange, also I graduate soon"	No
"I was enrolled in online at first and switched to in class. It was way too complicated and wasn't exposed to German enough like you would in a classroom"	No
"I am graduating this term. The courses have been interesting and I've learned a lot but it is not applicable in any way to my current life either personal or professional. Learning to read another language would be incredibly valuable though and I would gladly take courses in that if they could be taught without audio."	No
"Just depends on multiple factors"	Unsure
"I do not think that more courses are offered online"	Unsure
"Easy to fit them in during the summer, they are taught in *English*"	Yes
"I want to further my studies and I know many of the classes are online"	Yes