STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN CHOOSING TO STUDY LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGE AT A GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the motivational factors that have the greatest and least influence on students' choice to study less commonly taught language(s) at the University of Washington. In 2023, a five-part online questionnaire was used to collect 88 students' responses. The main part of the questionnaire consists of 46 motivational factors grouped into five thematic groups: Advertisements of language courses and language learning; prior knowledge of the learning process of the target language; positive previous experience in learning languages and prior knowledge of/ about the target language; language speakers, their communities in the US and worldwide; the use of language, its functionality; future perspective. Students were asked to measure the importance of each factor on a five-point scale. In addition, 26 students in the course "Latvian Literary and Cultural History" were surveyed, using open-ended questions to find out their language knowledge, language-learning experience, and beliefs about the value of language knowledge and learning at the university level.

The factors rated as extremely important in choosing to study a language were *Interest in languages* (63% of 88 responses), *Traveling, studying, or living in places where the target language is spoken* (57%), and *Learning about other people and their culture* (41%). In turn, the factors least influential in students' choice to study language(s) were *Regular posts about the course / language on social media* (51% of respondents), *Communication with relatives in their native / heritage language* (46%), and *Option to choose the number of credits (e.g., 3 or 5)* (46%). Such results indicate that students' intrinsic motivation has higher influence on their choice to study a language.

Keywords: extrinsic motivation, integrative motivation, intrinsic motivation, instrumental motivation, less commonly taught languages, students at the University of Washington.

Introduction

The University of Washington, or UW, is one of the largest and most prestigious public research universities in the United States. According to criteria such as teaching,

research environment, research quality, industry, and international outlook it is ranked 25th among world universities (The Times Higher Education, 2024).

To obtain a degree at UW, undergraduate students must learn various general education components, including a foreign language, in addition to the content of the chosen study program. Unless the student is a native speaker of a language other than English or has learned three years of a single foreign language in high school, the student must complete the third college quarter of a foreign language or pass a language proficiency test (Foreign Language, 2024). UW offers 46 foreign languages, including Arabic, Bulgarian, Indonesian, Latvian, Swahili, Urdu, and Vietnamese (Languages Taught at the UW, 2024). Most of these languages are considered less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) in the US (What is LCTL?, 2023).

The aim of the paper is to examine the main reasons (alongside the above-mentioned formal language requirement) why students choose to study LCTLs at UW, students' expectations and believes about language learning, and their awareness of the benefits of studying world languages.

The paper is mainly based on quantitative research, since to achieve the goal, two surveys of UW students in the spring of 2023 have been carried out.

The paper consists of six parts. The introduction (1) is followed by a discussion of the theoretical issues relevant to the study (2). The third part (3) describes the structure and distribution techniques of both questionnaires. The results of the questionnaires are presented in the fourth part (4), which are critically discussed in the fifth part (5). The paper concludes with main conclusions and ideas for future research (6).

Theoretical considerations

Motivation is an important concept in psychology, and it is defined as "a kind of central mental engine or energy-center that includes *effort*, *want* or *will* (cognition) and *task-enjoyment* (affect)" (Ng & Ng, 2015: 98).

Researchers in language pedagogy and educators strongly emphasize the importance of motivation for successful language learning (i.e., first language, or L1, second language, or L2, and foreign language, or FL). Motivation is theoretically considered in the context of factors such as *learner-specific factors* (e.g., cognitive and emotional factors, level of L2 or FL competence, personality traits, parental support, positive self-evaluation); *learning situational factors* (e.g., teacher, class size, composition of the learner group, syllabus and teaching materials, instructions and learning activities, norms and regulations); and *result-oriented factors* (e.g., academic achievements, job opportunities, new friends, and travel) and mainly examined in language classrooms (e.g., Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Lasagabaster, Doiz & Sierra, 2014; Dörnyei, 2019).

According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), an individual's motivation to learn an L2 or FL is sustained by both attitudes toward the native language speakers' community and the goals, or orientations, sought through the acquisition of the target language. The scholars identified two types of orientations: *integrative* and *instrumental* orientation.

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The first refers to a desire to learn the target language to have contact with, and perhaps to identify with, members from the native language speakers' community. It is more about interactions, communication, and belonging. The second, in contrast, refers to a desire to learn the target language to achieve practical goals, for example, course credit or job advancement. It is related to one's professional development, labor market and utilitarian needs.

A considerable amount of research has been dedicated towards distinguishing between types of motivation. The results of this research have been inconsistent due to conflicting findings (see more in Noels et al. 2000). There have been several attempts to develop alternative motivational models with efforts to complement the integrative–instrumental distinction. One formulation that has received the attention of several scholars is the distinction between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation (e.g., Brown, 1994; Vallerand, 1997; Noels et al., 2001).

Intrinsic motivation (IM) is related to the individual's identity and sense of well-being (Ng & Ng, 2015: 24), and it generally refers to motivation to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do. In this sense, language learning (both independently and in the classroom) can be seen as one such activity. There are three types of IM: (1) IM-Knowledge, the motivation for doing an activity for the feelings associated with exploring new ideas and developing knowledge; (2) IM-Accomplishment, the sensations related to attempting to master a task or achieve a goal; (3) IM-Stimulation, motivation based simply on the sensations stimulated by performing the task, such as aesthetic appreciation, fun, and excitement (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vallerand, 1997; Noels et al., 2000).

In contrast, extrinsic motivation (EM) comes from outside the individual (Ng & Ng, 2015: 98) and is related to actions to achieve positive instrumental outputs, for instance, a reward or avoidance of a punishment. Eternal rewards can either increase or decrease intrinsic motivation, depending on how they affect self-efficacy (ibid.).

Many researchers have combined all previously described motivation types: *intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative,* and *instrumental motivation* (e.g., Brown, 2007; Schunk, Meece & Pintrich, 2008; Özgür & Griffiths, 2013).

Methodology

Research data and its acquisition

Faced with the gradually decreasing number of students in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at UW, I desired to learn students' opinion about the advertising of language courses, their preferences in language course organization and content, and the importance of the acquired language knowledge in their future lives. In the spring of 2023, I developed the questionnaire "Motivation in Choosing to Study a Less Commonly Taught Language". Several survey issues were discussed together among colleagues in faculty meetings within UW's Department of Scandinavian Studies.

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Since the research deals with students' retrospective view of why they have chosen to study the language(s) and what they have given crucial importance to, result-oriented factors were more considered for surveying first-year language students, adding learning situational factors meant for second- and third-year language students (i.e., continuing students) or first-year students considering further studies of the target language. However, this does not mean that students' perception of the language learning process before their actual enrollment in the language class do not play a role in the choice to study / not study languages at UW.

The developed questionnaire consists of five parts:

1. Student profile;
2. Ways of obtaining information about language courses;
3. Factors influencing the choice to study a particular LCTL at UW;
4. Motivation in continuing to study the target language;
5. Individual recommendations to language instructors.

In the first part, students were asked about their: (1) study level, (2) study major, (3) native language(s); 4) number of languages known well enough to use in various daily situations (e.g., talk to people; read the news, posts on social media, or novels; watch movies; write emails, etc.); (5) number of languages studied at UW; (6) the last studied language at UW; (7) duration of learning the last language learned (years of study).

The second part consists of a multiple-choice question. The answer options include a maximum of all possible ways of obtaining information about the target language courses (e.g., Language Learning Center of UW, student advisor's recommendation, social media, and Google).

The third part is the main part of the questionnaire. It consists of 46 predefined factors possibly influencing student motivation. They are classified into five thematic groups:

1. Advertisements of language courses and language learning;
2. Previous experience in learning languages and/or prior knowledge of/about the target language;
3. Language speakers, their communities in the US (including UW staff) and worldwide;
4. The use of language, its functionality;
5. Future perspective.

Such a thematic division was created, hypothetically assuming that students' motivation can be influenced not only by the future perspective (e.g., traveling and communication with native language speakers), but also by the past (students' experiences, respectively) and present perspective (e.g., the image of the country/-ies where the target language is spoken and visibility of the target language(s) in students' surrounding).

All five thematic groups, with a list of possible influencing factors, begin with the question: *How important were these factors when you chose to study a less commonly taught language, or LCTL (other language than English, Spanish, French, and German)?* Then, a list of factors is given, respectively, according to the above-mentioned thematic groups.

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Students were asked to evaluate each factor on a scale of five levels dependent on its importance of influence: 1 – not important at all, 2 – not so important, 3 – somewhat important, 4 – important, and 5 – extremely important.

The fourth part of the questionnaire consists of 32 factors influencing students' motivation to continue to study the target language. The factors are based on the following thematic groups:

1. Learning materials;
2. Language learning process;
3. Instructor and course mates;
4. Learning bonuses.

Like the previous question, students were expected to measure the relative importance of factors on a scale of five levels (see above).

The questionnaire concludes with two open-ended questions with students' suggestions for language instructors regarding language teaching practices and language course promotion strategies. The last two questions were optional for students.

The online questionnaire was distributed to students mainly through e-mails of language instructors and promoted at informational events for students. The questionnaire was anonymous.

In addition to the previously described online questionnaire, undergraduate students of the course "Latvian Literary and Cultural History" were surveyed in the spring quarter of 2023. The purpose of this follow-up survey was to reach at least some of those students who have not studied languages at the UW (and do not intend to do so), to learn the reasons why they have chosen not to study language(s) at the university level.

The second questionnaire was also available to students online and consisted of seven open-ended questions:

- *What is your native language / mother tongue?*
- *Which languages do you know? Briefly describe your proficiency. (e.g., German – I can read and write simple texts)*
- *Do you currently study a language? If yes, which one?*
- *Why do you study (or not study) a language?*
- *What do you like in language learning? What do you don't like about studying a language?*
- *Which languages do you think is worth to study? Why?*
- *What can you gain from studying small languages (e.g., Latvian, Danish, Lao, etc.)?*

Unlike the first survey, this questionnaire includes a question about important and useful languages worth studying and hypothetical question about the need for learning particularly small languages.

Data analysis

The description of the quantitative data – the factors affecting motivation to study LCTL(s) – was conducted mainly considering the highest and lowest rated factors. Then

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these factors were analyzed from two points of view – the learning process and the desirable results of language learning. In the first case, an attempt has been made to answer what the highest rated factors tell us about instructor and organization, content, and atmosphere of language lessons that attract students. In the second case, the focus is on students' awareness of the benefits of knowledge and skills in the target language. For the paper, 15 motivational factors (out of 46) were selected and grouped into three types of benefits:

1. Benefits associated with cognitive and intellectual development;
2. Benefits associated with belonging and communication;
3. Material benefits, entertainment opportunities, and professional development (career).

Each thematic group consists of five potential motivational factors (the list of factors of each group is given in Table 1). The first group includes factors related to students' personal growth and attitude towards newly acquired practical skills, as well as preferences in spending free time. They refer to students' intrinsic motivation. The second group is based on the idea that it is important for students as social persons to be in contact with other people, get to know them and learn from them, and feel a sense of belonging to different groups of people (e.g., interest, ethnic, and linguistic). The factors are related to students' integrative motivation. The third group includes factors related to active involvement of students in different communities (e.g., interest groups, business groups, exchange student groups) to obtain some visible and clear benefit, for instance, financial support, language use-oriented job offer, unique work assignment, opportunity to study or work abroad, travel with higher confidence about the experiences to be gained and safety.

The content analysis of qualitative data was based on marking the recurring themes and keywords related to students' motivation to study LCTLs and motivational teaching / learning strategies.

Results

General description of findings
Student profile

In the spring quarter of 2023, 88 students at UW completed the main research online questionnaire. 73 of these students were undergraduate students, 15 – graduate students. Most students' majors were related to linguistics, international studies, or a particular language and culture (e.g. English, Japanese, Language & Culture, Global & Regional Studies), but also to computer science, environmental sciences, and political sciences.

The mother tongue of 72 students was English. The most frequently mentioned other mother tongues were Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese), Vietnamese and Spanish. 44 students claimed that they can use two languages in everyday situations, 17 have stated that they can operate with three languages.

At UW, 42 students had studied one language, 24 students had studied two languages, and 22 students had studied three or more languages. The most frequently mentioned languages studied last at UW are: Japanese (16 responses), Arabic (15), Korean (14), Norwegian (8), Latvian (5), Estonian (4), and Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian (BCMS) (4). Most respondents (51 students or 58% of all respondents) had chosen to study a LCTL for one year, while 17 students (19%) had learned the target language for two years.

In addition, during the lecture of the course "Latvian Literary and Cultural History," 26 completed online questionnaires were obtained. All students were undergraduates whose major studies are not primarily related to culture studies and linguistics. However, results of the data analysis shows that students' linguistic background is diverse. 17 students' native language was English, but the course was attended by students with Gujarati, Arabic, Ilocano, Tamil, Persian, and Vietnamese as their native language as well. 23 students described themselves as multilingual people who can operate with two or three other languages. Six students were studying a language at UW at the time of completing the questionnaire, their chosen languages being German (2), Greek (2), Sanskrit (1), and Vietnamese (1). Thus, 20 students from the course had not studied a language at UW and did not plan to do so at the time of filling out the questionnaire.

Ways of obtaining information about language courses

The results of the questionnaire show that the most popular sources of information about the language courses offered at UW are *homepage of respective department* (41 responses), *other* (including UW Course Listing, My Plan, and family – 26), *Google* (23), *student advisor's recommendation* (14), and *recommendation from friend(s)* (8).

In turn, the least-used sources for obtaining information were *information stands* (1), *presentations by language instructors* (1), and *Instagram* (1). Information is not collected at all during language-related events on campus and on social networks such as *Facebook* or *Snapchat*.

Evaluation of the importance of motivational factors
Factors most influencing students' choice to study LCTL(s)

Top 3 factors rated as extremely important in choosing to study a language are:
1. *Interest in languages* (63% of 88 responses)
2. *Traveling, studying, or living in places where the target language is spoken* (57%)
3. *Learning about other people and their culture* (41%)

The thematic factor group "Future perspective" is most often rated as very important or extremely important in the choice to study LCTL(s). Students highly value *traveling, studying, or living in places where the target language is spoken* (90% of 88 students), *possibility to operate with an unusual language combination/-s in everyday life* (66%), *boost confidence about ability to learn new things and skills* (58%), and *expanding language biography and resume* (53%).

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Factors least influencing students' choice to study LCTL(s)

Quantitative analysis of the data shows that there are three factors that are not important at all when choosing to study LCTL(s) at the UW.

First, although, the visibility of the language course advertisement can be perceived as an important strategy in reaching potential students, more than half of the respondents (respectively, 51% of the surveyed students) believe that *Regular posts about the course / language on social media* as a factor is not important at all. Second, 46% of respondents express that *Communication with relatives in their native / heritage language* is an unimportant factor in choosing to study a language. Third, *Option to choose the number of credits (e.g., 3 or 5)* is an important criterion in 46% of cases.

Instructor and learning process as essential motivators

The findings show that for 66% of respondents, it is not important *to know a language instructor before taking a language course*. On the other hand, 59% of students believe that *reviews about instructor* are a very or extremely important factor influencing motivation, and 56% of respondents think that *instructor's teaching philosophy and research* have a somewhat, very, or extremely important impact on choosing a language course.

In turn, students who have chosen to continue learning the target language for the second or third year or are considering doing that pay a lot of attention to the instructor's personality and professional work. Such motivational factors as *Instructor's knowledge of the language*, *Instructor's skills to present and teach the language*, *Instructor's personality*, and *Valuable feedback from instructor* are rated as very or extremely important factors (respectively in 94%, 93%, 84%, and 82% of cases).

When describing the language learning process, students mainly emphasize two things. The first one concerns an instructor's dominant teaching approach: students attach great importance to the *focus on communication (both oral and written)*, since 91% of respondents rate this criterion as very or extremely important. The second thing is related to the organization of the learning process – 89% of students think that a *well-organized learning process* is very or extremely important.

In turn, the factors with the least influence on the continuation of language studies are *Course differentiation by number of credits*, *Chance to co-organize the learning process*, and *Lots of homework*; 60%, 48%, and 46% of students rate them as unimportant or not so important, respectively.

Findings show that students want an easy-going and relaxed learning environment. 85% of students rate the factor – *Jokes and enjoyment in the learning process* – as very or extremely important, and 82% of students believe that *Friendly atmosphere in the classroom* is very or extremely important. The open-ended question with suggestions for language instructors only reinforces this. Three examples: *I think that making students* **feel comfortable** *and* **having fun**[1] *is the best environment to learn* (R1[2]), *It should* **be fun**,

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[1]   Hereinafter all emphasis in students' comments is made by the author of the paper.

[2]   R1 stands for a respondent with the identifier 1.

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learning to make jokes in another language is super cool and **gets me excited to learn** (R6), *Have translation games and other* **fun methods** *to help students* **have fun while learning** (R34), *A* **light and fun atmosphere** *is key* (R37).

Future benefits of studying languages as motivators

Table 1 summarizes data on students' perception of the benefits of learning a language/s (generally or at UW). As the data show, students value things that are related to individual growth on a cognitive and intellectual level more. The most highly rated factor – *Learning about other people and their culture* – can be considered as partly belonging to this group as well, since it indirectly indicates both possible interaction with people of other cultures and passive absorption of information about other people: their knowledge, experiences, traditions, etc.

Table 1   Students' awareness of benefits of studying LCTL(s)

Benefit groups and motivational factors	Number of students (*N* = 88) who have rated the factors as *somewhat*, *very*, or *extremely important*
(1) Cognitive and intellectual development	
Training memory, analytical abilities, creativity, and communication skills	69
Meaningful fulfillment of free time	70
Literary works you want to read in the target language	63
Art forms (music, plays, films) you want to explore in the target language	73
Boost confidence about ability to learn new things and skills	75
	70*
(2) Belonging and communication	
Communication with peers and strangers in their native / heritage language	54
Connection with local language-speakers' community	65
Belonging to the department where the target language is taught	44
Meeting new people	67
Learning about other people and their culture	82
	62
(3) Material benefits, entertainment, and career	
Opportunity to receive a scholarship	43
Possibility to operate with an unusual language combination/-s in everyday life	79
Clear future vision of professional activities in the target language	59
Participating in social and entertainment events in the target language (e.g., chorus, theater, dancing, markets, etc.)	62
Traveling, studying, working, or living in places where the target language is spoken	81
	65

Note: * The average of the number of students who rated <u>the entire benefits-related-factor group</u> as somewhat important, very important, and extremely important.

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On the contrary, the group of benefits – Belonging and Communication – is the lowest rated group by the students. *Belonging to the department where the target language is taught* seems especially unimportant.

The feature characterizing extrinsic and instrumental motivation – material benefit – according to students are less appealing; this is proven by the lowest rated factor *Opportunity to receive a scholarship.*

Reasons why students do not choose to study language(s)

Based on 20 students from the course "Latvian Literary and Cultural History," who did not study any language at UW at the time of filling out the questionnaire, the main reasons given by students for not including a language course in their study plan are lack of time and focusing on the main study courses. Three student responses as examples *I feel like **I don't have time to study** a language right now and **it isn't a top priority** for me at the moment* ($R_2$12[3]), *I plan on studying Spanish in the future, however **I am more focused on my major oriented classes** at the time* ($R_2$6), *I don't study right now because **I don't have room in my schedule*** ($R_2$26).

The second thing that appears in the students' answers is the reluctance to invest time and mental effort in learning the language. A few comments as examples: ***I don't like the repetition** that is sometimes required to truly memorize and understand a concept* ($R_2$10), ***I don't like how much you have to practice** the language or else you forget it so easily* ($R_2$12), and *What **I don't like** is having **to master the grammar aspect** of a language because it can be confusing* ($R_2$17).

Discussion

Findings show that students prioritize the role of language in cognitive and intellectual development. According to surveyed students, a cognitive factor – *Interest in languages* (including learning them) plays a significant role in the choice to study language(s). This factor in broader sense can be seen as students' curiosity about new elements (e.g., sounds, words), forms and structures, the expansion of existing skills (e.g., literacy, communication skills), and students' desire for new knowledge. This is proven by the fact that 46 of 88 students had studied more than two languages at UW, while 37 learned the target language(s) for more than one year. In this vein, we can see that the factor as the feature of students' intrinsic motivation is a strong prerequisite for choosing / continuing to study language(s). This leads to the essential question: What can main stakeholders and social actors (including language teachers in high schools and in universities) do to create and promote students' interest in languages?

A significant number of studies are concerned with creating and maintaining students' interest in the learning process. However, they mainly deal with interest in the classroom (e.g., Ainley, Hidi & Berndorff, 2002; Renninger, 2000; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000) and

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[3] $R_2$12 stands for a respondent from the second (additional) research survey with the identifier 12.

with learning materials in L2 or FL teaching (e.g., Ebrahimi & Javanbakht, 2015; Manzano, 2018; Berra, 2020).

The findings of this study show that factors affecting motivation such as *Interactive learning materials*, *Relevant and modern topics*, *Authentic texts*, and *Real-life-related tasks* are evaluated similarly; on average, 62% of students rate them as very or extremely important. Individual students highlight the need to include topic that are important to them and point to the insufficient number of authentic texts in the learning process. One example: *I wish there were **more interaction with real life sources** such as newspapers, books and movies in the targeted language* (R35).

The second topic that is widely covered in language pedagogy and related to the motivation / interest to learn language(s) is student involvement and engagement (e.g., Christenson et al., 2012; Hiver et al., 2021; Hiver et al., 2024). The open-ended questions of the questionnaires show that students are willing to be involved in the learning process, but with the premise that language errors are seen as a part of the learning process and that students can feel emotionally comfortable regarding them. One example: *Calling on students **to participate as well can encourage cooperation and discussion**, but only if there is an acceptance of mistakes and no fear of judgement* (R1). At the same time, almost half of the respondents state that *co-organize learning process* is not important at all in choosing to study language(s).

Researchers and practitioners have discussed students' engagement in connection with fun teaching methods, strategies, and learning activities to increase students' enjoyment and interest in language learning (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Lamb et al., 2019). Research shows that such motivational strategies are especially important for monolingual students to help maintain interest in the target language.

The finding shows that **fun** is the key word for students' motivation to learn language and high evaluation of language lessons. Language games, jokes, and other stress-relieving and interesting components of language learning are needed by students. As previously mentioned, students highly rate *jokes and enjoyment in the learning process* and value *friendly atmosphere in the classroom*. Similarly high results are regarding learning activities; 90% of respondents think that *variety of classroom activities* is a somewhat, very, or extremely important motivational factor. However, only about one third of the surveyed respondents (34%) believe that *extracurricular activities (e.g., Language clubs)* are very or extremely motivating.

Coming back to the previously raised question about promoting the interest of future or existing students in languages and language studies, there are relatively few studies devoted directly to the formation of young people's interest in language learning before they enroll in language classes. One example is Hogan-Brun's popular book "Why Study Languages?" (2021), in which the author shows through the stories of language learners (including herself) that "languages can make things happen" (Hogan-Brun, 2021: 47) and highlights such cognitive gains as stronger executive control (i.e., ability to focus on a specific task while ignoring irrelevant information), enhanced working memory, greater mental flexibility, better problem-solving skills, and being more creative (ibid., 54). On

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the other hand, boosting income is mentioned as one of the main utilitarian benefits (ibid., 61). The importance of some of these benefits is also confirmed by the results of the questionnaire – the set of factors related to students' future perspective is the most highly rated thematic group.

Thinking in this direction, the findings suggest that there is a lack of or an insufficient amount of effective and appealing advertising of languages and language courses on the campus and in social media. Also, the word-of-mouth approach, namely promoting the positive learning experiences and successful career achievements of former language students in more personal and an accessible way to students, is probably underused. One of the ways of promoting language courses in other US universities is *Language Fairs* with various showcases, language games, and meetings with former language students and instructors (e.g. University of Arizona – CERCLL, 2024). Such an event has not taken place at UW at the time of writing, but here individual language instructors individually or in small groups for several days at the beginning of the study year place the faculty's advertising boards, distribute brochures about language courses, and tell students stopped by about language study opportunities. However, the effectiveness of such small-scale and sporadic advertisement activities must be critically evaluated. According to the questionnaire data, only one student (out of 88) has obtained information about the target language course at UW in this way.

On the other hand, students do not believe that the visibility of LCTLs on the campus, city, or digital environment has much influence on their choice to study them. Such factors as *Target language samples on campus (e.g., direction signs, posters), The use of the target language in the city*, and *The use of the target language on social media* are mainly rated as not important at all or not so important (74%, 57%, and 49%, respectively).

Students' reluctance to study languages is mainly justified by the lack of time and focus and the other courses, but individual student comments also point to not seeing the importance of language knowledge in the long term, the idea that language learning is an impossible mission, and a lack of interest. The lattermost brings us back to the problematic issue about students' interest about languages and learning them raised in this discussion.

Conclusions

Small in scope, the research showed us that students' choice to learn LCTL(s) is based on their own passion for languages and prior knowledge and preconceptions about the cognitive and intellectual benefits of the language learning process and outcomes. Students choose to study LCTL at UW for the first time if they have an interest in languages and a clear plan for future practical use of the target language. Students' choice to continue studying the target language is more nuanced than their choice to study language at all. Here, attention is paid to the instructor, the language teaching approach, the psycho-emotional atmosphere in the classroom, and the learning materials.

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A more extensive study would be beneficial, surveying students at other universities in the US or elsewhere – or, on the contrary, narrowed, focusing on more precise aspects of one type of motivation. Similarly, repeating the questionnaire after a couple of years would allow retrospective evaluation of the persistence of certain motivational factors over time.

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