

Long-term variability in L2 motivation, retirement anxiety, self-efficacy, and EFL trajectories of third age learners

Background

Retirement and retirement resources

- Socially and linguistically constructed significant life event that interacts dynamically with social and mental well-being (Yeung & Zhou, 2017)
- Diverse retirement pathways: Inter- and intra-individual variation over time (Atchley, 2000)
- **Resource-based dynamic model** (Wang et al., 2011): more preparatory activities > more retirement resources > better well-being after retirement (Reitzes & Mutran, 2004; Yeung & Zhou, 2017)
- Successful retirement adjustment through meaningful and fulfilling activities (e.g. a language course) as well as social, emotional, and motivational resources (Schmitt 2018).

L2 language acquisition across retirement

- L2 learning found to contribute to maintaining and improving retirement resources in the third age (Pfenninger & Kliesch, 2023)
- Retirement may affect language use patterns (Schmid & Keijzer, 2009) and
- L2 learning maybe an ideal training activity for older learners as it may expand post-retirement activities (Antoniou et al. 2013; Atalay et al. 2019) and lead to increased post-retirement well-being
- Age one of many factors that may influence L2 development (Muñoz, 2019)
- Oral fluency: Observed interaction effects of some fluency measures and age: Older learners more disfluent (Lahmann et al., 2017).
- Self-efficacy and motivation linked to language learning strategies and performance (Raoofi et al., 2012; Tragant, 2006).

RQ: When do individual differences in social-contextual, emotional, and motivational resources affect L2 English proficiency over time in retiring adults?

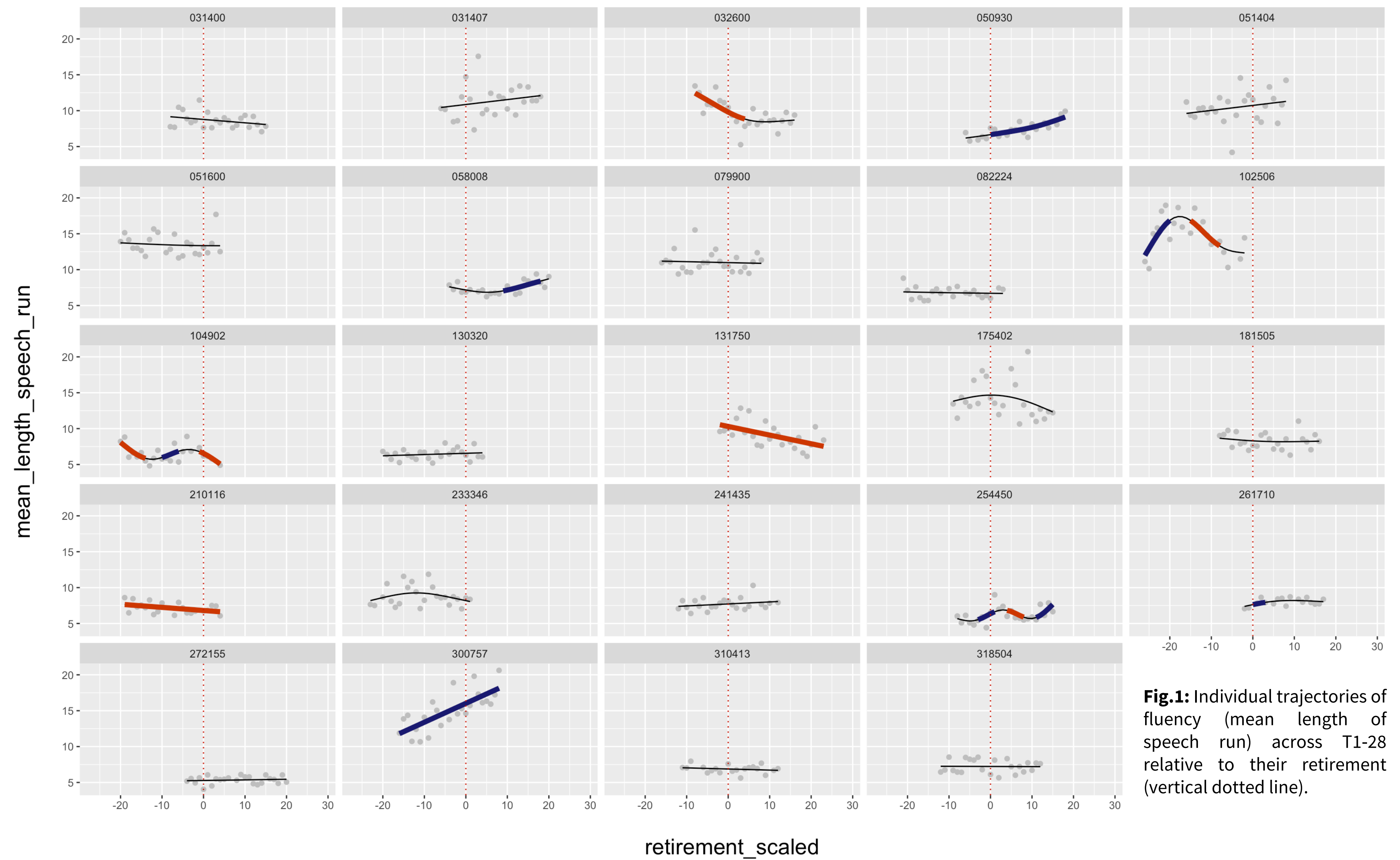


Fig.1: Individual trajectories of fluency (mean length of speech run) across T1-28 relative to their retirement (vertical dotted line).

Methodology

Participants

24 healthy adults (14W, 10M; L1: Swiss German; M(age)=63.4 years)

Procedures

- weekly 90min EFL instruction (on-site) and homework
- biweekly testing for 2 consecutive years
- L2 measures (from oral and written production tasks):
 - **Measure of textual lexical diversity** (MTLD)
 - Fluency: **Mean length of speech run**
- Socio-affective measures:
 - **General self-efficacy** GSE (Beierlein et al. 2014),
 - **Training motivation** (scale 1-10),
 - **Retirement anxiety** (Fletcher & Hansson, 1991)

Method

Longitudinal micro-development study focusing on individual trajectories to capture:

- Pre-transition slopes (developmental trends leading up to retirement),
 - Immediate changes related to the transition (short-term adjustment),
 - Changes related to post-transition period (longer-term adjustment)
- Goal: Visual methods of significance testing using generalized additive mixed models (GAMM) to visualize developmental trajectories across retirement (Hastie & Tibshirani, 1990).

Results & Discussion

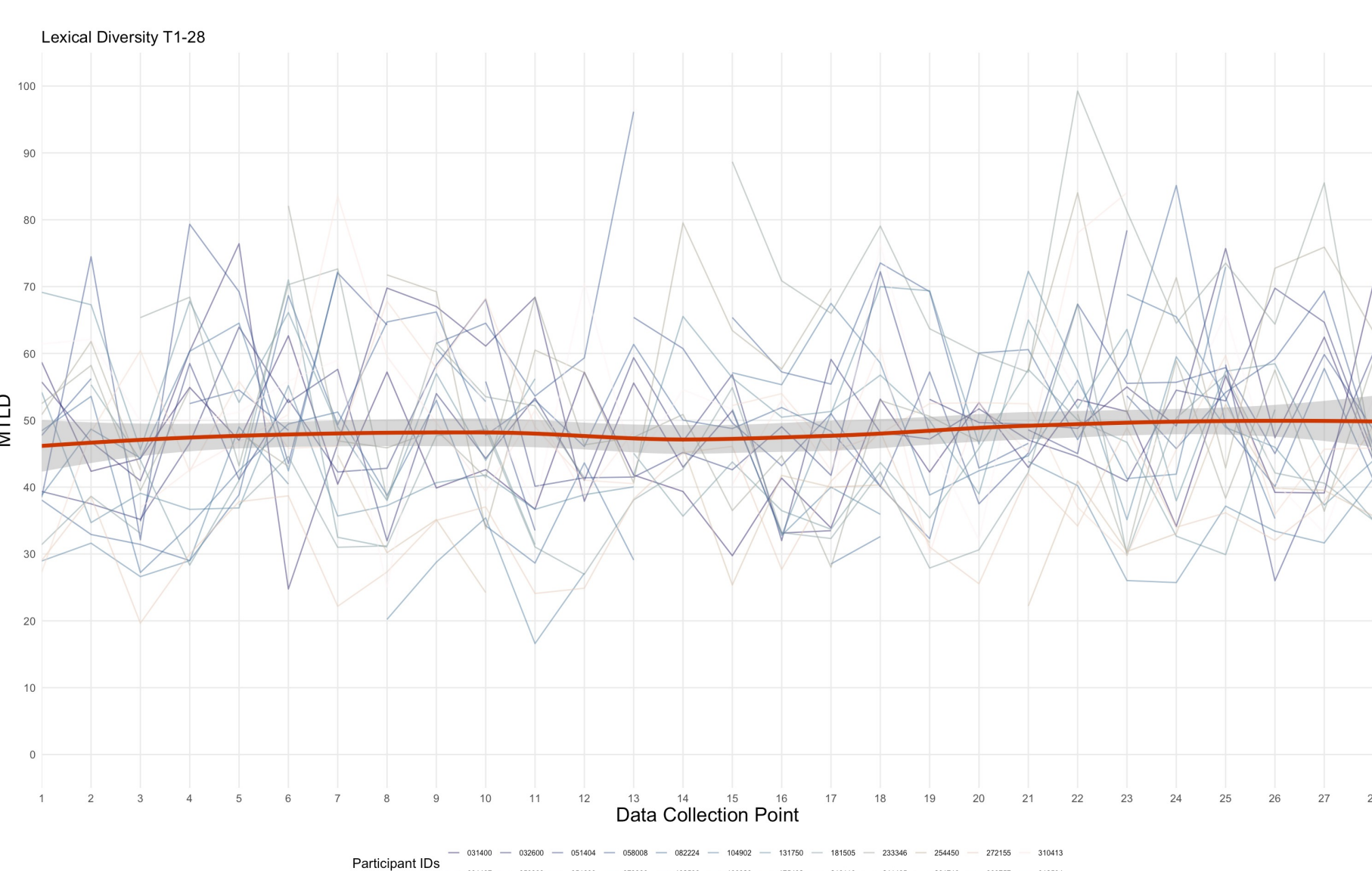


Fig.2: Individual trajectories of lexical diversity (MTLD) across T1-28 superimposed with group mean (n=24) with confidence band (CI=95%).

In general:

- Participants did not develop along identical paths (see Fig.1): Consistently high subject- and time-related random effects ($p < 0.001$)
- No patterns of occupational threshold effects

Lexical diversity

- No significant increase or decrease on a group level (Fig.2)
- Motivation ($p = 0.08$)

Oral fluency

- Significant ($p < 0.01$; and almost linear from T15 onwards) fluency gains for individuals with below-average general self-efficacy (GSE) scores across time (Fig.3)
- Also Kliesch & Pfenninger (2021): later in the training, below-average socio-affect associated with superior L2 fluency
- High GSE may lead to over-confidence and decreased effort (Stone, 1994; Bandura & Jourden, 1991).



Fig.3: Tensor product smooth for the interaction between self-efficacy and fluency (mean length of speech run) across time.

Conclusion

Conclusion and Limitations

- Textual diversity does not seem to change over 28 testing cycles
- Fluency is significantly influenced by perceived levels of self-efficacy
- Fluency changes significantly over time and on an individual level
- Operationalization of retirement (changes in workload and delays of retirement)
- General vs. language learning self-efficacy.

Outlook

- Take into account accuracy and functional adequacy of both written and oral production
- Mixed methods approach: Qualitative psychological process tracing to identify causal mechanisms of participants' investment and motivation in a 2-year language course.

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References

