

Young Foreign Language Learners' Motivation – A Slovenian Experience¹

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Received: 15 September 2011 / Accepted 15 April 2012
ISSN: 1697-7467

ABSTRACT: Teaching foreign languages is a complex psycho-pedagogical phenomenon which presupposes understanding of different factors which influence academic achievement in school context. The key factor is the student's motivation as it determines the learning process and indirectly influences the quality of foreign language proficiency. The article discusses an empirical research study based on a questionnaire. It involved 591 primary school students who started foreign language instruction in the first triad of the Slovene primary school system (age 6 to 8). The results of the study show that the students generally like learning foreign languages and develop a sense of positive academic self-concept during the lessons. Most students prefer foreign language lessons when learning activities involve playing (informal learning situations), while they like foreign language lessons least when they read or write ("classic" learning situation). This shows that the goals of learning foreign languages as perceived by the students may be either intrinsic or extrinsic. It is, therefore, very important that foreign language teachers of young learners recognise their students' most prominent motivational features by observing their students' classroom behaviour. Teachers should then be able to consider these features in lesson planning and actual teaching activities while at the same time they should become aware of the students' developmental features and their language competences. In this way students will be able to satisfy their own developmental needs and simultaneously become proficient in a foreign language.

Keywords: motivation, foreign language, students, learning, primary school.

La motivación de jóvenes estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras: una experiencia eslovena

RESUMEN: La enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras es un fenómeno psico-pedagógico muy complejo que presupone entender varios factores que influyen en el rendimiento académico en el contexto escolar. El factor principal es la motivación del estudiante, ya que determina el proceso de aprendizaje e influye indirectamente en la calidad del dominio del idioma.

El artículo presenta una investigación empírica basada en un cuestionario que incluyó 591 alumnos de la escuela primaria, quienes empezaron con las clases de lengua extranjera en la primera triada del sistema escolar en Eslovenia (edades de 6 a 8). Los resultados de la investigación mostraron que en general a los alumnos les gusta el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera y que desarrollan una actitud positiva de autoconcepto académico

¹ This research was supported by The Ministry of Education and Sport, The Slovenian National Educational Institute and The European Social Funds.

durante las clases. La mayoría de los estudiantes prefiere las clases de lengua extranjera cuando contienen actividades lúdicas (situaciones informales de aprendizaje) y lo menos cuando incluyen actividades de lectura o escritura (situación “clásica” de aprendizaje). Esto demuestra que los objetivos del aprendizaje de lengua extranjera percibidos por los alumnos pueden ser intrínsecos o extrínsecos. Por lo tanto, es muy importante que los profesores de lenguas extranjeras de alumnos jóvenes reconozcan las características prominentes de motivación observando la conducta de ellos en la clase. Los profesores deberían tomar en cuenta estas características a la hora de planificar las clases y durante las actividades, y al mismo tiempo deberían tomar conciencia de su desarrollo y de las competencias de lengua. De esa manera los alumnos serán capaces de satisfacer sus necesidades de desarrollo y a la vez obtener el dominio de una lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: motivación, lengua extranjera, alumnos, aprender, escuela primaria

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language teaching in a formal context has been lowered to an earlier and earlier age due to political reasons, but also to a certain number of research studies in psychology, linguistics and other disciplines supporting positive outcomes. “The earlier, the better” proposition, though, remains one of the perennial questions in (foreign) language acquisition and its underlying *critical period hypothesis* continues to pursue researchers in long and seemingly never-ending debates (Singleton and Ryan, 2004:1). In spite of this, foreign language learning in primary and pre-primary education is a rapidly expanding activity all over the world (Asia Society, 2009; European Commission, 2008).

From the research that investigated the impact of attitude and motivation on FL² learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Smythe *et al.*, 1975), the view that intelligence and aptitude on one hand and attitude and motivation on other should be treated as independent variables was established. However, already in 1975 Rosansky wrote that affective and cognitive factors cannot be separated in a meaningful way, since these interact in the reception process. Therefore, foreign language learning does not depend only on variables of ability but also on other variables, such as social and cultural contexts, curricula and learning goals, learning activities, individual student’s characteristics, teacher’s role and others (Dörnyei, 2006; Jantscher and Landsiedler, 2000; Lightbown and Spada, 2003; Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 1993, 1995; Nikolov, 1999; Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006; Singleton and Ryan, 2004). Among the latter, the variable of motivation has an important role as it determines whether a student will start learning the foreign language and how the learning will develop (Alexander and Murphy, 1998; Boekaerts, 2001; Dörnyei and Otto, 1998; Figueiredo and Silva, 2008; Gardner, 2001; Jarvela, 2003; Jurišević, 2006; Pintrich and Schrauben, 1992, Pintrich and Schunk, 1996; Stipek, 1998; Weinstein, 1998).

The role of motivation was investigated in a careful meta-analysis on a sample of 75 empirical research studies on the influence of motivation on foreign language learning: the conclusion is that learning motivation is significantly related to foreign learning achievements (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003).

² Foreign language (FL) refers here to a language not spoken as an official language in the context.

A pioneering work in establishing factors which influence foreign language learning and teaching in a structured school context was done by a Canadian psychologist Gardner (1985, 2001). He studied the role of learning motivation in foreign language learning and in the 1970ies designed a social-pedagogical model of foreign language learning. He pointed out four main factors in learning a foreign language: (1) external environmental influences, (2) individual differences among students, (3) the context in which foreign language takes place (formal or informal) and (4) foreign language learning achievements.

For the purpose of this study the foreign language learning motivation is defined as a specific type of learning motivation which is manifested in foreign language learning in a school context. This motivation, using different forms of motivational components (e.g., interests, self-concept, goals etc.), energises the foreign language learning process so that it activates and encourages it and directs it to the finalisation of the (current) learning activities. Motivational stimulations which a student perceives during the learning process from his learning environment and which may be manifested in different psychological and didactical forms will impact the orientation³ of the foreign language learning motivation including motivational goals a student will form in time. Frequently, research findings point to two motivational orientations – internal and external – which are represented in the motivational structure of any student, nevertheless, in different proportions (for further discussion see Weiner, 1992). The studies further show that best learning achievements are related to a high degree of both motivational orientations at the same time; the internal motivational orientation is based on the student's internal attributes while in the external motivational orientation attributes motivating a student from the outside, from the environment, such as achievement of goals and rewards, balancing emotional pressure etc. prevail (Jurišević, 2006; Marsh *et al.*, 2003; Pintrich and Schunk, 1996; Reeve *et al.*, 2004; Snow *et al.*, 2003). Gardner's division of motivational orientations in foreign language learning is conceptually similar, i.e. instrumental and integrative motivation (Gardner, 2001).

Studies which focused on children's learning motivation show that different motivational orientations are manifested in the child's behaviour already in the preschool time although according to the theories of child development, it is considered that the internal motivational orientation is fundamental (Butler, 2005; Eccles *et al.*, 1998; Wigfield and Eccles, 2002). Gardner (2001, 2007) proposes the same for integrative motivational orientation in the context of foreign language learning.

Intrinsic motivation is a real human nature promoter as it drives us to search for the new, to face challenges, to trial one's own capacities and to learn, from the birth onwards, even in the absence of external rewards (Harter, 1978). Similarly, Oldfather and McLaughlin (1993: 3) conceptualised intrinsic motivation within a constructivist framework as "a continuous impulse for learning".

Stipek (1996, 1998) highlights that highly intrinsically motivated students tend to start learning independently, as they select challenging tasks/activities or their parts where they have to combine knowledge acquired at school and knowledge gained through out-of-school experiences spontaneously. She further claims that children show independence in the learning process if they ask questions, are prepared to deepen their knowledge, do extra

³ Orientation is hereby defined as a latent variable in the system of learning motivation.

tasks and activities, persevere with finalising activities, learn regardless of the presence of external stimulations (i.e., grades, teacher's control), experience and express their positive emotions while learning, and are proud of their work. Moreover, highly motivated students are more successful in learning concepts and they tend to understand subject matter better than students who gradually form their prevailing external motivational orientation and who are predominantly interested in achieving their externally set goals.

Finegan (2008) points out that integrative motivational orientation in foreign language learning is related to more successful learning outcomes of a broader range of sounds and an authentic pronunciation. Ellis's (1997) review of different research studies leads to a conclusion that an informal learning environment plays a more important role for integrative than for instrumental orientation because such an environment is related to a higher-level motivation and a more successful learning. On the other hand, instrumental orientation is more present in the situations when students do not have any possibilities to use a foreign language or are not able to establish social relationships with the native speaking people and the target language culture.

According to Eccles *et al.*, (1998), Pintrich and Schunk (1996), and Stipek (1998) internal motivational orientation for foreign language learning may be defined in a sense of the three related elements: (1) a specific tendency to learn a foreign language and do such foreign language learning tasks/activities which challenge the student, (2) achieving learning competence and language skills (i.e., reinforcing one's academic self-concept in foreign language learning), and (3) such learning contexts which stimulate their interests.

Eccles's *et al.* (1998) review of the research shows that situational interests encourage predominantly the following features of tasks/activities: personal appropriateness for the student, the element of novelty, the student's own degree of activation and the comprehension of the content and context. In understanding the importance of students' interests in foreign language learning it is sensible to mention Schiefele (1996) who demonstrates that any individual interest involves two components, i.e., a feeling-related (e.g., *I like it*) and a value-related (e.g., *I am interested in*) component. Both components are directed towards a certain object or learning activity. The author claims that only if the former conditions are fulfilled, interests do contribute to a better learning quality.

Learning motivation develops in the process of differentiation during the student's learning development, from the very beginning of the educational process. It is part of the wider student's life and is contextually dependent (Greeno *et al.*, 1996; Gurtner *et al.*, 2001; Hickley and McCaslin, 2001; Wigfield *et al.*, 1998; Wosnitza and Nenniger, 2001). This leads us to the conclusion that in a concrete learning community students gradually develop their own social-participatory learning role, depending on their own perception of individual features of the existing learning context.

The main research question in this study was to investigate how students who learn a foreign language in the first triad of the primary school in Slovenia perceive foreign language instruction, in other words how they are motivated for learning a foreign language in the school context. Four research questions were posed: (1) How much are the students intrinsically motivated? (2) How do students perceive their own learning competence (their academic self-concept)? (3) What goals do the students set for themselves? and (4) Which learning activities motivate the students intrinsically?

2. EARLY FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING CONTEXT IN SLOVENIA

Slovenia with its geographical position in the Central Europe and a population of only about two million is a country where foreign languages are highly valued and appreciated. However, formal starting age of foreign language learning is relatively late (age 9) compared to many countries in Europe which have lowered this age to the beginning of the compulsory schooling or even to the preschool period (e.g. Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain etc) and have followed the Barcelona objective M +2 according to which every citizen should learn their language, plus two others from a very early age on (Orban, 2008: 2).

At present formal teaching of the first foreign language starts in Year 4 (age 9) and continues for all students up to Year 9. The curriculum for foreign languages is based on the communicative approach with 3 or more lessons a week of foreign language instruction. The languages that are taught are English or German. In the 2007/2008 school year most primary students learnt English (94.6%) and only 5.4 per cent learnt German as their first foreign language. On the other hand, the situation in the first triad of the primary school (ages 6 to 9) is far from being well-established and fair to all the children across the country. "Each primary school does what it can and feels like" is the most accurate description of the present situation. Due to parental pressure and their strong support for starting learning foreign languages as early as possible (Pižorn and Vogrinc, 2010: 103), many primary schools⁴ offer some kind of foreign language instruction already in the lower classes. In 2007, only 2.2 per cent of 368 schools which participated in the survey on teaching foreign languages in primary school in Slovenia did not offer any foreign language instruction in the first triad (Kac, 2007: 6). This led the Ministry of Education and Sport to start with a national project which would result in the guidelines and recommendations of implementing foreign languages to this young age group.

The project was run by the Board of Education and a number of language and education experts from different universities in Slovenia. The participants involved in the project were 37 foreign language teachers from 31 primary schools (40 classes) from different parts of Slovenia. The languages taught were English (27), German (11), Italian (one), and Spanish (one). In this article we focus on students' perceptions on foreign language motivation only.

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

In the 2008/2009 school year 591 students from 31 primary schools in Slovenia who were learning foreign languages from one to three years, aged from 6 to 8, were involved in the research study. Eleven per cent of students came from Year 1 (age 6), 20 per cent

⁴ In Slovenia there are 450 primary schools (The Slovenian Ministry of Education and Sport website: <http://www.mss.gov.si/>).

from Year 2 (age 7) and 69 per cent from Year 3 (age 8). The teaching was organised in different ways, either as extra-curricular activity before or after the regular lessons or as content and language integrated learning. The teachers of these students were foreign language specialists as well as primary school teachers specialised in teaching foreign languages to young learners. The students learnt English (74%), German (23%), Spanish (1%) and Italian (2%). Gender representation was balanced.

3.2. Research instruments

For the purpose of the study a questionnaire was designed on students' perception of foreign language learning (see Appendix). It was written in Slovene and included a total of 9 closed questions: they covered motivational processes involved in the foreign language learning (i.e., emotional and cognitive interests perceptions of one's own learning competence, perceptions of motivational stimulations, motivational goals and usefulness of foreign language proficiency). The items were designed in the form of questions which was found to be a suitable way for this age group in order to elicit the most truthful answers about the students' motivation for foreign language learning.

3.3. Procedures of Collecting Data and Data Analysis

The data were collected by the teachers who taught the students involved in the study. Before the students answered the questions their parents were informed about the study and the researchers managed to obtain the parents' consent in all primary schools involved in the study. The questionnaire was filled in individually (Year 1) or during the students' regular class time (Year 2 and 3). The students' reading and writing competences were taken into account so that the Year 1 teachers themselves wrote the exact answers of the students in the questionnaire. Older students filled in the questionnaire themselves. The data were analysed using the SPSS programme, and later descriptive and inferential analyses were performed.

4. RESULTS

The study focused on the investigation of the first triad students' perception of foreign language instruction and learning. The students' motivation for learning a foreign language was analysed by investigating the students' perception of foreign language instruction compared to other school subjects, the students' interest for learning a foreign language in general and in the school context, the students' self-concept development in foreign language learning and the students' preferences of different foreign language teaching activities.

4.1. Motivation for foreign language learning

First, the students had to name their favourite school subject. The question was open ended as the researchers wanted to investigate which school subjects the students can recognise and comprehend as such at this age (6-8) and if the foreign language is already perceived as a school subject.

The most favourite subjects were physical education (30%) and mathematics (24%), followed by Arts (9%), Slovene Language (8%), Music (2%) and Natural Science (1%). Foreign language was named by 19 % of the students (91 students learning English, 22 students learning German and 2 students learning Italian). Forty students or 6.7% did not answer this question. These were either the students who did not prefer any of the school subjects or who did not understand the question.

The frequency analysis shows that most students show emotional and cognitive interests for foreign language learning. Most students like foreign language lessons very much (79%); 19 per cent quite like it, and 12 students (2%) do not like it. Another finding may be derived from the following results: 77 per cent of the students find foreign language learning *interesting*, 20 per cent *sometimes interesting*, and 3 per cent of students say that the lessons are *boring* (Figure 1).

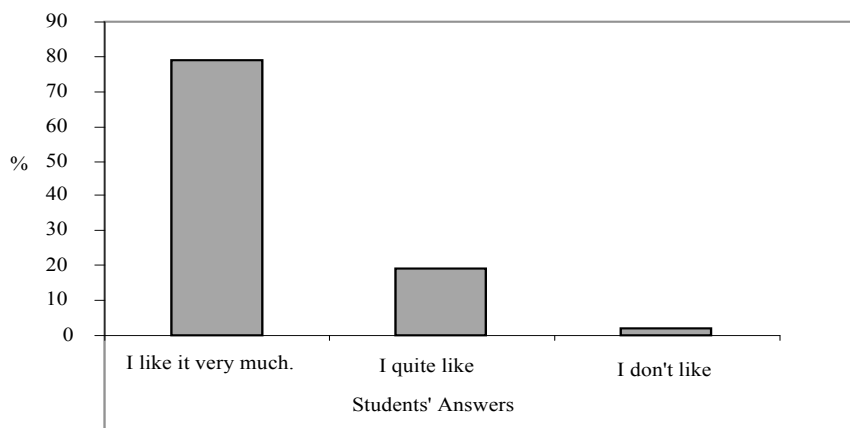


Figure 1. The students' perceptions how much they like foreign language lessons.

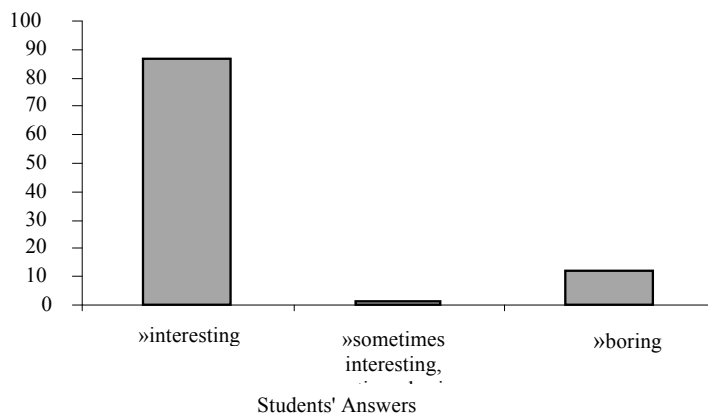


Figure 2. The students' perceptions of how interesting they found foreign language lessons.

The results in Figure 2 show that 84% of the students *like* learning the foreign language *very much*, 14% *quite like* it and 2% *do not like* learning the foreign language. As for how difficult they find learning a new language, 49% of the students perceive foreign language learning as *easy*, 47% find it *sometimes easy and sometimes difficult*, and 4% of the students report that foreign language learning is *difficult* for them. Half of the students think that they are *very good* at foreign language learning, 44% estimate that they *are quite good* and 6% *not too good*. The findings may be interpreted that most of the students involved in the study are developing a positive self-concept about their own foreign language learning competence (Jurišević, 1999).

Figure 3. The pupils' inclination to foreign language learning.

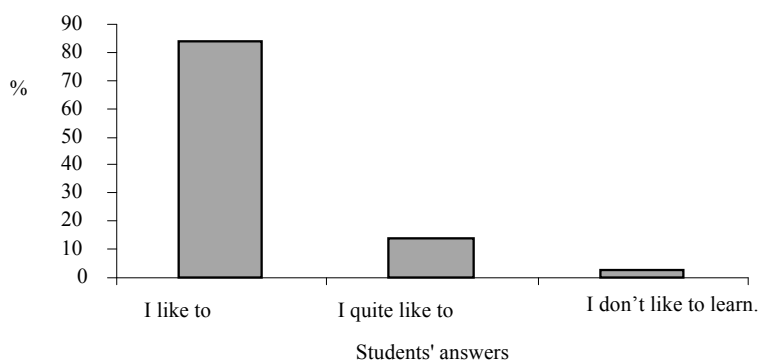
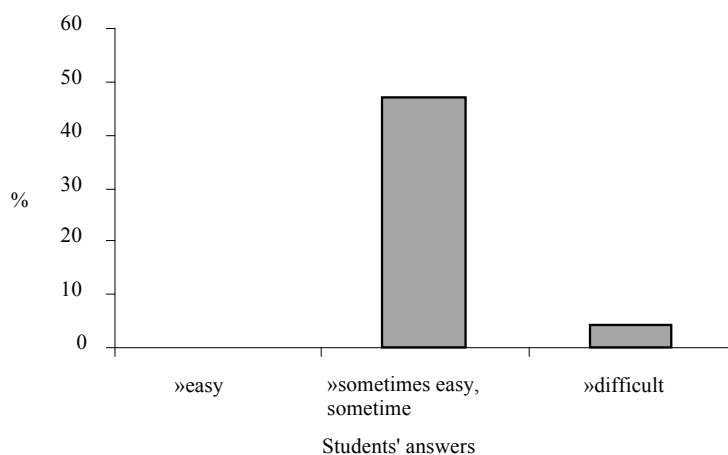


Figure 4. The students' perception of the difficulty of foreign language learning.



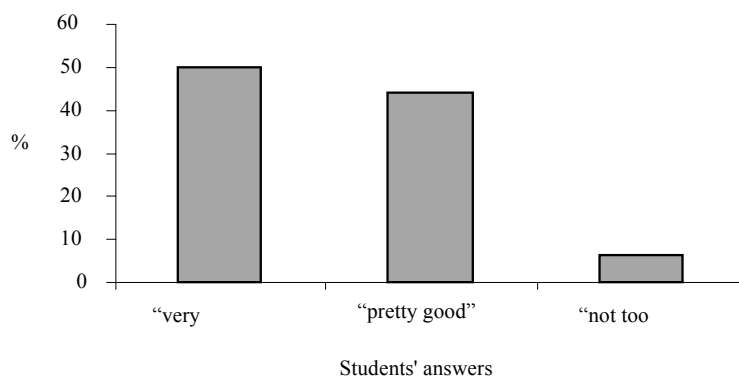


Figure 5. Students' perception about their own foreign language competence (self-concept).

The data analysis may lead to the conclusion that most students show more characteristics of intrinsic than external motivation. Most students (67%) claim that they learn the foreign language because of its meaningfulness (they will be able to speak, to watch cartoons, films, read books etc.), because they like the foreign language (12%), because they will satisfy their parents (11%), because they all in the class learn the foreign language (7%) or for other reasons (4%), for example *because we will have English in Year 4, so that I can travel to Italy, because my mother has an English computer, because I want to learn more* etc.

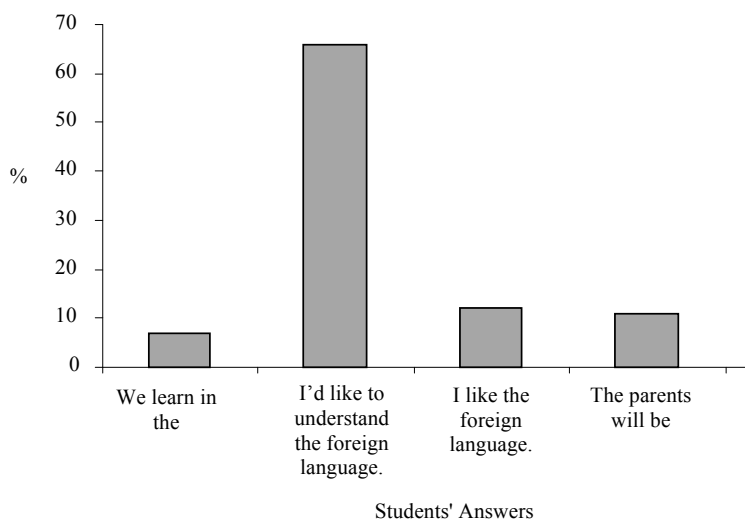


Figure 6. The students' perceptions about foreign language goals.

79 per cent of the students like foreign language lessons very much, 19 per cent quite like them, and only 2 per cent do not like them. Approximately half of the students (47%) always feel good during the foreign language lessons, about a quarter only then when they play (26%), and less when they sing or dance (12%). Four per cent of the students added situations when they feel good during foreign language lessons: *when we learn in groups, when we are in the gym, when we have fun, when we draw, when we watch cartoons, when we listen to English stories, when we colour etc.*

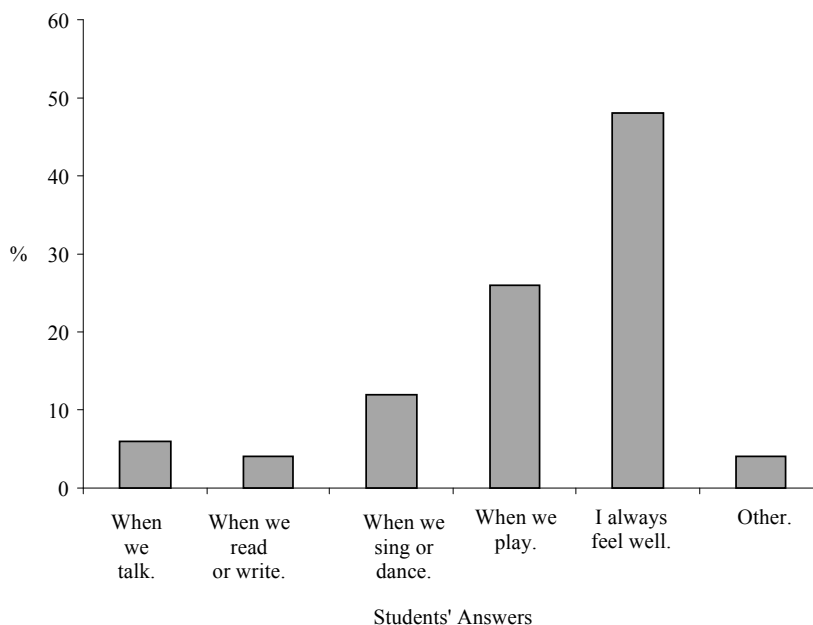


Figure 7. Foreign language activities which the students like most.

The students like the foreign language lessons least when they read or write (34%). It is important to note that 15% of the students selected the answer *other* and added that they don't like the foreign language lessons when the class is undisciplined or when the students argue with each other, e.g., some of the students' reasons *when we don't get along well, when the boys run after each other, when they shout, when we fight, when we argue, when we all talk at the same time, when the boys jostle, when the teacher tries to calm us down, when the teacher gets angry, etc.*

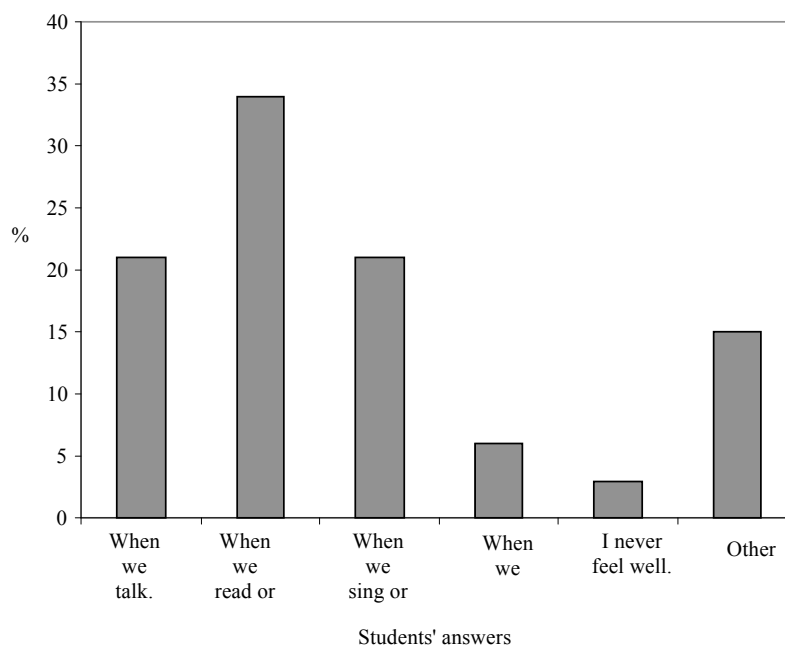


Figure 8. The students' rejection of the foreign language instruction according to individual learning activities.

The answers of the students show that they prefer learning the foreign language when the activities involve games and movement. Such a result corresponds with the developmental characteristics of the participating students' age. The opposite applies as well: the students in this study like less or find less interesting those learning activities which are typical for »traditional« forms of school learning or are more abstract and literacy related (i.e., a conversation, reading, and writing). From the answers to the question "When do you not feel well during the foreign language lesson?" it may be assumed that the students seem to be encouraged by a psychologically structured learning environment and classroom atmosphere which provides them with appropriate safety (rules and discipline) which they perceive as a prerequisite for successful learning.

4.2. Motivation for foreign language learning and the students' preferences for certain learning activities

We were interested in finding out whether the students with a different level of interest for learning foreign language prefer the same or different learning activities. The Kullback's $2\hat{I}$ test ($\chi^2 = 58.80$, $g = 10$, $\alpha = .00$) proved that the students who express a different emotional interest for the foreign language instruction differ significantly according to which learning activities they like. More than half of the students (54.6%) who like the foreign language lessons very much also feel well all the time, regardless of a selected learning

activity. Their least appreciated learning activity was reading and writing. Nearly half of the students (49.1%) who quite like the foreign language lessons and the other half of the students (50%) who do not like foreign language instruction feel best when they play. *Conversation* was the least frequently preferred learning activity selected by two students) or selected by no students from these two groups.

Kullback's $2\hat{I}$ test ($\chi^2 = 17.25$, $g = 10$, $\alpha = .07$) further proved that there are no statistically significant differences among the students with different cognitive interests for foreign language learning and their preferences to different foreign language learning activities. No matter how interesting the students find foreign language instruction, most of them (48%) always feel well or like the lessons when they play (25.6%). The least preferred foreign language learning activity by the students (4%) is reading and writing (Figure 5).

Table 1. The students' answers to the question »When do you feel best at English lessons? « according to their emotional interest in foreign language instruction (Likeness of foreign language lessons).

Likeness of foreign language lessons		I feel best in English lessons when						Total
		we talk.	we read or write.	we sing or dance.	we play.	I always feel well.	Other.	
I like them very much.	N	29	15	56	90	250	18	458
	%	6.3	3.3	12.2	19.7	54.6	3.9	100
I quite like them.	N	2	7	14	53	27	5	108
	%	1.9	6.5	13	49.1	25	4.6	100
I don't like them.	N	0	1	2	5	1	1	10
	%	0	10	20	50	10	10	100
Total	N	31	23	72	148	278	24	576
	%	5.4	4.0	12.5	25.7	48.3	4.2	100

Table 2. The students' answers to the question »When do you feel best at English lessons?« according to their cognitive interest in foreign language instruction (Interest in foreign language learning).

Students' interest in foreign language learning		I feel best in English lessons when						
		we talk.	we read or write.	we sing or dance.	we play.	I always feel well.	Other.	Total
Interesting	N	27	18	54	98	229	18	444
	%	6.1	4.1	12.2	22.1	51.6	4.1	100
Sometime interesting and sometimes boring	N	5	4	15	43	44	5	116
	%	4.3	3.4	12.9	37.1	37.9	4.3	100
Boring	N	0	1	3	7	5	1	17
	%	0	5.9	17.6	41.2	29.4	5.9	100
Total	N	32	23	72	148	278	24	577
	%	5.5	4	12.5	25.6	48.2	4.2	100

5. DISCUSSION

The research results show that the students of the first triad of the Primary school (ages 6 to 8) are intrinsically motivated for foreign language learning. In general, they like foreign language lessons very much and they also find them interesting. Approximately a third of the students point out that they like the foreign language lessons most when they play or are involved in playful activities, e.g. when they dance. Nearly the same percentage of students likes the traditionally taught lessons, such as reading and writing. It is worth noting (Figure 8) that a notable percentage of the students do not like learning activities involving their exposure (in front of their school mates or the teacher) and they also do not feel well in the situations when they perceive conflict communication.

The foreign language learning goals expressed by the students lead us to the conclusion that the students do understand the importance and the usefulness of foreign language

learning (instrumental motive). They perceive foreign language proficiency as a contribution to their own cognitive, social and emotional development (i.e., recognising and developing knowledge, satisfaction in fulfilling their needs and interests, and spreading social contacts). In addition, the results of the study show that the students learning foreign language at this age form a positive self-concept and develop a feeling of learning competence in the sense of mastering language skills and their perceived learning attainments.

The findings presented in this article are expected in relation to the recent developmental and pedagogical-psychological discoveries. They may lead to the conclusion that the perceived intrinsic motivation for learning foreign languages may be primarily developmentally dependent (Dörnyei, 2009; Eccles *et al.*, 1998; Gardner, 2001; Harter, 1978; Lamb, 2004; Piaget, 1952; Stipek, 1998;) while its stimulation, maintenance and consolidation depend on the stimulations from the social and the currently available socio-cultural and learning contexts (Wu, 2003). This may be the case when the foreign language instruction itself enables the students, in a psychologically safe and motivating environment (i.e. a pleasant learning climate) and through familiar activities (i.e., playing and moving around) to satisfy their developmental needs, to follow their current situational interests, or to be exposed to the foreign language at school or outside the school, via media and/or in an everyday interpersonal communication (Boekartes, 2001; Brown, 2000; Pomerantz *et al.*, 2005; Wentzel, 2005).

The documented presence of intrinsic motivation in the students of the first triad should not lead to a misconception that these empirical data can automatically be interpreted as acceptable in the sense of the achieved quality of the pedagogical process and that there is no improvement needed. The findings of this study namely point to at least two facts. The first is the fact that the participating students, among all school subjects, prefer physical education and mathematics most, although the school practice relatively uniformly shows that these two subjects are not preferred by upper-secondary students. The second fact may lead us to believe that the students tend to like learning activities and/or subject content they find familiar and which provide them with a feeling of psychological safety (Q.4 and 5). For example, the students preferred playing, singing and dancing to reading and writing as they played, sang and danced a lot in nursery school, while reading and writing were not explicitly taught or practised. Therefore, a dilemma is what actually goes on in the learning process and what happens with the foreign language learning development of the students when these satisfy their current needs and the new ones occur, different from, for example, foreign language learning, when the students are faced with new learning situations that they have not met or experienced before, e.g., such as reading, writing, exposing oneself etc., or when these situations require more mental strain and/or learning that the students themselves are prepared to invest (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The studies namely show that intrinsic motivation decreases with schooling time while external motivation for school learning increases (Eccles *et al.*, 1998).

It is widely understood that for optimal learning development, foreign language learning not being an exception, both motivational orientations (intrinsic and extrinsic) must be properly developed (for external achievements and knowledge which lead to a further learning and personal development). The question is then how to maintain and encourage the presence of the intrinsic motivational orientation in the situations which demand from the students a different approach or more than they can currently achieve and/or need to achieve.

Brophy (1999) answers with his idea of the stimulating learning in *the zone of the proximal motivational development*. The author believes that caring and stimulating the intrinsic motivation for school work, including foreign language learning in school context, in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1977), may only happen if learning and knowledge enter the students' value system and learning is not only related to entertainment and fun, socializing and/or playing. Intrinsic motivation in purposeful learning may be stimulated from the outside if two conditions are satisfied. Firstly, such learning activities should be planned which will enable an optimal match between the learning situation and the student's individual learning characteristics. The second condition refers to the selection of such subject matter and teaching methods which are sensible and suitable for the students.

To sum up, a good quality foreign language teaching of foreign languages requires teachers not only to consider the cognitive but also the motivational components of the learning process. The implementation of such a vision requires from the teachers to understand and to be able to recognise language and motivational competences and the needs of their students. Moreover, they have to be able to design such learning activities which will be optimally harmonised and set in the zone of the students' proximal development.

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Appendix

Questions from Questionnaire on the perception of foreign language learning for students

Which is your best school subject? You can write more, if you wish. (Write)

Do you like learning English? (Circle only ONE answer.)

- a) Yes.
- b) Quite.
- c) No.

How much do you like English lessons? (Circle only ONE answer.)

- a) I like them very much.
- b) I quite like them.
- c) I don't like them.

When do you feel best at English lessons? (Circle only ONE answer.)

- a) When we talk.
- b) When we read and write
- c) When we sing and dance.
- d) When we play.
- e) It is always nice.
- f) Something else? (Write what.) _____

When do you feel worst at English lessons? (Circle only ONE answer.)

- a) When we talk.
- b) When we read and write.
- c) When we sing and dance.
- d) When we play.
- e) It is always nice.
- f) Something else? (Write what.) _____

How difficult do you find learning English? (Circle only ONE answer.)

- a) It is easy.
- b) It is sometimes easy, and sometimes difficult.
- c) It is difficult.

How interesting do you find learning English? (Circle only ONE answer.)

- a) It is interesting.
- b) It is sometimes interesting, and sometimes boring.
- c) It is boring.

Why do you learn English? (Circle only ONE answer.)

- a) Because we all learn it at school.

b) Because I'd like to understand English (e.g. to understand cartoons, books, songs, films etc.).

c) Because I like English.

d) To make my parents happy/satisfied.

e) Something else? (Write what.) _____

How good are you at English?

(Circle only ONE answer.)

a) Very good.

b) Quite good.

c) I am not that good at English.