

## Changes in and the Relationship between Language Learning Motivation and Self-concept in 11-14 year-old Students in Hungary: A Longitudinal Study

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Motivation to learn foreign languages is a significant determinant of successful language acquisition. The subject has been widely researched in the past, and since the early 1990s a great deal of empirical research related to the classroom environment has been proposed to expand theory into everyday classroom practice. I present an empirical, longitudinal (3-year) study to explore the relationship between and changes in foreign language learning motivation, learning motivation and self-concept in the 5th, 6th and 8th forms of elementary school. The same tests (Kozéki-Entwistle's Learning Motivation Questionnaire, the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, and Clément, Dörnyei and Noels' Foreign Language Learning Motivation questionnaire) were administered three times, so I was able to compare the results and draw conclusions about developmental tendencies. A strong correlation was found between motivational and self-esteem scores, and between learning and foreign language learning motivation subscales. It is necessary to highlight the importance of the Moral, Family and Social Self, which draws our attention to the family values and beliefs students are equipped with, when they enter the school. The significant decrease in motivation and self-esteem in the period under investigation focuses our attention on problems of adolescence, and challenges language teachers to establish a highly motivating classroom practice.

How is it possible to teach a foreign language effectively? The question has been around for a while in linguistic and psychological research, and has directed researchers' attention to the individual characteristics of and differences among language learners. The literature emphasizes several major areas which clearly have importance in terms of individual differences in language learning, for example language aptitude, learning style, motivation, learner strategies, personality traits, and certain demographic factors such as gender, culture and age (Ehrman, Leaver, Oxford, 2003; Skehan, 1989). The vast data in the literature shows that the two major factors hidden in the background of dissimilar performances are *language aptitude* and *motivation*. Language aptitude is largely definite and invariable, motivation, however, is the result of many personal and situational factors, and thus changeable and variable. This makes it the key factor for teachers in encouraging students to learn languages more successfully. To increase the effectiveness of language teachers, it seems to be very important to carry out research in the field of motivation and present research results in a practice-oriented way.

In this study I would like to focus on those individual features that have been less emphasized in the research of motivation in foreign language learning so far, namely the psychological, personality aspect, focusing on the self-concept. As the following literature review shows, self-concept is a cornerstone of assertiveness, self-esteem and the lack of anxiety, which are essential factors for academic achievement. In addition, many models and theories emphasize the dynamic nature of motiva-

tion and personality traits. However, there is hardly any research exploring the nature of changes over time. The present study aims to examine general school motivation and self-concept in relation to the motivation in foreign language learning as a result of a three-year longitudinal study of 11-14 year-old students. Links between these features and motivation in foreign language learning will be presented, emphasizing the changes occurring over time.

### Motivation to Learn a Foreign Language

Theoretical approaches to motivation are very diverse, theory makers interpret motivation from various perspectives, emphasising different elements. Motivation is concerned with the factors that stimulate or inhibit the desire to engage in a particular behaviour. Motivation involves the processes that energize, direct and sustain behaviour, - an internal process that activates, guides and maintains behaviour over time. In a school context it is about the energy students bring to academic, learning tasks, the beliefs, values and goals that determine which tasks they pursue, their persistence in achieving them and the standards they set to determine when a task has been accomplished (Wentzel, Wigfield, 2009). Motivation to learn is the result of the interaction of different internal dynamic incentives and external determinant factors, the cognitive, affective and effective interactional system of the learning environment that develops in an active and situation-dependent way. Recent developments in motivational research emphasize individual characteristics as well as environmental, teacher, class or method-specific factors (Williams, Williams, 2011). The educational significance of motivation is not only discovering how it is possible to induce pupils to learn, but even how it is possible to facilitate the development of cognitive, personal and social motives in order to support the construction of a long-term system of motives for learning.

Language learning motivation is even more complex. On the one hand, the results of studies on general learning motivation are of direct relevance. On the other hand, social and cultural issues also have to be taken into consideration, because language is culturally bound, and language learning is “a deeply social event that requires the incorporation of a wide range of elements of the L2 culture” (Dörnyei, 2001b, p.46). The most influential language learning motivational theory was proposed by R. C. Gardner (1985), who emphasized the social-psychological nature of motivation. In addition to the introduction of basic concepts such as integrative and instrumental orientation, or the socio-educational model of L2 motivation, he and his colleagues established research and assessment techniques and thus brought high standards into L2 motivation research (Gardner, MacIntyre, 1993).

In the early 1990s a number of researchers called for an educational shift in motivation research, to expand theory into everyday classroom practice. One of the most influential articles declared that ‘we seek to encourage a program of research that will develop from, and be congruent with the concept of motivation that teachers are convinced is critical for SL success’ (Crookes, Schmidt, 1991, p.502). This idea gave a new stimulus to motivation research and a number of theories suitable for classroom application and empirical research related to classroom environment have been proposed.

Synthesizing several branches of motivational research, Dörnyei (1994) summarizes the motivational components of foreign language learning in a unified theoretical framework. In his model he separates three sets of motivational components: the levels of *language*, *learner*, and the *learning situation* (Table 1). The Language level is related to the culture, community and the usefulness of the language, which determine the basic learning goals and language choice. The Learner level includes a variety of affective and cognitive personality traits. The Learning situation level is composed of three areas, (1) course-specific components (eg. the syllabus, teaching materials, methods, tasks), (2) teacher-specific components (affiliation, au-

thority type, socialization of motivation), and (3) group-specific motives. Considering this model, the main issue of my research is the study of the learner level, with a special focus on general learning motivational background and self-concept.

Table 1. Dörnyei’s framework of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 1994, p.280)

LANGUAGE LEVEL	Integrative motivational subsystem	
	Instrumental motivational subsystem	
LEARNER LEVEL	Need for achievement	
	Self-confidence	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language use anxiety</li> <li>• Percieved L2 competence</li> <li>• Causal attributions</li> <li>• Self-efficacy</li> </ul>	
LEARNING SITUATION LEVEL	<i>Course-specific motivational components</i>	Interest Relevance Expectancy Satisfaction
	<i>Teacher-specific motivational components</i>	Affiliative drive Authority type Direct socialization of motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modelling</li> <li>• Task presentation</li> <li>• Feedback</li> </ul>
	<i>Group-specific motivational components</i>	Goal-orientedness Norm and reward system Group cohesiveness Classroom goal structure

Another noteworthy model created by this author draws our attention to the time dimension of motivation (Dörnyei, Ottó, 1998). In this model, the components of earlier motivation theories are placed in a process-oriented framework which points out that there may be considerable changes in the motivation of the learner in the course of the long process of language learning. Following Heckhausen and Kuhl’s (1985) Action Control Theory, the authors make a distinction between pre-actional, actional and post-actional phases of motivation. In the *pre-actional* phase, prior to the language learning activity, the learner chooses a language to learn and sets goals. In the *actional* phase the execution of the task occurs, in which certain motives enhance the accomplishment of the activity. The third phase is called the *post-actional* phase, which can be represented as a critical retrospection after the task accomplishment. This model is another important theoretical cornerstone of my study, because it highlights the significance of time among the other motivational components of language learning, and thus reveals that motivation can alter in time and place. In this way, it serves as a basis for a longitudinal examination of personal traits and motivation.

Research results in second language learning motivation support the complex, dynamic nature of motivation, requiring longitudinal and learner-centred approaches to further research (Campbell, Storch, 2011), approaches which are often missing from educational investigations due to the methodological difficulties.

### Self-Concept and Academic Achievement

In the course of learning self-concept plays an important role. On the basis of self-concept, an individual makes a decision on whether he or she is able to perform a certain task, or if it is beyond his or her capabilities. That is why self-concept is vital in the development of school achievement. Some motivational theories with a cognitive focus emphasize the role of past successes, attributions (Weiner, 1985), self-confidence (Clément, Dörnyei, Noels, 1994) or self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Schunk, 1991) in the formation of motivation, all of which share similar roots with self-concept and self-esteem.

Global self-esteem refers to a general affective self-evaluation, an overall evaluation of a person in life domains as a whole. It is closely related to special fields of self-evaluation, so when speaking about self-concept in a school context, it is more appropriate to use the notion of academic self-esteem, which refers to one's self-perception in the academic domain, and which is a better predictor for school achievement than global self-concept (Ahmed, Bruinsma, 2006). The correspondences between self-image and academic achievement are verified by numerous studies. Burns' (1982) results reveal that an unfavourable self-image fosters learning difficulties, even at the beginning of primary school education. The results of Marsh's longitudinal studies (1990) also unveil that a crucial determinant of school achievement is the positive or negative quality of self-image. Other research (Burns, 1982; Helmke, Van Aken, 1995) places more emphasis on the idea that self-image is highly determined by performance, so it is the learning difficulty that increases the negative quality of self-image, and not vice versa. Many studies have shown the interrelations between global, academic self-esteem and academic achievement (Byrne, 1996; Sanchez, Roda, 2003), but this has not been widely studied in the field of foreign language learning. Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self-System model (2009) has some relevance to self-concept as it refers to an image of oneself in a future state, but it has more to do with the ideal and 'ought-to be' L2 self than actual self-esteem or academic self-concept.

To summarize, it can be stated that learners' positive self-image can be facilitated by high academic performance, their relationships with parents and teachers will consequently become more balanced due to their success, which, in turn, results in higher motivation at school, further improving academic achievement.

### Objectives of the Research

The current study aims to reveal the relationship between L2 motivation and other individual factors such as learning motivation and self concept, and in addition, by employing a longitudinal design, to enable us to explore changes across various factors. The main goals of my research are (1) to give a detailed study of language learning motivation on the learners' level and (2) to trace the changes in motivation. Among the three levels of language learning motivation (Table 1) more studies deal with the level of learning process, while the learners' characteristics generally appear in isolation, focusing on certain aspects of the learner (Clément, 1986; Cohen, 1998). We have relatively little empirical data about the self-concept of language learners and also about general motivation for learning and the relationship between language learning motivation and language performance. Models describing motivational changes in time demonstrate that the motivational pattern is not static and stable, but changes and forms dynamically during the process of language learning. In spite of this fact, most of the studies dealing with motivation ignore this phenomenon, and there are only a few research works that undertake the task of describing how motivation changes over time (Campbell, Storch, 2011; Dörnyei, Ottó, 1998; Ushioda, 1998). During my longitudinal research I traced the changes in learner characteristics over three years, which allowed me to note and analyze the changes in time.

In this way, the premise underlying this research is that motivational and self-concept characteristics change over time, and that they mutually affect academic achievement in the language learning process, as well. The foregoing has highlighted the main goal of the current study: to document how general learning motivation, language learning motivation, self-concept features and achievement are related to each other, and to embrace the dynamic and changing nature of motivation and self-concept.

### Variables and Measures

I obtained data regarding general *learning motivation* from Kozéki-Entwistle's Learning Motivation Questionnaire (Kozéki, Entwistle, 1986). It contains 60 statements and the respondent has a 5-choice answer scale ranging from complete disagreement to complete agreement. The 60 items are gathered into 10 subscales, which can be grouped into three main factors (Affective, Cognitive and Performance motivational dimensions) and one additional scale (Feeling of being under pressure). Kozéki's concept of school motivation emphasizes that there are several successful ways of motivating learners according to their personality characteristics. He identified three main dimensions of school motivation: *affective-social*, which develops and appears in personal interactions, *cognitive*, which is based on acquiring new competences and following one's fields of interest, and *moral* dimensions, which are composed of meeting the requirements and taking responsibility. Each of the main dimension can be divided into three further components:

- Affective-social: love for parents, acceptance by teachers, belonging to peers
- Cognitive: independence, need for acquiring knowledge, group activities
- Performance, moral, self-integrative: conscience, need for external values, responsibility

All these motives are potentially present in every child, but their intensity depend on the motivating effects influencing the child right from birth. So family life and family activities play the most important role in forming learners' motivational structure.

*Foreign language learning motivation* was examined by the shortened version of the questionnaire introduced by Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994). Most of the items refer to the orientations of motivation (reasons for learning a foreign language), attitudes toward foreign language learning and foreign language speakers, foreign language use and classroom anxiety, need for achievement, motivational intensity and perceived group cohesion. The remaining items are related to self-evaluation of language ability, satisfaction and desired language proficiency.

To measure *self-concept* the Hungarian version of the 5-point-scale Tennessee Self-Concept Scale was used (Dévai, Sipos, 1986). This is an instrument with 100 items, 90 of which reflect the overall self-esteem of the respondent, while 10 relate to Self-criticism. Self-esteem includes five subscales, Physical Self, Moral Self, Individual Self (closely related to academic self-concept), Family Self and Social Self, each describing separate aspects of self-esteem.

*Academic achievement* was assessed by the final grades of the foreign language. All of the instruments were administrated during class time by the researcher herself.

### Participants

Participants in the research were students, who were at the beginning of a language learning process, so the development of their motivation could be traced during the three years of the research. They were in the 5<sup>th</sup> class at the beginning of the study (11-12 yrs) and in the 8<sup>th</sup> class (14-15 yrs) at the time of the last measure. They filled in the same questionnaires three times in classes 5, 6, and 8. The survey was carried out in five primary schools in four towns of Hungary. A total of 374 students were

included in the survey for three years, i.e. 374 students filled in the questionnaires at least once during the three years. In the first year 340 students participated in the survey. In the second year 19 students left from those who participated in the first year but 19 other students joined, so the number of students participating did not change. However, data from the previous year was only available for 321 students. For the third measurement 15 students joined in but 44 students left (many of whom continued their studies in a six-year secondary grammar school). The number of students who took part in all the three measurements was 277. The detailed description of the sample according to gender and the foreign language learnt is contained in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of students according to gender and the language they learn

	Boys	Girls	English	German	All
Measure 1 (5th class)	178	162	232	108	340
Measure 2 6th class	174	166	231	109	340
Measure 3 8th class	156	155	207	104	311

## Results and Discussion

### Relationships between Learning, L2 Motivation, Self-concept and Achievement

The relationship between learning and L2 motivation were assessed by the Pearson correlational index. When investigating the relationship between *school and language learning motivation* it was revealed that the main dimensions of Learning Motivation were significantly and positively correlated to most L2 motivation subscales in all the three years, while the Feeling of Pressure showed a negative relation to them. The results show that students who are generally motivated to learn are also motivated to learn foreign languages, which confirms the previous assumption that general learning motivation constitutes the basis for motivation to learn a certain subject - eg. foreign languages - in elementary school. This result is not surprising because both questionnaires embrace students' motivational background, but from different angles. However, the Travelling- and Sociocultural Orientation and the Integrity subscales of the L2 motivation scale do not correspond to the above mentioned group, as according to the results these figures correlate only slightly, or not at all, with the dimensions of school motivation. What might be the reason for this? These figures for language learning motivation investigate those fields which deal explicitly with the reasons for learning languages and the desire to resemble native speakers of the language, so in terms of topic they do not really fit into the main dimensions of learning motivation.

We experience the most significant change in the Satisfaction subscale in the correlation figures through the three years: this element has a significant relation with the figures for school motivation ( $p < 0.005$ ) in class 5, while it completely disappears by class 8, so there is no relation between these two fields. It seems that while in the case of younger students there is a stronger relationship between being satisfied with their language abilities and school motivation, for adolescent students being contented with themselves is rather a result of other components.

The relationship between *motivation and self-concept* scores were also assessed by the Pearson correlational index. Results show a strong positive relationship between these factors, so self-esteem and motivation go hand in hand in these students, thus confirming our original hypothesis (Table 3). All self-concept scores, except Physical Self, are significantly related to learning motivational subscales. Self-esteem scales (Moral, Individual, Family, Social Self, total score) are positively related to motivation, while Self-criticism is negatively correlated to it. Feeling of pressure is negatively correlated to self-esteem scores and positively to Self-criticism, which shows that the feeling of inadequacy and dissatisfaction is very stressful for students, and as a result of feeling pressure and a lack of motivation they are not able to attain a good school performance. The role of the Moral, Family and Social Self as determinants of learning motivation should be emphasized, which draws our attention to the importance of family values and atmosphere that seem to influence rule-consciousness, positive self-esteem and social adaptation. This means that teachers may influence students' motivation, and form and improve their attitude toward learning, but they cannot substitute parents' learning values, positive attitudes and encouragement.

Table 3: Correlations of self-concept and school-motivational dimensions

	5th grade: N=295 6th grade: N=317 8th grade: N=273	AFFECTI VE	COGNITIVE	PERFOR- MANCE	Feeling under pressure
<b>Physical</b>	5th	0,189**	0,074	0,154**	-0,124*
	6th	0,138*	0,133*	0,087	0,069
	8th	0,119*	0,093	0,098	0,164**
<b>Moral</b>	5th	0,367**	0,321**	0,483**	-0,160**
	6th	0,332**	0,336**	0,457**	-0,261**
	8th	0,404**	0,459**	0,513**	-0,233**
<b>Individual</b>	5th	0,243**	0,167**	0,291**	-0,109
	6th	0,130*	0,176**	0,197**	-0,099
	8th	0,233**	0,216**	0,182**	-0,185**
<b>Family</b>	5th	0,481**	0,355**	0,502**	-0,332**
	6th	0,450**	0,390**	0,483**	-0,383**
	8th	0,485**	0,488**	0,493**	-0,440**
<b>Social</b>	5th	0,422**	0,308**	0,442**	-0,189**
	6th	0,387**	0,339**	0,434**	-0,280**
	8th	0,469**	0,473**	0,484**	-0,382**
<b>TOTAL</b>	5th	0,426**	0,303**	0,463**	-0,230**
	6th	0,368**	0,351**	0,420**	-0,279**
	8th	0,446**	0,452**	0,469**	-0,374**
<b>Self-criticism</b>	5th	-0,369**	-0,307**	-0,377**	0,269**
	6th	-0,285**	-0,277**	-0,378**	-0,312**
	8th	-0,407**	-0,459**	-0,473**	0,399**

p<0,05\* p<0,01\*\*

The correlations between *L2 learning motivation and self-concept* scores show a similar picture. Self-concept scores are significantly (p<0,000) correlated with most language learning motivational subscales connected with self-esteem, such as lack of anxiety, self-evaluation and satisfaction, and general motivational indices like attitude toward language learning, motivational intensity and total score.

The relative importance of Family and Social Self stresses the relevance of family values again. Physical Self scores are significantly correlated with linguistic confidence, which may be surprising at first, but it is easy to imagine that a good-looking and well-groomed teenager is more confident even in language classes than his or her peers who feel uncomfortable all the time because of their physical appearance. A negative correlation was found between Self-criticism and L2 motivation, which reminds us how important it is to provide a classroom atmosphere of acceptance and empathy, without anxiety, refusal and too much criticism, and make it a place where students can practice foreign language communication freely.

However, after the detailed analysis of all subscales of language learning motivation and self-concept it was revealed that some orientational scales and the subscale of Integrativity do not, or only marginally, correlate with the dimensions of self-image. What is the reason for this? When investigating the relationship between language learning and school motivation we pointed out that these figures, namely the reasons for learning a foreign language and the desire to be similar to native speakers of the target language, specifically relate to the characteristics of language learning, meaning that they have no close relation with it, so they are independent from other determinants of motivation, for example self-concept.

The Spearman correlation test was used to explore the relationship between *achievement and other scales*. Concerning school motivation we can see that there is a significant correlation between Performance motivation and marks ( $p < 0,001$ ) in all the three years, while the other two dimensions of motivation are slightly weaker, so the ambition to perform well is clearly manifested in students' striving for good marks (Table 4). On the other hand, Pressure has a negative correlation with marks ( $p < 0,001$ ) so the stronger the pressure is, the worse marks the students get, or, as we are discussing correlation, it is possible that the worse the mark is, the more they feel that pressure is almost unbearable for them.

Table 4: Correlation between L2 achievement (final grade) and school motivation

	Achievement (final grade) 5th class	Achievement (final grade) 6th class	Achievement (final grade) 8th class
	N=312	N=320	N=278
<b>AFFECTIVE</b>	0,279**	0,181**	0,130*
<b>COGNITIVE</b>	0,120*	0,186**	0,128*
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	0,220**	0,297**	0,192**
<b>Feeling under pressure</b>	-0,193**	-0,205**	-0,190**

Spearman correlation, \*  $p < 0,05$ , \*\*  $p < 0,01$

The relation between marks and language learning motivation is similar: there is a strong positive correlation with the subscales referring to general motivational level (attitude towards language learning, intensity of motivation), with self-estimation and with the figures for courage to use and stress in using the language either in or outside the lessons in all the three years. We may conclude that a general motivational level occurs together with a good performance, specifically, a higher level of motivation results in better performance and better performance results in a higher level of motivation. The relation to linguistic self-estimation is clear: students with better marks esteem their linguistics abilities higher. From the figures for courage to use and stress in using the language it turns out



that good marks increase the confidence of students so they will have more courage to perform in the language classes but at the same time it is true that teachers give better marks if students are confident when using the language.

Among the characteristics of self-concept, Family and Social self-image are those which correlate significantly with language performance in all the three years. According to Dévai (1988) the relationship between self-image and school performance can be clearly proven while Radin (1982), referring to the importance of family self-image, emphasizes that the parent-child relationship influences the child's school performance by means of affinity, support, and providing an example.

### **Changes in Motivation and Self-concept**

In order to examine the changes over three years, the General Linear Models Repeated Measures (SPSS) were used. I first examined learning motivational changes (Figure 1). The pattern of the elements of general school motivation is similar in all the three years: Performance motives are the strongest, Affective motives are a little weaker but are still remarkable, while Cognitive ones are the least typical of students in the higher classes. For these students responsibility, conscience, the need for order and to perform and complete the tasks has a strong motivational effect, but besides all these factors the need for affinity and belonging, being accepted and also for maintaining trust and emotional relationship is also very noticeable. Cognitive motives such as competency, the acquisition of knowledge and interest are not as motivating as the two previous factors. Of course, this does not mean that students lose their general interest towards learning, because in the case of extra-curricular learning activities Cognitive motives are quite strong (Páskuné, 2002). It shows, instead, that the school does not take advantage of the opportunities this motif offers.

The change in the direction of motivation is in accordance with the expectations: all the motives show a decreasing tendency over time, students have a low level of inclination to learn towards the end of their school years. Other Hungarian researchers (Józsa, 2002; Balogh, 2004) also experienced this decrease in school motivation. It seems that the general changes in adolescence, the widening interest in extra-curricular events, the growing importance of peers, and being dissatisfied with themselves, all of which have a great influence on school performance and interest, are crucial factors in the decrease in motivation. Besides the continuous decrease in school motivation figures, the feeling of pressure increases over the three years and pressure becomes especially strong in class 8, at the end of primary school studies.

Examining language learning motivation, a significant decrease in these figures can be remarked, too, so language learning motivation decreases over the years, similarly to school motivation (Figure 2). The majority of changes in language learning motivation figures mostly correspond to the decrease in general learning motivation, i.e. language learning as a school subject does not differ significantly from other school subjects in terms of motivation, which means that students learn languages with decreasing enthusiasm.

The detailed analysis shows which components of motivation undergo a crucial change and in which cases the decrease is not significant. The decrease in Knowledge Orientation could not be detected between classes 5 and 6, but later the difference between classes 6 and 8 was so large, that it made the linear change significant, i.e. the decreasing tendency appearing in the other elements was to be found here, too. On the other hand, the Travelling Orientation did not decrease significantly by class 8, so the initial assumption that this factor does not change seems to be correct (Figure 3). This figure calls our attention to the fact that future journeys and spending some time abroad, either learning or working, is attractive for students so it is worth emphasizing this way of utilizing language learnt, even during the learning period, to slightly counterbalance in some way the otherwise significant decrease in motivation.

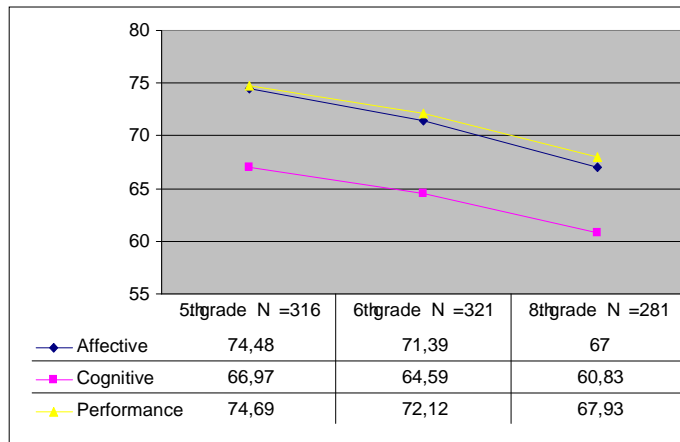


Figure 1: Hierarchy and changes of the main motivational dimensions

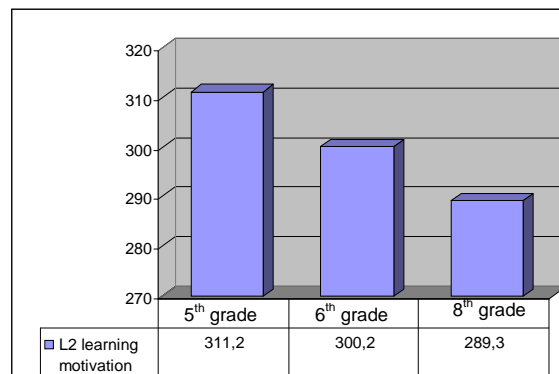


Figure 2: Changes of mean values of L2 motivational total scores

Changes in adolescence and in attitudes towards learning, changes in interpersonal relationships and social interaction, higher expectations, approaching high-school studies and inadequate teaching methods may be related background variables of these ensuing motivational changes. In addition, a gradual shift from supportive and formative feedback to qualitative and rating evaluation, when there is a growing emphasis on the realized products of learning, may also discourage students.

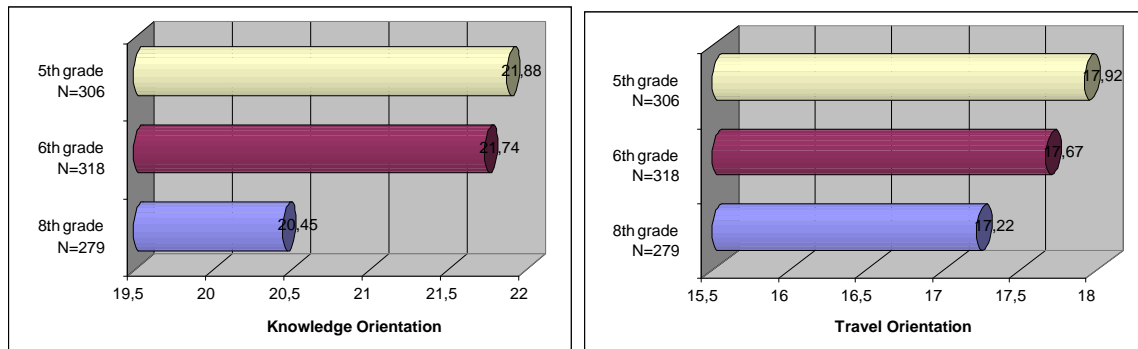


Figure 3: Changes of Knowledge and Travel orientation within L2 motivation

There is a significant linear decrease in every dimension of self-image and in Total self-image through the three years (N=221,  $p < 0,000$ ), as well (Figure 4). Comparing the classes we can conclude that, except for body-image, which becomes significantly worse between classes 5 and 6 ( $p = 0,018$ ), the most significant changes occur between classes 6 and 8 as the scores of all self-image dimensions decrease ( $p < 0,017$ ). There is no significant change in the index of self-criticism through the three years, although the average score increases slightly by class 8 and this promotes the students' consideration of themselves in a critical way and may be one of the sources of dissatisfaction and low self-image. Józsa (2002) obtained similar results when observing the decrease in learning self-image between classes 7 and 11. Colangelo and Assouline (1995) recorded a similarly decreasing tendency in the dimension of self-image as age increased.

Academic achievement in learning languages, manifested in grades, has changed considerably through the years: the General Linear Models Repeated measures show a decreasing tendency concerning marks obtained (Table 5).

Table 5: Changes of foreign language achievement (marks)

	5th class	6th class	8th class
Mean of foreign language marks	4,18	4,04	3,94

Presumably motivational and self-image-related figures - the decrease in inclination to learn and the weakening of self-confidence and sense of effectiveness - are behind the significant decrease in marks which I have previously described.

**Summary**

My recent study aimed to reveal changes in foreign language learning motivation and its relationship to learning motivation and self-concept in the 5th, 6th and 8th forms of elementary school. It can be clearly seen that these phenomena are closely connected, indeed they mutually influence each other.

On the basis of these findings it can be stated that there is a strong relationship between learning motivation and self-concept. Self-esteem subscales are positively, while the Self-criticism subscale is negatively correlated to motivation. The same is true for foreign language learning motivation. It is necessary to highlight the importance of the Moral, Family and Social Self, which calls our attention to the family values and beliefs students are equipped with, when they enter school.

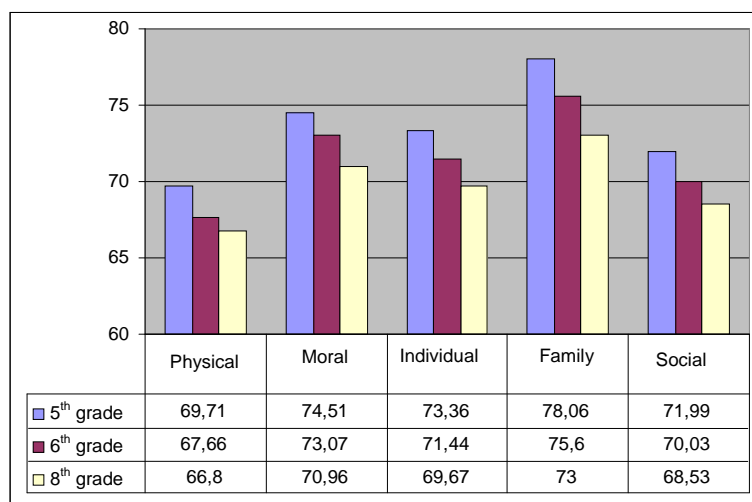


Figure 4. Changes of self-concept dimensions

The main dimensions of Learning Motivation are significantly and positively correlated to most L2 motivation subscales, while Feeling under Pressure shows negative relationship to them, which suggests that students who are generally motivated to learn are also motivated to learn foreign languages.

General changes of decreasing motivation can be observed during the period of investigation, while Feeling under Pressure increases slightly. Language learning motivation also decreases, but there is no significant change in certain subscales such as travelling orientation and the attitude towards language learning. The pattern of the components of learning motivation is similar in all the three years. The figures for self-concept dimensions also decrease through the years, all of which are closely related to the figures for motivation, except for Physical self-concept. Language marks also get worse through the three years. Marks are determined by the factors related to both school and language motivation, and they correlate positively with the Family and Social dimensions of self-image.

The question of practical usefulness may arise: how should we motivate students to learn foreign languages? On the basis of these research results I would list various motivating techniques, most of which are in accordance with Dörnyei's (2001a) recommendations:

- Set up tasks and projects in which students can work independently according to their own choices and interest, provide regular feedback on progress and take time to celebrate any success to ensure a feeling of satisfaction and to strengthen performance motives.
- Build affective motives and attachment through good student-teacher relationships by congruency, empathic understanding and positive regard.
- Reduce the feeling of being under pressure, self-criticism and classroom anxiety by helpful, accepting behaviour and encouragement, and also by asserting that making mistakes is a natural attribute of learning.
- Take into account the motivational and personality changes and demands arising from adolescence.

- Promote a positive attitude to knowledge and travel by reminding students that mastering an L2 can be an instrument to accomplish these goals.
- Highlight the importance and usefulness of speaking foreign languages by showing their value in the globalized world, in order to form positive attitudes toward language learning.
- Strengthen students' self-concept and self-esteem through positive reinforcement, and create individualized - and sometimes easier - exercises to provide motivation and a feeling of success.

### Implications for Further Study

The current study presented a smaller part of a more extensive research project into language learning motivation. However, the present database itself offers further statistical analysis for a more complex mathematical modelling of how these elements influence each other and to what degree do they determine academic achievement. In addition we could go on collecting data in other age groups, or continue this study with the exploration of the characteristics of high-school students. Other aspects of personality (eg. anxiety, extroversion-intrversion) are also of relevance in motivation and achievement and worth further investigation. It would be interesting to provide a deeper analysis from the perspective of gifted students, mainly in terms of motivation, attitudes and efficiency, as educational issues related to gifted children are currently in the focus of several Hungarian projects. The use of qualitative methods (in addition to, or instead of, quantitative methods) would represent a completely different direction for the research. Several recent studies (Kim, 2006; Wesely, 2010), highlight the importance and usefulness of qualitative data-collection methods, interviews, classroom observations and case studies, this points out a limitation of the present study, namely the lack of a deeper, qualitative analysis in the explanation and interpretation of statistical results, In the future it will be necessary to use qualitative methods, too, for deeper understanding.

This research contributes to focussing increased attention on the importance of motivation in the learning process, and its results may be used as steps to establish a motivation-sensitive teaching practice in creating a positive motivational climate to enhance school achievement and foreign language proficiency as an ultimate objective.

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