

**Міністерство освіти і науки України**  
**Закарпатський угорський інститут ім. Ференца Ракоці II**  
**Кафедра філології**

Реєстраційний № \_\_\_\_\_

**Кваліфікаційна робота**  
**Мотивація учнів різного віку до вивчення англійської мови як**  
**іноземної: зовнішні та внутрішні чинники**

**ВІГ АДРІЕНН ЙОСИПВНИ**

Студентки 4-го курсу

Освітня програма: «Середня освіта (Мова і література (англійська))»

Спеціальність: 014 Середня освіта (Мова і література (англійська))

Рівень вищої освіти: бакалавр

Тема затверджена на засіданні кафедри  
Протокол № 107 / 14.08.2024р.

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Робота захищена на оцінку \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ 2025 \_року

Протокол № \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ 2025

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Берегове

2025

**Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine**  
**Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education Ferenc Rákóczi II**

**Department of Philology**

Qualifying paper

**MOTIVATING LANGUAGE LEARNERS OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS  
IN TEACHING EFL: EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACTORS**

Level of higher education: Bachelor's degree

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Berehove

2025

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the last century, the need for foreign language knowledge has increased dramatically. Nowadays, it is a very important component both in the professional sphere and in the mental and cultural aspects of every person's development. For effective learning, modern tools and methods are used that can not only interest but also motivate students to learn foreign languages.

Success in learning new knowledge highly depends on motivation. The effectiveness of learning a foreign language depends on the desire and interest in the learning process, so learning motivation and types of motivation is considered one of the main problems in the methodology of teaching foreign languages.

The issue of developing motivation to learn has always been relevant in psychology and pedagogy. It is known that the content of the educational process and its importance for the student are the basis for the formation of the motivational sphere. It is the content of learning that determines a student's orientation, i.e. their learning motives. The main task of a modern teacher is to use such resources in teaching that can arouse and maintain students' interest in acquiring new knowledge. In this context, motivation is of particular importance as a key element of the educational process. The level of a student's motivation determines his or her academic performance, the quality of knowledge acquired, and the readiness and ability to learn throughout life.

A considerable amount of academic literature has been published on the problem of motivation strategies. The major contribution to the field was made by Dörnyei (2003, 2005, 2008, 2009), who developed the L2 Motivational Self System, a comprehensive framework for understanding second language motivation. It includes the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. It is also important to note that the L2 studies in the present research are focused on English as a foreign language, due to the fact that in our community L2 is the Hungarian or Ukrainian language. Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) are known for the "Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners", widely used as a guideline for practical motivational strategies in the classroom. Higgins (1987, 1998) did his main contribution by developing the Self-Determination Theory (STD). His theory helped to shape Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, particularly the "ideal self" and "ought-to self". Wigfield and Eccles (1992, 2000) developed the Expectancy-Value Theory of Achievement Motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000, 1985, 1991) proposed the Self-Determination Theory (STD), distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic



motivation. Their theory emphasizes psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Many others have contributed to the field of motivation, such as Gardner (1985), Harmer (2007, 2012, 2015), Ushioda (2011) etc.

The **object** of the thesis is the process of motivating learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) belonging to different age groups. This includes understanding how motivation operated in different educational contexts and how age-specific characteristics influence the effectiveness of certain motivational strategies.

The **subject** of this research encompasses the internal and external motivational factors that affect EFL learners, along with theoretical concepts and practical strategies used by teachers to influence motivation. It includes the classification of motivation, the psychological underpinning of motivational behaviors, and the pedagogical implications for different learner age groups.

The **aim** of this study is to explore how internal and external motivational factors influence the language learning process of EFL students of different age groups. Specifically, the research seeks to identify age-specific motivational patterns, examine how these factors interact with learners' cognitive and emotional development, and evaluate how teachers can effectively apply this knowledge to enhance motivation in the EFL classroom. By comparing motivational profiles of very young learners (VYLs), young learners (YLs), adolescents, and adults, the study aims to provide practical recommendations for designing age-appropriate teaching methods and strategies that foster sustained engagement and success in foreign language learning.

To achieve this aim, the **task** of the thesis include:

- reviewing and synthesizing existing literature on motivational theories and their application in EFL learning.
- differentiating and defining intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.
- exploring age-related psychological and cognitive aspects relevant to motivation in language learning.
- conducting empirical research through qualitative interviews with experienced EFL teachers.
- analyzing how motivation strategies vary across age groups and identifying patterns in teaching practices.
- to get answers to our research questions and find out weather the hypothesis has been confirmed or disproved.

The **novelty** of this research lies in its exploration of how motivation in EFL learning varies across different age groups, integrating both theoretical insights and practical teacher experiences. By conducting interviews with EFL teachers, the study provides unique, age-specific perspectives on how intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influence language learners.

The thesis contains an introduction, three parts and a summary. The first part presents the theoretical background, exploring key concepts of motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic types, as well as demotivation and amotivation. The second part focuses on how age influences motivation, incorporating Piaget's cognitive development theory and categorizing learners into distinct age groups, each with specific motivational needs and learning characteristics. Part 3 is based on qualitative research through interviews with EFL teachers who have experience with various age groups. This empirical investigation examines how teachers perceive and apply motivational strategies in real classroom settings, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

# **PART I**

## **MAJOR THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MOTIVATION**

Motivation is an essential element in the field of language learning, influencing the commitment, perseverance and success of learners. It can be widely classified as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal desire to engage in an activity for itself, fueled by personal interest and pleasure, while extrinsic motivation implies external factors, such as rewards and recognition. Various theories clarified the motivation for language learning, including the socio-educational model of Gardner, which emphasizes the role of cultural and social factors, and the theory oriented towards the process of Dörnyei, which highlights the dynamic nature of motivation throughout the learning process.

Contemporary studies explaining effective strategies to improve the motivation for language learning. An important strategy is the integration of culturally relevant materials that resonate with the history and interests of learners. This approach promotes intrinsic motivation by making language learning more relatable. In addition, it has been shown that the definition of achievable learning objectives reinforces motivation by offering learners a clearly meaning of orientation and accomplishment. Social interaction, thanks to collaborative learning activities, also plays a vital role in stimulating motivation. The interaction improves not only linguistic skills, but also promotes a feeling of community among learners, thus enriching the learning experience.

Finally, understanding definitions and types of motivation is essential to grasp its impact on language learning. The examination of motivation theories, in addition to the implementation of effective strategies, provides valuable information that can facilitate a more engaging and more productive language learning environment.

### **1.1 Definition of motivation**

First of all, we need to understand what motivation is. The definition of this term can be interpreted in different ways:

- a desire or an impulse to act;
- a person's ability to satisfy his or her needs;
- a process that governs a person's behavior, activity and endurance etc.

Motivation in learning promotes a love of learning, encourages students to be active and also willing to do their best in different situations. In different fields of activity this term has different meaning, nevertheless, in foreign language teaching, the teacher's goal in the classroom is to create an environment that will cause an internal desire to learn. Despite the fact that teacher's motivation is an integral part of teaching, students can achieve good results primarily when they set goals for themselves and work towards them (Voronova, 2007).

Motivation itself is a complex psychological construction that influences human behavior and actions. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), motivation may be defined as the driving force to action. For this reason, a person who does not have any internal or external drive to act will be regarded as unmotivated, while an individual who has energy and is activated towards a purpose will be viewed as motivated. Indeed, most of the people engaged in work or plays with others are – to some degree – interested in motivation, looking for answers on how motivated those people, or the self, are for a certain task, while every practitioner in one way or the other has to deal with the everlasting problem of how to increase or decrease motivation in people. Most conceptions of motivation stem from an analysis of the mentioned above concerns by treating motivation as a singular phenomenon, ranging from no motivation to act to abundant motivation.

Ushioda (2011) expands in the notion of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by integrating the concepts of self and identity withing the framework of motivation. As stated by him, an individual's motivation is closely linked to the concept of identity, which influence the learner's language learning results and learning strategies. According to this statement, motivation of EFL students involves promoting a positive personal identity as linguistic users. The need of educators to consider individual backgrounds and spirations in their teaching practices is underlined by the interaction of the identity and motivation of the student.

An extremely significant role has the social context of learning in modeling the motivation of language learning. Lifrieri's (2005) sociological perspective is underlining how social factors influence the level of motivation of EFL students. Wallace and Leong's (2020) research describes a discovery that the dynamics among students can create both positive and negative climate. This discovery is indicating that the motivation of primary EFL students is often influenced by interactions with teachers and peer group members, also influencing their linguistic competence. In addition, Dörnyei (2003) highlights the meaning of attitudes and guidelines towards the learning of languages, which contribute to the motivational profile of an individual. Ranking the motivation in three orientations: supplementary, instrumental and intrinsic. The supplementary motivation reflects the desire to connect with a culture, while the instrumental motivation is guided by utilitarian objectives, such as the progress of the career or academic success. The recognition of

these guidelines requires differentiation in educational strategies to satisfy different motivational drivers among students.

Regarding all of the above, the different definitions of motivation in EFL learning reflect a complex interaction of various factors, including personal identity, attitudes, social dynamics etc. While research continues to take place, it is essential for educators to recognize the multifaced nature of the motivation and implement strategies that meet the unique motivational profiles of their students. In this way, they can create support environments that not only improve the results of language learning, but also promote a permanent passion for the acquisition of the language.

## **1.2 Motive for learning and learning motivation**

Understanding the difference between “motive (or reason) for learning” and “learning motivation” is crucial in the context of EFL learning. although these two terms are often used interchangeably, some researchers reveal that they have different meanings that contribute to the broader field of language acquisition.

Motive for learning we can explain as the students’ focus on different aspects of learning activities (Voronova, 2007). In other words, this includes the question of how to build students’ desire to learn, to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities, i.e. how to form and develop full-fledged learning motives.

According to Dörnyei (1990), the “move for learning” refers to the underlying reasons or objectives that push an individual to learn a language. This may include personal interests, career aspirations, desire to communicate with the speakers of tis language, social interactions etc. In the field of EFL, the patterns are considered to be the initial catalysts which encourage learners to engage in the language. As Dörnyei (1998) noted, these reasons can be intrinsic (such as personal satisfaction) or extrinsic (such as employment opportunities), influencing the commitment of the learner with the language.

The term “learning motivation” is a generalization of the processes, means and methods of encouraging students to engage in cognitive activity and to learn effectively and quickly (Androshchuk, 2022). This concept depends on the level of pre-existing learning motives, for the reason that this is the driving force behind personal development.

It is generally accepted to consider a motive as an internal impulse of a person to a particular type of activity related to the satisfaction of a certain need.

“Learning motivation”, in comparison with “motive for learning”, is more complete and concerns psychological processes that maintain interests and effort for language learning over time. Gardner asserts that “learning motivation” not only includes the initial motives, but also the emotional and cognitive factors which promote continuous engagement with the learning process. This distinction illustrates that if the reasons can initiate learning, motivation is essential to maintain efforts towards linguistic competence. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) point out that motivation is an evolving construction influenced by many factors, including situational context and learner’s identities.

### **1.3 Two main types of motivation: internal and external features**

Based on Self-determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000a) there are two main types of motivation:

1. Internal motivation
2. External motivation

In Self-determination Theory (ibid.) we differentiate between different types of motivation based on the different aims and reasons that give impulse to act. That is the reason why internal motivation is characterized by the awareness of the internal need to acquire knowledge and the impulse to act (ibid.), while external motivation is characterized by learning stimulus, in fact encourages the learner to work harder (Ryan & Deci, 2000b), i.e. this can be called external impulse.

The significance of intrinsic motivation in education is widely acknowledged; it serves as a potent stimulus for learning and academic success, its development or destruction being significantly influenced by parental and pedagogical approaches (Ryan & Stiller, 1991). Given its crucial role in fostering high-quality learning and creative output, a thorough understanding of the factors that promote or inhibit intrinsic motivation is paramount.

Equally crucial, however, is a nuanced examination of the diverse forms of extrinsic motivation. While traditionally depicted as a comparatively weak and poor motivational force in contrast to intrinsic motivation (e.g., de Charms, 1968), Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits a spectrum of extrinsic motivation, ranging from externally controlled and unenthusiastic engagement to actively self-supported and voluntarily driven behavior.

This spectrum confines a continuum of engagement, from actions performed with reluctance, resistance, and disinterest – representing the prototypical understanding of extrinsic motivation – to those undertaken with a willing acceptance of the task's inherent value or utility.

### **1.3.1 Key features of intrinsic motivation**

Intrinsic motivation is defined as engagement in an activity driven by inherent satisfaction rather than external rewards or consequences. Intrinsically motivated individuals act for the enjoyment or challenge inherent in the task itself, independent of external pressures or motive.

While not the only driver of human behavior or volition, intrinsic motivation is an extensive and significant force. Healthy human development, from infancy onward, is characterized by inherent activity, inquisitiveness, curiosity, and playfulness, demonstrating a spontaneous tendency towards learning and exploration that requires no external motive. This innate motivational tendency is crucial for cognitive, social, and physical development, as growth in knowledge and skills arises from acting upon inherent interests (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

It is also worth mentioning the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), presented by Deci and Ryan (1985), to specify the factors in social contexts that produce variability in intrinsic motivation. CET, which is a sub-theory within Self-Determination Theory, explains the social contextual factors influencing intrinsic motivation. CET posits that interpersonal events and structures (e.g., rewards, communication styles, feedback) fostering feelings of competence during task engagement enhance intrinsic motivation by satisfying the fundamental psychological need for competence. Consequently, optimal challenges, supportive feedback, and the absence of demeaning evaluations are all hypothesized to promote intrinsic motivation. However, CET further specifies that perceived competence (or self-assurance) alone is insufficient; a concurrent sense of autonomy is also necessary to enhance or maintain intrinsic motivation. Therefore, high levels of intrinsic motivation require the satisfaction of both competence and autonomy needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

### **1.3.2 Key features of extrinsic motivation**

While intrinsic motivation is a significant motivational force, the majority of human activities are not purely intrinsically motivated, particularly beyond early childhood. Increasing social demands

and role-related responsibilities necessitate engagement in tasks lacking inherent interest, thereby diminishing the scope for intrinsic motivation. This trend is evident in educational settings, where intrinsic motivation often declines with increasing grade level.

Extrinsic motivation, conversely, describes engagement in activities to achieve separable outcomes, contrasting with the intrinsic pursuit of activity for its inherent enjoyment. Contrary to perspectives characterizing all extrinsically motivated behavior as non-autonomous, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits a spectrum of autonomy within extrinsic motivation. For instance, a student completing homework no more than to get a good grade exhibits extrinsically motivated behavior driven by the separable outcome of parental punishment avoidance. Likewise, a student undertaking work due to its perceived value to their chosen career path is also extrinsically motivated, as the activity is pursued for its instrumental value rather than inherent interest. Although both scenarios involve instrumental behavior, the latter demonstrates personal endorsement and a sense of agency, unlike the former's mere compliance or obedience with external control. Both represent intentional actions, yet differ significantly in their degree of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

The inherent lack of intrinsic interest in many school-based activities necessitates exploring methods to cultivate student valuation and self-regulated engagement without external force. Within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this challenge is framed as fostering the internalization and integration of values and behavioral regulations (Deci & Ryan, 1985). *Internalization* represents the adoption of a value or regulation, while *integration* signifies the transformative process by which individuals fully assimilate the regulation into their sense of self. Conceptualized as a continuum, internalization encompasses a range of motivational states, from amotivation and unwillingness to passive compliance and finally, active personal commitment. Increased internalization, and its associated sense of personal commitment, correlate with enhanced persistence, improved self-perception, and higher-quality engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Overall, students' learning activities are motivated by a complex of motives, which can be dominated by internal motives related to their content and performance or by broad social motives related to the need to take a certain position in the system of social relations. Motives for learning activities are distinguished by content and dynamic characteristics. The content characteristics of motivation are (Androschuk, 2022):

- the presence of a personal meaning of learning for the student;
- the effectiveness of the motive (its real impact on the child's learning activities and behavior);



- the place of the motive in the structure of motivation;
- the independence of the emergence and manifestation of the motive;
- the level of awareness of the motive;
- the degree of extension of the motive to different types of learning activities, types of academic subjects, forms of educational tasks.

The main dynamic parameters of motives are persistence (a student learns enthusiastically even despite unfavorable external conditions, obstacles, his or her learning activity is highly productive in normal and extreme conditions); modality (emotional coloring), which can be positive and negative (Voronova, 2007). In the process of learning, the type of learning motivation of a student changes. This is influenced by new self-imposed goals (e. g. the desire to circumvent or overcome difficulties), long-term successes or failures during classes, the choice of a life path, etc.

This raises the question: which one is better and more effective? Internal motivation is based on a student's need to acquire knowledge to achieve certain goals (for example, to speak a foreign language) or to become better than the others. External motivation is based primarily on grades, punishments, deadlines, etc. Based on the above, we can conclude that internal motivation is more effective and it helps students to learn better.

## **1.4 Understanding demotivation and amotivation in language learning**

Fostering successful learning settings requires an understanding of the reasons why language learners get disengaged or cease participating entirely. Understanding the psychological and contextual elements that block learner engagement is possible through the ideas of demotivation and amotivation. Amotivation reveals a deeper, internal lack of purpose or perceived competence, whereas demotivation frequently results from outside factors like uninteresting classroom practices or teacher behavior. Exploring both helps to identify and address barriers to sustained motivation in EFL contexts.

### **1.4.1 Demotivation**

The concept of demotivation has been widely explored in literature. Kiehelä (2021) identifies demotivation as a floating phenomenon that can be influenced by situational, emotional and social

factors. It includes a decline of the motivation that can occur after the initial motivation has been established and is often linked to the negative experiences in the classroom. Understanding these fluctuations is essential for researchers and educators who try to encourage a more encouraging learning environment.

The determinants who contribute to demotivation have been classified in various forms. Pourtoussi, Ghanizadeh and Mousavi (2018) present a qualitative analysis that highlights the roles of the questions relating to teachers, class dynamics and the wider EFL curriculum. They argue that when teachers show ambiguous objectives, they cannot provide adequate feedback or do not effectively involve students, students can quickly become demotivated. This perspective aligns with the results of Tran and Moskovsky (2022), which emphasize the impact of students on the motivation of teachers, suggesting that the behaviors and attitudes of negative students create a demotivation cycle that affects both sides.

Academic literature explores the perceptions of specific class activities as specific to the fundamental demotivation. Jahedizadeh, Ghanizadehand and Ghonsooly (2016) have discovered that students who perceive class activities as non -demanding or irrelevant often show lower levels of motivation and greater burnout possibilities. He underlines the need for EFL teachers to design engaging lessons that resonate with the interests of the students and promote an orientation to the lens of mastery, ultimately improving the motivation and preventing demotivation.

The comparative dynamics of the beliefs of expert and novice teachers also play a fundamental role in demotivating students. Afshari, Tajeddin and Abbasian (2019) have shown that novice teachers can demonstrate less effective teaching practices because of their inexperience, contributing to the perceptions of the student of ineffectiveness in their languages of learning languages. This discovery suggests the importance of professional development for teachers, which can help them cultivate a more motivating class atmosphere.

#### **1.4.2 Amotivation**

The concept of amotivation plays a central role in understanding students' motivation, in particular within the framework of the theory of self-determination of Deci and Ryan (1985) (SDT) and the motivation model of Vallerand et al. (1997). Amotivation, defined as a lack of motivation or intention to engage in an activity, represents an important aspect in educational contexts, involving both academic success and personal development. By exploring the nuances of starting through

these theoretical lenses, we can have an overview of its causes, consequences and potential interventions to promote greater motivation among students.

The SDT of Deci and Ryan (1985) postulates that human motivation is influenced by three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. When these needs are not met, students can feel amotivation, because their commitment to academic activities becomes a chore devoid of any intrinsic value (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Insufficient satisfaction in these needs may result from a range of factors, including external pressures, lack of interest and inadequate feedback mechanisms. Consequently, students who experience amotivation often find it difficult to achieve academic success, thus potentially depriving themselves of the possibilities of personal growth and development.

Vallerand et al. (1992) introduced the academic motivation scale (AMS), which systematically measures intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation in educational contexts. Their work strengthens the premise that amotivation is not simply a phase of engagement of students, but a distinct motivation construction which justifies a careful analysis and intervention. For example, students with high levels of start-up can frequently point out that the feeling of feeling disconnected from their academic work, which can give an overview of the underlying problems affecting their educational experience (Vallerand et al., 1993).

In addition, Lavigne et al. (2007) applied a motivation model using the principles of the SDT to understand the persistence in science education, stressing that amotivation could have a negative impact on the commitment of students to learning. Their results suggest that promoting the conditions that improve autonomy and competence can reduce feelings of amotivation, thus encouraging greater persistence in academic efforts. This aligns with Ratelle et al. (2007), which identified distinct types of academic motivation, stressing that autonomous motivation is considerably correlated with positive results, while amotivation is correlated with negative performance indicators.

In the hierarchical model of Vallerand (2000), amotivation is considered a critical factor which directly influences the regulation of the motivation of individuals. More specifically, the model illustrates the cascade effects of the lower motivational states on the educational experience of a student. When students fail to identify significant reasons for engaging in their studies, their motivation dissipates, leading to increased cases of academic disengagement (Vallerand et al., 1997).

An exploration of starting also reveals the impact of societal and educational structures, such as standardized tests and the pressure to be performed, which can aggravate the feelings of incompetence and disconnection (Ntoumanis et al., 2004). In the environments where performance

is priority over learning, students often report increased starting levels, which leads to a harmful disengagement cycle. It is imperative for educators and political decision-makers to recognize these structural influences and to seek to cultivate a learning environment which promotes intrinsic interest in subjects rather than focusing solely on the results that contribute to amotivation.

When integrating ideas derived from SDT and Vallerand models, interventions aimed at reducing amotivation can be designed and implemented. For example, the promotion of the basic teaching styles of autonomy which emphasize the choice of students and autonomous learning can improve feelings of competence and relatedness between students (Lavigne et al., 2007). In addition, continuous engagement strategies – including personalized comments and mentoring programs – can provide the necessary support for students who have signs of amotivation, promoting their academic success and personal development more.

In conclusion, the exploration of the concept of amotivation by the theory of self-determination of Deci and Ryan (1985) and the motivation model of Vallerand et al. (1997). Reveals significant implications for academic success and personal development. It is essential to improve educational experience, as it influences not only academic performance, but also shapes personal growth. By creating an educational environment that meets the intrinsic needs of students and promotes a positive motivation, educators can have a significant impact on the well-being and overall success of their students in academic environments.

## **1.5 Theories of foreign language learning motivation**

The concept of motivational self-system of the second language, introduced by Dörnyei (2005, 2009), provides a complete picture to understand the motivation in the context of language learning.

According to the theory, foreign language learner's motivation is directly influenced by three factors:

- 1) Students' ideal second language self (in our case English as a foreign language self), i.e. how much they can imagine themselves to be able to use the foreign language they are learning at a high level in the future;
- 2) Students' need-based second language self, i.e. what the language learner thinks the environment should be like in terms of goals to be achieved in language learning;
- 3) Students' motivation is shaped by their language learning experiences.

Each of these components performs a distinctive function in modeling the motivational aspect for language students.

The central idea of the theory is to identify the dimension of traditional integrative motivation in part with the ideal second language self, i.e. the ideas and desires that the language learner wants to achieve. If part of the language learner's ideal second language self is to be a good speaker of language, i.e. to imagine oneself as a person who can communicate in a foreign language, that one can describe this learner, using Gardner's (1985) terminology, as having an integrative orientation. This suggests that motivation is not only a cognitive component, but is deeply intertwined with personal identity and future aspirations. These ideas challenge prior motivation theories that did not properly explain the role of self-concept in language learning (Csizér, 2019).

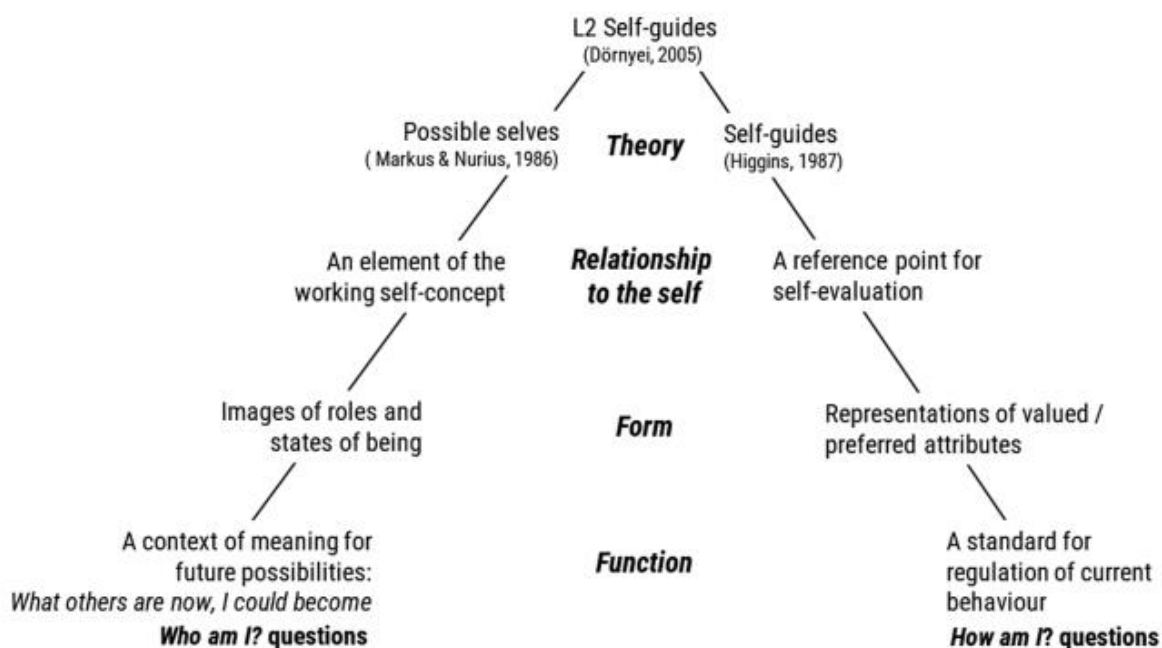
Based on the works of Higgins (1987,1998), and Dörnyei (2005, 2009) suggests that an individual not only has an ideal second language self-image, but also a self-image that he or she calls the sufficient second language self. This self-image aggregates the unrealized motives that the student thinks he or she should achieve but is not convinced of himself or herself. These motives according to Dörnyei (2005), are largely instrumental since the necessary second language self-image summarizes the quality that the individual feels he/she must achieve, but may have little to do with his/her own personal desires and wishes.

This concept of students' need-based second language self, also termed 'Ought to L2', additionally focuses on the external pressures and obligations that student perceive, including social expectations and the possible consequences of not learning a language effectively. This implies extrinsic motivations that can serve as powerful promoters of behavior (Martinovic, 2018). Contrary to intrinsic motivations, typically emphasized in older learning models, such as Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, the Ought to L2 Self highlights the importance of social and family expectations in the configuration of students' motivations. For example, a Thai undergraduate apprentice who navigates in multiple foreign languages may feel promoted to learning better English due to social emphasis on the need for the dominance of English to achieve academic and professional success (Yang & Liang-Itsara, 2024). These findings provide a framework for educators to recognize and address these external influences in their teaching approaches, thus facilitating a more support learning environment.

The third component of the second language motivational self-system summarizes language learning habits and includes language learning-related motives that describe the language learning experiences of different students. The learning experiences include the specific opportunities and contexts through which students engage with the language. These experiences moderate both the ideal self that the self should influence the way students perceive their skills and successful

potential. The experience of positive learning by supporters, engaging materials and interactive environments are significantly improving motivation by promoting a safe self-image and the desire to improve. On the contrary, negative experiences, such as the lack of ineffective support or teaching methods, can reduce motivation and even have an impact on the perceptions of students on their ideals (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009)

**Figure 1.** A theory map of the constructs from which L2 self-guides are derived (Jingle-Jangle, 2024, p. 4).



The implications of motivational self-system of the second language extend beyond individual learning contexts to highlight the broader sociolinguistic dimensions of motivation. Al-Horie (2018) made a meta-analysis that reveals that different cultural and linguistic contexts can influence the motivations of language students. For example, in regions where English is considered as a global frank language as a requirement for educational progress, motivations can change drastically according to the sociopolitical landscape. Understanding language learning and sociocultural identity can enrich the framework of motivational self-system of the second language, shedding light on how identity shapes the motivational landscape.

In addition, the successful application of the motivational self-system of the second language framework in the EFL classrooms, as evidenced by Chen's findings (2022), reinforces its relevance in contemporary language teaching practices. Chen's study illustrates how motivational self-system of the second language can be operationalized in the design of the

curriculum, emphasizing the integration of future aspirations of students and social roles in pedagogical frameworks. This experiment demonstrates the practical application of motivational theories in language education, advocating that understanding students' self-concepts can cover the way for more personalized and effective pedagogical strategies.

Dörnyei's theory of motivational self-system of the second language also provides a basis for greater research on language learning, which suggests roads for academics to explore how emerging technologies could interact with self-concept and motivation. With the increase of digital platforms for language learning, understanding how these can influence student's L2 is still a mature area for exploration (Csizér, 2019). By incorporating technological tools that allow students to visualize and interact with their ideal beings and should be dynamic, new methods that amplify the participation and persistence of students in language learning efforts may arise.

In summary, Dörnyei's (2005,2009) motivational L2 self-system offers a robust framework to understand and improve motivation in foreign language learning. His emphasis on the integrative nature of the ideal self L2, the students' need-based second language self and the learning experience L2 presents a holistic vision of the motivation that transcends traditional theories. By recognizing the complex interaction between individual aspirations, sociocultural influences and classroom dynamics, educators can design more effective language learning experiences that resonate with their students. Continuous implications for research suggest the need for continuous investigation on how self-concept and identity can be used to encourage intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in various educational landscapes. These ideas not only contribute to theoretical advances in the motivation of language learning, but also present practical ways to improve educational results in language instruction in cultural contexts.

## PART II

### PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO MOTIVATING LANGUAGE LEARNERS ACROSS DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

Motivation depends on many factors. These include both psychological factors and cognitive development of the learner. Since the focus of this thesis is on language learners of different age groups, it is important to study their cognitive development as well, as this will influence how EFL teachers can motivate them. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss Piaget's model of cognitive development in the next subsection of this thesis. Piaget's theory postulates that cognitive development occurs in stages, which can be an integral part of understanding how different age groups address language learning. In this chapter, we will review the primary theories on the age factor according to Piaget's theory, categorization of EFL learners based on the work of Harmer (2007, 2012, 2015), Cameron (2001), Lenneberg (1967) and Richards (2014). In addition, we will look through the existing motivational strategies across the studies.

#### 2.1 Piaget's Theory on Cognitive Development

According to Rabindran and Madanagopal (2020), a Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, was extremely interested in the way thinking develops in children from birth till they become young adults and how do they acquire knowledge during this period. In order to get answers to these questions, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Piaget attentively observed his own three children's behavior. "His observations of children led him to propose a new perspective that emphasized the active role of children in constructing their understanding of the world through exploration and interaction" (Ajayi, 2024, p. 3).

Jean Piaget believed that humans adapt both social and physical environments which they are surrounded by. It is a process of adaptation which begins right after birth. Piaget determined two important terms for this period of adaptation and effective learning: assimilation and accommodation (Rabindran & Madanagopal, 2020).

1. **Assimilation** – adjusting new experiences to fit prior concepts (Ruhee, n.d.).
2. **Accommodation** – adjusting concepts to fit new experiences (Ruhee, n.d.).

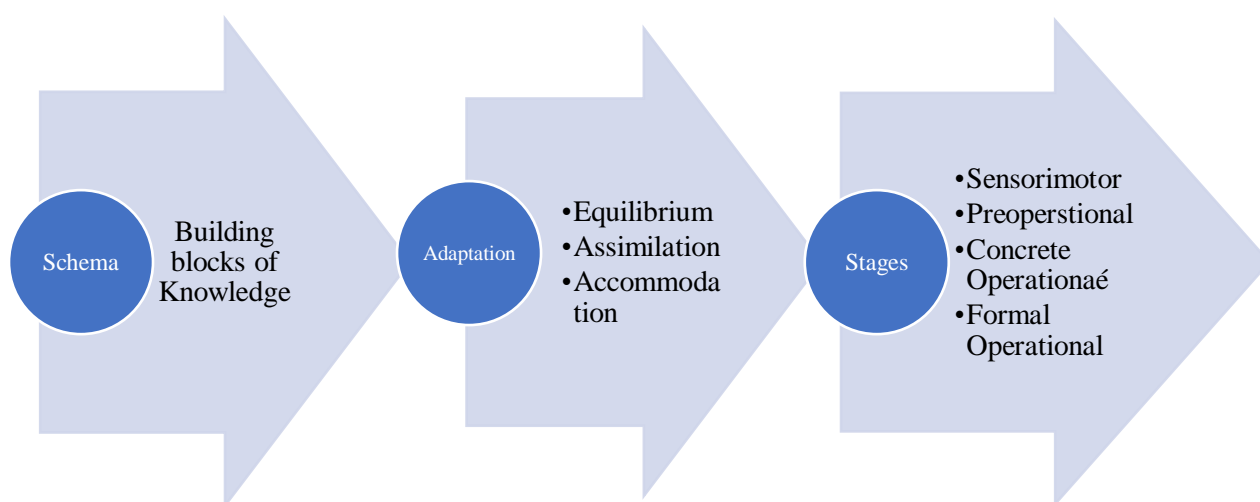
These two concepts lead to short-term learning and also to the main focus of Piaget's cognitive theory – long-term developmental changes (Rabindran & Madanagopal, 2020).



During the development of the cognitive theory, Piaget also defined 4 basic elements in development (Ruhee, n.d.):

1. Maturation
2. Experience
3. Social transmission (learning through language, schooling or teaching by parents)
4. Equilibrium

**Figure 2. Basic components of Piaget's cognitive theory (Rabindran & Madanagonal, 2020, p. 2153)**



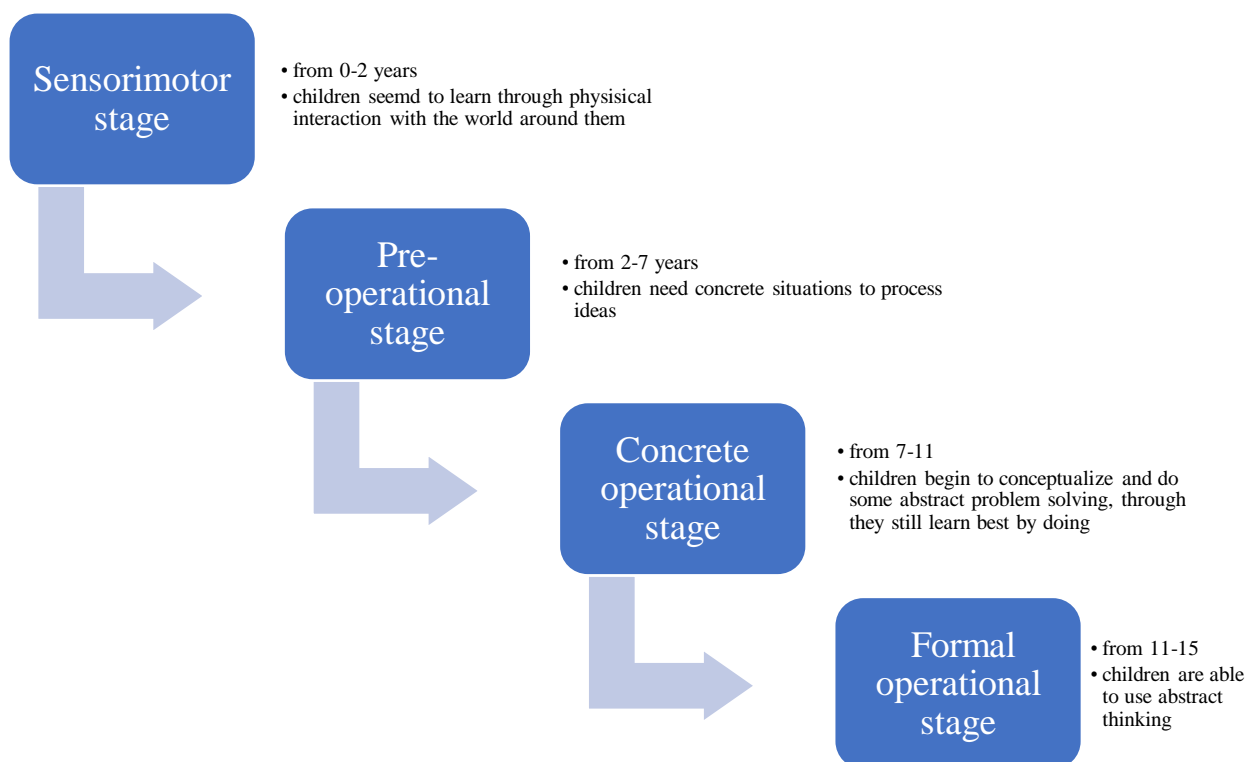
Ruhee (n.d.) states that the important concept of Piaget's theory of cognitive development is the fixed progression from one stage to another. For Piaget, cognitive growth is a progressive change that vary from one individual to other and represents a fixed sequence.

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development (CD) outlines four main stages of children's progress (see *Table 3*) as they acquire understanding and knowledge (Ajayi, 2024). Each of these stages has an age span which highlights the current learning capabilities for that specific age group. Understanding of these stages could be extremely important and helpful both in framing the curriculum and for teachers and parents as well.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development states that children develop in four distinct stages, each of which is distinguished by a particular set of cognitive skills. The use of senses and motor actions to investigate the surroundings is what defines the sensorimotor stage (0-2 years), which results in the development of basic mental representation, goal-directed behavior, and object

permanence (Rabindran & Madanagopal, 2020). Symbolic thinking is characteristic of the pre-operational stage (2-7 years), but it is constrained by egocentrism, animism, and challenges with logical processes such as classification and conservation (Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022). Children start to thinking logically and methodically during the concrete operational stage (7-11 years), when they overcome egocentrism and become proficient in classification and conservation (Ajayi, 2024). Lastly, a significant change that promotes higher education and sophisticated problem-solving is the formal operational stage (11-15 years), which makes abstract, hypothetical, and systematic reasoning possible (this text was generated by ChatGPT on May 6, 2025).

**Figure 3. Staged of cognitive development (Own edit based on Lőrincz, 2020)**



## 2.2 Categorization of EFL learners by age: VYLs, YLs, adolescents, and adults

Age plays a crucial role in language learning, especially in foreign language learning. The categorization of age groups in EFL is a critical consideration for both linguists and teachers, who seek a better understanding on how to teach and motivate language learners according to their abilities. Therefore, Piaget was not the only one who was interested in dividing language learners

into age groups. Besides him, fundamental work in this area has been done by linguists such as Harmer (2007, 2012, 2015), Cameron (2001), Lenneberg (1967), Richardson and many others.

Lenneberg (1967) stated that age plays a decisive role in the ability to acquire a language. In order to prove it, he introduced the concept of critical period hypothesis (CPH) in which Lenneberg states that during this critical period learners are the most receptive to the acquisition of a new language. According to this period, children, up to about the age of eleven, were able to learn a language. Lenneberg believed that if language was introduced to children after this critical period (or after the age of eleven) then it was still possible but extremely difficult for them to learn it. It is also often the main reason for starting the foreign language teaching in a child's early ages (Lőrincz, 2020).

Harmer (2007), based on Lenneberg's ideas, presented a detailed categorization of EFL learners which includes the followings:

### **1. Very young learners (VYL) (3-7 years)**

Some researchers believed that there is an existing period when language learning is easier than in other ages (Lenneberg's CPH, (1967) or Penfield & Roberts (1959)). At this stage a question may occur: what are the concrete aspects that make language learners successful from an early age (as cited in Horky, 2024)? At this stage children characterized by an innate curiosity and an ability to reflect later in life and because their speech basis is not yet formed on their mother tongue, children are able to perfect their pronunciation and intonation in the EFL (as cited in Horky, 2024).

According to Krashen's theory of Affective Filter (1985), young children have a low affective filter which increases their language development and makes them more open to input: they are able to use the language more freely and language anxiety is not repressing their achievement (as cited in Horky, 2024).

### **2. Young Learners (YL) (7-12 years)**

In terms of Harmer's classification, YL have a greater capacity to understand basic vocabulary, simple grammatical concepts and at the same time benefiting from communicative activities. At this stage, learners refine their cognitive capacities and begin to engage with more structured forms of use of language, which require an adjustment of educational strategies to include skills in fundamental literacy alongside language learning. Halliday (1973) stated that children understand what a language does rather than what is a language. Another important thing teachers should know about YL that they are motivated in a different way than adults; lessons are not developed in an intensive way (Kraus-Srebric, 1979 as cited in Makhiyo, 2022).

### **3. Adolescents (12-18 years)**

Adolescents have advanced cognitive skills that allow more complex reasoning and abstract thought. However, this age group is often assaulted by social dynamics which can influence motivation and commitment. Consequently, educational strategies for adolescents should incorporate relevant cultural contexts and personal interests to promote a feeling of agency and relevance in learning.

In that time of adolescent, children shift from the carefree childhood to the more intricate adult world (Maier, 2011). For that reason, teachers should not forget that during this period a child's life go through a lot of physical and psychological transformations. In order to apply appropriate approaches, it is extremely important for the teachers to become familiar with these changes (as cited in Horky, 2024). Alongside with the general knowledge of the changes in the period of adolescent, Harmer (2012) highlighted the importance of prioritization of the way students learn rather than how the teacher teach and recommended for teachers to choose tasks based on learners learning style.

#### **4. Adults (18 and over)**

According to Harmer (2015), adult learners are notable for a number of special characteristics:

- The ability to think abstractly;
- They have a wide range of experience to draw on;
- They have expectations about the learning process;
- Mostly they have internal motivation for the language learning. Unlike VYL and YL they have a clear understanding of why they are learning and what they want to achieve;
- They are more disciplined.

However, Harmer (2015) also mentioned that even adults are not entirely problem-free learners:

- They are more critical. It could happen because of their previous learning experiences differ from the new one. Conversely, they may be hostile to certain teaching activities;
- Previous failures or criticisms may have a negative influence on their further attitudes and self-assessment;
- They may worry that their intellectual powers may be diminishing with age. They are concerned to keep their creative powers alive, to maintain a 'sense of generativity' (Williams & Burden, 1997 as cited in Harmer, 2015). However, Alan Rogers (1996) points out, this generativity is directly related to how much learning has been going on in adult life before they come to a new learning experience (as cited by Harmer, 2015).

Overall, in order to be a good teacher of adult learners, teachers should recognize the need to minimize the bad effects of past learning experience. Teachers can diminish the fear of failure by

building up the activities in which the learners will be able to use their previous experiences, could be more indirect through reading, writing, communicative speaking, and listening.

Richards and Rodgers (2014) describe various teaching methodologies ranging from grammatical translation to the teaching of the communicative language, each of which meets different demands and profiles of students. This suggests that age should be considered by selecting a methodological framework for EFL instruction. For younger students, who often depend largely on game-based activities and multidimensional learning experiences, the strategies that are involved through significant contexts are essential (Cameron, 2001). In contrast, adult students may be more likely prefer to do task-based learning that reflects real world applications. Richards and Rodgers (2014) confirmed that effective teaching methodologies should be aligned with the stage of development and cognitive abilities of students.

Cameron (2001) emphasizes that young students have unique characteristics that require specialized approaches. Children are often more instinctive in their learning, depending on sensory experiences and personal connections to absorb a new language. Consequently, the role of teacher EFL changes to a facilitator who creates a rich and support environment that encourages exploration and experimentation with language. Younger students thrive in environments that incorporate rhythm, rhyme and repetition; These elements not only help memory retention, but also encourage enjoyment in language learning (Garton & Copland, 2019).

In addition, the acquisition of vocabulary presents a different challenge between age groups. Aina (2021) points out that younger students tend to learn vocabulary through context and images, while adult students benefit from explicit instruction and logical processing.

### **2.2.1 Age matters: a comparative analysis of psychological factors in EFL learners across different age groups**

Age significantly influences the acquisition of a language, particularly in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), with young students who demonstrate a potential greater than adults. However, this statement has encountered different academic perspectives. This review aims to analyze how age correlates with several psychological factors that influence EFL students, classifying existing research is different age groups: young learners, teenagers or adolescents and adults.

Research has often underlined the advantages of younger student with respect to cognitive and linguistic abilities (Johnson & Newport, 1989). The hypothesis of the critical period suggests

that there is an optimal window for the acquisition of language, often associated with children's experiences that facilitate phonetic and grammatical domain (Johnson & Newport, 1989). These first students typically exhibit a decrease in the anxiety of the foreign language and greater self-confidence, which are essential psychological factors that contribute to their successful acquisition of EFL (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). This is aligned with Clément et al. (1994), who emphasized the role of self-confidence in the affective variables that correlate with the success of language learning. Citing Ellis and Beaton (1993), it seems that younger students benefit from a more easily influenced neurocognitive framework, which allows them to assimilate new linguistic structure effortlessly than their oldest counterparts.

As students make the transition to adolescence, their psychological landscape undergoes significant changes. Adolescents tend to experience greater self-awareness and social exploration, which can affect their motivation and language learning strategies (Dörnyei, 1998). This cognitive and emotional change can lead to greater anxiety of the foreign language, particularly when faced with communicative situations (Dewaele et al., 2008). Teenagers can also fight with identity training, which can complicate their relationship with the foreign language that is learned. Schumann (1975) proposed that affective factors, such as the socio-psychological aspects of development, play a fundamental role in acquiring a second language (in our case English as a foreign language), which suggests that adolescents could exhibit less resistance to these affective challenges compared to children.

In addition, Moyer (1999) stressed that social dynamics during adolescence often influences learning environments, suggesting that classmates can serve as facilitators and barriers for language acquisition. In general, peer interaction is crucial for language students, but adolescence complexities can lead to mixed results where anxiety is a motivational factor and an obstacle (Patkowski, 1980). The influence of motivation during this phase is also critical. The desire of the adolescent student of social acceptance can improve or frustrate his/her language learning experience (Schumann, 1986). Consequently, the interaction between motivation and anxiety remains fundamental, indicating that adolescents can possess different psychological barriers compared to younger students.

In contrast, adult EFL learners have a different set of psychological factors that influence their learning experience. Adults often bring wide life experiences, which can cultivate intrinsic motivation and resilience (Oxford & Ehrman, 1995). However, this is placed side by side against unique challenges, such as established auto-images, various degrees of anxiety related to communicative performance and a decrease in error tolerance (Dewaele et al., 2008). O'Malley et al. (1985) emphasized that adult students often adopt more structured and strategic approaches for

language acquisition, which can compensate for their high anxiety levels and lack of innate language flexibility. This indicates that although adult students can face psychological barriers derived from age, these can be counteracted for their experienced approaches for learning.

In addition, age-related decrease in cognitive flexibility and phonetic achievement has caused studies that highlight the importance of motivation in the acquisition of adult language (Bongaerts et al., 1997). Adults often use a variety of language learning strategies that differ significantly from those used by younger student, as stated by Wharton (2000) who illustrated that adults tend to favor metacognitive strategies on the most intuitive that they prevail among children. The strategic approach of adults, although theoretically advantageous, can cause higher levels of anxiety linked to a decrease in confidence in their ability to dominate complex linguistic structures (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993).

Psycholinguistic analyzes emphasize further how neurological maturation related to age affects vocabulary acquisition and the use of foreign language. Studies indicate that younger students have an incomparable phonological awareness that can greatly influence their vocabulary and pragmatic use in a context of foreign language (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). This is aligned with the affirmation of Hsiao and Oxford (2002) that the use of the strategy varies with the age group. While children can unintentionally make use of learning opportunities within immersive environments, adults consciously strategically strategy their language path based on pre-existing knowledge and contextual relevance.

The interaction of these psychological factors of critical to understand EFL students in different age groups. While each group experiences unique emotional landscapes that their language acquisition trip, studies constantly highlight the application of motivation as a type of milk at all ages (McLaughlin, 2013). For example, regardless of age, high levels of motivation have been correlated with reduced anxiety and mastery of improved language (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016). In addition, the adaptability of learning strategies raises a challenge and an opportunity through ages. Younger students require to take their natural advantages, while adult student must cultivate resilience and counteract anxiety through self-efficacy practices (Dörnyei, 1998).

In conclusion, understanding how age influences psychological factors in EFL learners demand a nuanced exam from different age groups. YL, adolescents and adults exhibit unique motivational profiles, anxieties and strategic approaches to learning, factors that shape their trip of foreign languages. As the language learning prospect evolves, taking advantage of age-related psychological ideas will be essential for educators with the objective of maximizing the student's results in this diverse spectrum. Therefore, age not only influences the potential for the acquisition

of language, but also intricately waves through the psychological issue that supports successful language learning strategies.

### **2.3 Motivation strategies in teaching different age groups**

Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) created several effective motivation strategies, i.e. “Ten Commandments of Motivation”. These motivational strategies are design not only to trigger the intrinsic motivation of students, but also to improve extrinsic motivation factors that can facilitate the learning process. Dörnyei (2001a) highlights the importance of contextualizing motivation, and this aligns perfectly with the theory of self-determination, which emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation and the psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relationship. Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) also emphasize that the application of motivational strategies in language classrooms can significantly influence students' involvement and attitudes on learning, illustrating the relevance of both theoretical structures in practical environments.

The first commandment, which is particularly relevant for very young learners (VYLs) and young learners (YL), on the importance of the learning environment, reiterates the principles of SDT, where an atmosphere of support can nourish the intrinsic motivation of students. This aligns with the discoveries of Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008), who explored how motivational strategies have affected the motivation and success of students in language learning contexts. His study suggests that a positive learning environment promotes a sense of belonging, which is critical to meet the need to relationship with the SDT relationship.

The second commandment defends the improvement of students' self-confidence, which fits the principle of SDT competence. Language students display greater persistence and pleasure when they feel able to achieve their language goals. This commandment is central for adolescents who often struggle with self-esteem and fair of failure in front of their mates. Stimulate risk-taking is a safe environment (e.g. classroom) granting effort can significantly impact students' sense of competence, as supported by Lee and Lin (2019).

Dörnyei's third commandment emphasizes the relevance of setting clear and achievable goals, thus instilling a sense of direction and purpose in language learning. It becomes more meaningful with adolescent and adult learners, who engage in goal-setting practices. This also reflects SDT's statement that autonomy in defining objectives enhances motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) found that students who actively participated in the definition of their language learning objectives have shown a greater commitment to study, thus reinforcing



the need to nourish autonomy in educational contexts. This combinatory approach increases engagement as students assume their learning journey.

The fourth commandment discusses the importance of personalized learning experiences, which does not apply to a specific age group, but has shown its importance at all ages. Recognizing the various origins and motivations of students is essential to promote engagement (Lee & Lin, 2019).

The fifth commandment involves the use of motivational tools. Motivation can usually vary throughout the language learning process and, as highlighted by Peroni (2019), effective motivational tools can support interest and commitment. The strategic use of rewards, intrinsic and extrinsic can invigorate learning experience and encourage continuous effort. In addition, the need for continuous feedback is fundamental in both structures. Teachers should provide timely and constructive feedback to take advantage of students' potential and nourish their desire for competence (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Feedback serves as a critical motivational tool that reinforces effort and progress, thus increasing self-efficacy and contributing to the quality of involvement in language learning. Both of these commandments, the use of motivational tools and providing meaningful feedback, finds its strongest expression with EFL learners of all age groups, from the very young learners (VYLs) to the adults.

Dörnyei's seventh commandment emphasizes the role of the community. A strong sense of community inside a classroom promotes social ties among students, especially for teenage learners. These social dynamics can serve as a powerful intrinsic motivator, as students feel more connected and responsible for their peers, thus increasing collective involvement in the learning process. While adolescents benefit the most from the seventh commandment due to their developmental focus on peer relationships, all age groups can benefit when the principle is adapted to their psychological stage and learning context.

According to Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), supportive teacher interactions, which is the eighth commandment, reinforce motivation, especially in cases where students face challenges in their language learning journey. This consistent encouragement helps to meet the innate psychological needs of students, leading sustained engagement and finally promotes a richer learning experience. Providing supportive teacher-student relationships serves as key motivational driver across all age groups but since young and adolescent learners may rely heavily on teacher encouragement to stay motivated during challenging phases, it is especially vital for these two age groups.

The ninth commandment addresses the importance of teaching methodology, emphasizing the need for varied and engaging instructional practices to maintain the student's interest (Dörnyei,

2001b). Using varied teaching methods is a universal need for students of all ages but must be tailored to developmental levels. While adults and adolescents may find value in project-oriented, discussion-based, or task-based methods, young learners may benefit more from games, songs and total physical response (TPR).

Finally, Dörnyei's tenth commandment emphasizes the need for reflection, a critical component of the learning process. This self-reflexive practice can increase motivation, and most effective with adolescents and adults, as it allows students to make significant connections between their experiences and learning results (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005).

Some of these motivational strategies can be transferred across cultural and ethnolinguistic contexts. For example, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) identified the following strategies more effective toward motivating EFL (English as a foreign language) students:

- Set an example;
- Create a relaxed atmosphere;
- Promote learner's self-confidence;
- Familiarize learners with L2-related values.

Moskovsky et al. (2013) admitted a similar list:

- Provide individual support;
- Supply background knowledge;
- Provide positive rewards and praise.

Wong (2014) advocated effective motivational strategies are:

- Sufficient preparation and assistance;
- Recognizing success;
- Reminding students instrumental value of L2.

Lee et al. (2019) argued teachers can enhance students' motivation behavior by:

- Drawing students' attention to unique and difficult aspects of English;
- Using group work;
- Building confidence and promoting learner autonomy.

Lee and Lin (2019) suggested the ways teachers can motivate students are:

- Help students recognize their own strength;
- Tell students the usefulness of the knowledge and provide positive feedback on students' performance.

These high frequency strategies such as promote learner's self-confidence, familiarize learners with target language related values, building confidence and promoting learner autonomy can be further categorized into two major types of applications of motivational principles:

- 1) Expectancy-value
- 2) Self-determination theory.

Expectancy-value model posits that the two most immediate predictors of learners' persistence, effort and achievement are expectancies for success and task value beliefs (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, 2000). This model can be closely related to language learning. Learners may learn a language for a collection of reasons. The importance of the reasons for learning would decide how much effort students will spend and what cost they will pay for. In the school context, teachers should afford learners opportunities to see the relevance between the curriculum and personal needs and allow students to perceive their capabilities to attain the goal, so that their learning motivation can be promoted.

Expectancy-value model has been broadly adopted in various educational research, but it has rarely been integrated into EFL motivational strategy. Future studies can apply the expectancy-value model to steer clear of overlapping and ambiguous strategies and may enable teachers to come up with new strategies.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a theory of motivation that addresses issues of internal and external motivation. SDT maintains that to understand human motivation, it requires the recognition of the fact that people have three major innate psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000a):

- 1) Competence (to control the outcome and experience mastery)
- 2) Relatedness (to interact, be connected to and experience caring for others)
- 3) Autonomy (to be causal agents of one's own life and act in harmony with one's integrated self)

If these global needs are met, learners will be motivated and function optimally.

## **PART III**

### **RESEARCH ON MOTIVATING LANGUAGE LEARNERS OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS IN TEACHING EFL: EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACTORS**

The primary objective of this research is to explore what factors of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation influence the driving force of EFL learners of different age groups. The success of language learning depends to a large extent on the motivation of learners, which can be influenced by a number of factors, including the age of the learner, individual goals, the social environment, and the teaching methods and motivational strategies used by teachers. Since motivation is a complex, dynamic system with internal and external elements, the present research aims to capture this complexity through the perspective of practicing EFL teachers.

The two primary study questions are:

1. How do motivational elements for learning EFL differ across different age groups (VYLs, YLs, adolescents, and adults)?
2. How do extrinsic and intrinsic motivational elements affect teachers' teaching strategies?
3. What part do EFL teachers' teaching strategies play in the growth of learners' motivation?

The key hypothesis of the research is that learners' motivation experiences are significantly influenced by their age, with older learners becoming more driven by intrinsic motivation (such as self-improvement and career opportunities), while younger learners being more influenced by extrinsic motivation (such as rewards, good marks, parental expectations).

Additionally, it is also hypothesized that teachers intentionally modify their pedagogical approaches to enhance the motivation of learners of different ages.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

The theme of the current study is the following: motivating language learners of different age groups in teaching EFL: external and internal factors.

The study follows a qualitative research design, along with it aims to explore how EFL learners of different age groups are motivated, with a special focus on external and internal motivational factors. Since motivation is a complex and deeply personal phenomenon, qualitative interviews were deemed as the most appropriate tool for the gaining of in-depth comprehension into the views and experiences of language teachers.

Semi-structured interviews were indeed the chosen method for the empirical part of the thesis. This approach allows flexibility for the interviewer because it enables that person to ask follow-up questions based on the responses from the participants while still ensuring that all key topics are covered at all times. Three main areas were designed for coverage by the interview questions:

1. The participants' view on the ideal age for language learning.
2. Their observations regarding motivational differences between age groups.
3. The teaching strategies and motivational techniques they apply in practice.

This method was selected because it improves teacher perspectives exploration that purely statistical approaches or closed surveys would not have captured subtly.

### **3.1.1 Participants**

Ten EFL teachers participated in the study. They were selected on account of the fact they have experience in teaching learners from different age groups including children, teenagers, and adults. The selection was non-random but purposeful, so each participant could make sure they provide relevant understandings into at least two distinct age groups. All of the participants gave their consent so as to be interviewed. Academic use was granted regarding the participant's private responses.

**Table 1. Overview of the participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Level of education</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>	<b>Age groups taught</b>	<b>Context</b>
Participant 1	MA	30	6-17	School
Participant 2	MA	11	6-19	School, vocational school
Participant 3	MA	29	6-17	School
Participant 4	PhD	16	6-70	School, higher education, language courses
Participant 5	PhD	23	10-50	Middle and high school, higher education, language courses
Participant 6	PhD	1	13-17	High school, private lessons
Participant 7	BSc	3	3-62	Private lessons, summer school, middle school, high school
Participant 8	MA	23	3-16	Pre-school, elementary, middle and high school
Participant 9	BSc	5 (in teaching EFL)	10-17	Middle and high school
Participant 10	BSc	4	13-20	Language courses, private lessons

Each of the participants were female teachers. Three of them has a PhD degree, four have completed magister degree, and three have a bachelor degree, two are still studying for magister degree but are already teaching. The provided data indicate that the interview participants are highly qualified and their responses are deemed to be valid within the context of this research.

The 10 interview participants presented a broad range of professional experience. Specifically, four had been teaching more than 20 years, two between 11-20 years, and four up to 5 years. This means that the majority – six out of ten – had more than a decade of teaching experience. Such an extensive background was especially relevant in the context of this research,

as the educators are more likely to have explored a wide array of teaching strategies and developed a deeper understanding of the methods and strategies of motivating EFL learners of different age groups.

Since I conducted the research in the form of interviews, I was able to clarify first which age group of EFL learners the participants were working with and then formulate the questions according to the specific age group. The range taught by the interviewees is very diverse as most of them have worked with EFL learners of different ages during their careers. Taking into account the age groups that respondents are currently working with, two work with very young learners (VYL), six work both with young learners (YL) and teenagers or adolescents, and two with adults. Respondents also teach in different places because they work with students of different ages. One of the teachers is employed in a kindergarten, four in schools (elementary, middle and high school), one in vocational school, two are teachers in a college of higher education, and two give private lessons and language courses.

### **3.1.2 Research instrument**

The research instrument was the semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. It helped to gather information on issues related to the main theme. The guide contained open-ended questions (see Appendix 1) grouped into thematic sections:

- focusing on the age of language learners;
- internal and external motivational factors;
- effective teaching strategies.

This format allowed for consistency across interviews, while still giving participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences and insights.

The set of questions consisted of 24 questions and were divided into three parts.

The first part of the questions (1-14) dealt with general questions about the teachers: their age, experience, foreign language they teach, level of education, type of education they offer, as well as the age range they have worked with, both in the past and currently, teaching style and personal opinion about the perfect age for learning a foreign language etc.

The second part of the questions (15-22) seeks to find out teachers' thoughts on different types of motivation (extrinsic, intrinsic and amotivation or demotivation), and also which of these types do they deal the most, considering their students' age. Additionally, the participants shared how do they deal with challenges and what method they use in order to motivate their students.

The third part consisted of two questions (23 and 24). Question 23 included four situations of motivational challenges (internally motivated student, externally motivated student, amotivated student and group motivation challenge), the aim of which was to find out how teachers would deal with the challenges in the context of the age group they are teaching. The 24<sup>th</sup> question was based on Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) "Ten commandments of motivation". The aim of the question was to investigate whether the statements are really important in motivating foreign language learners and to what extent practicing English teachers agree with them.

The interview questions were developed in Hungarian, Ukrainian, depending on the native language of the respondents, to ensure clarity and natural communication. Selected responses were later translated into English for analysis and citation purposes.

### **3.1.3 Procedure of the research**

Our first task was to set up the questions both in Hungarian and Ukrainian. The set of questions were structured in such a way as to obtain detailed information from the interviewees. Since it is a rather intangible issue, we wanted to get information about the motivation of EFL learners of different ages, i.e. our main topic, from all angles and to get as much and as transparent information as possible. The research was carried out both online and offline in the spring semester, between 7 and 26 April. After, the interviews were transcribed (see Appendix 2).

Afterwards, the interviews were arranged. The interview participants were deliberately chosen from among teachers of English as a foreign language who had worked with at least two different age groups during their careers. During the research, we selected the purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, method. In order to obtain relevant data for the analysis of the topic, teachers were selected one by one and interviewed. The main objective was to elicit responses about how teachers motivate their students in teaching English as a foreign language, both extrinsically and intrinsically.

Subsequent the data collection, it was subjected to analysis.

## **3.2 Findings and discussion of the results**

In the following subsections, I summarize the findings obtained during interviews. The responses are presented and analyzed within thematic blocks. Accordingly, the subsections have been

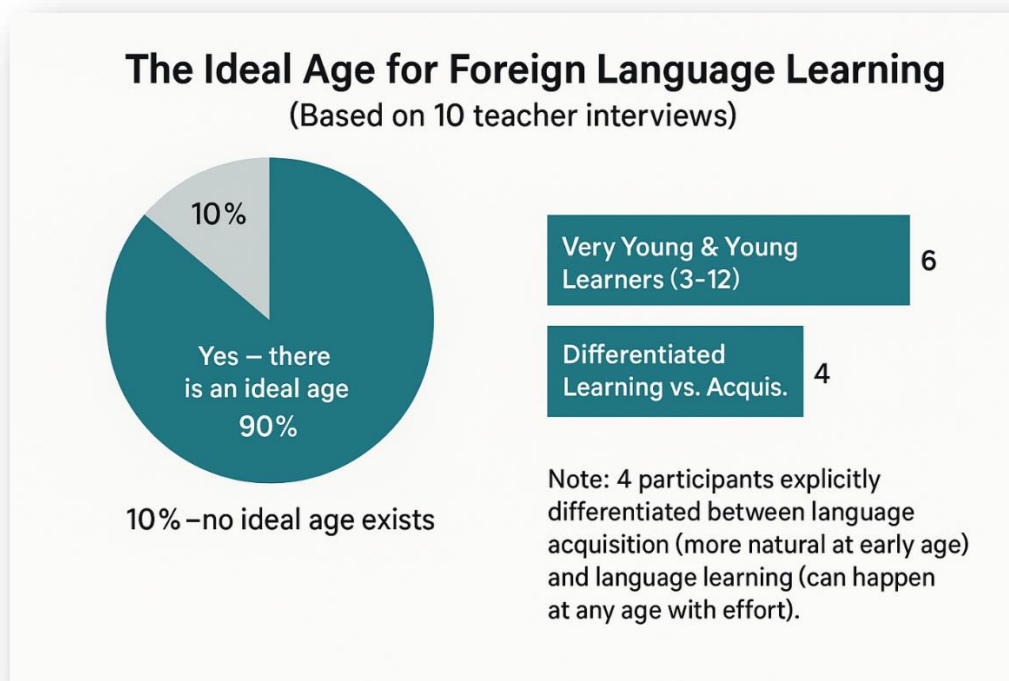


structured around the following topics: the ideal age for language learning, the most easily motivated age group, the impact of internal and external factors on teaching strategies, awareness of learner age and motivation, practical motivational strategies, motivational challenges and external factors, reflections on the “Ten commandments of motivation”.

### **3.2.1 Teachers’ perceptions of the ideal age for learning EFL**

The ninth and tenth questions explore teachers’ views on whether there is an ideal age for foreign language learning. If so, what age would it be? The answers were largely unanimous, but some clarifications were made about the difference between learning and acquiring a foreign language. Nine participants stated “as soon as possible” (Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). According to them, there is an existing ideal age (3-12 – VYLs and YLs) for EFL learning, and only one responded the following: “I don’t think there is an ideal language to learn a foreign language. Any child of any age can learn it, even a 3-year-old...and a 70-year-old can learn a foreign language.”

Within these, 4 of them made a distinction between learning and acquiring a foreign language. A shared point was that we can talk about acquiring a foreign language from 3 to 12 years old and only after 12 years old about learning a foreign language. According to the 4<sup>th</sup> interviewee, learning a foreign language earlier than 10 years of age is not formally recommended, as native language competences are not established. These responses to some extent echo the research of Lenneberg (1967), who states that there is a critical period (CPH), during which learners are the most receptive to acquire a new language. In accordance with CPH, children, up to about the age of 11, were able to learn a language (see chapter II, subsection 2.2).



**Figure 4. Ideal age for foreign language learning according to the interviewee (generated by ChatGPT on May 7, 2025)**

### **3.2.2 Teachers' perceptions on age groups most easily influenced in terms of motivation**

The objectives of questions eleven and twelve were to ascertain the EFL learners' age group that the teachers interviewed thought would be more likely to be motivated, and what differences did they noticed in motivation between different age groups. The answers of the interview participants revealed the followings: two of them said they could most easily influence YL. One of them (Participant 3) added that she thought that students of any age could be motivated according to their interests and goals, but that personally she found YLs the easiest, while the other (Participant 6) said that she found a common ground with the YLs and older ones (9+) and it helped her to motivate them. Among these age groups (9-16), Participant 6 didn't notice any significant difference, because mostly they are externally motivated. Four of the participants merged VYL and YL. All four were unanimous in saying that these are the age groups that can be highly motivated externally. They all mentioned playful teaching and some of them mentioned stickers or other small rewards as examples. Participant 5 also referred back to the fact that in age groups mentioned above, we are talking about language acquisition, so students are not consciously learning the language, which means it is not stressful for them, and there are more ways to arise

their interest and increase motivation in comparison with older students. According to Participants 2 and 9 they are best able to motivate YLs and teenagers (6-16 years old). Regarding the motivational differences between age groups, Participant 2 said the following: “There is a difference in the sense that, at least in my experience, lower grades can be motivated through interests, play, and playfulness, while upper grades, i.e. the high school age group, have a much stronger external motivating factor, which is independent of me, and therefore the young person themselves wants to learn the language, wants to catch up, whether because of social media platforms or even video games, and therefore is much more easily involved in the learning process.” To some extent, Participant 9 also pointed out that in grades 8-11, students already have a self-motivation, such as graduation or language exam, that drives them, so students’ motivation is still dependent on the teacher, but to a lower degree. The fourth interviewee said that teenagers (10-13 years) are those learners who are most easily could be motivated due to existing competitive spirit. According to her, motivating 14-17 years old learners is nearly impossible. In addition, she expressed a detailed description of the motivational differences between the different age groups, such as (also see figure 4):

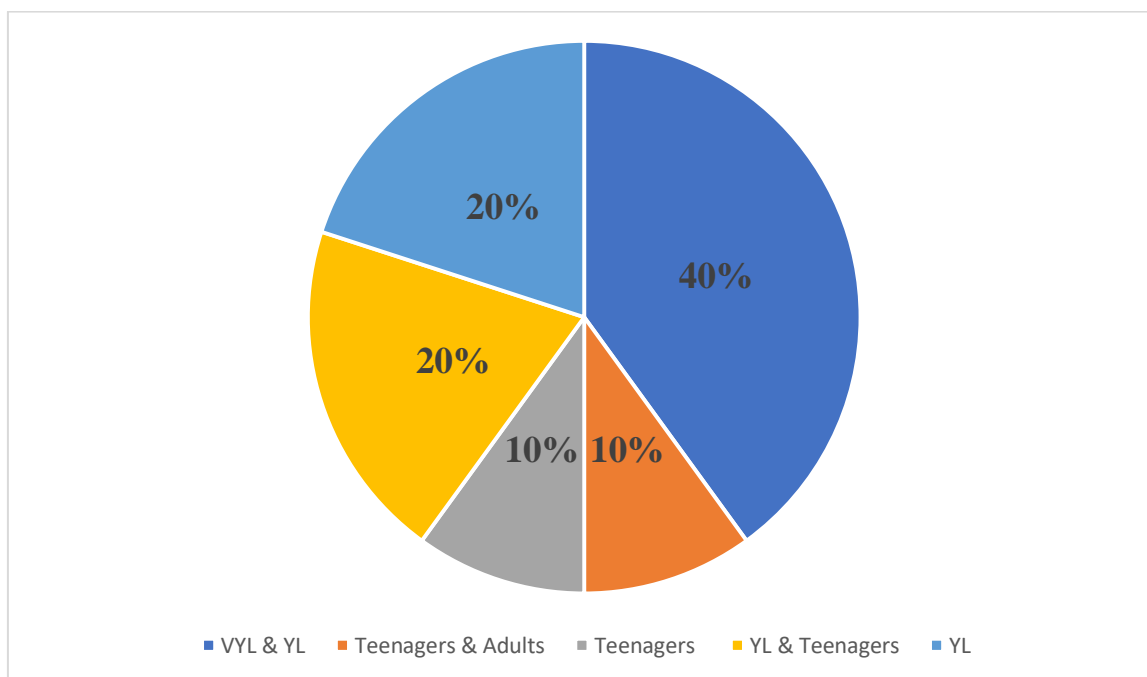
- For primary classes (ages of 6-9), motivation is very easy to arouse because they are driven by natural curiosity. They can pay attention for short periods of time, but games, songs, and movement activities (e.g. Simon Says) are highly effective. However, a lack of competitive spirit, especially because of the lack of text-based assessment system (HYIII<sup>1</sup>), can reduce the drive to achieve.
- Pupils in grades 5-7 (10-12 years old) can already be motivated by grades, competitions and recognition. This is where external motivation has a stronger influence, but pupils are often still willing to participate in tasks voluntarily.
- Between grades 8-10 (13-15 years old), there is a kind of stagnation, a consequence of adolescent reticence and lack of motivation. It is particularly difficult to maintain motivation during this period, both through external and internal means.
- In grade 11 (age of 17), a stronger external motivating factor reappears: the entrance exams. Although many students are not yet aware of their goals, the prospect of further education has a somewhat reinforcing effect.
- In higher education (18+), intrinsic motivation comes to the fore and is crucial for long-term commitment and progress. Students who learn out of intrinsic motivation tend to pursue

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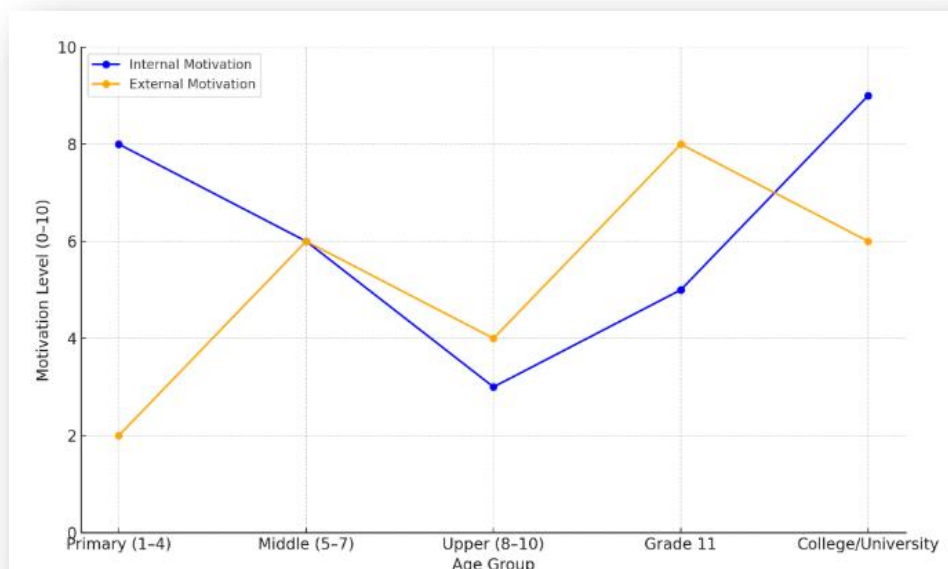
<sup>1</sup> НУІІ (нова українська школа) – a nationwide educational reform in Ukraine, aimed at modernizing the school system.

deeper knowledge and self-development, while those who study for a specific purpose (e.g. language exam) often stop once they have achieved it.

Finally, there is one more participant, Interviewee 10, according to whom adolescents and young adult are the age groups she can motivate the most, but she additionally noted that, it depends on the needs of the students who approach her.



**Figure 5. Teachers' perceptions: age groups most easily influenced in terms of motivation**



**Figure 6. Levels of external and internal motivation of EFL learners of different ages according to Participant 4 (generated by Chat GPT on May 7, 2025)**

### 3.2.3 The impact of students' motivation on educators' teaching strategies

The interview provided valuable insights into how intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors affect teaching strategies and student engagement. Teachers widely agreed that while both types of motivation are essential, their strategies must be adapted depending on the learner's age and personal background.

Teachers of younger learners tend to rely on external motivators, such as praise, stickers, and small rewards. Participant 5 observed that “students are not consciously learning the language at that age, so it's not stressful for them, and there are more ways to arouse their interests.” Participant 5 also recalled how lower-grade students were highly responsive even to smiley stickers and playful songs.

With older learners, especially adolescents, external motivation often revolves around grades, entrance exams, or social validation. However, many participants pointed out the importance of trying to convert this into intrinsic motivation. Participant 1 explained her strategy: “I try to help them reflect on whether they are learning for themselves or just to meet expectations.” At the higher educational level, intrinsic motivation dominates teaching decisions. Participant 2 described how her vocational school students acquire additional materials on their own or engage

deeply in tasks that align with their personal goals. This shift demands to explore, reflect, and take responsibility for their language development.

### **3.2.4 Teachers' awareness of learner age and motivation types**

A recurring theme in the interviews was the importance of age-awareness in shaping teaching methods. Most participants expressed, that adapting lessons to the age group of learners is essential for keeping students engaged and motivated. Participant 4 emphasized that “a task that is engaging for a six-year-old is not suitable for a sixteen-year-old,” and therefore the age of the learner must be taken into consideration when designing materials and selecting activities. Participant 9 also noted that the emotional and cognitive development stage of students determines how they process information and how long they can stay focused, influencing both content delivery and classroom management.

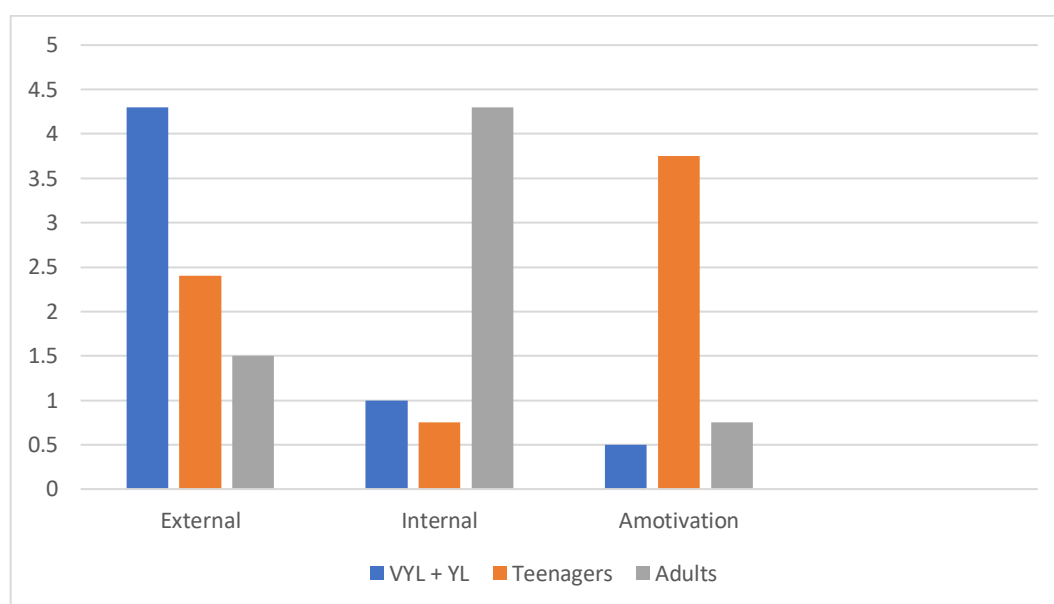
Teachers also demonstrated a clear understanding of the differences between externally motivated, internally motivated and amotivated learners. Several participants described externally motivated learners as those who respond well to tangible outcomes like grades or rewards. For example, Participant 2 shared that “in upper grades, students are often driven by external factors like exams or social media relevance.” Internally motivated students, in contrast, were described as self-directed and goal-oriented. Participant 6 explained that such learners are “easier to work with in the long term, because they are seeking personal growth.”

Amotivation or demotivation was reported as most common among adolescents. Teachers pointed out that these students often lack clear goals or feel disconnected from the learning process. Participant 4 described this as “a stagnation phase where it is hard to reach them through either kind of motivation.” Understanding these distinctions helped teachers in planning differentiated activities and offering individualized support.

When asked which type of motivation they considered more important for EFL learning, most participants leaned toward intrinsic motivation, especially in the context of long-term success. Participant 6 stated that “external motivation may spark initial interest, but internal motivation sustains learning.” However, teachers also acknowledged the value of external motivation, particularly with younger learners and in institutional settings where testing and assignments are central. According to Participant 10 “I would probably say intrinsic motivation with a hint of extrinsic works the best. But I also think intrinsic motivation is not always enough, and I would take some minimal rigidity out of extrinsic motivation and drop in intrinsic motivation

to keep it level but not too much rigor in it.” The overall agreement was that both types are important, but the balance and emphasis should shift according to age, context, and individual learner needs.

These insights highlight the necessity of adaptive teaching that takes into account both the developmental stage and the motivational profile of the learners. By recognizing these nuances, teachers can create more effective, responsive, and supportive language learning environments.



**Figure 7. Teachers' perceptions of motivation types across different age groups**

### 3.2.5 Teachers' motivational strategies in practice

A wide range of motivational strategies and methods adapted to different learner profiles and age groups were mentioned by the interview participants. For younger learners (VYs and Ys), common methods included songs, storytelling, movement-based games, and visual rewards such as stickers or stars. Participant 5 recommended to use tangible rewards: “stickers and smileys help maintain their attention and build excitement for class.” Participant 7 shared that including movement activities like TPR (Total Physical Response) greatly enhanced participation. These responses confirm Cameron’s (2001) studies, that younger students often depend largely on game-based activities, while adults may be more likely prefer to do task-based learning.

Participants teaching Ys and adolescents (ages 10-16) tend to focus more on goal-setting, competition, praise, and personalized learning tasks. Participant 2 mentioned that assigning small responsibilities within group work could turn passive learners into active participants. Participant 8 emphasized competition and points-based systems, which created short-term engagement, even

in case of VYLs, and in case of adolescents she implemented digital projects that allowed students to present their interests in English, which promoted intrinsic engagement.

Among teachers of young adults and students of higher education, strategies shifted toward autonomy-supportive techniques. Participant 6 described creating thematic units aligned with students' career aspirations, while Participant 9 emphasized debate and discussion-based activities that promote critical thinking and real-word application. Participant 2 noted: "when students see how English connected to their goals, they take more responsibility for their own learning."

As for effectiveness, nearly all teachers agreed that the success of motivational strategies depends on learner personality, context, and class dynamics. Participant 4 acknowledged that "what works for one group or even one student might not work for another," and emphasized the need to adapt constantly. Participant 9 also noted that while younger students respond immediately to praise and gamification, older learners require that respect their autonomy and individuality.

Overall, the participants emphasized the importance of a flexible, student-centered approach. While external motivators help initiate engagement – especially among younger or less confident students – most of the teachers considered the transition to intrinsic motivation as a key goal, particularly in preparing learners for independent language use. Participant 1 summarized this view by stating, "our task is not just to make them participate today, but to help them want to continue learning tomorrow."

### **3.2.6 Challenges in motivating learners and external influencing factors**

While teachers in the research demonstrated a wide range of motivational strategies, they also shared several challenges they faced when trying to maintain learner motivation, particularly across different age groups. A commonly cited difficulty was related to adolescents, who were frequently described as the most resistant to motivation. Participant 4 explained that "teenagers between 14 and 17 are the most difficult to motivate – they often don't know what they want, and it's hard to find what drives them." Similarly, Participant 6 mentioned that this age group often shows disinterest even when lessons are engaging, noting that "they require a more individual approach and more time to reach." Participant 2 also emphasized that biological and emotional changes occurring during adolescence can result in mood fluctuation and decreased focus, both of which negativity impact motivation in the classroom. For that reason, as it was mentioned in chapter II, subsection 2.2, children shift from carefree childhood to the adult world. They go through a lot of physical and psychological transformations, and for that reason it's essential for



the teacher to become familiar with these changes, apply appropriate approaches (Maier, 2011), and prioritizing the way students learn rather than how the teacher teaches (Harmer, 2012).

In contrast, motivating younger learners posed challenges related to short attention spans and the need for constant novelty. Participant 3 shared that “VYLs and YLs lose focus quickly, so even though they’re easier to excite, it takes energy to keep them engaged for a full lesson.” Participant 7 highlighted the importance of balancing fun with structure, as younger learners might not respond well to repetitive or overly academic tasks.

Adult learners, while often more intrinsically motivated, bring other difficulties. Participant 4 noted that “some adults only learn for a certificate and lose interest once they reach that goal,” pointing to the temporary nature of external motivation.

Beyond age-related factors, participants also identified external influences that significantly affect student motivation. One key factor mentioned by several participants was the educational system itself. Participant 4 provided “HYIII” as an example, noting that its reliance on non-numerical, descriptive assessments in early years eliminates competition and “makes it harder to instill ambition.”

Parental involvement was also seen as a double-edged sword. Participants 3 and 8 explained that supportive parents can reinforce motivation, especially at home, but overbearing or disinterested parents can diminish a student’s confidence or willingness to engage. Participant 3 noted the following: “inconsistent home support often reflects in poor classroom participation.” Lastly, technology and media influence were frequently mentioned. Participant 2 remarked that platforms like TikTok, YouTube, or online games can serve as both motivators and distractions, while students may be eager to understand English used in games or videos, they also often struggle with attention and discipline due to the high stimulation these platforms provide.

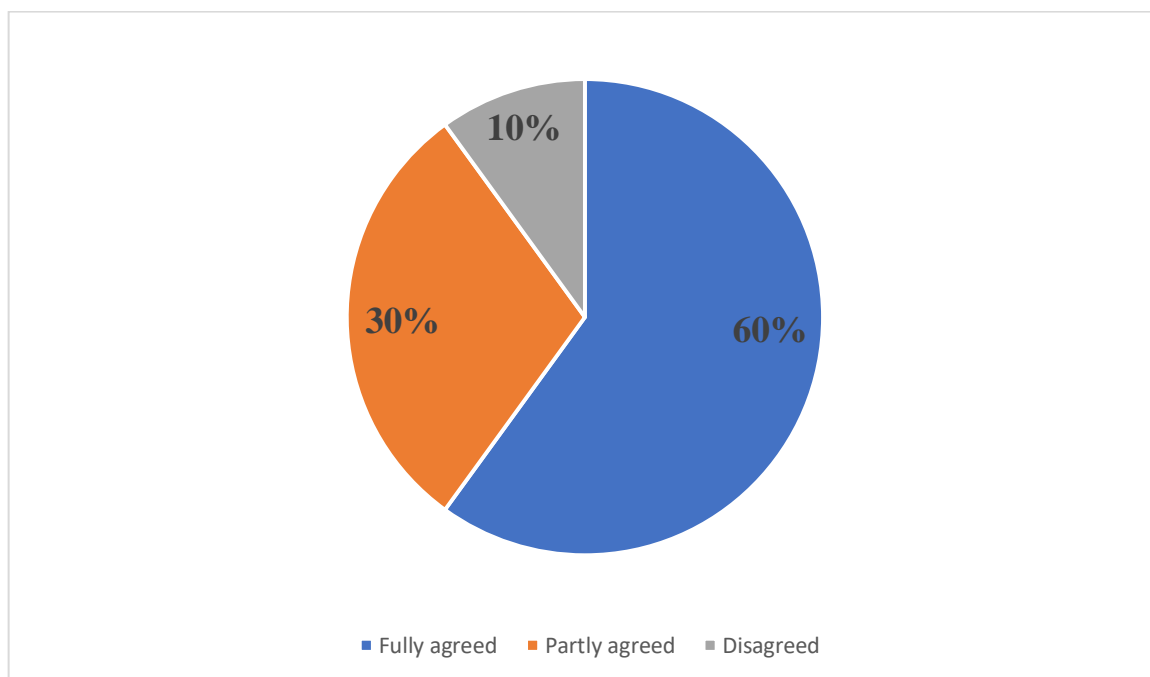
### **3.2.7 Teachers’ reflection on “Ten commandments of motivation”**

The final interview question explored teachers’ opinions on Dörnyei and Csizér’s (1998) “Ten commandments of motivation” – a well-known framework that offers practical strategies to enhance learner engagement. Responses from participants revealed general support for the principles, though with varying degrees of agreement, adaptation, and critical reflection.

Out of the 10 teachers:

- 6 participants fully agreed with the commandments and found them applicable to their own teaching contexts (Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 9);

- 3 participants partially agreed, indicating that while most points were valid, not all commandments fit every teaching situation or age group (Participants 3, 5, and 10);
- 1 participant expressed skepticism about the universal applicability of such a structured list, emphasizing that motivation depends too much on learner individuality and context to be “standardized” (Participant 8).



**Figure 8. Teachers' agreement level with Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) "Ten commandments of motivation"**

Several teachers emphasized that while the commandments are useful as a guiding framework, they must be adapted to age, personality, and classroom dynamics. For example, Participant 2 strongly supported the emphasis on creating a pleasant classroom climate and building confidence, stating:

“Children especially need a safe and supportive space. Without it, no strategy can work.” Participant 10, who partly agreed, pointed out that while she applies many of the commandments intuitively, not all are equally effective with adolescents: “They are too critical and resistant. You can vary methods or set goals, but they need more than that. Sometimes it’s about personal trust, not methodology.”

Others, like Participant 6, adapted the commandments to specific learner needs: “I focus on using varied tasks and showing students their progress, which builds confidence – especially for teenagers. But reflection, the tenth point, works better with older students and adults.”

Participant 4 emphasized the importance of personalized learning experiences (commandment 4), especially in diverse classrooms: “When a lesson connects to their interests, even demotivated students start participating.”

However, several participants highlighted challenges in applying all ten commandments consistently, especially due to curriculum constraints, class size, or limited teaching time.

Participant 3 marked: “The ideas are excellent, but reality doesn’t always allow such adapted motivation.”

Regarding the most valued commandments, participants most frequently mentioned:

- Commandment 1: creating a pleasant, supportive classroom atmosphere (mentioned by 6 participants);
- Commandment 2: increasing students’ self-confidence (5 teachers);
- Commandments 5 and 6: stimulating students with interesting tasks and providing regular feedback (4 teachers each).

In contrast commandment 10 (encouraging self-reflection) was viewed as less applicable to younger students. Participant 10 noted: “Reflection works better with adults. With young learners, you motivate through action, not introspection.”

Overall, most participants recognized the value of Dörnyei’s commandments as practical and research-based tools for enhancing motivation in EFL classrooms. Nevertheless, they emphasized the need for flexibility, contextual awareness, and age-appropriate adaptation when implementing these strategies in practice.

### **3.3 Consequences and pedagogical implications**

This research set out to explore how learners’ motivation to learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is shaped by their age, and how teachers adapt their pedagogical strategies in response.

One of the key consequences of the research is the confirmation that younger learners (very young and young learners) are primarily driven by extrinsic motivators. These include teacher praise, classroom rewards, fun and game-based activities, and parental approval. Their motivation tends to be short-term and dependent on engaging and stimulating classroom environments. In contrast, older learners (adolescents and adults) begin to shift toward intrinsic motivation, especially when they are able to connect language learning with personal goals such as academic achievement, career advancement, or personal development. However, the adolescent group was

also identified as the most difficult to motivate, due to a mix of psychological, emotional, and social changes that often lead to a temporary motivational stagnation.

Another important outcome is the way teachers adapt their methods. The interviews revealed that teachers consciously employ different strategies based on learners' developmental stage. With young learners, they focus on external reinforcement, structured routines, and movement-based activities. With adolescents, they often integrate competitions, digital tools, and projects that offer some degree of choice and responsibility. For adults, teaching tends to become more autonomous and goal-oriented, involving real-life applications and critical thinking.

These insights have several pedagogical implications. Firstly, they highlight the need for teacher education programs to include training on motivation theory and developmentally appropriate strategies. Teachers should be equipped not only with general teaching methods but also with tools to identify and respond to individual motivational profiles. Secondly, the findings suggest that curriculum designers and school administrators should support flexible learning environments that accommodate both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational strategies, depending on the age group.

Furthermore, this research underlines the importance of continuous reflection and differentiation in teaching. Motivation is not static; it evolves with the learner. Teachers must therefore be able to reassess and adjust their methods over time to maintain student engagement and foster long-term learning habits. The long-term goal should always be to gradually transition students from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, thereby encouraging autonomy, self-regulation, and lifelong learning.

Therefore, based on the findings, strong support was found for the original hypotheses: first, that motivation is significantly age-dependent, and second, that teachers modify their teaching approaches intentionally to meet learners' motivational needs.

## SUMMARY

The main objective of this thesis was to explore how age influences motivation in the process of learning English as a foreign language, with special attention to internal and external motivational factors. While age clearly shapes how learners engage with language instruction, it is not the sole determinant of success. Motivation, influenced by both individual characteristics and external context, plays a central role in shaping the effectiveness of language acquisition at any stage of life.

Throughout the theoretical chapters, the study examined key concepts and frameworks related to motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic types, the critical period hypothesis, and developmental theories such as Piaget's. It also considered how EFL learners of different ages – ranging from very young children to adults – differ in cognitive, emotional, and social readiness for language learning. By incorporating both psychological and pedagogical perspectives, the thesis provided a well-rounded analysis of how age and motivation intersect.

The empirical part of the research highlighted the practical experiences of teachers, revealing that educators do adapt their motivational strategies according to age-specific needs. Most teachers emphasized that motivation can be fostered at any age, provided that teaching methods align with the learner's developmental stage and goals. However, the findings also suggest that while younger learners benefit more directly from engaging, playful instruction and external rewards, older learners rely more heavily on personal goals and internal drives. The role of pedagogical methods appears most effective in childhood and adolescence, whereas for adult learners, personal circumstances, goals, and intrinsic motivation may play a more decisive role.

In conclusion, the research partially confirmed the hypothesis. Teachers acknowledged that age significantly influences the type of motivation learners experience and that they consciously adjust their strategies accordingly. However, the success of foreign language learning – particularly for adult learners – depends not only on age and pedagogical methods, but also on broader individual and situational factors. This underscores the complexity of motivation in EFL education and the need for flexible, learner-centered approaches.

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## РЕЗЮМЕ

У цій дипломній роботі досліджено особливості мотивації учнів різних вікових груп у процесі вивчення англійської мови як іноземної з урахуванням внутрішніх та зовнішніх мотиваційних чинників. Питання мотивації є одним із ключових у сучасній методиці викладання іноземних мов, оскільки рівень зацікавленості та готовності учня до навчання безпосередньо впливає на успішність оволодіння мовою. Дослідження показує, що мотивація є складним, багаторівневим процесом, що формується під впливом віку, психолого-педагогічних особливостей учня, соціального середовища та освітнього контексту.

У першому розділі було розглянуто основні теоретичні підходи до вивчення мотивації, зокрема роботи Дернеї (2003, 2005, 2008, 2009 і т.д.), Райана і Десі (1985, 1991, 2000), Вігфілда й Еклс (1992, 2000), які дали змогу краще зрозуміти природу мотиваційної поведінки у сфері вивчення іноземних мов. Особлива увага приділена розмежуванню понять "мотивація до навчання" і "мотив навчання", а також впливу афективного фільтру, самооцінки та соціальної взаємодії на рівень зацікавленості учнів.

У другому розділі було досліджено вікові особливості учнів різних груп: дуже молодших, молодших школярів, підлітків та дорослих. У роботі враховано як когнітивні аспекти розвитку згідно з теорією Піаже, так і педагогічні рекомендації відомих дослідників (Гармер, Кемерон, Леннеберг). Це дало змогу краще зрозуміти, як вік впливає на здатність до мовного навчання та які методи є ефективними для кожної групи.

Третій розділ присвячений практичному дослідженню, яке було проведено шляхом напівструктурованих інтерв'ю з викладачами англійської мови, що мають досвід роботи з учнями різного віку. Отримані результати підтвердили, що вчителі свідомо змінюють свої стратегії мотивації залежно від вікових особливостей: для молодших учнів ефективними є ігрові методи, заохочення та візуальні матеріали, для підлітків — елементи змагання, а для дорослих — мотивація, пов'язана з професійними чи особистими цілями.

Таким чином, гіпотеза дослідження була частково підтверджена: вік справді впливає на тип мотивації та педагогічні підходи, однак успішність навчання значною мірою залежить також від зовнішніх обставин, попереднього досвіду, рівня самостійності та підтримки з боку викладача. У дитячому та підлітковому віці недоліки, зумовлені віком, здебільшого компенсуються ефективними методами викладання, тоді як у дорослому віці

ключову роль можуть відігравати внутрішня мотивація, саморефлексія та цільова орієнтація.

## APPENDIX 1

### Part 1

1. How old are you?
2. What foreign language do you teach?
3. What is your highest qualification?
4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
5. What age group(s) have you worked with during your teaching career?
6. Where did you teach a foreign language (pre-school/primary school/secondary school/high school/lyceum/higher education/language course/special classes etc.)?
7. What age group(s) do you currently teach?
8. Where do you currently teach a foreign language?
9. In your opinion, is there an ideal age for learning a foreign language?
10. If yes, which one (VYL (3-7 years), YL (7-12 years), adolescents/teenagers (12-18), adults (18+))?  
If not, why do you think so?
11. Which age group do you personally think you can most easily influence in terms of motivation?
12. Have you noticed any differences in motivation between different age groups?
13. How would you describe your teaching style, based on feedbacks?
14. Do you think it is important for teachers to take the age of language learners into account when choosing teaching methods?

### Part 2

15. - What do you think means when a student is externally motivated? How is this reflected in the classroom?
- What do you think means when a student is intrinsically motivated? How is this reflected in the classroom?
- What do you think means when a student is amotivated/demotivated? How is this reflected in the classroom?
16. What type of motivation is typical of your students/age group you teach? Why? How does it manifest itself?
17. From your experience, which is more effective/more important?

18. What impact do you think you have on the motivation level of your students?
19. How do you motivate your language learners? What tools or methods do you use to promote external/internal motivation (if you are currently working with students of different age groups, please specify each age group)?
20. In retrospect, how successful have the methods you have selected and used to trigger external/internal motivation?
21. What external factors influence successful motivation? (e.g. lack of time, too much material in class, textbooks are not interesting etc.)
22. In your personal opinion, what is the biggest challenge in motivating foreign language learners?

### Part 3

23. Based on the following situations, answer the questions:
  - a) (Intrinsically motivated student) *The student is passionate about English, attends classes and studies beyond the assignments.*
    - How would you nurture and maintain the student's intrinsic motivation?
  - b) (Externally motivated student) *The student is only interested in learning English for good grades or external rewards.*
    - How would you try to direct this student's motivation towards intrinsic motivation?
  - c) (Amotivated student) *The student consistently shows no interest, makes no effort and avoids participation.*
    - How would you approach this situation? Would you try to motivate them or do you think that motivation should come from within?
  - d) (Group motivation challenge) *you have a mixed group of students, some of whom are very motivated and active, others who are completely passive.*
    - How would you balance the teaching process so that both groups are actively involved in the sessions and their interest is aroused? Do you think this is even possible?
24. According to the age group you teach, to what extent do you agree with the following statements (Dörnyei's "Ten commandments of motivation")
  - 1) The atmosphere in the classroom influences the external motivation of language learners.
  - 2) Language learners show more perseverance and enjoyment in learning a foreign language and feel able to achieve their foreign language goals if we improve student's self-confidence.



- 3) It is important to set clear and understandable goals, as this gives purpose and direction to language learning.
- 4) the personalized learning process is important.
- 5) It is important to use motivational tools
- 6) Teachers need to provide timely and constructive feedback
- 7) A strong sense of community in the classroom fosters peer relationships between learners and can serve as a powerful intrinsic motivator, as learners feel more connected to and responsible for their peers, thus increasing collective participation in the learning process.
- 8) Supportive teacher interactions increase motivation (especially when students face challenges in language learning).
- 9) (in terms of teaching methodology) Varied and engaging teaching methods are necessary to maintain learners' interest.
- 10) Need for reflection. The practice of self-reflection increases motivation, allowing learners to make meaningful connections between their experiences and their learning outcomes.

## APPENDIX 2

The transcribed interviews are available on drive at the link below:

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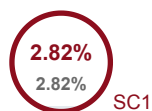
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5	<a href="http://file.upi.edu/Direktori/FPBS/JUR._PEND._BAHASA_INGGRIS/197308062002122-ROJAB_SITI_RODLIYAH/paper_kopendas.pdf">http://file.upi.edu/Direktori/FPBS/JUR._PEND._BAHASA_INGGRIS/197308062002122-ROJAB_SITI_RODLIYAH/paper_kopendas.pdf</a>	24 0.15 %
6	<a href="http://www.slideshare.net/creatiga/week2taleapril2014">http://www.slideshare.net/creatiga/week2taleapril2014</a>	20 0.12 %
7	<a href="https://sites.google.com/site/di2014ide736kb/1-theories-and-terms/intrinsic-and-extrinsic-motivation">https://sites.google.com/site/di2014ide736kb/1-theories-and-terms/intrinsic-and-extrinsic-motivation</a>	19 0.12 %
8	<a href="http://fcc-educ120.weebly.com/uploads/2/3/6/3/23636704/handout_learning_theories_summary.pdf">http://fcc-educ120.weebly.com/uploads/2/3/6/3/23636704/handout_learning_theories_summary.pdf</a>	18 0.11 %
9	<a href="http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/11971/1/Magid_Thesis.pdf">http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/11971/1/Magid_Thesis.pdf</a>	15 0.09 %
10	<a href="https://library.dmed.org.ua/index.php?do=download&amp;id=2711">https://library.dmed.org.ua/index.php?do=download&amp;id=2711</a>	14 0.09 %

from the home database (0.00 %)



NO	TITLE	NUMBER OF IDENTICAL WORDS (FRAGMENTS)
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from the Database Exchange Program (0.09 %)



NO	TITLE	NUMBER OF IDENTICAL WORDS (FRAGMENTS)
1	Ways of increasing motivation in the process of teaching a foreign language at school 2/9/2023 University Miras (University Miras)	14 (2) 0.09 %

from the Internet (2.73 %)



NO	SOURCE URL	NUMBER OF IDENTICAL WORDS (FRAGMENTS)
1	<a href="http://www.intuit.ru/studies/courses/4458/778/lecture/28759?page=4">http://www.intuit.ru/studies/courses/4458/778/lecture/28759?page=4</a>	75 (4) 0.46 %
2	<a href="https://sites.google.com/site/di2014ide736kb/1-theories-and-terms/intrinsic-and-extrinsic-motivation">https://sites.google.com/site/di2014ide736kb/1-theories-and-terms/intrinsic-and-extrinsic-motivation</a>	72 (4) 0.44 %
3	<a href="https://library.dmed.org.ua/index.php?do=download&amp;id=2711">https://library.dmed.org.ua/index.php?do=download&amp;id=2711</a>	54 (3) 0.33 %
4	<a href="http://fcc-educ120.weebly.com/uploads/2/3/6/3/23636704/handout_learning_theories_summary.pdf">http://fcc-educ120.weebly.com/uploads/2/3/6/3/23636704/handout_learning_theories_summary.pdf</a>	43 (4) 0.27 %
5	<a href="http://file.upi.edu/Direktori/FPBS/JUR._PEND._BAHASA_INGGRIS/197308062002122-ROJAB_SITI_RODLIYAH/paper_kopendas.pdf">http://file.upi.edu/Direktori/FPBS/JUR._PEND._BAHASA_INGGRIS/197308062002122-ROJAB_SITI_RODLIYAH/paper_kopendas.pdf</a>	34 (2) 0.21 %
6	<a href="http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/11971/1/Magid_Thesis.pdf">http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/11971/1/Magid_Thesis.pdf</a>	20 (2) 0.12 %
7	<a href="http://www.slideshare.net/creatiga/week2taleapril2014">http://www.slideshare.net/creatiga/week2taleapril2014</a>	20 (1) 0.12 %
8	<a href="http://conferences.neasmo.org.ua/uploads/conference/file/28/conference_29-30.4.2016.pdf">http://conferences.neasmo.org.ua/uploads/conference/file/28/conference_29-30.4.2016.pdf</a>	19 (2) 0.12 %
9	<a href="https://abusewarrior.com/mental-health/intrinsic-and-extrinsic-motivation-whats-the-difference/">https://abusewarrior.com/mental-health/intrinsic-and-extrinsic-motivation-whats-the-difference/</a>	18 (2) 0.11 %
10	<a href="https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4207434/">https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4207434/</a>	14 (2) 0.09 %
11	<a href="https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1449746.pdf">https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1449746.pdf</a>	13 (1) 0.08 %
12	<a href="https://scil.com.au/self-determination-theory-explains-behavior/">https://scil.com.au/self-determination-theory-explains-behavior/</a>	11 (1) 0.07 %
13	<a href="https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/self-determination-theory/38313584">https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/self-determination-theory/38313584</a>	9 (1) 0.06 %
14	<a href="http://www.maschiine.com/BA/2013_Mueller.pdf">http://www.maschiine.com/BA/2013_Mueller.pdf</a>	8 (1) 0.05 %
15	<a href="https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Ideal-L-2-Self-as-a-Predictor-of-Intercultural-Oz/e06deed433ed3ce2e3a64733dbf58311f6009790">https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Ideal-L-2-Self-as-a-Predictor-of-Intercultural-Oz/e06deed433ed3ce2e3a64733dbf58311f6009790</a>	7 (1) 0.04 %
16	<a href="https://www.structural-learning.com/post/self-determination-theory">https://www.structural-learning.com/post/self-determination-theory</a>	7 (1) 0.04 %

17	<a href="https://pdf.tips/the-princeton-encyclopedia-of-the-world-economy-two-volume-set.html">https://pdf.tips/the-princeton-encyclopedia-of-the-world-economy-two-volume-set.html</a>	7 (1) 0.04 %
18	<a href="https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1279861.pdf">https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1279861.pdf</a>	7 (1) 0.04 %
19	<a href="https://www.slideshare.net/sabrina-ben/describing-learners-motivation">https://www.slideshare.net/sabrina-ben/describing-learners-motivation</a>	5 (1) 0.03 %

### List of accepted fragments (no accepted fragments)

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NO	CONTENTS	NUMBER OF IDENTICAL WORDS (FRAGMENTS)
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