

ADULT LEARNERS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Annotation

Research on peculiarities how adults learn foreign languages in formal, non-formal and informal ways is comparatively not extensive, especially in Lithuania. Therefore, it was important to investigate the effects which motivate adults to learn foreign languages and how age makes a difference in learning. A research survey was designed on the basis of theoretical analysis and the study was conducted in Kaunas and Panevezys cities in order to find out the reasons why participants learn foreign languages (i.e. their extrinsic or intrinsic, integrative or instrumental motivation). The results of the empirical study revealed that adult foreign language learners in Lithuania mostly learn the English language and they know Russian and German; the current language they are learning in many cases is their second or third one. The participants revealed that adult learners are mostly motivated intrinsically (because of their wish to improve, learn, travel and etc.), less adults were motivated extrinsically (because of the work purposes – instrumental motivation) and because of communication reason (integrative motivation). The survey showed that participants believe that to learn a foreign language it is important to be motivated, want to improve in their life and, of course, to have a purpose.

Key words: adult foreign language learner, foreign language learning, foreign language learning motivation.

Introduction

Lifelong learning (LLL) has become a necessity to any person in order to improve and keep up with the developing technologies. The knowledge that we acquire in the educational institutions is not enough. Moreover, at this modern age, when we have the opportunity to study, learn and work internationally, travel and live all around the world. An excellent example which explains the need to learn throughout our life is the necessity to learn foreign languages. Likewise, competence of several languages allows people to communicate with foreign colleagues, travel independently or just communicate informally. Yet there are different opinions about the capacity to learn by learners of a different age.

Research in foreign language acquisition and learning has discussed the issue of adult versus child learning for over fifty years now, starting with Penfield and Roberts' works in 1959 and further continued by Lenneberg 1967, who developed a theory which is well known around the world as a critical period hypothesis (CPH). This hypothesis claims that adults, otherwise than children, are worse at learning something new, especially language, because "brain reaches its adult values until puberty and then there will be a loss of brain plasticity and its reorganizational capacities" (Lenneberg 1967). According to these researchers, after puberty a human loses the ability to learn a language as they did before the teenage years. Until now the debate continues, therefore there are critical studies of CPH (Abelo-Contesse 2009), as well. In spite of the disagreement among researchers, adults continue learning and acquiring foreign languages because of different reasons. Therefore, this article focuses on exploring adults' language learning motivators in learning a foreign language by identifying various types of motivators (Greenwood and Parasuraman 2012). There is a lack of this kind of research in Lithuania, as most research concerns children and students as language learners (Mačianskienė and Bijeikienė 2018).

The object of this article is motivation in adults' language learning. The aim of this article is to identify the adult learning motivation in learning a foreign language. The research used quantitative methods to find out effects of motivation on adults' foreign language learning: a) descriptive analysis was performed to analyse the demographical data of the research respondents (place of residence, age, languages learnt, learning period); b) comparative analysis was performed to investigate different data provided by the respondents on various aspects of language learning motivation. The following objectives were set to achieve the aim:

1. To define the topic related concepts and perform a theoretical analysis on the types of motivation;
2. To investigate adults' motivation to learn languages in non-formal, informal and formal ways.

Definitions in foreign language learning

Learning most of the time requires person's considerable efforts because it is not only a difficult endeavour but likewise time-consuming activity. Usually, the people who achieve a lot in their life, in their academic or professional areas, are very motivated people. They have goals and work hard to pursue them. The same applies in learning languages: in order to acquire competence in any foreign language, learners must have important reasons to participate in language learning. Of course, people are motivated by different various reasons.

In Lithuania, there is abundant research on adult learning (Gedvilienė, Mickūnaitė and Burkšaitienė 2016), but lack of research on adult language learning motivation, as most research concerns children and students as language learners (Mačianskienė and Bijeikienė 2018). Likewise, Šatrauskienė and Dautaras analysed peculiarities of adults' motivation for learning foreign languages in an informal education and they agreed that "these topics are very relevant in the modern changing world and they lack proper scientific discourse" (2008, 4).

Therefore, this research was performed in order to know more about adult learners' motivation to learn particularly in Lithuania. It was important to investigate the reasons why adults decided to return to learning. Consequently, this research might help to visualize the situation related to adult learners in at least two cities of Lithuania (Kaunas and Panevezys). Accordingly, theoretical analysis of the concepts relevant to the topic will be analysed and an overview of scholarly research in adult motivation will be provided. The differences between second language and foreign language, as well as between learning and acquisition, formal, non-formal and informal education will be explained, various types of motivation will be identified, as well.

First and foremost, the concept of "adult learner" must be explained because it is the main concern of this research. As Kapur (2015) explains, "adult learner (mature student) is a term used to describe any person socially accepted as an adult who is involved in a systematic learning process" (i.e. formal, non-formal or informal). Other authors (Belanger and Federighi 2000) argue expressly that adult learners are the participants in learning new opportunities. They form a heterogeneous group of people with different knowledge, learning background (e.g. different schools) and needs for learning.

Secondly, the concepts of second and foreign language must be clarified because these terms are used in collocations with "education", "learning" and "acquisition" by different scholars and may cause ambiguities. In contrast with the second language, when people learn a foreign language, which is not spoken in the place of residence, they learn it as a foreign language, hence we speak about foreign language learning, foreign language acquisition. According to Eddy (2011), a foreign language is acquired after L1 as a second language, as well; however, learners learn this language in their home environment and they choose it because of willingness to learn a foreign language or as a part of their education, and not because of any urgent necessity to survive.

Thirdly, the other two terms, acquisition and learning, chosen for discussion can also cause some misunderstandings because of different meanings they can carry. A number of researchers use both of these terms as synonyms to mean the process of gaining language competence. Nor and Rashid (2018) provided definitions of both the terms. They define language learning as a conscious process of learning when you learn it with a specialist (e.g. teacher) at a specific place, like school or kindergarten whereas acquisition is more as a subconscious process that occurs when a person learns language as it is his/her first (native) language. They also state that in order to acquire a language, a person has to be in the right environment to learn it by listening to words when others speak. There can be added, that "acquisition" and "learning" have this main difference in their definitions: to acquire a language means to learn it naturally, while "learning" defines that language learning is planned.

Fourthly, the word motivation is a meaningful word for all people who are willing to seek their life goals. Likewise, it has become a very popular word in the internet social life, as now many people like to post things which they do and show others what motivates them. The meanings of daily life motivation and learning motivation will be compared and explained in order to fully understand the concept of foreign language learning motivation.

According to Ching (2015), human motivation is a very broad concept, which can be used in many academic disciplines including sociology, psychology, political science, education, and economics. Yet other researchers (Alwi, Bakar, Gopalan, Mat and Zulkifli 2017) define this concept in more philosophical terms, that motivation and learning process have a connection, and motivation is crucial to succeed in educational matters and in real life, as well. They think that "the learning process is an endless life long process", and it is crucial to always achieve a high motivation. Cerdan (2017) states that motivation is the impulse that brings people to achieve what they want, and it, of course, plays a great role in learning. Ur (2012, 10) considers motivation to be "a crucial factor in successful language learning".

Fifthly, people can be motivated by different agents or drivers and have different aims in their life, likewise, researchers have identified various types of motivation (intrinsic vs. extrinsic, instrumental vs. integrative, etc.), which will be described further.

Cerdan (2017) states that “intrinsic motivation” appears when a person is motivated to do some activity because he/she thinks that it is important or that this brings joy. For example, intrinsically motivated people become happier and more excited to work because working becomes a challenge. Gottlieb, Lopes and Oudeyer (2016) add that “intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence.”

The second kind of motivation is extrinsic motivation. According to Cherry (2018), extrinsic motivation occurs when people are “motivated to perform a behaviour or engage in an activity to earn a reward or avoid a punishment”. The main difference between these two types of motivation is that extrinsic motivation arises from outside of the individual, while intrinsic motivation arises from within (Cherry 2018).

Canadian researchers Gardner and Lambert (1972), the most prominent scholars in second language motivation research field, described motivation in terms of orientation or “goal” and distinguished such orientations as integrative and instrumental. Instrumental motivation (or orientation) in language learning refers to a desire to learn a language in order to fulfil particular utilitarian goals, for material or educational benefit. For example, to be hired for a job, to pass an examination, to progress in studies, etc. On the other hand, integrative motivation refers to a desire to learn a language in order to “integrate into the community of speakers of that language” (Ur 2012, 10), to communicate, to be liked by people of another culture.

The last but not the least, other important concepts are formal, non-formal and informal learning. These concepts are broad categories and might be considered as learning environments. Learning environment is important for language learners because it does not only show where the language was learnt, but how organized it was, how planned and it might help to understand the learning goals.

Formal learning is, first of all, intentional and structured, and its opportunities are arranged by some institutions, for example, learning language at a kindergarten, school, college or university. This kind of learning is organized and, in some cases, mandatory. Generally speaking, Ainsworth and Eaton (2010) state that learners who learn in a formal way have clearly defined objectives and expected outcomes (they know why they are learning). Upon the completion of formal learning a certificate or diploma is awarded. On the other hand, non-formal learning is learning in some non-formal education institution, for example, learning a language in language courses offered by language schools, like an extra-curricular activity with a tutor or so. It has two options: it may be or not be intentional or organized by an institution.

In case of informal learning a person learns himself or herself; they may be taught by their siblings, parents or friends; they may decide to learn a language and put all efforts in doing it on their own. Thus, this type of learning is not organized and most of the time this kind of learning is experiential. A learner usually does not have clearly set objectives and learning is spontaneous.

Hence, it is obvious that these three learning types depend mostly on environment learners choose to learn and lead to different language competences acquired. Formal, non-formal and informal learning can be differentiated by the aspect of learning environment and organization of learning: formal learning usually takes place at university or school; non-formal learning is in between these two types; and informal learning can be done by ourselves having some or no goals. A non-formal and informal language learning are most applicable in discussing adults’ language learning.

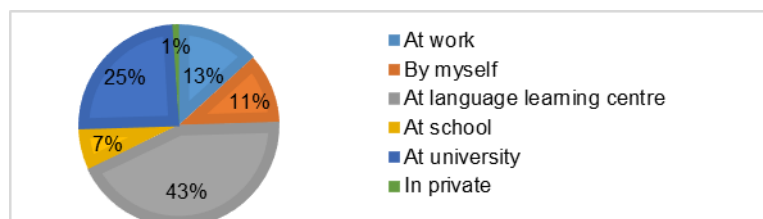
To sum up, it is clear that motivation is a very important “trigger” for any human being in learning, because it helps them to achieve the set learning goals and acts as a driver during the learning process. Many aspects of motivation can be found and a number of types of motivation (e.g. intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental and integrative) can be discerned depending on the person’s learning environment and purpose.

Analysis of empirical research results

Information about adult learners’ language learning motivation was gathered using a questionnaire survey as a research instrument. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of theoretical analysis into adult motivation and consisted of 15 questions to be answered by adult learners who start or continue learning foreign languages for different reasons. Therefore, there were released 120 questionnaires. The questionnaire was anonymous and involved respondents to provide information related some demographic data and motivation in learning languages. During the analysis process, the motivation aspects were grouped into different types of motivation (extrinsic vs. intrinsic, integrative vs. instrumental). The questionnaire asked

respondents to provide some demographic data, what motivates them to learn, why they learn, and what effects the acquisition of a foreign language, etc.

These people who answered the questions were from Kaunas (about 80%) and Panevezys (about 20%) counties. In most cases the process of data collecting proceeded at language learning centres (43%), adult language courses provided in university premises (25%) (mainly at Vytautas Magnus University), work, independently by learners themselves, school or with private tutor (see 1 Fig.). Results showed that 80% of the respondents know Russian, which is understandable having in mind that about half of the respondents are more than 40 years old and they were affected by the Soviet regime. "In 1940 Lithuania because occupied country where Russian was the de facto language of innovation – novelties, news and education came to Lithuanians through Russian" (Lane 2014). And almost 30% of respondents know German language, as well. Yet there was found that more than 40% of the respondents know English and this might be because the other part of the respondents were younger than 40 years old and they already are a generation of English influence.



1 Fig. Current place of learning a foreign language

The research data shows that more than half of the respondents are over 46 years old, which proves the fact that that age is not a barrier for learning something new, like learning a foreign language. This finding could support Krashen's theory (1983) that adults, the same as children, are capable of learning a foreign language. It means that CPH theory by Lenneberg (1967) is clearly outdated.

The analysis of the research findings helped to discover many features which are related to adults' motivation to learn a foreign language, and it is clear that motivation varies from person to person because of activities and reasons at that particular time in their life when they decided to study a foreign language. This supports the statement of researchers (Ching 2015) that human motivation is a very broad concept and "a crucial factor in successful language learning" (Ur 2012) and that motivation is a power in learning.

It appeared that there were strongly motivated people (each tenth of the respondents) who wanted and needed to learn a foreign language, that is why they were determined to go to the lessons. One more interesting fact was that half of the respondents, who were learning a foreign language at the time of the research, said that they had learnt it before. One of two of this survey's participants have been learning a particular language already for at least one year, two years or even for five years. It means that motivation was strong enough to make them return to learn the language one more time, and it supports the idea of Lifelong learning.

Interestingly, but the reason why people choose to learn foreign languages is most often related to the changing tendencies in the world, i.e. they dictate the logical steps in human life: to learn something which is useful at that particular moment in their life when they could get advantage from it. For example, earlier in our history, in the mid-1990s when Lithuania was still occupied by Russians, there were laws which stated that citizens of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) countries had to learn the Russian language. Then people were supposed to know this language because it was mandatory by law, and because they could do more at that time knowing Russian. The greatest advantages were that they could travel and get better carrier opportunities. On the other hand, these years ended and a new tendency has emerged: to know English. Now these people who used to have an advantage of knowing Russian must renew their skills by learning a language – English – which allows them to reach the same benefits as they did during the soviet years.

Analysing what inspires the respondents to start and continue learning a foreign language it appeared that for the majority of the respondents (see Table 1) (86%) willingness to learn a language or, in general, to learn is the greatest inspiration. For the half of the respondents travelling is their important inspiration as well. This could be explained that travelling is like a reward for serious work but in order to get this reward you must know foreign languages to be independent while travelling. A little bit less than half of the respondents agreed that curiosity is one of the intrinsic motifs which inspired them to learn. One of three answered that better carrier opportunities (extrinsic/instrumental motivation) inspire them to learn a foreign language

because there are situations at work when you need to communicate with others or you need to find some information which is e.g. in English, and then you know that the knowledge of this language might reduce the difficulties, or sometimes it even can create favourable circumstances to be promoted. Hence, this Table 1 shows that the respondents equally are inspired by intrinsic and extrinsic motifs which are led with instrumental motifs as well.

Table 1

Inspiration to learn a foreign language

Inspirations	Number of participants	Participants (%)	Types of motivation
Willingness to learn a foreign language	91	86%	Intrinsic
Travelling	56	53%	Extrinsic/Instrumental
Curiosity	40	38%	Intrinsic
Knowledge of foreign languages	35	33%	Intrinsic
Better future/carrier opportunities/salary	27	26%	Extrinsic/Instrumental
Foreign films, theatres, music, etc.	14	13%	Extrinsic/Instrumental
Life abroad	12	11%	Integrative
Studies	10	9%	Extrinsic/Instrumental
Communication	10	9%	Integrative

It can be concluded that 90% of the respondents raise their learning goals and for more than half of them this goal is oral communication if there is an opportunity or for approximately 40% of the respondents is to be able to use a foreign language, like when reading a book in a foreign language. Moreover, the research results disclosed that majority of the participants (80%) learn a foreign language for travelling purposes while 60% for communication and one third for watching non-Lithuanian movies and for work purposes. This research showed that a great number of the respondents learn a foreign language because they were inspired by intrinsic motifs: willingness to learn a foreign language, to know more languages or to learn something in general and because of curiosity. Still, half of the respondents were inspired to learn by extrinsic and instrumental motifs, like travelling and better carrier opportunities.

More than half of the respondents admitted that the teacher and his/her desire to explain the lesson, the atmosphere, adapted teaching to individual needs and group work are some of the efficient encouragements which helped them to learn a foreign language in the class. Finally, in total half of the participants agreed that motivation and willingness to improve are great determiners of gained language proficiency as well.

Furthermore, absolute majority (nine out of ten) of the respondents agreed that they had a lesson goal in learning as well. To illustrate, half of the surveyed ones answered that their biggest goal which kept them motivated in each lesson was trying to speak the target foreign language. Likewise, more than half of the surveyed learners preferred learning in formal and non-formal settings rather than in an informal way, as they were more motivated to learn in a lesson because of the teacher who managed to create a cosy learning atmosphere. They were also motivated by the teacher's ability to explain the lesson until a student finally comprehended it, by adapting the teaching to a student's personal skills and by creating group work for adults to participate in.

All the obtained research results which were related to motivation were divided into four types of motivation, using the terms intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Lopes and Oudeyer 2016) and integrative and instrumental motivation, as suggested by Ametova (2020). It was determined that the most popular situations in which participants used their foreign language skills were promoted by intrinsic motives: travelling, communicating with people in the target language, willingness to learn a foreign language or willingness to learn in general and to improve, willingness to know more foreign languages, they also wanted to learn because of pure curiosity. Less motivated learners, looking at the percentage value of the answers, were influenced by extrinsic motives, such as work, studies, better career opportunities, etc. This shows that motives which arise from inside of foreign language users are more popular and motivate adults stronger to learn a language. These drivers of motivation can be somewhat close for any mature person, as having in mind that most of the participants were over 46 years old, there we can see more decisions concerning their stage of life which is already maturity not their teenage years.

Discussing the research results from the perspective of another dichotomy – integrative and instrumental, it is evident that instrumental motivation prevails: travelling was the most popular motive, chosen by over half of the respondents, work was chosen by each fifth respondent, other variables such as learning the language because it will help to understand the films or plays staged in the foreign language or understand the songs sung in the target

language or to help them in their further studies were chosen by a smaller number of the respondents (about one tenth). Integrative motive – willingness to live abroad - was chosen by only each tenth respondent as well. It is difficult to say if the respondents understood this variable as permanent or temporary living abroad, but in any case, it shows the tendency to know the target language and be able to integrate more easily in the society where that language is spoken.

Finally, the last question with regard to motivation and the last question of the survey was an open one and asked the research participants to think about the determiners of language proficiency, i.e. the factors that could be responsible for good language acquisition. The respondents explained that being motivated was one of the most important aspects, putting effort (extrinsic motives: watching movies, listening, writing, doing homework, reading, etc.) as well; practical use of a foreign language, like travelling (extrinsic), speaking in a foreign language (integrative) was added as important as well, likewise willingness to learn/improve (intrinsic), having a goal, personal qualities (stubbornness, ability to concentrate, trust in oneself, personal attitude, etc.), invested time, environment, teacher, interest, etc. Mostly all of these factors which come from inside the human and determine language proficiency are related to intrinsic motives, and it shows that adult learners usually are motivated because of themselves and not because of awards or other aspects which might be a motive for younger generation who seeks for more practical use.

We can also conclude that only one tenth of the respondents were motivated to learn a language for integrative purposes (willingness to live abroad), all other respondents showed having the instrumental motivation to learn a foreign language (e.g. for better career opportunities). On the other hand, some adults were motivated by some extrinsic motives, such as work, studies or better salary. It indicates that whenever the effects of these extrinsic motives disappear then the willingness to learn a language decreases as well.

To sum up, it can be said that adult learners are most often self-motivated language learners because they are motivated intrinsically which means that they do not need any awards from learning a language because the learning itself makes them happy, they know that they can be more independent when they know more languages, and they can use these languages for a number of purposes (instrumental motivation) as well. Moreover, older learners already see the barrier between communicating with the rest of the world, i.e. people who do not speak Russian, and that is why it can be a reason to learn one of the most popular languages - English. Adult learners understand that foreign languages open more opportunities in their life, such as better future and career opportunities (extrinsic) and ensure independence while travelling (intrinsic) and meeting new people (integrative). The results of the research revealed that among all three fields of human life - personal, professional, or academic - that can motivate a person to learn languages, in this research, personal motivation was stronger than the other two fields. It may be because the majority of adults (as can be determined by their age) had acquired their education and were the participants of the labour market who did not feel the necessity to acquire different language competences, but the willingness for their personal development was so strong that it even made people return back to learn or relearn a language.

Conclusions

1. In Lithuania, there is abundant research on adult learning. Consequently, in order to narrow deeper, there was a “must” to write the research. For this purpose the survey was conducted, but first of all, the main definitions were identified. Thus, motivation is a “trigger” which keeps people move to their goal; a foreign language is a language which is not spoken in the place of residence whereas a second language is a language used for public communication of that country. Other important concept is related to learning environment. Therefore, the most popular environment chosen by respondents was non-formal learning, e.g., when a learner learns a language in courses offered by language schools.

2. The research revealed that the research respondents' language repertoire was broad: the majority of them were learning English and knew the Russian and German languages, and that mainly all the learners were currently learning their second or third language. This language learning experience allowed to assume that the research respondents had some previous experience in language learning, strong and supportive motives to learn which helped them to continue learning in their later years. Therefore, it can be stated that LLL exists, and more people choose to learn languages.

3. The analysis of the research results identified that the majority of the respondents were motivated to learn a foreign language they were currently learning by internal or intrinsic motives (which arise from within her/himself), as the major goal of learning a language was to

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