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THE UPS AND DOWNS OF MOTIVATION: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF A GROUP OF SECONDARY-SCHOOL LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

(A motiváció változásának hosszú távú vizsgálata egy középiskolás angolos csoportban)

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation is concerned with the fluctuation of motivation to learn a foreign language (L2) in an institutional setting. The participants were 16 students at a secondary grammar school (III. Béla Gimnázium, Baja). The purpose of the study was (a) to identify the most important classroom-related motivational features and examine their interaction, (b) to explore the dynamic nature of motivation, and (c) to define the teacher's role in the motivational process over an extended time.

The study followed a qualitative research design and lasted for four years. In order to gain an emic perspective of the factors underlying students' motivation, self-report data was gathered from a variety of sources, which included students' diaries, focus group interviews, the teacher's diary, and a questionnaire on beliefs about L2 learning. The different phases of the data collection procedure focussed on the following aspects: (1) students' self-perceptions as language learners, (2) the classroom environment and the motivational effects of teachers' instructional strategies, (3) learners' L2 development and its impact on the changes in their orientation, and (4) the evolution of mastery motives in the course of their studies.

The findings of the study have contributed to a better understanding of current issues in L2 learning motivation research such as the interaction between various motivational characteristics and the temporal changes in students' motives. The study carries important implications for practising teachers and teacher educators.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement. On the other hand, high motivation can make up for considerable deficiencies both in one's language aptitude and learning conditions…*(Dörnyei, 2005, p. 65)

Why do students behave as they do? What drives them to participate in different classroom activities? What factors influence their choice of action? How can teachers understand learners and scaffold their learning process? These are some of the daily questions that teachers ask themselves, and to which applied linguists seek answers.

My personal interest in the issue stems from the fact that, as a secondary-school teacher of English as a foreign language (EFL), I also often face problems of how to arouse and maintain my students' interest and how to provide them with a suitable learning environment. This desire to understand students' attitudes and motivation has strengthened since I enrolled in the PhD course in language pedagogy, and my studies have given me inspiration to examine the subject from the perspective of the participants of the learning process. Although the research articles that I have read have clarified some theoretical

issues, continuous reflections on my own teaching practice have posed further questions, which eventually called for systematic data collection and led to the design of a longitudinal qualitative study of a group of my students.

My aim was to examine the relevance of theory in the classroom context, that is, to explore how different affective factors that are emphasised in the literature relate to everyday teaching practices. Another goal was to consider how I, as a researcher teacher, could utilise the findings in the classroom for the sake of the students' progress, in simpler terms, how I could become a better teacher and help them become successful learners. Given the fact that I undertook participant research, the reader might have the impression that I was biased. This is probably true, however, the lessons functioned and I was fully aware that my work was in close interaction with my students' motivation. I hope that the reader will also see that the good practice described in this dissertation was apparently effective. Furthermore, I must admit that I consider myself a motivated teacher, who has always taken a keen interest in her own development and kept her finger on the pulse of EFL matters. Also, I believe that only a devoted professional would venture on investigations into the motivational characteristics underlying her students' behaviour and actions in the classroom.

Besides my personal motivation, the study that I conducted for the dissertation was also inspired by the increasing interest in the literature in the role that affective variables occupy in second and/or foreign language (L2) learning. As a result, students' attitudes and motivation have become focal points in the study of this field. Researchers appear to agree that motivation is indeed a complex phenomenon, since their investigations have resulted in various definitions of the construct (see, for example, Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner, 1985; Reeve, 1992; Williams & Burden, 1997). Massive research has been carried out with the aim of getting better insights into the L2 learning processes by examining them from the student's

point of view and major attributes such as language aptitude, motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, learning strategies and learning styles seem to be prevalent in every study (e.g., Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Oxford & Ehrman, 1993; Skehan, 1991). Other authors (e.g., Horwitz, 1987; White, 1999; Williams & Burden, 1999), however, highlight the causal relationships between learners' beliefs and expectations on the one hand, and the actual strategies they use while learning the foreign language, on the other.

As more and more studies were carried out in EFL settings, the classroom milieu got in the limelight. A new approach, the process-oriented view has gained ground, and researchers investigate the ways in which the different mental processes that affect L2 learning and achievement operate (Dörnyei, 1998; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Motivation is now seen as a dynamic concept, in which time is considered to be a determining factor (Dörnyei, 2000, 2002; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Ushioda, 1996; Volet, 2001). Consequently, attention is directed towards attitudes and motivation concerning the learning environment, more specifically the course, and the role that peers and teachers play (see, for example, Burnett, 2002; Nikolov, 2000, 2001; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999). Despite this shift in interest towards L2 learning settings, the number of empirical studies examining the classroom climate is relatively small.

Given the fact that most investigations primarily focus on classifying previously identified motivational variables, the study that I have undertaken fills a gap by examining how the different variables interact with each other in the long run. The need for such a more holistic approach has been expressed by several authors (Dörnyei, 2001a; McGroarty, 2001; Ushioda, 2001). The research conducted for the dissertation intends to add new empirical data to the study of L2 learning motivation as well as inspire further investigations of its dynamic nature.

Research questions and overview of the dissertation

The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of L2 learning motivation by exploring the following areas: (a) the interaction between classroom-related motivational variables; (b) the evolution of students' motivation in the course of instructed language learning; and (c) the teacher's role in the motivational process. The dissertation addresses the following research questions.

1 How do students see themselves as language learners?

- How do they conceptualise success in learning English?
- What impact do beliefs about L2 learning have on their motivation?
- How pervasive is foreign language anxiety amongst the students?

2 What impact do content and form of teaching have on students' motivation?

- What are their perceptions of various task types?
- How motivating and effective do they perceive different working modes?

3 How does the atmosphere of the classroom shape students' motivation?

- What factors trigger their choice of action?
- What role does the teacher play in enhancing motivation in the classroom?
- How do peers contribute to a supportive atmosphere?

4 How does motivation change over time?

- What is the relationship between proficiency level and motivation?
- How do students' changing goals interact with motivation?

The dissertation falls into two parts. Part 1 provides a theoretical background to the study, while Part 2 gives a report on the actual investigations conducted for the thesis.

Following this introduction, in Chapter 2 I provide an overview of those trends in motivation research that directed my attention towards its educational aspect, and gave me inspiration to investigate the effects that the classroom milieu exert on students' attitude and behaviour. First, I describe different approaches to motivation and show how Gardner's (1985) fundamental socio-educational model has been expanded over the past two decades. This is followed by a presentation of theories that view motivation from an educational perspective and by an outline of three models of L2 learning motivation that provide the theoretical framework for my investigations. Next, I review previous studies into motivation in the classroom together with the research methods traditionally used in the field. Chapter 2 is concluded by the statement of purpose and the formulation of research questions.

Part 2 of the dissertation is organised into seven chapters as follows. Chapter 3 provides the contextual background for the study. First, I outline recent changes in the structure of the Hungarian educational system and the reforms implemented in the curriculum and in the school-leaving examination system. Then I propose an explanation for the privileged status of foreign languages in this scenario and give a description of the setting where the investigations were conducted. A detailed account of the research design is given in Chapter 4. This includes the statement of the rationale for the methodology as well as a description of the participants and the data collection instruments and procedures adopted in the different phases of the research.

The results pertaining to the main research questions of the study are presented and discussed in four consecutive chapters. Chapter 5, addressing the first research question, presents the picture that students form about themselves as language learners. It clarifies issues such as students' conceptualisations of success and failure, their beliefs about L2 learning, and anxiety. The subsequent two chapters are concerned with actual classroom

procedures. Chapter 6, dealing with the second research question, examines how motivating and effective students perceive different task types and working modes. Chapter 7, addressing the third research question, explores the climate of the classroom. After identifying the factors that influence the atmosphere of various lessons, I discuss the role that teachers and peers play in creating the learning environment. Chapter 8, concerned with the fourth research question, looks at the impact of time on students' motivation. In the last chapter of the dissertation, the most important findings are summarised together with the limitations of the study. As a conclusion, possible pedagogical implications are considered.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

Why do people engage in certain activities? Why do they learn? What makes some people more persistent than others in pursuing an activity? What motivating factors influence human behaviour and achievement? Questions like these have a long tradition of research inspiring both psychologists and educational experts to find convincing answers. This intense interest in human motivation is understandable if we consider the fact that it is present in practically every facet of our personal as well as professional life (Dörnyei, 2001a).

In this chapter first I will outline those theoretical issues that have provided a basis for investigating the educational perspective of motivation. This will be followed by a summary of various models and approaches to motivation to learn an L2. Then, by further narrowing the field, I will overview studies that focus on the instructional setting and thus explore students' attitude and behaviour in the classroom. Finally, I will present the research questions that the dissertation addresses.

2.1 What is motivation?

In everyday usage the term denotes a rather broad concept. It refers both to people's intentions, i.e. the impulse or the reason why they do something, and to the attraction of an assigned or desired goal. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995, p. 929) offers a more concise definition, according to which motivation is the "eagerness and

willingness to do something without needing to be told or forced to do it". In psychology, however, deeper layers are investigated revealing a more complex notion. Heckhausen (1991, p. 9), for example, defines motivation as "a global concept for a variety of processes and effects whose common core is the realisation that an organism selects a particular behaviour because of expected consequences, and then implements it with some measure of energy, along a particular path". On the other hand, Williams and Burden (1997) describe the process of motivated behaviour by distinguishing three stages of motivation: (1) reason for action; (2) deciding to act; and (3) sustaining the effort. They define the construct as "a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 120).

Given the intricate nature of human behaviour, there seems to be an ever-growing interest in understanding the motivational characteristics underlying people's actions. Although different psychologists and educationalists approach the issue from differing standpoints, most of them agree that motivation is an interplay of three factors: (a) people's choice to do something; (b) their persistence in maintaining the activity; and (c) the effort they are willing to expend on it (e.g., Bandura, 1991; Dörnyei, 2001a; Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Weiner, 1992). Of the various cognitive theories in psychology, I will give an outline of the three most influential frameworks: expectancy-value theory, goal-setting and self-determination theory.

Expectancy-value theory

Perhaps the most widely adopted framework in motivation research is expectancy-value theory, according to which engagement in a task is dependant on two main factors: (1)

people's beliefs that they are able to perform a task (expectancy of success); and (2) the value they place on the successful completion of the task (value). The first theory that was developed within this framework is achievement motivation theory (Atkinson & Raynor, 1974), comprising two further elements: need for achievement and fear of failure. Although these latter categories might seem to be opposite terms, they provide the same driving force. Human behaviour, it is argued, can be characterised by tendencies either to initiate activities in the hope of achievement or to make an effort in order to avoid a negative outcome (Dörnyei, 2001a).

As a result of further research within the same framework, constructs such as attribution, various self-conceptions, and people's belief systems have been defined as key determinants of the expectancy of success. Introduced by Weiner (1986), attribution theory explains how people's past experiences (successes and failures) influence their future behaviour. In his seminal work, he asserts that the causes to which people attribute outcomes in achievement tasks can be viewed in three dimensions: (1) locus of causality, which shows whether individuals see their successes and failures as caused by themselves or by others; (2) stability, showing whether the attribute is fixed or changeable; and (3) controllability, which refers to the extent to which an outcome is within the control of the individual.

Expectancy can be explained by another constructivist theory (Williams & Burden, 1999), which is based on the view that absolute knowledge does not exist. Individuals understand things in different ways, and construct their own personal meanings. Learners' self-conceptions are at the centre of the learning process, because it is these aspects that influence the way in which individuals make sense of their learning as well as their attitude towards the learning task. These self-conceptions include notions such as (a) self-concept, which refers to people's overall view of themselves (Wylie, 1979); (b) self-efficacy, which

shows how competent learners see themselves in a particular field (Bandura, 1977, 1993); and (c) locus of control, which shows whether or not people consider the events in their lives to be within their control (Wang, 1983). Although people's self-efficacy is claimed to enhance their motivation to the extent that they trust their own abilities, according to self-worth theory they are only willing to engage in activities as long as they can preserve their self-esteem (Covington, 1992).

Another important factor determining the expectancy component is belief systems, which were found to help individuals to understand different situations and, therefore, to adapt to new environments (Abelson, 1979; Lewis, 1990). Furthermore, beliefs are claimed to play an essential role in defining tasks, and they influence people's behaviour (Bandura, 1986; Nespor, 1987; Schommer, 1990). According to White (1999), expectations, which may affect individuals' reactions to a new environment, are also determined by beliefs. Adopting Sigel's (1985) term "mental constructions of experience", she defines beliefs as "mental constructions of experience that are held to be true and that guide behaviour" (White, 1999, p. 443). Learners' belief systems help them to see what is expected of them and to act accordingly.

The value component of the framework is emphasised by Eccles and Wigfield (1995), who argue that the reasons why individuals approach a certain task greatly influence their motivational intensity. In their view, issues like personal interest, the importance of success, as well as external values and costs need to be taken into consideration. Advocates of the expectancy-value theory claim that those learners who believe that the task is interesting and important will use more effective learning strategies and will expend greater effort. However, Keller (1983, 1994) also highlights the drawbacks of the model. Although he agrees that people will be eager to achieve a goal if they expect success and if they

consider the goal valuable, he misses the effect of external factors such as rewards and punishments, for example, as well as the influence of the environment in general.

On the other hand, Pintrich and de Groot (1990) argue that students' affective reactions to the task also play an important role in motivation. They say that apart from the questions "Can I do this task?" and "Why am I doing this task?" students also ask themselves "How do I feel about this task?"

Goal-setting theory

The theory of goal setting is based on Locke and Latham's (1990) assertion that the degree of the specificity and difficulty of goals that individuals set for themselves have a strong influence on their commitment. Reviewing previous research, they came to the conclusion that specific goals exert a more positive effect on performance than vague goals. Their findings also revealed that those people who set difficult goals for themselves can focus their attention on the given task more easily, moreover, they develop better strategies, and are more likely to accomplish the task.

Over the years, achievement goals have been classified into two types according to the orientation that people adopt. These orientations are referred to as learning vs. performance goal orientation (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliot & Dweck, 1988), or as mastery vs. performance orientation (Bouffard, Vezeau, & Bordeleau, 1998; Elliot, 1997; Harackiewicz, Barron, Carter, Lehto, & Elliot, 1997; Martin & Debus, 1998; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Whichever label has been attached to the concepts, they convey the same idea in that the first type of orientation is concerned with the desire to learn and develop skills, whereas the second focuses on outcome and the demonstration of capability (Parajes, Britner, & Valiente, 2000).

In Pintrich and Schunk's (1996) definition mastery orientation refers to the pursuit of learning goals, where students make an effort to develop new skills and to improve their level of competence. Individuals with a mastery orientation place emphasis on the intrinsic value of learning the content or the skill. Performance orientation, on the other hand, implies the existence of extrinsic goals or ego-involvement goals, which focus on the demonstration of ability. For students setting performance goals, grades, rewards and approval from significant others, i.e. teachers, parents and peers, are of considerable importance (see also Nicholls, 1984; Nicholls, Cheung, Lauer, & Patashnick, 1989). There is empirical evidence that individuals with a mastery orientation make better learners, as they take a positive attitude to learning, are intrinsically motivated, and use more effective learning strategies, which eventually leads to better performance (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001; Pintrich, 2000a, b). It was also found that mastery-oriented students work towards improving their skills even at the cost of making mistakes, while performance-oriented learners chose simple tasks in order to receive praise (Miller, Behrens, Greene, & Newman, 1993). However, in the Hungarian context Józsa (2002a, b) found that mastery motivation decreases over the years and in early adolescence intrinsic motives are often replaced by the influence of external rewards such as feedback from the teacher in the form of grades or praise.

Recent studies by Obach (2003) and Lee and Gavin (2003) confirmed the hypothesis that mastery-oriented students see themselves as more competent to master academic subjects than students who set performance goals. McInerney, Roche, McInerney and Marsh (1997), however, revealed that the two categories are not dichotomous. They argue that learners may adopt both types of goals depending on the nature of the task they are engaged in as well as on the school environment. Similarly, Meece and Holt (1993), Pintrich and Garcia (1991) and Seifert (1995, 1996) found that the two kinds of goals complement each

other, and those students who pursue them simultaneously may find it easier to adapt to various learning contexts.

The same issue is viewed from a wider perspective by Wentzel (1992, 1999), who claims that in the classroom students try to achieve multiple goals. Apart from academic goals they pursue social relationship goals, both of which are considered to have a positive influence on motivation. Apparently, the effect of performance and social goals is particularly beneficial in those cases when a learning task is not interesting yet important for further studies. Moreover, the pursuit of social responsibility goals results in positive forms of social interaction which, in turn, enhance the development of cognitive skills and thus lead to academic success (Wentzel, 1999).

An important contribution to goal-setting research has been made by Elliot and his colleagues (see Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996), who further distinguish between approach and avoidance behaviours of learners with a performance orientation. In their understanding, performance-approach goals drive learners to outperform their peers and thus prove their ability. On the other hand, performance-avoid goals stop students from failing or looking dumb. A similar distinction is made by Skaalvik (1997) except that he names the two categories self-enhancing and self-defeating ego orientations. Following this train of thought, Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2001) developed a four-cell model by dividing the other type of orientation in the same way. They introduce the concepts of mastery approach and mastery avoidance in order to compare learners who strive to work correctly for the sake of their own development to learners who are motivated to avoid doing something incorrectly (like in the case of perfectionists). This is in line with Barker, McInerney and Dowson (2002), Elliot and McGregor (2001), and Pintrich (2000c), whose findings also confirmed the four-cell model of goal orientations.

Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory has evolved as a result of extensive research into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Rather than presenting these constructs as dichotomous categories, however, Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed a more elaborate explanation. Their theory suggests that the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects are only reflective of an individual's motivational orientation, while the intensity of motivation depends on the level of the individual's self-determination.

In their paradigm, intrinsic orientation expresses an internal drive to engage in an activity *per se*, i.e. for the joy it provides. According to Vallerand (1997), three subtypes of intrinsic orientation can be distinguished: (1) knowledge, (2) accomplishment, and (3) stimulation. Intrinsic knowledge refers to the enjoyment that comes from improving knowledge and satisfying one's curiosity. Accomplishment describes the pleasure that stems from surpassing oneself by performing a difficult task. The third in line of intrinsic orientations, stimulation, refers to the reason for doing an activity in order to experience the pleasurable feelings it provides. This stage of intrinsic motivation was defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1991) as "flow", or phrased differently, optimal experience.

Extrinsic orientations, on the other hand, are concerned with instrumental reasons and external rewards. Breaking with the traditional view according to which extrinsic motivation undermines intrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan (1985) determined four subtypes of the construct classifying them as (1) external, (2) introjected, (3) identified and (4) integrated regulation. These elements are not seen as mutually exclusive categories, but are placed along a continuum on the basis of the extent to which learners can internalise regulations and identify with different actions. The most self-determined of these orientations is integrated regulation, which is fairly similar to intrinsic motivation in that it

includes the experience of choice and is completely controlled by the self. However, integrated regulation does not mean that the activity is pursued for the sake of the pleasure it provides, rather it is undertaken because it is congruent with the individual's other values and needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

A third factor distinguished by the theory is amotivation, which can be considered as the opposite of both intrinsic and extrinsic orientations, in that it is characterised by the lack of any regulations and occurs when people do not see the relationship between their behaviour and the outcome of their actions.

The above mentioned theories were developed in mainstream psychology but oozed into educational research, and gave way to the development of further paradigms explaining the factors underlying learning motivation. In section 2.2, I will describe this development with a special focus on research conducted in the field of second and foreign language learning.

2.2 Issues in L2 learning motivation

Learning motivation and especially students' motivation to learn an L2 appears to be an area of general interest among educational researchers as well as practising teachers. Despite the fact that there is an extensive literature on the subject, no clear consensus exists over a comprehensive definition of the construct (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Although there are overlaps and recurring characteristics, different researchers suggest different frameworks and definitions. Dörnyei (1994) considers this eclectic nature of the construct inevitable, explaining that besides acquiring knowledge, L2 learning involves personal features and social elements.

L2 learning motivation research has been deeply influenced by investigations conducted in Canada, inspired by the language learning processes of the French and English speaking communities. The research methods were designed for a special bilingual setting, and, as such, were not entirely suitable for other contexts, nevertheless, Gardner and Lambert's (1972) theory set the scene for motivation research for several decades. In what follows, first I will demonstrate how Gardner's (1985) seminal model has been revised and expanded over the years. Then, I will present new frameworks that have inspired research into the role of motivation in instructed second language acquisition in the classroom.

2.2.1 A revision of Gardner's (1985) model

Stemming from a special second language acquisition (SLA) context, Gardner's (1985) model puts particular emphasis on the social aspect of motivation. The model suggests that motivation exerts its influence on the learning outcome in interaction with other individual difference variables such as intelligence, language aptitude, language learning strategies, language attitudes, and language anxiety. Furthermore, Gardner assumes that motivation is directly influenced by integrativeness (i.e. an openness and positive disposition towards the target language society) and students' attitude towards the learning environment. In his understanding, the construct can be defined as a necessary interplay of three elements: (1) the effort expended by the learner to attain a goal; (2) the desire to learn the language; and (3) the satisfaction one gets from the learning activity itself.

In the past decades, however, Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model has been revised, which resulted in an expansion of the theoretical framework (see, for example, the

integration of the work of Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, 1990, 2005; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Noels, 2003; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Ushioda, 2001).

Drawing on the expectancy-value theory developed in general psychology, Crookes and Schmidt (1991) proposed a more complex model, classifying motivational factors as internal or external characteristics. In their paradigm, internal motivation comprises such concepts as interest in the language, relevance (that is the fulfilment of the learner's personal needs), expectancy of success or failure and learning outcomes (in other words, rewards). External features, on the other hand, include the individual's decision to engage in language learning, persistence and maintaining a high activity level.

Similarly, the concepts of integrative and instrumental orientation suggested by Gardner (1985) have been further elaborated, and the range of affective variables characterising individual differences in motivational intensity has widened. The relevance of the integrative dimension was questioned in foreign language learning situations, given the fact that foreign language learners are less likely to encounter the target language community than their counterparts studying in a multilingual and multicultural environment. At the same time, the importance of the instrumental aspect of L2 learning motivation was emphasised by researchers outside Canada (Dörnyei, 1990; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000; Warden & Lin, 2000).

The intrinsic/extrinsic framework established by self-determination theory (reviewed in section 2.1) was applied to L2 motivation research by Brown (1994) and Noels (2001a), among others, followed by a series of studies in a similar vein (e.g., Noels 2001b; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999, 2001; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000). The findings of these investigations have led Noels (2003) to conceptualise motivation as a composite of intrinsic reasons (supposing that learning is fun and challenging), extrinsic

reasons (referring to pragmatic aspects), and integrative reasons (implying a positive relationship with the target language community).

Further examination of the concept has resulted in an emphasis on learner autonomy (see, for example, Benson & Voller, 1997; Dickinson, 1995; Ushioda, 2001, 2003). The idea that learner autonomy entails motivation is also supported by Noels et al. (2000), whose findings reveal that autonomous learners find pleasure in learning, and they also feel more competent and less anxious in the learning process. In a more recent study, however, Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002) reverse the direction of the relationship between motivation and autonomy saying that it is indeed motivation that precedes autonomy.

Summarising various trends in L2 motivation research, Dörnyei (1998) points out that Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model has often been misinterpreted as simply representing a dychotomy of integrative and instrumental motivation. In a recent article, Gardner himself discusses some of the debated issues, with a primary focus on the role of integrativeness in the model (Gardner, 2001). However, in order to follow his train of thoughts, it is important to have a proper understanding of his terminology. Apparently, he makes a clear distinction between motivation and orientation, claiming that integrative orientation refers only to goals and reasons for learning a language. On the other hand, the driving force that triggers effort and persistence on the part of learners in order to reach a desired goal is associated with motivation. Another point that is worthy of attention is his view of second language acquisition. Conceptualising it as the development of near-native language skills, he assumes that a certain degree of identification with the target language community is necessary for such a high level of mastery. As a result of this definition, differing views concerning the relevance of the construct might be explained, given the fact that, in environments where English is not regularly used in everyday communication, not

many people attempt to achieve near-native competence. Perhaps an exception is those non-native EFL teachers who set themselves high standards (Medgyes, 1994).

After clarifying basic concepts, Gardner (2001) presents the most recent version of the original framework, describing the role that language aptitude and motivation play in L2 learning. According to his revised theory, it is these two elements that have a direct influence on language achievement, although motivation is supported by two further variables, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation. In this context, integrativeness is reflective of an integrative orientation toward studying the second language, and of an openness both toward the target language community and other cultures. On the other hand, attitudes toward the learning situation refer to various aspects of the learning environment, which include, among others, perceptions of the course, the material, peers as well as attitudes toward the teacher in general. According to the model, the three variables – motivation, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation – together constitute the concept of integrative motivation, which, in Gardner's (2001) view, is vital for achievement. In his definition, "the integratively motivated individual is one who is motivated to learn the second language, has a desire or willingness to identify with the other language community, and tends to evaluate the learning situation positively" (p. 6).

2.2.2 Developing a global identity

The above clarifications notwithstanding, the idea of identification with the target language community is still widely debated and its generalisability is questioned. A new factor, integration into an international community has emerged from a number of studies, which called for a reinterpretation of the concept (e.g., Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Irie, 2003;

Lamb, 2004; McClelland, 2000; Yashima, 2000). Interestingly, a similar tendency of developing a 'bicultural identity' is discussed in psychological research as one of the effects of globalisation aided by the Internet boom. The phenomenon is explained by Arnett (2002, p. 777) as the desire of especially young people to "develop a global identity that gives them a sense of belonging to a world-wide culture and includes an awareness of the events, practices, styles and information that are part of the global culture". The professional world is no exception, where there is an ever-growing need for direct international communication. Obviously, this has led to the appearance of a global language, which is undoubtedly English (Crystal, 1997; Truchot, 1997).

With English as the *lingua franca,* however, the question 'Who owns English?' has to be addressed again (see Widdowson, 1997). Furthermore, if English is widely used as a means of communication between non-native speakers, the traditional culture associated with the language loses relevance. It is no longer a specified target language group that learners wish to identify with but rather an 'imagined community' (Norton, 2001). This being the case, Gardner's (1985) traditional view of integrative orientation has been challenged again.

Considering the above issues, Dörnyei (2005) has developed a possible solution and proposed an *L2 Motivational Self System,* which is supported by the results of a recent nation-wide study in Hungary (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006). The new system, which attempts to understand motivation from the perspective of the self, is comprised of three dimensions: (1) the ideal L2 self, (2) the ought-to L2 self, and (3) the L2 learning experience. The ideal L2 self refers to the idealised picture that we have about ourselves. If that ideal self speaks a foreign language, it motivates us to learn the language so that we become similar to the ideal. The ought-to self, reflecting a more extrinsic dimension,

determines what we ought to do in order to avoid failure, while the L2 learning experience, a more intrinsic category, refers to executive motives concerning the actual learning environment. Given the fact that Dörnyei (2005) integrates the major issues raised in the field of motivation research, his approach seems to be suitable for understanding the factors underlying L2 motivation in the era of language globalisation.

2.2.3 An expansion of the model

Research has shown that motivation to learn an L2 is a particularly complex phenomenon, since by investigating different segments, new components can be added to existing frameworks. However, there seems to be a trend in EFL and SLA research for applying the factors discussed in mainstream psychology to L2 learning. In what follows, I will discuss the role of goal setting, various self-perceptions, beliefs about language learning, attributions, and emotion in L2 learning motivation research.

Goal setting

Most researchers, among others, Oxford and Shearin (1994) and Tremblay and Gardner (1995) agree that goal setting and performance are related, but while the former examine individual differences in learning styles, the latter investigate the effect of language learning attitudes. Oxford and Shearin (1994) claim that students will select goals on the basis of the work these goals involve, and their choice will also determine their motivational behaviour. Apparently, extroverted students are eager to engage in communicative activities, whereas introverted students feel more comfortable working individually. Whichever the case, the two researchers also underline the importance of feedback about the progress students are

making. Further to this, Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) empirical study has revealed that it is positive attitudes towards the L2 in question that helps people to develop specific learning goals.

A more complex picture of goal setting is projected by Ames (1992a), who discusses how different aspects of motivation influence students' goal selection. The six areas that she examines were originally defined by Epstein (1988) as classroom tasks, authority structure, recognition of students, group formation, evaluation practices, and time frame. For each category, Ames (1992a) suggests instructional strategies that may foster task-involved rather than ego-involved goals. She argues that tasks that are interesting and challenging enhance mastery motivation. Similarly, if the authority structure of the classroom allows students to take responsibility of their own learning, they are more likely to pursue task goals. Recognition of effort and the use of rewards and incentives have similar effects, as do heterogeneous classes and co-operative working modes. As regards evaluation, research has shown that more students opt for learning goals if teachers assess their progress continuously, and if students are given the opportunity to improve. Finally, if the pace of instruction is appropriate and a sufficient amount of time is provided for each student to accomplish the given task, again, mastery motivation is facilitated.

Self-perceptions

Closely related to goal-setting theory are two cognitive components of motivation, learned helplessness and self-efficacy theory, both of which refer to students' beliefs about their abilities to apply existing knowledge effectively in order to perform a given task (Bandura, 1977, 1993; Schunk, 1989; Williams & Burden, 1997). Learned helplessness is concerned with the pessimistic way of thinking about one's capabilities of accomplishing a task

successfully. Similar to this form of self-appraisal is low self-efficacy, which may result in discouragement and, eventually, in task abandonment. High self-efficacy, on the other hand, triggers higher effort and inspires individuals to set more challenging goals. This, in turn, will lead to skills development and the achievement of better results (Cotterall, 1999; Locke & Latham, 1990; Vrugt, Oort, & Zeeberg, 2002). The above idea is supported by Oxford and Shearin (1994), who also argue that teachers can enhance students' self-efficacy by assigning tasks which will give them a feeling of success and control.

A third concept in the line of self-perceptions, self-confidence, also refers to students' own judgements of their competence, but while self-efficacy is task-specific, self-confidence expresses a more general term. Originally defined as a social construct by Clément, Gardner and Smythe (1977), it was later applied in L2 learning research, and proved to be a significant motivational factor in EFL settings as well (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994).

Beliefs and attributions

The importance of understanding the nature of student beliefs is emphasised by Horwitz (1987), who claims that these beliefs have an impact on the choice and use of appropriate learning strategies, on students' behaviour in the classroom, and, ultimately, on learners' acquisition of language (see also Peacock, 2001). As a further step, she suggests a comparison of student and teacher beliefs, which, in her view, may help reveal potential clashes as well as explain why certain students lose confidence in the teaching approach.

An important aspect, students' attributions for their successes and failures are investigated by Williams and Burden (1999). Based on constructivist theories (reviewed in section 2.1), they provide a more precise definition of the construct. In their interpretation,

attributions develop by age and cluster around the following notions: (1) internal feelings of competence and interest; (2) external influences such as the quality of teaching, parents' expectations, and peer co-operation; and (3) social context, that is, the classroom climate, the curriculum, and the whole school environment (Williams & Burden, 1999, p. 199). They emphasise the importance of understanding the way in which external influences shape learners' internal attributions, observing that the expectations of significant others (teachers, parents, and peers) greatly affect students' motivational styles, their L2 learning strategies, and also their progress in language acquisition.

The importance of attributions is also stressed by Oxford and Shearin (1994), who assert that past experiences have an impact on people's choice of behaviour in a particular situation, especially when performance is involved. Past successes will generate greater effort and urge students to engage in more challenging tasks. They claim that it is the teacher's responsibility to recognise individual differences between learners and provide situations that will bring them success and satisfaction. The above ideas are in line with Oxford and Ehrman's (1993) view on individual differences. They also place special emphasis on the role of teachers, claiming that it is their responsibility to recognise these differences between their students and adapt their instructional practices accordingly.

The idea of favourable experiences in L2 learning and teacher feedback is also supported by Herman (1980), who takes a step further and points out that the satisfaction that students get from achieving good results on a learning task may even change their attitude towards the target language community. There are, however, learners who feel the need to avoid failure rather than the need to achieve success. This fear of failure may turn into foreign language anxiety, which is likely to result in students' avoidance of communicative activities (Horwitz & Young, 1991).

Emotions

A rather neglected issue, the link between emotions and motivation has been raised recently by MacIntyre (2002). After studying earlier views in the field of psychology (Tomkins, 1970; Schumann, 1998), according to which affect functions as the primary motivator in human life, MacIntyre (2002) applies the theory to L2 learning. Drawing on previous research into language learning strategy use (MacIntyre & Noels, 1996), he argues that whether or not learners become motivated to engage in a given task is highly dependent on the emotions that they experience while learning the language.

The assertion that emotional states exert an effect on students' actions in the classroom has been justified by various educational researchers. An example is Boekaerts (2001), who has conducted a series of studies examining the way in which emotions affect students' goal setting and actions in mathematics classes. Her findings underline the importance of the learning context, revealing that students pay attention to motivating and demotivating cues in the environment, and their appraisals of the situation determine their emotional state. This idea of "context sensitive behaviour" (p. 29) is supported by Op't Eynde, De Corte and Verschaffel (2001), whose findings also reveal an element of individual differences with relation to students' perceptions of classroom interactions.

To summarise thus far, the application of various psychological theories to L2 learning motivation has confirmed its complex nature and resulted in a boom in research investigating the field. This intense interest in the language learning process has inspired theoreticians to synthesise the variables discussed in earlier research and propose new frameworks in order to provide a better insight into the factors underlying the concept of motivation to learn an L2. In what follows, I will present three such models, which have turned researchers' attention towards immediate classroom procedures.

2.2.4 A focus on L2 learning motivation in the classroom

The above discussions imply that the L2 classroom plays a major role in how motivational models represent real life experiences. Of the several models that have been proposed, I outline the following: (1) Dörnyei's (1994) three-level motivational construct, (2) Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) extended socio-educational model, and (3) Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) process model. Given the fact that these three models display a marked educational element, they are of particular interest in light of the research I have undertaken.

2.2.4.1 L2 learning motivation as a multilevel construct

Drawing on Clément, Dörnyei and Noels' (1994) tripartite framework, which defined motivation as the interplay of integrative motivation, linguistic self-confidence and appraisal of the classroom climate, Dörnyei (1994) attempted to integrate the multitude of existing motivational variables into a multilevel model. In his comprehensive framework he distinguishes three levels of motivation: the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level, each of which reflects different dimensions of language learning: the social, the personal and the educational aspect respectively (see Table 1).

In the model, the language level describes general motives that orient fundamental learning goals. It can be divided into an integrative and an instrumental subsystem, where the former includes affective variables, such as interest in foreigners, and the attitude towards the L2 culture and community; and the latter refers to the usefulness of learning the language with regard to future career expectations. Motivation at the learner level is explained by stable character traits like need for achievement and self-confidence, the latter comprising L2 anxiety, self-perceived competence and attributions about past successes and

failures in L2 learning and use. As can be seen in Table 1, Dörnyei (1994) puts special emphasis on the learning situation level, taking into account all three determining factors of the learning environment, i.e. the course, the teacher and the peer group.

Table 1
Dörnyei's (1994, p. 280) model of L2 motivation

Language level	Integrative motivational subsystem Instrumental motivational subsystem
Learner level	Need for achievement Self-confidence ▪ language use anxiety ▪ perceived L2 competence ▪ causal attributions ▪ self-efficacy
Learning situation level	
Course-specific motivational components	Interest Relevance Expectancy Satisfaction
Teacher-specific motivational components	Affiliate drive Authority type Direct socialisation of motivation ▪ modelling ▪ task presentation ▪ feedback
Group-specific motivational components	Goal-orientedness Norm and reward system Group cohesion Classroom goal structure

The first set, course-specific motivational components, is meant to cover the influence of the syllabus and the teaching materials, and involve elements such as interest, relevance, expectancy, and satisfaction. At this level, interest refers to students' desire to acquire knowledge; relevance expresses their feelings about the extent to which the course contributes to L2 mastery; expectancy is related to success as well as learners' self-confidence and self-efficacy; while satisfaction concerns the learning outcome both in terms

of extrinsic rewards such as good marks, and intrinsic rewards such as the feeling of enjoyment and mastery development.

The second category, teacher-specific motivational components identify the teacher's personality and teaching style, and include motives like affiliate drive, authority type and direct socialisation of student motivation. Affiliate drive refers to students' wish to please the teacher; authority reveals whether the teacher supports autonomous learning or, on the contrary, controls every activity; and socialisation of motivation shows how the teacher develops students' motivation by providing them with a model, carefully presenting different tasks and giving appropriate feedback.

The third class of motives, group-specific motivational components are concerned with group dynamics and interactions within the learning group. Such components include goal-orientedness, norm and reward system, group cohesion and classroom goal structure. In this context, the term goal-orientedness expresses how uniform the group is in setting the same goal, namely mastering the L2. The group's norm and reward system reveals the extent to which such extrinsic motives as grades are accepted as standard values by the majority of group members. Group cohesion refers to the relationship of group members to one another and determines the effort they are willing to contribute to the whole group's success. The last element, classroom goal structure measures the influence of competitive, co-operative and individualistic working modes on students' motivation.

What distinguishes Dörnyei from many other researchers is the fact that apart from providing a theoretical framework, he has compiled a comprehensive list of strategies that might help practising teachers to enhance their students' motivation (see Dörnyei, 1994). The list is organised following the same classification as the multilevel model, which means that his suggestions cluster around the language, the learner and the learning situation,

accordingly. Although the author does not consider his ideas to be rules carved in stone, I am convinced that the techniques he mentions are applicable in most educational contexts.

2.2.4.2 Motivational antecedents

The relationship between the different elements of motivation and the role that they play in the language learning process was explored by Tremblay and Gardner (1995). Based on Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, they drew up a sequence of motivational variables, proposing that language attitudes determine motivational behaviour, which in turn influences the learning outcomes. Apart from motivational variables, learners' exposure to the target language (labelled as *French language dominance*) appears to be an important contributor to achievement. This aspect can be explained by the fact that the research was conducted in Canada, where the coexistence of the anglophone and francophone population provides a special context.

The novelty in Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) approach lies in the fact that they identify mediating variables that explain the direct influences between attitudes and learners' behaviour. In their understanding, these mediators serve as motivational antecedents and include goal salience, valence and self-efficacy. The term goal salience implies both goal setting and the frequency with which students refer to their goals. Valence measures the value and benefits that students expect from completing the task, while self-efficacy expresses confidence in their ability to accomplish the task. According to the authors' definition, such factors "cannot be readily perceived by an external observer but still influence motivational behaviour through their cognitive or affective influence" (p. 507). Motivational behaviour, on the other hand, refers to observable characteristics exhibited by

learners, such as effort, persistence and attention. Figure 1 provides a simplified representation of the model.

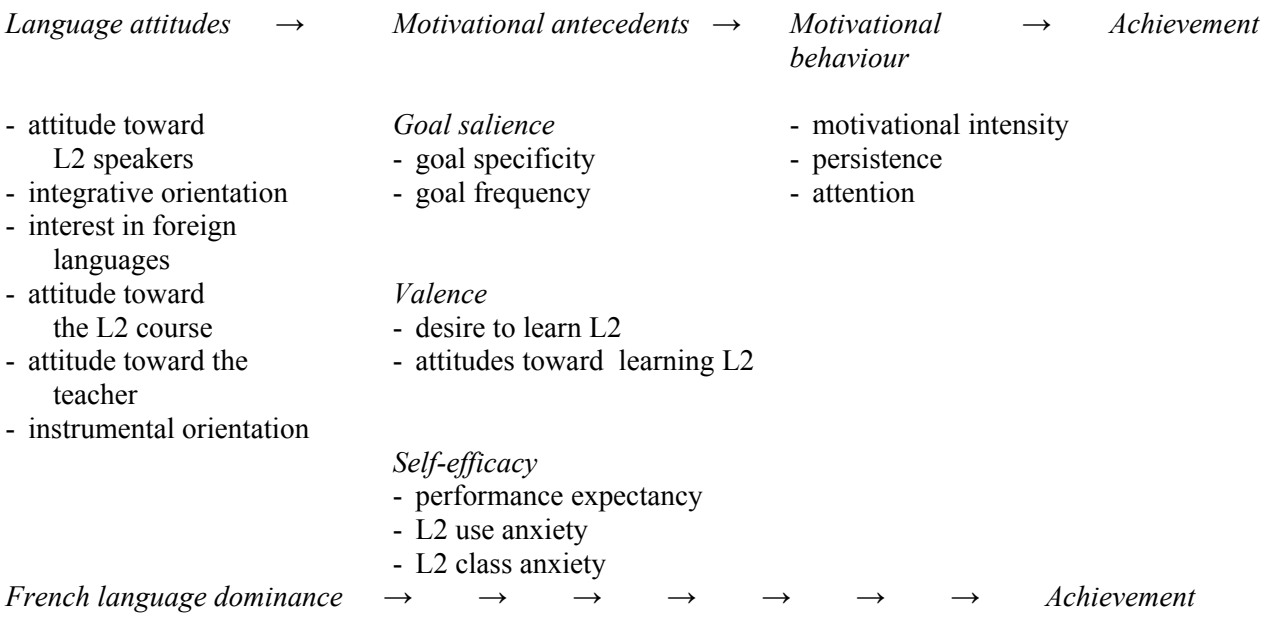

Figure 1 A simplified version of Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) model of motivation

As can be seen in Figure 1, language attitudes exert their influence on motivational behaviour through the three motivational antecedents. The model also suggests that those students who set themselves specific goals and plan their work accordingly are more intensive and persistent learners than students who only have vague goals. Similarly, if they express a desire to learn the L2 and attach the necessary value to the outcome, they will become better learners. The figure also implies that students are willing to expend a greater effort if they believe that they are capable of achieving their goal. As for French language dominance, it appears that exposure to the target language has a direct effect on their achievement.

The above framework is a considerable contribution to our understanding of second language learning motivation, since it provides a synthesis of the Gardnerian model and current theories. The authors have managed to incorporate further measurable constructs into the original model while maintaining its integrity. Another merit of the model is that it identifies measurable factors that effect motivation directly.

2.2.4.3 A process-oriented conception of motivation

The 1990s witnessed a shift in the focus of motivation research, when attention turned towards investigating the learning of an L2, most importantly English in institutional settings. As learning was seen as a fundamentally social activity, the classroom milieu got in the limelight. In order to apply the existing static models, it was a must to take a process-oriented view and investigate the ways in which the different mental processes that affect language learning and achievement operate (Dörnyei, 1998; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Following Heckhausen and Kuhl's (1985) action control theory, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) have drawn up a comprehensive model of L2 motivation synthesising the numerous approaches to understanding motivational influences. The framework, which has been further elaborated by Dörnyei (2000, 2001b), distinguishes three phases of the motivational process as seen from a temporal aspect: the preactional stage, the actional stage, and the postactional stage, each of which has a functional dimension based on motivational influences (see Figure 2).

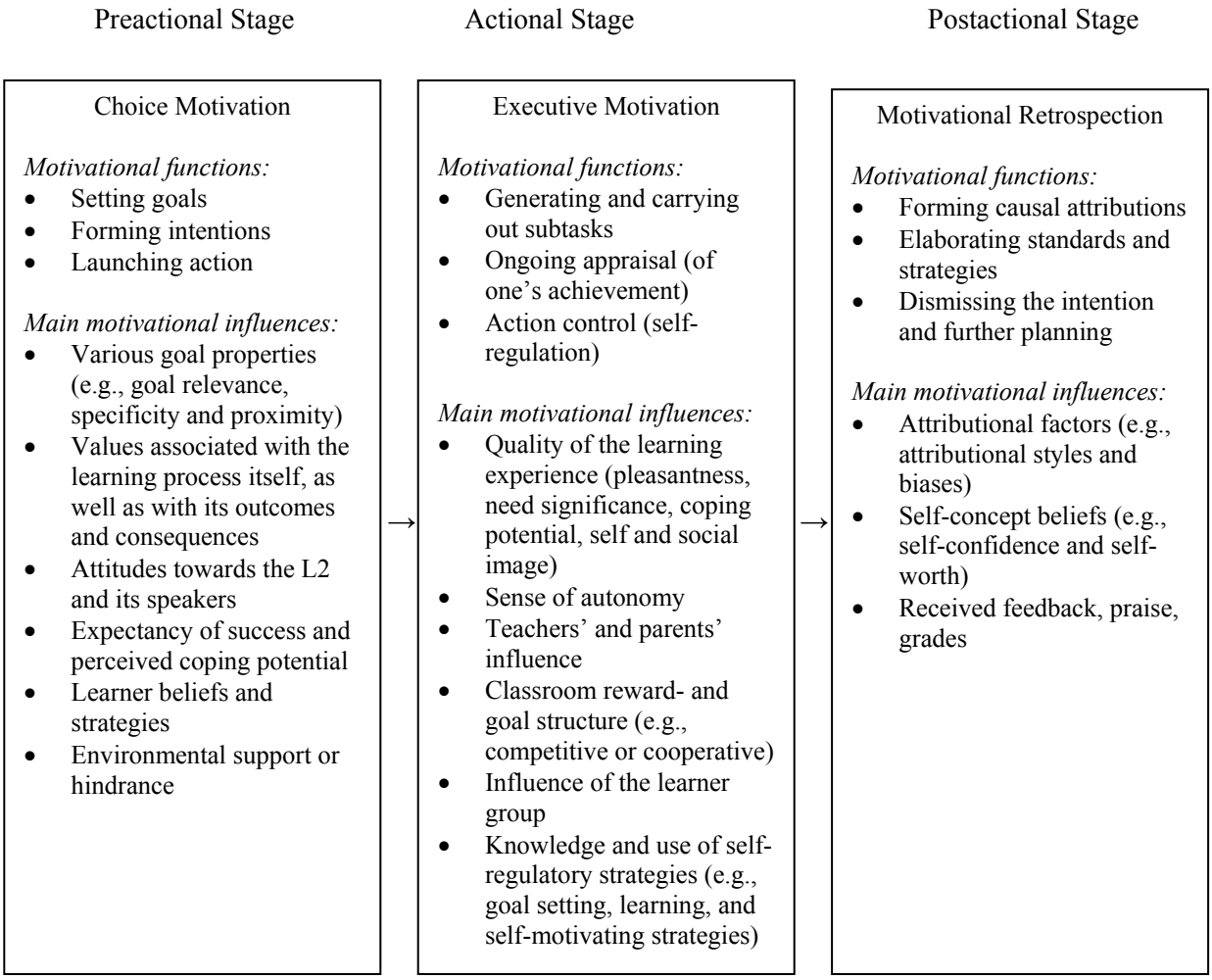

Figure 2 The process model of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 22)

As can be seen in Figure 2, the first dimension in each phase, motivational functions, exhibit motivated behaviour. In the preactional stage, 'choice motivation' determines goal setting and intention formation as well as the initiation of action. The idea underlying this sequence is the assumption that, apart from forming a specific goal, the individual needs to be committed in order to take the necessary steps towards reaching that goal. In the actional stage, 'executive motivation' is responsible for maintaining motivation while the actual learning is in progress. In this phase, the learner creates and carries out subtasks while continuously monitoring external influences in order to apply the right self-regulatory

mechanisms, i.e. learning strategies. The third, post-actional stage is concerned with individuals' retrospective evaluation of the learning process and its outcomes. During this crucial phase students develop conceptions of themselves as language learners, which will determine their choice of future actions.

The second dimension in each phase refers to those motivational influences ('energy sources') that trigger the above behavioural processes. In the first stage, they include factors such as the evaluation of the goal and the learning process, attitudes towards the target language and the L2 community, the expectancy of success, students' beliefs about language learning, and environmental effects. Executive motivational influences involve appraisals of the immediate learning environment, the feeling of autonomy, and the use of self-regulatory strategies. The third group, affecting post-actional evaluation, is concerned with self-concept beliefs and the impact of feedback.

Owing to the above ideas, motivation is now viewed as a dynamic concept, in which time is considered to be a determining factor (Dörnyei, 2000, 2002; Ushioda, 1996; Volet, 2001). While Volet (2001) conceptualises the dynamic nature of motivation as the interaction of classroom practices with students' beliefs and behaviour, Ushioda (1996) points out that rather than being a stable construct, motivation fluctuates between the ups and downs of effort and commitment throughout the learning experience. These opinions are supported by Dörnyei (2005), who also highlights the time dimension arguing that apart from evolving gradually, motivation is characteristically influenced by various internal and external factors, especially in the case of language acquisition, which may extend over years.

2.2.4.4 Summary

The three models outlined above all provide an in-depth analysis of motivation to learn an L2, and draw up basically the same sequence of the learning process, which was described by Williams and Burden (1997) as reason → decision → action → outcome. What Williams and Burden (1997) define as 'reason for action' refers to the same concept as 'language attitudes' in Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) definition. Similarly, the notions 'deciding to act' in the former study and 'motivational antecedents' in the latter convey the same idea. These two phases of the motivational sequence appear later in Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) model; however, there they are incorporated into a broader term, the 'preactional stage' of motivation. Likewise, the third component in each theory ('sustaining effort', 'motivational behaviour' and 'actional stage', respectively) basically corresponds to the same notion.

What distinguishes the three models is the view that the authors adopt in order to synthesise the wide range of elements discussed in L2 motivation literature. While Dörnyei (1994) arranges the variables according to three different levels, Tremblay and Gardner (1995) go further and determine the direction of influence on motivation by classifying motivational factors as mediators and placing them between attitudes and behaviour. Nevertheless, the most elaborate framework has been presented by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), as it is based on the fluctuating character of motivation. Also, it proves that rather than being mutually exclusive, all the motivational factors discussed in the literature are relevant, albeit effective at different phases of the language learning process. However, as Dörnyei (2005) points out, the question of where the boundaries of the proposed phases are remains to be answered. How these models may represent classroom L2 learning motivation is what the dissertation aims to explore.

2.3 Motivation in the classroom

As a result of the heated debates over the last two decades on the above theories, attention has been directed towards how attitudes and motivation are shaped and how they change in specific learning environments, more specifically towards the role that the course, peers, and teachers play. This section gives a review of recent research into classroom motivation organised according to the focus of the investigations.

2.3.1 Task motivation

Situation specific motivation, more precisely learners' attitudes towards different instructional activities are the focus of studies conducted by Julkunen (2001), Nikolov (1999a) and Dörnyei (2002). Julkunen (2001) justifies research into task-specific motivation by arguing that although motivation is important for goal selection, its main function is to control and maintain students' engagement in the activity in order to complete a given task. After examining Finnish comprehensive-school students working on different vocabulary assignments, the author concludes that learners are more attracted to tasks that are unpredictable, such as language games, for example. Despite the fact that Nikolov (1999a) studied a different age group, her findings seem to be consistent with Julkunen's (2001) research. Her young Hungarian learners were also found to be intrinsically motivated by interesting and playful, but cognitively challenging tasks.

Apparently, students' involvement in a given task is highly influenced by their judgements of the task. In a report on a study of Hungarian secondary-school students' task completion, Dörnyei (2002) emphasises the dynamic nature of task motivation. He claims

that task motivation is 'co-constructed' by the participants (p. 156), i. e. peers have an influence on each other's appraisal processes. This is also in line with Julkunen (2001), whose findings reveal that co-operative, competitive and individualistic situations all have a different effect on motivation, co-operative situations being the most motivating, regardless of task type.

The same issue, i. e. the effect that various working modes have on students' engagement in a given task is discussed by Ghaith (2003), Garrett and Shortall (2002), and Cantwell and Andrews (2002), among others. These three rather large-scale studies were carried out in the Lebanon, Brazil and New South Wales in Australia, respectively, and look into different segments of the question. The first study examines the connection between the co-operative, individualistic and competitive forms of instruction, learners' achievement, and certain aspects of classroom climate. Although Ghaith finds positive correlation between co-operative instruction, students' perceptions of the classroom climate and their EFL achievement, he calls for further studies to determine the conditions under which these findings apply. In the second study, Garrett and Shortall tap learners' evaluations of teacher-fronted and student-centred activities. Their findings reveal that students have different needs at different stages of the learning process and thus their judgement depends on their language level. In the Australian study, the authors focus on students' attitudes towards group work, and find that learners differ in their judgements of group-work activities. Their research reveals that cognitive factors explain students' preference for group work, whereas emotional factors are responsible for preference for individual learning.

In the Hungarian context, Nikolov (2003) examined the attitude and motivation of students in years 6, 8, and 10 and found a discrepancy between the frequency of tasks allocated in English and German classes and their motivating force. Apparently, all the three

age groups perceived meaning-focused tasks more enjoyable than form-focused activities. The most popular classroom activities included tasks on listening comprehension and watching videos followed by tasks requiring creativity such as free conversation and language games. As regards different working modes in the language class, students reported preferring pair and group work activities to individual study or teacher-fronted activities. Paradoxically, these task types and working modes were conducted or applied least frequently in the surveyed schools. As Nikolov (2003) argues, such classroom processes are hardly suitable for maintaining learners' motivation in the long run. Besides, these results might also explain why many students do not achieve the expected outcome despite their generally positive attitude and motivation.

2.3.2 Classroom management

In a comprehensive article, Wigfield, Eccles and Rodriguez (1998) provide a detailed analysis of different aspects of motivation, focusing on teaching practices and classroom organisation, and also discuss the influence that these factors exert on the development of students' motivational intensity. In agreement with generally accepted views that the teacher's personality and teaching style greatly contribute to the atmosphere of the classroom, the authors place stress on the latter element. They claim that effective classroom management and clearly focused, goal-oriented lessons are essential in order to satisfy students' needs and facilitate their achievements.

Research focusing on the impact that experiences of an EFL class exert on learners' motivation and development has shown that the dynamics of the language classroom is a motivational factor as important as integrative orientation (see Brown, 1990; Clément,

Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Crooks & Schmidt, 1991; Ramage, 1990). The above findings are supported by Kormos and Lukóczky (2004), who suggest that a negative classroom atmosphere might lead to a decrease in motivation. In a case study of Hungarian secondary school students, they identify the following classroom-related factors causing de-motivation: lack of group norms, peers' attitude, lack of discipline, and the teacher's incoherent explanation.

The role of classroom climate is emphasised by several other researchers (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997; Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998; Ghaith, 2003; Juvonen & Wentzel, 1996), moreover, research has shown that the climate of the whole school influences the motivation of both teachers and students (Maehr & Midgley, 1991). In interpreting the findings of their research, Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt and Shohamy (2001) assume that factors such as the school's educational policy and teachers' beliefs and actions play a decisive role in forming students' motivation. A negative example is given by Williams and Burden (1999), who argue that in an achievement-oriented school, students will most probably set performance goals for themselves rather than learning goals, and their self-perceptions will be based on external rewards, such as marks and examination results. This practice, however, will not foster their ability to become effective and successful learners.

2.3.3 Peer influence

Closely related to the issue of classroom climate is another, equally important social influence on motivation, the role that peers play in the learning process. Aspects that have been researched include, among others, friendship, co-operative learning, and help seeking. While Goodenow (1993) argues that a supportive peer group facilitates learning, Ladd

(1990) emphasises the benefits of good social skills, saying that students who are accepted by their peers also become more successful learners. Slavin (1990), on the other hand, approaches the issue from the perspective of co-operative learning. He assumes that the mere enjoyment that derives from collaborative activities may enhance students' motivation. Moreover, since peers help each other to understand and master the subject matter by discussing it, their achievement will also improve. A similar idea, help seeking from peers is discussed by Newman (1994), who has found that in a classroom where learning goals are emphasised, children are more ready to seek help when they face difficulties, in order to keep engaged in an activity.

However, as Wigfield et al. (1998) point out, generalisations ought to be made with caution, since the different motivational constructs described in the literature constantly undergo changes. It is partly due to the cognitive and emotional development that learners go through with age, and partly because, during their school years, students also change institutions, moving from elementary to middle school and then to secondary education. Peer group influence, for instance, is salient in adolescence, when students are especially vulnerable and yet concerned about social acceptance. These changes and circumstances pose challenges to students and have a marked effect on their beliefs, values, interest and behaviour (see also Hufton, Elliott, & Illushin, 2002; Ryan, 2000).

2.3.4 Teachers' style and methods

Throughout the studies on classroom motivation, great emphasis is put on the role of teachers and, more specifically, on the effects of their teaching and communicative styles. Burnett's (2002) study, investigating the relationship between teacher praise and feedback

and elementary school students' perceptions of the atmosphere in the classroom, yielded a rather surprising result. On the one hand, he found no significant correlations between general teacher praise and students' perceptions of the classroom climate. On the other hand, feedback on ability exerted a direct influence on how students felt about their classes, while negative feedback and feedback on effort showed a direct impact on their relationship with teachers. On the whole, frequent feedback on ability and effort seemed to result in their satisfaction with the learning environment.

The importance of the teacher's communicative style is also highlighted by Piniel (2004). Exploring the possible sources of learners' anxiety in the foreign language classroom, she arrives at the conclusion that teachers' unclear explanations, unfair assessment, unpredictable classroom management, and instructions that are difficult to understand do not only cause feelings of apprehension but might lead to students' demotivation in the long run.

The focus in Noels, Clément and Pelletier's (1999) study is on the impact that teachers' instructional styles have on students' motivational goals. The authors assess the relationship between motivational orientations and various language learning outcomes within the self-determination paradigm, with specific regard to the way in which teachers interact with their students. The results of their investigations reveal that teachers who are supportive of learner autonomy and who also provide useful feedback about their students' progress may foster internally regulated motivation, which, in turn, leads to higher levels of achievement. These findings support the self-determination theory suggested by Deci and Ryan (1985, 1995) and are also in line with Guay and Vallerand's (1997) claim that teaching styles and learners' perceptions of these styles impact motivational orientations.

An intriguing question, 'What kind of classroom milieu is likely to facilitate learning and achievement?' is asked by Meece (1994). Drawing on the findings emerging from a series of observations of elementary science classes (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988), she identifies high versus low mastery oriented classes, and explains the reasons for students adopting either type of goal by their teachers' instructional strategies. She has found that in the high mastery classes, the teachers monitored their students' understanding of the material and gave support to their efforts to solve problems independently. They encouraged learners to actively participate in the lesson by leaving room for peer collaboration. However, extrinsic rewards like grades were rarely used as a means of motivating students. On the other hand, low mastery classes turned out to be dominated by rote learning and the recitation of the material. Students were rarely involved in the construction of meaning and they had little opportunity to co-operate with peers. Despite the fact that the teachers did not tailor the lessons to the learners' needs or abilities, assessment played a major role in the teaching process.

Similar findings surface from Syed's (2001) study, the aim of which is to identify the factors that help students to maintain their interest in learning an L2. The results suggest that the way in which the language is taught may act as an important motivational factor. Apparently, by making an effort to meet learners' needs and personalising the teaching material, teachers can enhance their students' motivation greatly.

The quality of the teaching programme was found to be accountable for students' wishing to continue their language studies in Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt and Shohamy's (2001) research. What makes their findings remarkable is the context of the study: the authors investigated the teaching of Arabic to Hebrew-speaking students in Israel. It seems that good

quality teaching methods are always appreciated by the students, moreover, devoted teachers' efforts to promote motivation can even rise above political conflict.

The teacher's responsibility is also emphasised from another perspective. Apparently, teaching methods and evaluation practices may debilitate motivation if they make the differences in students' abilities clearly visible in the classroom (Ames, 1992b; Maehr & Midgley, 1991). Whole class activities, group formation according to ability, and the public display of feedback convey the salience of achievement or competition, therefore, they direct students towards ego-involved performance goals. On the other hand, in classes where learner autonomy is supported and students' improvement is valued, learners are more positively motivated.

Nikolov (2001) takes an interesting approach to the issue when she interviews young adults who consider themselves unsuccessful language learners. Again, classroom experience, teaching methods and assessment practices seem to be salient factors accountable for student motivation and long-term learning outcomes.

As can be concluded from the standpoints reviewed above, the role of the teacher in shaping students' motivation is crucial. Still, the majority of empirical research is concerned with understanding learners' motives, while such issues as the motivation of teachers themselves and their skills in motivating their pupils have been rather neglected (Dörnyei, 2003). A notable exception is Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) list of useful motivational strategies, which provides a synthesis of techniques suggested in earlier research articles (e.g., Brown, 1994; Dörnyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). These "commandments for motivating language learners" rest on firm theoretical foundations and, at the same time, incorporate practising teachers' beliefs and teaching methods. Although the ideas put forward by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) have been further elaborated (see Dörnyei, 2001a;

Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Dörnyei, 2007), unfortunately, they have never been tested in classrooms.

2.4 The theoretical framework of the research

As the theoretical framework of the research, the dissertation uses Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) process-oriented model of second language motivation applying it to the learning situation level described by Dörnyei (1994). In Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) model, the various factors that energise motivation are effective at different phases of the action sequence. According to this theory, motivation cannot be considered as a stable construct, as it is characterised by a constant flux caused by immediate internal and external influences.

In Dörnyei's (1994) framework, motivation is a multilevel construct, which can be described at three different levels of the language learning process: the language, the learner, and the learning situation level (see section 2.2.4.1). The research this dissertation reports on focuses on the third level, which is concerned with motivational variables related to the language course, the teacher, and the learning group. However, I explore the various motivational influences operating on the learning situation level within the process-oriented framework proposed by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998).

The process-oriented approach to understanding L2 motivation represents a pivotal point in motivation research, as it puts special emphasis on the dynamic nature of the construct. The theory has received empirical support from several studies examining the temporal aspect of motivational influences. Ushioda (2001) has conducted a number of interviews focusing on the qualitative content of learners' thoughts. Her findings reveal continuous changes in the way students value and interpret their goals and experiences, and

also suggest that these thoughts directly influence their involvement in the learning process. Another example is Shoaib and Dörnyei's (2005) retrospective qualitative analysis of learning histories identifying certain 'motivational transformation episodes' in the language learning process, which have brought about changes in learners' motivation. These periods are classified as follows: (1) maturation and gradually increasing interest; (2) stand-still period; (3) moving into a new life phase; (4) internalising external goals and 'imported visions'; (5) relationship with a significant other; and (6) time spent in the host environment.

As evidenced by the above examples, investigating the temporal aspect of L2 motivation can make an important contribution to our understanding of the motivational factors that underlie foreign language learning. Undoubtedly, this fact makes it an enterprise worth embarking upon.

2.5 Methods in motivation research

In this section, I analyse studies in second and foreign language learning motivation from a methodological aspect and provide a brief description of the two dominant approaches, namely quantitative and qualitative research designs.

Research into motivation to learn an L2 is rich in survey methods following a quantitative design. Typically, researchers have administered questionnaires or other similar quantifiable rating scales to large populations, and then analysed the data through various descriptive and inferential statistical procedures in order to test previously formulated hypotheses and to propose theories. Undoubtedly, the most widely used such instrument is the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Smythe, 1981), the

relevance of which has recently been demonstrated via a meta-analysis of research carried out by Gardner and his associates (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

Similar techniques have been employed by those researchers who aimed at elaborating existing frameworks (see, for example, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei, 1990; MacIntyre, MacMaster, & Baker, 2001; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Valerand, 2000; Schmidt, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Further uses of quantitative methods include, among others, research investigating particular aspects of the concept. To give a few examples: Baker and MacIntyre (2000) examine the role of gender in L2 orientations, while Valle, Cabanach, Núnez, González-Pienda, Rodríguez and Pineiro (2003) focus on the role of goal setting in academic learning. Gardner and MacIntyre's (1991) study explores the effect of instrumental motivation on language acquisition, whereas Jacques (2001) and Julkunen (1989) compare students' and teachers' views on effective classroom tasks. Kondo-Brown (2001) investigates the language use of bilingual Japanese students studying their heritage language in Hawai'i, while Dörnyei and Csizér (2005) examine the effect of intercultural contact on L2 learning motivation in Hungary.

Questionnaires are often used for examining the interrelationship of various motivational characteristics. Examples of such investigations include Lawson and Sachdev (2004) exploring the relationship between multilingual behaviour, minority language use and learners' attitude; Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret (1997) focusing on the relationship between integrative motivation and language acquisition; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Donovan (2002) looking into the interrelationship of a wide range of factors; Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner (2001) testing the effect of motivational variables in an informal educational setting; and Schmidt and Watanabe (2001) assessing the relationship between

motivation, use of learning strategies and students' preference for different learning activities.

Similarly, large-scale cross-sectional studies have been conducted with the aim of comparing different motivational variables. In a nation-wide study, Dörnyei, Nyilasi and Clément (1996), Dörnyei and Clément (2001), and Dörnyei *et al*. (2006) investigate Hungarian students' motivation and attitudes towards different target languages. In the same educational setting, Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) focus on the effect of motivation and social variables on learners' willingness to communicate while performing conversation tasks. Surveying 1,690 learners of Arab in Israel, Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt and Shohamy (2001) examine which variables prove to be best predictors of maintaining students' motivation. Williams, Burden and Lanvers (2002) conducted their research in British schools exploring how various factors influence motivation and comparing differences in age, sex, proficiency level and target language.

Quantitative research is traditionally designed to identify measurable constructs and then survey large populations with an aim to produce generalisable results. This approach is particularly suitable for large-scale investigations often following a synthesis of several preliminary studies (e.g., Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006; Meece, 1994).

In contrast to survey methods, qualitative studies follow a much looser 'emergent' design, where the emphasis is on generating hypotheses during the research process rather than testing a priori hunches (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Creswell, 1998; Davis, 1995; Erickson, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McCracken, 1988). Qualitative researchers tend to conduct their investigations in natural settings, gather a rich source of data, and, by adopting a funnel vision, move from the general to the specific phenomenon. As McCracken (1988, p. 16) compares the two approaches, "[the] quantitative researcher uses a lens that brings a

narrow strip of the field of vision into very precise focus. The qualitative researcher uses a lens that permits a much less precise vision of a much broader strip".

These exploratory studies yield verbal data, which is interpreted by the researcher in order to identify patterns in the observed phenomenon and understand them from the participants' perspective (Brown, 1988; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Patton, 2002; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Typical methods of data collection in this type of L2 research include interviews (Hufton, Elliott, & Illushin, 2002; Nikolov, 2001; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2001; Williams, Burden, & Al-Baharna, 2001; Wenden, 1987), diary studies (Bailey, 1983; Brown, 1985; Numrich, 1996), classroom observations (Syed, 2001), and case studies (Albert, 2004; Edwards, 2004; Kormos & Lukóczky, 2004).

A noteworthy advantage of such methods is that they yield natural data and reveal the otherwise unobservable aspects of the second or foreign language learning experience. Individual differences in cognitive style, affective variables, language learning strategies, decision making and also motivational factors come to light. This approach is highly suitable for exploring the language learning milieu, especially the impact that significant others (parents, teachers, peers) exert on motivation. Moreover, qualitative research makes it possible for the researcher to investigate the learning processes of more introverted students, who often avoid classroom interaction (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Matsumoto, 1987).

Rather than making broad generalisations or drawing far-reaching conclusions, qualitative researchers aim to provide deep insights into the thoughts and feelings of participants and thus arrive at a better understanding of the question under scrutiny.

Whichever approach they have taken, researchers have usually conducted cross-sectional studies tapping the participants' thoughts and feelings at one particular time. Sadly, there is a lack of developmental, longitudinal studies in L2 motivation research, obviously

because continuous data collection is not feasible in most circumstances. A notable exception, however, is Nikolov (1999a), who investigated the motivational changes of young learners during their eight years of primary education. Her research lasted for 18 years and involved the observation of children in three cohorts. Another well-known project was a ten-year survey of French language learning in the United Kingdom (Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen, & Hargreaves, 1974).

With more and more studies focusing on the dynamic nature of motivation, the need for more holistic interpretations has been expressed, which resulted in calls for approaching the issue with a qualitative description in mind (McGroarty, 2001). This shift in interest is explained by Ushioda (2001, p. 96), who argues that "motivation may be defined not in terms of observable and measurable activity, but rather in terms of what patterns of thinking and belief underlie such activity and shape students' engagement in the learning process".

In sum, motivation research has a long tradition of applying survey methods and statistical analyses. Recently, demands have been put forward for more holistic approaches, nevertheless, there is a shortage of examinations following a qualitative research design. Besides, most of the investigations reviewed above consider L2 learning motivation from only one angle, thus lacking triangulation. It should also be noted that they were undertaken by researchers, not practising teachers. In contrast, the study that I conducted for the dissertation is an example of participant research, which makes it a rather unique enterprise.

2.6 Statement of purpose and research questions

The research this dissertation reports on is meant to contribute to a better understanding of L2 learning motivation by exploring the following areas: (a) the interaction between classroom-related motivational variables; (b) the evolution of students' motivation in the course of instructed language learning; and (c) the teacher's role in the motivational process.

The dissertation addresses the following research questions:

1 How do students see themselves as language learners?

- How do they conceptualise success in learning English?
- What impact do beliefs about language learning have on their motivation?
- How pervasive is foreign language anxiety amongst the students?

2 What impact do content and form of teaching have on students' motivation?

- What are their perceptions of various task types?
- How motivating and effective do they perceive different working modes?

3 How does the atmosphere of the classroom shape students' motivation?

- What factors trigger their choice of action?
- What role does the teacher play in enhancing motivation in the classroom?
- How do peers contribute to a supportive atmosphere?

4 How does motivation change over time?

- What is the relationship between proficiency level and motivation?
- How do students' changing goals interact with their motivation?

PART II

THE STUDY

The second part of the dissertation presents a detailed report on the research that I have undertaken. In Chapter 3, I give an account of recent changes in the Hungarian education system in order to place the study in a broader context. Then, following the methods section (Chapter 4), I present and interpret the findings according to the research questions (Chapters 5–8). Finally, in Chapter 9 conclusions will be drawn together with a discussion of the limitations of the study and possible pedagogical implications.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The turn of the millennium was a particularly interesting time in the life of Hungarian schools. There were considerable changes in the structure of educational institutions and reforms were implemented both in the curriculum and the examination system. This chapter provides background information to the educational scene in Hungary in light of these changes. In my account, I focus on secondary education, given the fact that my research was conducted at a secondary grammar school.

3.1 Structural changes in education

Breaking with the uniformity of the educational system, the liberalisation processes characteristic of this period have brought about major structural changes. The traditional 8+4 formation, i.e. eight years in primary school between the ages of 6 and 14 and four years in secondary education (ages 14-18), has been expanded and new arrangements such as the 6+6 and the 4+8 models have been introduced. This means that today a number of secondary schools offer six- or eight-year teaching programmes, thus attracting the most gifted 10- or 12-year-old population (Halász & Lannert, 1998). The question of ownership adds further colours to the educational palette. Following the privatisation of certain properties, the traditional churches were able to take control of some of their former institutions. In addition, several fund-maintained schools have been established, which adopted alternative teaching methods (e.g., Montessori, Waldorf).

3.2 Changes in the curriculum

The uniformity of the previous system also meant that all of the schools used the same curriculum. However, liberalisation made it impossible and, for that matter, unnecessary for each institution to follow the same route, and the need arose for the development of a *National core curriculum* (NCC, 1995). Implemented in 1996, the new document delegates responsibility by laying down criteria according to which every school is expected to design its own local curriculum and educational programme. The NCC applies to ten different knowledge areas, for which it prescribes requirements, thus setting the standards and attempting to exercise control over output rather than input (Nikolov, 1999b).

The reformed curriculum also represents a shift of emphasis from encyclopaedic knowledge to the application of knowledge and skills. As a result, it is now communicative competence and skills development that are considered pivotal issues and the necessary key competencies are defined as the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes that are jointly indispensable for the individual to become an active and useful member of modern society.

3.3 The two-level school-leaving exam

The curriculum reform was followed by fundamental changes in the organisation and content of the school-leaving examination. In the previous system, all students graduating from a secondary grammar or vocational school took a school-leaving exam at the end of year 12 of their education, but exam papers differed according to the type of school. Although the written component was compiled centrally, the exams were organised by the schools and papers were evaluated internally by the students' own teachers, which made the system highly unreliable. In addition, entrance examinations were held by universities and colleges for students wishing to gain admission into tertiary education. These exams also varied according to the requirements set by the institutions.

The reformed school-leaving exam was introduced in 2005, and the rationale behind it was to earn respect for the exam by developing standardised papers and thus producing reliable and comparable results. University entrance examinations have been abolished, as the same tests are administered to all students regardless of school type. The exam has to be taken in five subjects: Hungarian Language and Literature, History, Mathematics, a Foreign Language, and a fifth subject of the students' own choice or suggested by the university to which they have submitted their application.

The new exam is available at two levels. The intermediate level is meant to test all the students graduating from secondary education, while the advanced level was originally designed for those wishing to continue their studies in tertiary education. However, as colleges and universities accept certificates at both levels, students can decide for themselves which level to take. The only incentive for aiming at the advanced level is the bonus points they get if they achieve a minimum of 30 %. The written papers of the intermediate level and both the written and oral components of the advanced level are compiled centrally. Intermediate level exams are organised locally and tests are evaluated internally, but following detailed evaluation criteria. Advanced level exams are administered by the National Assessment and Examination Centre for Public Education (OKÉV) and evaluated by trained external examiners.

Apart from the structure, the content of the exam has also changed. The tasks have become more life-like and there is an emphasis on testing students' capability to apply their knowledge. Apart from factual knowledge, their communicative and problem solving skills are also assessed.

3.4 The privileges of foreign languages

A special tint may be added to the above picture if we consider the status of foreign languages in the Hungarian education system. Owing to socio-political reasons, there has been an ever-strengthening need for people speaking foreign languages. First, since the country opened up its borders, both the tourist industry and economic relations have shown a considerable increase. Second, multinational corporations have set up businesses in the country and now look for local employees. Third, there has been a boom in the media as

foreign television channels became accessible and international videos and films appeared on the market. Finally, in May 2004 Hungary became integrated into the European Union, which opened up new opportunities for Hungarian citizens (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006). Nevertheless, the nation still seems to lag behind in foreign language proficiency.

In order to improve the situation, certain administrative measures have been imposed that also have their effect on public education. If a student passes a state foreign language examination at an intermediate or advanced level, he or she gets bonus points at university admission. Until recently, students with such a certificate got exempted from foreign language classes and were automatically awarded top grades at the school-leaving exam. There is such a wide range of national and international foreign language exams that a special Accreditation Board has been established to monitor them and classify them as state language exams. Although these exams are available for a fee, they have been very popular with students for the reasons mentioned above. However, the system changed in September 2005 with the decision that exemption is only granted to students who pass the school-leaving exam. It will be interesting to see how this situation will affect the market of foreign language exams.

3.5 The setting of the study

The study reported on in this dissertation was conducted in a medium-sized secondary grammar school in the south of Hungary. The school has a good reputation for its high standard of teaching and is very popular in the region, which is indicated by the number of applications every year. In the past decade, there have always been twice as many applicants as there were places. Apart from the usual four years, the school also offers five

years' tuition, which includes a year of intensive language learning, and a six-year programme starting with year 7 (age 12).

As a result of the decentralisation of education described above, schools have the right to decide what subjects to teach as long as the knowledge areas described in the NCC are dealt with. However, because teachers are trained in the traditional subjects, the school offers the following: Hungarian Language and Literature, History, Mathematics, two Foreign Languages, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Music, Art, Physical Education, and Information Technology. Special areas like Drama or Media Studies are usually incorporated into Literature classes. As can be seen from the list, students are expected to learn two foreign languages. The so-called first foreign language, English or German, is practically a continuation of their primary-school studies and is taught in five classes a week. It is worthy of notice, however, that English is gaining popularity owing to the process of language globalisation, as evidenced by recent studies (Dörnyei *et al.*, 2006). As for the second foreign language, students can select from among English, French, German or Italian, of which they have three classes weekly. They can also opt for classes specialised in mathematics, information technology, or communication and media studies, furthermore, in years 11 and 12, they can decide which subjects they want to study for the advanced level exam.

As regards evaluation, students are assessed continuously throughout their studies, usually on the basis of their written and oral performance. Assessment is made in the form of grades on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is the top grade and 1 means fail. At the end of each term, a grade point average is calculated in each subject, which is noted in students' school report. Admission to university is determined by points, which are calculated by adding up the grade point averages of five subjects at the end of the last two years, the results of the

school-leaving exam, and optional bonus points. Until recently, all the students were to sit for an internal examination in four subjects of their choice at the end of year 10. Although learners were evaluated in the usual manner, grades were only given for the purposes of information about their performance but were not recorded and did not count for grade point averages.

The recent reform in the Hungarian education system has left its mark on the school's philosophy, which means that the priorities of the *National core curriculum* (1996) are reflected in its newly written policies. According to these documents, the emphasis is shifted on learning as opposed to teaching. In response to these novel demands, the school has scheduled a three-day project at the beginning of each year, where students are taught a variety of learning strategies. Two further 'learning to learn' days are organised during the year, one later in the autumn and one in the winter. However, the teachers' appreciation of the project is rather contradictory. On the one hand, there are the advocates of the idea, who put in a lot of work and even devise new activities for the students. On the other hand, there are the sceptics, who doubt the usefulness of the project and consider it a waste of time. In my view, the root of the problem lies in the application of the package. Learning strategies are almost taught like other school subjects and are limited to a few hours' engagement instead of being incorporated in daily teaching practices.

Apparently, it takes time for new approaches to education to get support from teachers. It is no wonder then that despite the emphasis on skills development and the necessity of conveying general knowledge the school is practically achievement oriented. Both students and teachers are primarily evaluated by examination and competition results, and this practice often causes a rather competitive atmosphere. The heavy workload notwithstanding, most learners are highly motivated and wish to continue their studies in

tertiary education, which explains the high admission rate (around 90%) into universities and colleges.

The study this dissertation reports on was conducted in the transitory period (2002 – 2006) described above. It was a particularly interesting time, as both the local end-of-year-10 examination and the school-leaving exam reform created situations that I found well worth exploring in light of the influence they exerted on students' motivation.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

4.1 Rationale for research methodology

The present study follows the qualitative research tradition. The rationale behind adopting such an approach is that it enables the researcher to offer more holistic explanations by interpreting the phenomenon in its wider context. With regard to the study of foreign language learning motivation, it means that influences outside the learning experience can also be taken into account. This is an important standpoint since, in agreement with Dörnyei (2005, p. 86), I consider the classroom more than an academic setting, in that I regard it a 'social arena', which is a scene of friendships, love and combats with the problems of growing up and socialisation over time.

More importantly, open-ended methods make it possible to unveil learners' thoughts, feelings and beliefs, thus providing an emic perspective. The focus of the research may shift from measuring the intensity of students' motivation to discovering how their way of thinking, their beliefs and values effect their choice of action and their involvement in the learning process (Ushioda, 2001).

The novelty of this study lies in its longitudinal nature. An indisputable advantage of such research is that through prolonged observation of the same participants changes in their motivational behaviour may be detected and the reasons uncovered. The extended period of time also makes it possible for the researcher to gather as much information as possible and analyse the data simultaneously, thus narrowing the focus of investigation while the research

is still in progress (Keeves, 1994; Menard, 1991). Such in-depth analyses yield far better insights since, as Dörnyei (2001a, p. 195) points out, "only by collecting longitudinal data can we fully explore the dynamic nature of the mental processes underlying motivation".

4.2 Participants

4.2.1 The students

A group of 16 students participated in the longitudinal study. The eleven girls and five boys took part in the school's six-year educational programme and, at the beginning of the data collection procedure, in the autumn of 2002, they were in Form 9C (ages 14-15), starting their third year at the school described in section 3.5 of Chapter 3. Twelve students came from Baja and four commuted to school from nearby villages. As for their academic orientations, six of them attended special classes in mathematics and another six opted for communication and media studies, leaving only four students with no optionals at all. In year 9, they started learning a second foreign language, which in their case was Italian for eleven students and French for five students. In these language classes they were mixed with other year 9 students.

Compared to the average Hungarian secondary school student, their general academic motivation could be described as fairly high. This assumption is based on the fact that they all came to the school with the aim of continuing their studies in tertiary education and were working hard towards that goal. At the end of year 8, for example, six students achieved outstanding results, i.e. they obtained top grades in all or all but one subjects, and the lowest grade point average was 4.0 on a scale of 1 to 5.

Besides attending classes, most of them were involved in some kind of extracurricular activities, which were either related to their studies or pursued in order to cultivate and nurture certain natural gifts. The following list illustrates the wide range of their interests (the students are referred to by pseudonyms):

- Kitti, Erika, Beáta and Melinda sang in the school choir,
- Erika, Beáta, Kitti and Zsófi played a musical instrument,
- Béla, Zsófi and Judit played sport,
- Benjámin joined the maths circle and entered competitions,
- Beáta and Noémi were members of the school's arts circle,
- Sára took part in essay-writing competitions and oral debates,
- Beáta and Karcsi read poetry and acted in the school drama group,
- Géza played an active role in the students' union,
- Sára studied Latin, while Klára and Benjámin learned French in addition to their regular foreign language studies.

The students had five English classes a week, of which there was usually a double period. I was their teacher for all the six years that they spent in the school. The course-book that we used in class was *The new Cambridge English course* (Swan & Walter, 1992, 1993), a four-level course taking learners from elementary to upper-intermediate level. The lessons were often supplemented by extra reading materials, video sequences, grammar tasks and various oral communication practice activities.

I met the students when they entered the school at the age of 12, starting year 7. They were generally easy to work with, as they were playful, enthusiastic, and eager to learn. Most of them were also self-confident and outspoken, although there were a few quiet ones, who required special attention. I remember three students in particular: Máté, Noémi, and Erika.

Máté seemed to have difficulties with English. As it turned out, he was convinced that he lacked foreign language learning aptitude and believed that he would never be able to master the English language. When I talked to his parents at a parents' meeting, however, I realised that it was their belief actually and their excuse for their son's poorer performance. Comparing Máté to his elder brother, a successful language learner, and seeing that he was not producing immediate results, they were resigned to the fact that their second son was not going to reach the same standard. Máté seemed to accept his parents' view and got engaged in the learning process only half-heartedly. It was a real challenge to make him believe that hard work and extra effort would yield the desired results.

Noémi joined the group a few weeks later than the others and seemed to find it difficult to adapt to the new surroundings. Although the group welcomed her, she was extremely shy and kept to herself for a long time. When I discovered that she lacked confidence and suffered from a considerable degree of anxiety, I tried to encourage her and help her overcome the difficulties she experienced. Nevertheless, it was not until she found a good and reliable friend that she started to feel at ease and appeared to enjoy herself.

The third student, Erika was also very reserved. Apparently, she worked hard but never volunteered answers in class and when asked, she always spoke in a really soft voice. As it turned out, she felt very unsure of herself. Although she was driven by a desire to prove her abilities, she was afraid of failure. As I saw it, her self-perception was unrealistic and she set herself too high aims. This posed a different sort of challenge, as I was expected to encourage her and advise her to be patient at the same time.

The rest of the group appeared largely homogeneous considering their behaviour and language proficiency. When I started the systematic data collection for the research, the students were in year 9, in the middle of their secondary education, and they had already

gained a great deal of experience as language learners. I had no doubt that they were open and mature enough to express their ideas.

In the first phase of the research, I also involved 14 students from a parallel class (Form 9B) besides the target group. As will be shown later, they participated in the interviews and wrote narratives and feedback notes on self-assessment. They were included in the preliminary data collection for reasons of counterbalancing researcher bias.

4.2.2 The teacher-researcher

Another important participant of the study was the teacher, myself, who played a dual role in this research. On the one hand, as the students' English teacher I was involved in the constant interaction with the group every day for six years. I was aware that I played an active part in arousing and maintaining their motivation to learn the language as well as in facilitating their development. On the other hand, as a researcher I monitored and explored their behaviour trying to understand the underlying influences.

Although such participant research is generally considered to yield a distorted picture, I believe that rather than being conflicting, the two roles complemented each other. As a teacher, I could make use of the researcher's findings by reinvesting them into my everyday teaching practice and thus further increasing my students' motivation. As a researcher, however, I could benefit from the teacher's background knowledge of the students and the learning context, thus arriving at a better understanding of the situation and events.

4.2.3 External observers and raters

Since in the present study the teacher and researcher are the same person, it was inevitable to involve external observers in order to counterbalance possible researcher bias and meet the requirements of triangulation. These included the English teacher of a parallel class, two colleagues visiting my lessons, a trained examiner, and a fellow researcher, all of whom played different roles in the course of the research.

The English teacher of Form 9B was asked to conduct the interviews with my students in the first phase of data gathering. Two teachers were invited to observe and comment on my classes at the second stage: a colleague teaching Chemistry and Physics at the same school and an EFL professional from a university. A trained examiner was arranged to assess my students' oral performance at the proficiency exam twice: at the beginning and end of the second phase of the study. Finally, a fellow researcher went through the audit trail of the research during the peer-debriefing session.

4.3 Data collection instruments

Data collection started in autumn 2002, when the students were in year 9, and covered a period of four years with each phase focusing on different aspects of motivation. In order to produce the thickest possible description of the case, I collected data along two lines. On the one hand, I gathered information with the aim of identifying the motivational factors that serve as a driving force in students' EFL learning. The major body of information was provided by the students' self-report diaries, which was supplemented by lesson observations, the teacher's diary, focus group interviews, and a questionnaire.

On the other hand, I kept continuous record on the students' progress in general, and the development of their communicative skills in particular. This was done by means of different proficiency measures such as progress tests and grades each year as well as the teacher's regular evaluation of learners' effort and performance. In addition, students were asked to assess their progress at the end of each term. Table 2 summarises the four phases of data collection in relation to the specific focus of the investigation each time. As can be seen in the table, I applied the method of triangulation, as I used multiple sources to gather information in each phase with the purpose of enhancing the trustworthiness of the research.

Table 2
Phases of data collection

Phases	Focus of study	Sources of data
Phase 1 2002-2003 academic year	• students' self-conceptions as language learners • language learning aptitude • beliefs and expectations	• interviews • narratives • feedback notes • language aptitude test • questionnaire on learners' beliefs
Phase 2 2003-2004 academic year	• content and form of teaching • the teacher's role, • the teacher's reflections, • classroom climate • students' EFL development	• student diaries • teacher's diary • lesson observations • focus group interview • language proficiency measures
Phase 3 2004-2005 academic year	• students' EFL development • changes in orientation	• language achievement measures • participant observation • student diaries
Phase 4 2005-2006 academic year	• students' EFL development • students' persistence	• participant observation • test results • final examination results • feedback from students

temporal changes in motivation

I consider it important to emphasise that confidentiality was maintained throughout the research. Where possible, students provided information anonymously and in any case, nobody but the researcher had access to the raw data. As for their diaries and the interviews,

students are cited under false names in the analysis and results section of the dissertation. In what follows, I give a detailed description of the instruments and the data collection procedures phase by phase. In most cases, the instrument and procedures are so intertwined that I have decided to describe them in the same section in order to make it easier for the reader to have a better grasp of the broad array of data sources.

4.3.1 Phase 1

The research started in the autumn of 2002 with the primary aim of getting a better insight into students' actual thoughts and feelings by exploring the factors that they attribute for their successes and failures in learning English. Furthermore, I wanted to see how their beliefs about L2 learning affected their actual learning practice. I started my research with a replication and extension of a study conducted by Williams and Burden (1999), and collected three different types of data to explore the perspective of the participants. To avoid researcher bias, another group of 14 students from a parallel class (Form 9B) as well as their English teacher were involved in this part of the investigation.

Following the qualitative data gathering, a language aptitude test and a questionnaire on students' beliefs were administered, this time to the target group only.

4.3.1.1 Instruments and procedures

Structured interviews

As a starting point, structured interviews were conducted with the learners, following the schedule that was proposed by Williams and Burden (1999). Students were asked (1) about their preferences, (2) about their attributions for their successes and failures regarding

their L2 studies, and (3) about effective language learning strategies. The questions included an explanation of why they liked or disliked learning English as well as a self-assessment of their proficiency. They were also invited to recall experiences of success and failure about their English studies and to give reason for their performance. Finally, they were asked to give advice for somebody who wanted to master English. As the interview schedule was an adapted version of the original instrument (see Appendix A), it had to be validated, which involved the translation and piloting of the items as described below.

Validation of the interview schedule

The aim of the pilot stage was to provide clearly worded, unambiguous questions, which conveyed the ideas of the original interview schedule. First, the questions were translated by the two teachers, and the translation was checked by yet another EFL teacher (see Appendix A). Then, we discussed the schedule and different techniques (McCracken, 1988) before conducting pilot interviews with four students from the same population, i.e. Year 9, but from different study groups, to see if the questions elicited meaningful answers. Both of us were present at the pilot sessions, and we each asked two students in turn. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for further analysis. During these sessions, we had to paraphrase and explain some of the items used by Williams and Burden (1999) until we found the most appropriate way of wording the questions. The alterations that we made are as follows.

As a starting point, we agreed to use the term "do well [jól megy]" instead of "succeed [sikeresnek lenni]" as suggested by Williams and Burden (1999), partly because it translates well into Hungarian, and partly because we found it easier for our students to understand. During the validation stage, however, we realised that Hungarian expressions

like “sikerélmény” and “nem sikerült”, for example, are more precise than “do/not do well.” As a result, we changed question 5, “Give me an example of when you did well,” into “Give me an example of when you experienced a feeling of success [Mondj egy példát, amikor sikerélményed volt]”; and question 9, “Give me an example of when you did not do well,” into “Give me an example of when you failed [Mondj egy példát arra, amikor nem sikerült valami].”

Similarly, in the case of question 13, we thought that the revised version, “How can you judge how well you are doing in English? [Mi alapján tudod megítélni, hogy jól megy-e neked az angol?]” was more to the point than the original “How can you tell how well you are doing?”

For question 12, we decided to replace the original “What do you have to do to do well in French?”, with “What advice would you give someone who wanted to master English? [Milyen tanácsot adnál annak, aki szeretne jól tudni angolul?]” We made this change because we felt the question somewhat vague. We thought that by asking students to give useful advice, we would also ask them to think about what they were actually doing in order to improve their English. And indeed, already in the pilot stage, participants listed ways in which they were practising the language.

Procedures

The actual interviews were conducted in the school library during English classes. None of the participants were interviewed by their own teacher, because we thought that students might feel more comfortable with a stranger and thus give more truthful answers. The interviewer started each session with an informal discussion about what the students were doing in their English class and how they felt about it. Then, the questions were asked

according to the schedule, i.e. always in the same order. All the interviews were held in Hungarian, and they were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. They varied in length between ten and fifteen minutes, and, as some students were better than others at verbalising their thoughts, they also varied in how informative they were.

Narratives

As a follow up to the interviews, the students wrote about an event in their lives during which they experienced a feeling of success in connection with English. We asked them to recall a particular case and describe what happened and how they felt about it. They gave their accounts in class writing in Hungarian. In order to ensure anonymity, students were asked not to write their names on the paper.

Although question 5 of the interview ("Give me an example of when you experienced a feeling of success") was meant to reveal the same type of information, we requested the narratives because many participants gave only short, superficial answers to question 5. We thought that if students were given more time to think about a successful situation and they were on their own, they would provide more information. In this case as well, however, the accounts varied considerably both in length and content. Some participants wrote detailed descriptions of their feelings, and others only listed several occasions, without elaborating on them.

Feedback notes on self-assessment

The third type of data consisted of short, written, anonymous feedback, eliciting an even more specific answer. For a period of two weeks in November 2002, the students were asked to write one sentence on a piece of paper immediately after each English class. They

were told to complete either of the following sentences: (1) "I think I did well today, because…"; or (2) "I do not think I did very well today, because…" The sentences were then collected and put in an envelope.

The language learning aptitude measure

The instrument I used to measure students' aptitude for learning an L2 was the *Hungarian Language Aptitude Test (HUNLAT)* (Ottó, 2002). Foreign language aptitude is defined by Ottó (1996) as a "construct of general competencies or learning capacities … that accounts for a large portion of the variance in individual differences in foreign language achievement" (p. 6). It is presumed to stem from first language learning ability and is thought to facilitate L2 learning (Skehan, 1991, 2002). In Ottó's (1996) view, language aptitude is not a unitary construct but a cluster of several independent language learning abilities, which can be divided into the following general categories: memory abilities, auditory abilities, and analytical abilities (Ottó, 1996). The HUNLAT is based on Carroll's four-component theory of language aptitude and his Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) (Carroll & Sapon, 1959). It comprises the following subtests: (1) Hidden Sounds, which were designed to measure *phonetic coding ability* – defined as "the ability to identify distinct sounds, to form association between those sounds and symbols representing them, and to retain these associations", (2) Language Analysis, measuring *inductive language learning ability* – that is the ability "to infer or induce the rules governing a set of language materials, given sample language materials that permit such inferences", (3) Words in Sentences, designed to measure *grammatical sensitivity* – the ability "to recognise the grammatical functions of words in sentence structures", and finally (4) Vocabulary Learning, or *rote learning ability* – "the ability to learn associations between sounds and meanings

rapidly and efficiently, and to retain these associations" (Carroll, 1981, cited in Ottó, 1996, pp. 8-9).

Procedures

Students completed the test in class at the beginning of January 2003, and the procedure followed the instructions played from a CD.

Questionnaire on student beliefs

The questionnaire on student beliefs was meant to provide insights into students' expectations concerning foreign language learning. The instrument that I used for this purpose was a modified version of Horwitz's (1987) *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI). The questionnaire was adapted for Hungarian learners by Sheorey (2007), and, like the original inventory, it assesses student beliefs in the following five areas: (1) foreign language aptitude (a sample item is 33, "Mindenki meg tud tanulni egy idegen nyelvet" [Everybody can learn a foreign language]); (2) the difficulty they encounter while learning an L2 (e.g., item 25 "Könnyebb beszélni angolul, mint megérteni a beszélt vagy írott nyelvet" [It is easier to speak English than understand spoken or written English]); (3) the nature of language learning (e.g., 27, "Más angolt (vagy egyéb idegen nyelvet) tanulni, mint a többi tantárgyat" [Learning English (or other foreign languages) is different from learning other subjects]); (4) students' language learning communication strategies (e.g., item 9 "Jobb meg sem szólalni, amíg az ember nem tud helyesen beszélni angolul" [It is better not to say a word until you can speak English accurately]); and motivation (e.g., item 32 "Szeretnék angolul beszélő barátokat szerezni" [I would like to make friends with English-speaking people]).

In the survey, students were asked to rate the 35 items on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, giving respondents the option of no opinion as well (see Appendix B for the whole questionnaire). The survey was also introduced by a brief background questionnaire. For the purposes of the present study, I used the following three items: (1) a self-evaluation, where students had to rank their knowledge of English in comparison with the others in the group; (2) their opinions about how interesting they found learning English; and (3) their reasons for learning the language. The other questions, asking about their age, gender, the length of their English studies, and any other foreign languages they speak, were irrelevant as I was familiar with the students' background.

Procedures

The students completed the questionnaire in their English class. I explained the purpose of the study and asked them to give truthful and thoughtful answers. I also made it clear to them that it was not a test, there were no right or wrong answers, but I was interested in their opinion about learning English. In order to be able to match their answers with data collected from other sources, I asked respondents to write their names on the survey. Nevertheless, confidentiality was maintained, as the responses were used solely for research purposes and nobody else but I had access to the data.

4.3.1.2 Data analysis

All the verbal data was analysed using the constant comparative method, as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994), to find emerging patterns. I determined initial categories by reviewing the information gathered during the interview sessions. Then, as a result of a

thorough analysis of the narratives and the feedback notes, I modified these groupings and constructed new categories.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the research, I used the widely accepted technique of peer debriefing (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). This technique involved a critical analysis of the research method and the data by a fellow researcher, who went through the audit trail and commented on each step. She reviewed the research instruments and checked the information gathered from the students to see if her understanding of the findings corresponded with my interpretation.

As regards the questionnaire, given the small number of participants (n=16), complex statistical analyses were not considered. Instead, I made frequency calculations in order to distinguish salient responses.

4.3.2 Phase 2

The second phase covered the 2003-2004 academic year and yielded the largest amount of data. Given the fact that my main interest concerned the actual classroom milieu, I explored areas such as the relationship between motivation and content and form of teaching, the role of the teacher and the teaching material as well as the effect of time on students' motivation. These issues were examined both from the students' and from the teacher's viewpoint. In addition, I applied various language proficiency measures in order to keep track of my students' English language development.

The major body of information in this phase of data collection was provided by student and teacher diaries, since they are, as McDonough and McDonough (1997, p. 135) described them, the "primary vehicle for process research, for getting 'under the skin' of the

psychological, social and affective factors involved in teaching or in language development in ways that cannot readily be reached by staff meetings or tests or population sampling or experiments". These introspective accounts were expected to explore students' reactions and thus reveal what they considered as important processes in the English language classes (Allright & Bailey, 1991). In order to enhance the credibility of this self-report data, however, I also arranged for lesson observations.

4.3.2.1 Instruments and procedures

Language proficiency measures

The following indicators of language achievement were used:

- *Grade point averages in English,* which were indicative of achievement in English as measured by end of term and end of year grades. The averages were calculated from the grades that students were given during the year as part of the customary assessment system in a traditional school environment. I carried out a continuous assessment of students' homework assignments, task completion, effort and performance in class, among others.
- *Progress test results:* grades providing information about students' language development. Two tests were scheduled during the year, one in January and one in April 2004, and the task sheets were taken from the test booklet accompanying their course book, *The new Cambridge English course 3* (Swan & Walter, 1992). The tests followed the same format, and were comprised of listening, grammar, language in use, pronunciation, vocabulary, reading and writing sections at intermediate level.

- *Standardised proficiency scores* as an objective measure of students' proficiency. The test battery used for the current research was compiled by the Lingua Franca Group of the Department of English Applied Linguistics at the University of Pécs, and commissioned by the National Assessment and Examination Centre for Public Education (OKÉV). The reason for choosing this particular test was that it was designed for year 10 students, and as in 2003 it was administered to a representative sample of secondary-school learners as part of a nation-wide survey, my students' performance could be compared to the results of that research (Nikolov, 2003; Nikolov & Józsa, 2006).

The examination was composed of a written and an oral component, and focused on the four basic communicative skills. The written component measured reading, listening and writing skills. The reading comprehension booklet comprised five different tasks, which the students were required to complete in 45 minutes. Listening comprehension was examined by two tasks lasting for 15 minutes. Finally, the writing task was a 150-word letter, where the time limit was 30 minutes, and the papers were assessed according to four criteria of an assessment scale: task completion (communicative purpose), appropriate vocabulary, accuracy, and organisation of the text. The tasks were designed to cover level A2 and, partially, level B1 of the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001).

The oral component was taken from an earlier study in 2000. It consisted of three tasks, and each student was examined for about 12-13 minutes. The first task was a warm-up, in which candidates were asked simple questions about themselves, their families and preferred leisure activities. In task 2 students chose a picture from six to describe and compared it with scenes from their lives. The final task was a selection of six role plays, where the students were given six situations, of which they had to choose

three, and act them out with the examiner (see Appendix C). Students' oral performances were assessed on all three tasks separately along the following four criteria: task achievement, appropriacy and richness of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation.

- *Students' self-ratings:* providing information about students' self-perceptions with regard to their proficiency level and language skills development. This was done in written form at the end of each term.

Procedures

Students took the progress tests in their regular English classes, and the exact timing was negotiable, that is, students were always given the possibility to vote on the most appropriate time for taking the test.

In the case of the proficiency test, the students were given two versions of the paper: booklet A at the beginning of September 2003 and booklet B at the end of March 2004. The two booklets included the same tasks in a different sequence. The second test also functioned as their local, end-of-year-10 examination. The oral interview sessions were tape-recorded with the students' permission, and, in order to avoid researcher bias, they were assessed by a trained external rater.

Student diaries

Participants were asked to keep a diary and note down their thoughts and ideas on certain issues regularly. They were given the choice of language, English or mother tongue. The process followed the routine suggested by Bailey (1991), and McDonough and McDonough (1997). In the course of the data collection, the journals went through different

phases, gradually narrowing the scope of investigation. Ideas for concrete questions were generated by students' diary entries themselves and taken from McDonough and McDonough (1997) and Benson (2001).

As a starting point in September 2003 students were asked to give their overall impressions, write about their general attitude towards English language learning and assess their own progress for a period of two weeks. I asked them to write at least one entry a week at home, so that they could get accustomed to keeping a diary.

Then, for a period of four weeks in September and October 2003 they reported on their experiences and activities related to English outside school. I asked them to concentrate especially on positive things. Again, they made their notes at home.

After this introductory period, their entries were always given a more specific focus, in the course of which the following areas were considered:

- At different times during the year (in October 2003, January and April 2004) students commented on specific learning tasks. They gave their written feedback in class immediately after completing the task, and said what they liked and what they disliked about it. The tasks included a jigsaw reading activity in pairs, a role-play in small groups, and the tasks of a nation-wide competition organised by the Hungarian Ministry of Education as part of the World – Language Project (Medgyes & Öveges, 2005).
- For two weeks in December 2003, students wrote their feedback at the end of each lesson, answering the following three questions: (i) What did you find useful in today's lesson? (ii) What did you enjoy doing and why? and, (iii) What did you dislike? and What did you miss?

- In December 2003, students wrote about their impressions and feelings while taking a written progress test and how they thought they had performed on them. They gave their accounts in class, immediately after completing the test.
- At the end of each term (in January and June 2004), students assessed their progress giving their responses to the following questions: (a) How satisfied are you with your English? Please, elaborate on the four skills: speaking, writing, reading and listening. (b) What would you like to improve? How? (c) What activities would you like to do more frequently in the English lessons?
- In February and March 2004, students commented on two weeks in retrospect. At the first time, they were asked to recollect the events of a whole week, and answer questions such as, "What activities did we do last week?" "What did you like best?" At the second time, they were given a list of all the activities of the previous week's classes and were asked to comment on each of them. The idea behind this approach was the hypothesis that the most motivating tasks and activities would stick in students' mind.
- At the end of March 2004, students sat for the local, end-of-year-10 examinations organised by the school. They took the exam in four subjects of their choice, one of which was English in the case of the participants of the present study (see *Language proficiency measures* earlier in this section for the description of the test). Students were asked to write two entries about this event. The one written before taking the test was meant to allow me to explore their expectations and feelings, and the other, written after completing the test was to express their views concerning the examination in general, i.e. all the subjects, and the English test in particular.
- The focus in May 2004 was on comparing English with other school subjects, more precisely, on the differences between English classes and Physics or Chemistry lessons. I

did not give students any specific guidelines, as I wanted to know what they found most important with regard to different subjects and how they felt about general teaching practices and classroom organisations.

- Finally, students' comments were invited every time that external observers came to visit English classes. The questions that I asked them were as follows: (i) How did you feel during the lesson? (ii) What did you like about it and why? (iii) What would you have done differently? (iv) Do you think the other students enjoyed the lesson?

Procedures

At the beginning of the 2003-2004 academic year, I explained to students the purposes of my research, and asked them to actively participate in it by keeping a diary about their language learning experiences. I asked them to write their diary entries either at home or in class depending on the focus of inquiry. In order to obtain valid self-report data, I guaranteed confidentiality by making it clear to them that their answers would only serve research purposes and direct quotations in the dissertation would appear as illustrations under false names.

To motivate students to keep writing, I commented on every diary entry and I did my best to respond by the following day. While the students were given the choice of language (L1 or L2), I always replied in English. Thus, these diaries became dialogue journals and, as such, besides providing learning opportunities for students, they also invited continuous reflections on development from both parties: students and their teacher. Not only did they broaden the scope of investigation, but by revealing specific areas to be explored, the ideas gathered from the students generated further, more clearly focussed questions.

In the results and discussion section (Chapters 5-7) excerpts from students diaries appear in my translation. However, if the original entry is written in English, it is quoted exactly and is printed in italics. Sample pages photocopied from students' diaries can be found in Appendix D.

Teacher's diary

In order to provide a picture from the teacher's viewpoint, I also kept a diary throughout the year, noting my thoughts and comments immediately after every lesson. These entries included general impressions as well as reflections on the following aspects suggested by McDonough (1994) and Numrich (1996):

- the atmosphere of the lesson;
- what went well and what difficulties I encountered in the lesson;
- what I enjoyed and what I disliked;
- what I think the students enjoyed;
- comments on individual students' participation and progress;
- ideas for future classes.

Whenever the students were given specific questions to consider in their comments, the teacher's diary followed suit. I wrote the entries either immediately after classes or later the same day.

Lesson observations

I asked two teachers to visit classes and give feedback on their observations. The two people represented different viewpoints. One of them was an EFL professional, a visiting professor at a Hungarian university with several years of experience in teacher training and a

clear view of current issues in language teaching. The other observer was a Chemistry and Physics teacher from the same secondary school, who did not speak English at all and could therefore see the class from a different outsider's perspective.

Rather than following a strict schedule compiled a priori, a more holistic approach was used: observers were asked to record their overall impressions on aspects such as classroom atmosphere, students' attitudes and involvement, and teacher behaviour. Feedback was given in two ways: either in the form of a written report or in a post observation interview. The comments were compared with my own observations and diary notes thus contributing to fuller picture of the classroom milieu.

Focus group interview

In Morgan's (1997) view, group interviews produce data that would be less accessible without the interaction between group members. He argues that it is not only the researcher's questions that guide the discussions but also participants' responses to each other's experiences and opinions.

Accordingly, the aim of the technique used in the present study was to give students the opportunity to discuss their language learning experiences, thus providing a rich source of information. On the other hand, the conversations served as evaluations of lessons, teaching materials and techniques at the end of the term. Topics for discussion included the following points:

- What should an English class be like?
- To what extent do lessons meet students' expectations?
- What are the good points of the lessons? What activities do students find useful?
- What would they do differently?

- Do they get enough help from the teacher to reach their goals?
- In what fields do they feel that they are making progress?
- How are English lessons different from other classes?

Procedures

The interview was held in one of the classrooms where the group normally had their English classes, and it was scheduled for the last but one EFL lesson in June 2004. The conversations were carried out in Hungarian and lasted for 45 minutes. The atmosphere could be described as friendly and relaxed, the students were sitting in a circle and most of them were open and willing to share their opinions. The session was tape-recorded with the participants' permission and transcribed for further analysis.

4.3.2.2 Data analysis

All verbal data were analysed qualitatively, following the constant comparative method as described in the previous section (4.3.1.2). Photocopied sample pages of students' diaries and the teacher's diary as well as excerpts from the transcript of the focus group interview and the observers' reports are provided in Appendix D.

4.3.3 Phase 3

The third phase of the research covered the 2004-2005 academic year, when students were in year 11 of their studies. In this year, my investigations were focused on two aspects of the language learning process. On the one hand, I paid close attention to motivation in light of their EFL development, especially to tests and proficiency measures. On the other

hand, I was interested in exploring the effects that external rewards, in their case bonus points for examination results, exerted on their motivation.

It was in this year that the school-leaving examination reform was implemented and they were among the first candidates to be tested in the new system the following year. This meant that they had to decide which subjects to take at advanced level and select courses accordingly. In addition, the privileged status of foreign languages required further decisions. According to the new regulations, a certificate of intermediate-level state language examination yielded bonus points at university admission and, at the same time, granted exemption from the school-leaving examination. However, the same bonus points were awarded for advanced level school-leaving examinations with scores of 60% or higher. As a result, students had to decide whether to wait and sit for the regular examination at the end of year 12 or try one of the many accredited language examinations during year 11. Advanced-level school-leaving examinations taken during term time also granted exemption from classes, as they practically provided them with a certificate of secondary education in the given subject. I found this dilemma and the immediate impact of language policy decision on students' motivation well worth investigating.

Again, I collected data from multiple sources, which included language proficiency measures, the teacher's participant observations and notes, and students' diary entries.

4.3.3.1 Instruments and procedures

Language proficiency measures

The following measures were used in this phase of data collection:

- *Continuous assessment by the teacher* in the form of grades.
- *Progress tests* as described in phase 2 (4.3.2.1). The students were required to write four progress tests this year, one in October 2004, and one in January, March and May 2005, respectively. As earlier, the task sheets were taken from the test booklet accompanying the course book, *The new Cambridge English course 3 and 4* (Swan & Walter, 1992, 1993). For the description of tasks and procedures the reader is referred to Chapter 4.3.2.
- *Standardised proficiency score:* at the end of January 2005, students were given a complete school-leaving test at advanced level. The test was compiled by the National Institute for Public Education (OKI) for pilot purposes and was comprised of four sections. Both reading comprehension and language in use included four tasks, which the students were required to complete in 70 and 50 minutes, respectively. Listening comprehension was examined by three tasks lasting 30 minutes. Finally, the writing paper comprised two tasks: a letter of 150-200 words and a 200-word journal article. The time limit was 90 minutes, and the papers were assessed according to five criteria of an assessment scale: task completion (task achievement), appropriate vocabulary, accuracy, organisation of the text and layout. For the evaluation of the letter, a sixth criterion was included, register or style corresponding to the situation and the addressee. The tasks were designed to cover level B2 of the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001).

Participant observation

This technique of data collection included the description of all the aspects of my experiences in English classes in the form of written notes, as suggested by Long (1980). In practice, it meant the continuation of the diary that I started keeping the previous year, albeit with fewer entries.

Student diaries

Students were invited to write a final entry in their diaries in June 2005. I asked them to focus on the following issues:

- how they felt about their language examinations,
- how important it was for them,
- what their plans were with English for the next year.

They wrote their comments in class following a group discussion, during which group members evaluated the course and the teacher assessed their effort, progress and achievement.

4.3.3.2 Data analysis

All verbal data were analysed qualitatively, following the constant comparative method as described in section 4.3.1.2.

4.3.4 Phase 4

The last phase of data collection covered the 2005-2006 academic year, when students were in year 12. The primary purpose of this stage of my research was to follow students' actions until the end of their secondary-school studies, witness the outcome of the learning process, and, in the meantime, explore how the changes in their learning environment influenced their motivated behaviour.

Being school leavers, students had to face a gradually increasing workload and, besides, a fierce competition at the end of the year in order to get admission into tertiary education. As regards their English studies, 12 out of 16 were exempt from visiting classes, since by October-November 2005 they had passed one or the other kind of accredited state language examinations and thus had a certificate of advanced level English. Nevertheless, only four students decided to stop participating in classes, the others persisted in taking part in the lessons. In light of these changes, I was curious to find out what made them continue their studies; therefore, I observed their general behaviour in class as well as their effort and engagement in the learning process.

Data gathering practically followed the procedures described in the previous phase (4.3.3) and, again, sources included the teacher's observation, feedback from the students and language proficiency measures. As the continuous assessment by the teacher in the form of grades became pointless, progress tests and final examination results were used as indicators of students' language development.

4.3.4.1 Instruments and procedures

Language proficiency measures

- *Progress test results:* three progress tests were used for the purposes of assessing students' skills development, administered in September 2005, and in January and March 2006. As earlier, the task sheets were taken from the test booklet accompanying the course book, *The new Cambridge English course 4* (Swan & Walter, 1993). The description of the tasks and procedures can be found in section 4.3.2 above.
- *School-leaving examination results:* this data indicating the learning outcome was obtained from the documentation of the school-leaving examination processes. Three students sat for the intermediate-level exam organised by the school while one boy took the advanced-level exam administered by the National Assessment and Examination Centre for Public Education (OKÉV). The examinations took place in May-June 2006 and students were issued their certificates at the end of June.

Participant observation

This method of data gathering was meant to explore the factors that influenced students' decision making and engagement in classroom activities, and followed the procedures described in the previous phase (4.3.3).

Student feedback

Students gave their feedback in the form of a focus group interview in the last lesson of the year. During this session, they shared their retrospective thoughts concerning their secondary school years in general and their English studies in particular. Although the

atmosphere could be described as fairly emotional, most students were willing to join in the conversation. No recording was made during the discussion, instead, I took notes of the most interesting opinions and ideas immediately after the lesson.

4.3.4.2 Data analysis

All verbal data were analysed qualitatively, following the constant comparative method as described previously (section 4.3.1.2).

The aim of this chapter was to describe the various instruments I used during the four phases of data collection. In the following four chapters I will present and discuss the findings of the study by organising them around the main research questions of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 5

HOW DO STUDENTS SEE THEMSELVES AS LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

This chapter will present and discuss the findings related to the first research question, the aim of which is to display a snapshot of students' self-perceptions and set the direction of deeper investigations. First, I will explore students' conceptualisations of success in learning a foreign language and compare it with results obtained from a British study (Williams & Burden, 1999). Then, I will examine the impact that students' beliefs about L2 learning exert on their motivation and, ultimately, on the actual learning strategies they use. Finally, I will address the issue of foreign language anxiety amongst the participants of the study. For these analyses, data was gathered from the following sources: in the first phase of the study from interviews with students, written narratives, feedback notes on self-assessment, and a questionnaire on their beliefs; in the second phase, from students' diaries and focus group interviews (see sections 4.3.1-2). In this and in subsequent chapters, most excerpts from students' self-report data are given in my translation, and students are cited under false names. Certain quotations are printed in italics, which indicates that students wrote those diary entries in English and therefore are quoted directly.

5.1 How do students conceptualise success in learning English?

5.1.1 What do learners mean by succeeding in the foreign language?

Table 3 summarises the information gathered from three data sources: interviews with students, written narratives, and feedback notes on self-assessment. It shows that the 16 participants of this study see the ability to communicate effectively and to understand what is said as the most important measure of success.

Table 3
Students' notions of success

Item	Frequency*
communication	58
comprehension	50
classroom performance	39
school tests/marks	22
exams/competitions	21
accuracy	6

**Note:* Frequency indicates how often students mentioned the given category in the three data sources

By communication students explained that they meant the ability to talk to native speakers of English and to people from other countries to build relationships. They felt it was important to use the language in real-life situations. Recurring themes in their comments included general claims as in "The greatest success is when I can make myself understood by anybody," and more specific experiences from the past, for example: "When I met foreigners in the summer and I could talk to them, then I felt that yes, I'm doing well. I could make myself understood." "It was interesting for me to use my English 'for real' at last."

Students also related feelings of success when speaking English with peers in class, as in this response: “When we play games in class … we can speak a lot … and I always feel good after games.”

Comprehension included understanding books, pop songs, television programmes, and films. Responses relating to comprehension included the following: “I saw a film in English and I could understand it quite well … I felt that it was worth learning it.” “It felt good when we were watching an English-speaking programme with dad or mum, and they asked me to translate it for them if I could. I did so well that even I was surprised.” Naturally, comprehension also referred to understanding live English. Many respondents described instances from summer trips: “I could understand nearly everything the tour guides were saying.” “Another good thing about that holiday was that my sister and I interpreted for our parents … I was indispensable.” On the other hand, many students mentioned the ability to follow what the teacher or their peers said in class, as reflected in this comment and several other feedback notes: “I think I did well today because I understood everything.”

Another major source of success that most learners identified was classroom performance. A large number of responses that fell into this category came from the end-of-class feedback notes, and they referred to (a) the successful performance of a particular task, such as homework or a grammar task; (b) the students’ creativity, as in writing a dialogue, for example; or (c) their active involvement in class. Answers included the following: “I did well today because I could join in,” “I didn’t do well today because I wasn’t active,” and “I didn’t do well today because I didn’t say a word.”

An interesting finding is that good test results and school marks were not mentioned as primary measures of success. Similarly, although passing the state language examination

was an obvious goal for many students, there was little mention of it. On the other hand, when asked about a specific successful event, a few students remembered language competitions that brought them a sense of achievement. The question of accuracy also emerged from responses such as "I did well today because I didn't make any mistakes," "I think I did well today because I remembered the prepositions," and "I don't think I did very well today because I used the wrong tense in a dialogue."

5.1.2 How can students assess their own development?

Students' responses are summarised in Table 4, which shows that self-perception of competence and feedback from the teacher were most often mentioned as indicators of their development (26 and 24 times, respectively). These are followed by comparing themselves with other students in the group (mentioned 16 times) and having their own internal measure (mentioned 7 times)

Table 4
Students' assessments of their performance

Item	Frequency
sense of competence	26
feedback from teacher	24
comparison with others	16
internal measure	7

Although the findings suggest a considerable reliance on feedback from the teacher in the form of grades and test results, an internal sense of competence seemed to play the primary role in students' judgements. Understanding and communicating effectively appeared again, as in "If I see a text that we haven't read in the English lesson and I can

understand it," "If I can understand things after the first explanation," and "If I don't know a word but I can paraphrase it." Comments such as "If I can do the homework," and "If I can do a task easily and quickly" underlined the importance of task performance for the learners.

As can be seen in Table 4, there was also a considerable degree of peer pressure, as a large proportion of the participants compared themselves with the others in the group. What is interesting, however, is that many of them had their own internal measures ("I can feel it") and compared their performance to their own abilities. The following comment reveals a mature, highly motivated learner: "I have my own measure … so I can decide if I'm at the top of my form or below … I sometimes analyse myself, consider my performance to see how I can improve."

5.1.3 How do students explain their successes and failures?

Table 5 summarises students' perceived reasons for their success, and Table 6 presents the reasons for failure. Students identified a mixture of external and internal attributes; however, a more thorough analysis reveals that the majority of learners attributed their successes and failures primarily to internal reasons. Phrased differently, they often felt that their ability to 'do well' was within their control rather than caused by external influences.

As can be seen from the two tables, hard work and concentration emerged as two major factors accounting for success and failure, which is consistent with Nikolov's (2001) findings about unsuccessful adults. At the same time, affective variables such as attitude, motivational intensity, and anxiety also appeared to be remarkable reasons for success, as the following comments show: "I think it is important to be interested," "It depends on the topic,

whether I like it," "It is a question of willpower," "I am responsible for speaking well," and "When I speak English with somebody, I don't feel anxious." Students also mentioned external attributes such as the role of the teacher or the attitudes of others, as reflected in the following comments: "The teacher helped a lot," "It also depends on the teacher … her explanations are easy to follow and we can ask questions, and it helps a lot," "My sister helps me," and "We [students] help each other before tests."

Table 5
Reasons for success

Reason	Frequency
learning/working hard	32
attitude/interest/motivation/anxiety	17
listening and concentrating	14
practising outside class	14
teacher	12
encouragement/help from family and peers	11

Table 6
Reasons for failure

Reason	Frequency
not working hard enough	33
language/task difficulty	22
not listening/concentrating	19
being tired	13
bad mood	10
missing class	8

Another salient factor which students held responsible for failure was the difficulty of the English language or a particular task. For example: "There are certain grammar points where I don't see the logic … we don't have it in Hungarian," "The rules may have been too difficult," and "It happens that I don't understand something." Despite the fact that external influences such as being tired, not being in the mood, or having missed classes were often mentioned, the attributes for failure were internal (i.e. caused by themselves) in most instances, as they were for successes.

5.1.4 What actions do students find necessary in order to be more successful learners of English?

To answer this question, responses to interview item 12 "What advice would you give someone who wanted to master English?" were analysed, and the recurring ideas are summarised in Table 7.

Consistent with attributions for success and failure (see Tables 5 and 6), working hard was the most prominent category, but the students went further. Besides the general advice, "You have to learn regularly," they also pinpointed the focus of learning, for example, "If somebody is good at speaking, they should concentrate on grammar, and if somebody is better at grammar, they should practice pronunciation," and "Learning everyday words and dialogues is most important." Practising the language outside the English class seemed to be given equal importance, and ideas such as reading books and magazines, watching films and television programmes, and practising speaking were often mentioned. The role of the teacher also emerged in this area: "It is very important to choose a good teacher," "A good teacher is essential," and "If you don't understand something, talk to your teacher about it."

Table 7
Advice for mastering English

Advice	Frequency
learn/work hard	33
practice outside class	31
ask for help	9
attitude/motivation	9
concentration/active involvement in class	5
go to English-speaking countries	5

Other responses referring to the value of motivation, active involvement in class, and travelling abroad were also worthy of note: "You must have a goal … some motivation, and then everything goes better," "You should be interested in the culture," "First of all you have to like the language," "You should be active in class," and " If you go abroad, you are compelled to speak." As can be seen from the examples, students appeared to acknowledge the influence of both intrinsic and instrumental motives on achievement.

5.1.5 How are Hungarian students' self-perceptions as language learners similar to those of students in a British context?

This comparison can be made on the basis of the previously discussed findings. It should be mentioned that, although Williams and Burden (1999) investigated different age groups, for comparative purposes here I refer only to the data from year 9 students in their study.

When students judged their progress in learning an L2, both samples showed a strong reliance on feedback from the teacher. British respondents relied mainly on marks and test results, whereas Hungarian students appeared to give primary importance to self-assessment: an internal sense of understanding and communication.

Learners' perceived reasons for success and failure proved to be very similar. British and Hungarian students alike provided a wide range of attributions, including effort as well as help and encouragement from others. At the same time, two other prominent factors seemed to emerge from the responses of the Hungarian students: attitude and extra practice outside class, as in "We can learn it if we want to," or "You have to learn it and use it. It isn't enough to sit in class and do the homework. You have to take extra effort." Similarly,

although both groups referred to ability, the notion of language difficulty seemed to be more salient in the Hungarian context. This can be felt from comments like “It is more difficult to understand because we don’t have it in our language,” and “ There are certain grammar points that I don’t consider very logical. Right now we are learning the Present Continuous and I don’t understand it perfectly.”

As regards actions that participants see as necessary to becoming more successful language learners, strategies such as effort, practice and revision appeared to figure prominently in both studies. Yet, what made the two samples different was the way the students determined success. British students listed classroom activities as areas of success and seemed to set performance goals for themselves, whereas Hungarian students placed greater emphasis on extra- curricular activities. Furthermore, Hungarian students considered attitude and motivation essential contributors to success, but the British study made no mention of those factors.

The findings arising form the first phase of the study suggest that the respondents enjoyed learning English, and, although most of the time they were satisfied with themselves, they all wished to improve. Their responses revealed a positive attitude towards the English language and the culture studied, and they seemed to recognise their own responsibility for their development. Despite the fact that they mentioned external as well as internal factors as accountable for their successes and failures, in most instances internal reasons were predominant.

The wide range of internal attributions seems to provide evidence of students’ developing autonomy and self-awareness. Unlike the British students, the 16 Hungarian participants appeared to see the foreign language as more important than a school subject, and their aim was to make use of their knowledge and language skills outside the classroom

as well. A sample comment is: "You can explain a lot of things and use it in everyday life. Even if somebody is not so good, they can already make use of [their knowledge]." Although they displayed a certain dependence on the teacher (e.g., "A lot depends on how it is taught"), most of them already possessed clearly defined learning goals as well as an internal sense of achievement. Apparently, this finding contradicts Williams and Burden's (1999) claim that students in an achievement-oriented school mostly set performance goals for themselves. Further phases of the study will be concerned with observations and a thorough examination of the teacher's attitude and behaviour in order to test this hypothesis, and draw grounded conclusions.

The most remarkable finding of this phase of the research is the differences in how Hungarian and British respondents conceptualised the notion of success. Apparently, for the British students doing well meant performing well in class in order to get good grades. The Hungarian participants, on the other hand, displayed a certain sense of competence in that they saw success as the ability to communicate effectively and to understand what is said. One possible explanation for this difference was provided by the students themselves. When asked why they wanted to do well in English, many of them gave answers such as "Today it is important to speak foreign languages," "So that I can talk to people if I go abroad," "So that I can use it later in my life," "I could use it wherever I travelled," "English is very important in the 21st century," and "English is understood all over the world." If English is today's *lingua franca,* naturally, British students studying another foreign language do not have the same kind of motivation as Hungarian students.

5.2 What impact do beliefs about language learning have on students' motivation?

5.2.1 Beliefs about aptitude and the difficulty of language learning

Students' responses to the questionnaire items seem to suggest that they do not consider language aptitude as the only predictor of mastery (see Appendix E). Although all of them agreed that there are people with a special ability to learn foreign languages, twelve out of 16 (75%) believe that everybody can learn an L2. As for their own aptitude, seven respondents (44%) agreed that they had such an ability, three (19%) disagreed and six (37%) could not decide. Nevertheless, 14 students (87.5%) believed that they would learn to speak English well, while the remaining two were undecided. One reason for this optimism is that they saw no real difficulty in doing so, since seven students (44%) considered English as an easy language and eight (50%) respondents as a language of medium difficulty. None of them said it was very difficult, which suggests that learning English was a realistic challenge within their reach.

More importantly, most of the students appeared to trust their competencies, as can be concluded from the answers given in the first part of the belief questionnaire, where they were asked to judge their own English language skills and compare themselves with the other students in the group. Bearing in mind their grades and general performance, I believe that eleven students made the right judgement, one student overrated herself, three respondents slightly underrated themselves, and one girl painted a negative picture of herself. One possible reason for the negative self-concept exhibited by some of the students, anxiety, will be discussed in section 5.3 in this chapter.

Students' optimism seems to be supported by their actual FL aptitude, which was measured by their performance on the HUNLAT (Ottó, 2002). Based on their test results, they were assigned to one of three categories as suggested by Tóth (2007). Those who scored one standard deviation or more above the sample mean were classified as 'above average', those who scored one standard deviation or more below the mean, as 'below average', and the rest was categorised as 'average'. As shown in Table 8, most of the respondents (13 out of 15, 86.6%) displayed at least average language aptitude and three students were found to have an aptitude above average. Considering the scores of the two students with an aptitude below average (49 and 41 points out of a maximum of 80, i.e. scores above 50%) it can be stated that the 16 participants of the present study all have sufficient natural ability to master a foreign language.

Table 8
Students' language aptitude

HUNLAT score (max. 80)	Number of students*	Percentage (%)
71 < (above average)	3	20
52-70 (average)	10	66.6
< 51 below average	2	13.3

**Note* Only 15 students completed the test as one girl was absent

Despite the fact that the group appears to be relatively homogeneous in their judgement of language aptitude and the difficulty of learning an L2, it is worth going beyond statistics and examining how my experiences coincide with their aptitude data. I can confirm that the majority of the students proved to be able to learn English well and showed considerable progress over the years. However, as regards the three learners in the 'aptitude above average' category (Judit, 74; Sára, 74; and Béla, 71), I only considered Sára to have excellent language learning abilities. On the other hand, I had the impression that Klára (63

points), Benjámin (63 points), and Géza (62 points) had greater aptitude than shown by the HUNLAT (Ottó, 2002). Moreover, Melinda's performance (54 points) took me by surprise because I knew her to be an outstanding student excelling not only in English but also in every other subject. She was rather ambitious and determined and, as she confessed in her diary, she compensated for her anxiety with hard work and enormous devotion, which eventually resulted in the desired success.

The students with the lowest aptitude include Máté (49 points) and Erika (41 points). Apparently, they were aware of their own weaknesses, as it was they who disagreed with the statement "I have a special ability for learning foreign languages." Yet, only Máté was unsure about learning to speak English well eventually. He seemed to accept the fact that his language aptitude was below average, thus preventing him from experiencing success. With a lot of patience, however, I managed to make him realise that he only needed more time than the better students and by expending extra effort and energy he would be able to achieve good results. And indeed, when he graduated, he had passed the state language exam both in English and Italian.

Interestingly, Erika turned out to be highly optimistic, even though her language learning aptitude proved to be the lowest (41 points). She studied conscientiously, yet, she was one of the two students who graduated without a certificate of state language examination. In her case, language aptitude appeared to be a true predictor of outcome.

5.2.2 Beliefs about the nature of language learning and the status of English

Although none of the participants had visited any English-speaking countries, the majority (14 out of 16; 87.5%) shared the common belief that it was best to learn an L2 in the target language community. Rather inconsistent with this is the finding that only six students (37.5%) thought that learning about the target culture was important.

As regards the nature of language learning, almost everybody (15 students; 94%) believed that learning English was different from learning other academic subjects. Students did not endorse questionnaire items prioritising specific aspects of the learning process, such as learning about grammar or translation into the mother tongue, which suggests a fairly holistic view of language learning on the part of the learners. However, learning vocabulary turned out to be an exception, as it was considered very important by ten respondents (62%).

Interestingly, the same finding arises from the data obtained from students' diaries. As the data analysis revealed, the most frequent answers to the question 'What did you find useful in today's English class?' are 'We learnt new words' and 'We expanded our vocabulary'. Students give different explanations for the popularity of vocabulary tasks, which range from the simple "I like learning new words", written by Géza in his diary (p. 23) to more elaborate comments. Suggestions are offered, for example, about how to encourage students to learn words and expressions. The ideas that students put forward include allotting class time for individual vocabulary study and writing word tests, as demonstrated by the following two excerpts:

Excerpt 1 (Kitti, p. 16)[1]
The lesson that I remember well from last week was the one in which we had to learn different parts of a car. … I think it is a good idea to learn words in class since I know that many students – among them myself – do not sit down to mumble vocabulary at home at least it is rare. … One more thing, it helped me a great deal that there were pictures with the words and it made me easier to learn them since I am a visual type.

Excerpt 2 (Judit, p. 23)
What I don't like is that we ask the meaning of a certain word, put it down and then ask again if it comes up in another task two weeks later because it doesn't get fixed in our memory, at least this is a problem for me. … Perhaps we should write word tests more often or I don't know.

An interesting opinion is expressed by Benjámin, who explains that, at a beginner level, students usually consider learning new words and phrases important because it gives them a sense of achievement. In his own words:

Excerpt 3 (Benjámin, p.1)
Somehow I feel as if a language was difficult at the beginning of the study. Many times in such cases I feel that it is too much, it cannot be learned. It is because at the beginner stage we have to expand our vocabulary in order to be able to express ourselves and to learn grammar. When we do these vocabulary tasks, I get the impression that we learn much more than otherwise.

In contrast to this, I feel grammar points boring and monotonous, not always but it happens. It is as if we were not learning anything new in those cases. I don't think I am the only one of this opinion.

When comparing English with other school subjects, students attribute the differences to the nature and organisation of the various classes as well as to their own attitude to the subjects. While in one lesson they are provided with rules, data and formulae, in the other they are involved in playful learning, which – for many of them – seems to be more satisfactory. This can be felt from the following quotes:

[1] Quotes from students' diaries are given in my translation. When the original is in English, the excerpts are printed in italics.

> Excerpt 4 (Sára, p. 22)
> The English lesson is different from the others because in this lesson we learn a language and not data. I think we are studying and playing at the same time. … And everybody enjoys that we talk – in pairs or small groups – or sing, play, write stories – and we can be funny – it's not a problem, but it depends on the teacher, too.

> Excerpt 5 (Emese, p. 11)
> We don't have to swot formulas. It is true that we have to learn the words, but since we practise them, we can remember a lot. The whole atmosphere of the English lesson is different.

> Excerpt 6 (Franciska, p. 16)
> English is also a subject but everybody has a different attitude to it. Physics, for example, is a compulsion, and I don't like going to those classes, I never understand the material properly. But I can follow the English classes all right.

Another difference that students highlight is that, especially in science classes like Physics or Chemistry, they are expected to absorb information while in English classes they are invited to take part in the learning process actively by making use of their existing knowledge and deductive and inductive reasoning skills. Furthermore, they believe that, apart from providing opportunities for language practice, English classes also foster the development of general communicative skills, which they consider necessary for social interaction. As they put it:

> Excerpt 7 (Benjámin, p. 24)
> Generally, English lessons are very different from science lessons. In English lessons we must speak a lot of English, but we don't have to speak so much in – for example – a physics class. In science lessons we must write a lot of important things like formulae in a chemistry lesson. We must know the things we have written. In English lessons we don't have to know so many rules, it is more important to know words and be able to speak and write in English.

> Excerpt 8 (Focus group interview, p. 4)
> One aim of the secondary school is to form us into proper social beings. I think a foreign language lesson is really suitable for that because of all the group work and because everybody is allowed to say what they think and thus practise the language.

However, active participation also depends on students' interest in the particular subject and on the goals they set for themselves in connection with the subject in question. As one

respondent explains it, students are more willing to learn a subject if they have an aim to achieve. In her own words:

> Excerpt 9 (Kitti, p. 24)[2]
> *I think English lesson is more "familier". Because there are 16 person who learn English and I think we like English. We talk for anything with each other and the teacher and it is very good. The other lessons there are 36 person who don't like the lesson, the Chemistry or Physics or History. Not everybody has a future with the studies. But in the English lesson everybody has a plan with English. A little or a big, but there is. And I think it's the biggest different for the other lessons and the English lesson. 16 person have a "same" plan. I think it's important.*

By making comparisons between the different foreign languages that they were studying, students pointed out that the popularity and privileged position of English made it more attractive for them than other languages. Again, the use of an L2 for communicative purposes came to the fore and they expected to have more opportunities to speak English than either French or Italian. As they explained:

> Excerpt 10 (Focus group interview, p. 11)
> When learning a foreign language, I think it is important for everybody to experience a feeling of success. Because if, for example, a tourist stops us in the street and asks where the Penny Market or whatever is, and we can explain, then we go home and open the English book [laughter]. Italian, on the other hand, can only be used later. … Even if learn where to put the verb and the noun and I don't know what, we won't be able to cope with situations and communicate successfully.

> Excerpt 11 (Focus group interview, p. 12)
> You use English more often even in Hungary than, say, Italian. I mean, in Hungary it is quite unlikely that somebody will stop you and ask in Italian where the Penny Market is. The chances are bigger that the same happens in English. … Italian and French, for example, can only be used in one country, while English is spoken all over the world.

Such opinions suggest that English is indeed popular with these students, and, at the same time, provide an explanation for the findings obtained from the background information to the belief questionnaire. The reasons they mentioned there for wanting to learn English are

[2] Excerpts printed in *italics* indicate that students wrote the diary entry in English.

consistent with the above standpoints: 13 respondents highlighted the utility of the language saying that they will need it in the future, and almost all of them (14 out of the 16 participants) said they were learning English because they liked it or found it interesting. When asked about their general opinion concerning learning the English language, eight students considered it as very interesting, seven respondents as quite interesting, and one student as interesting.

These findings are in line with Dörnyei *et al*. (2006), whose large-scale nationwide study has demonstrated the global nature of the English language. They claim that this has brought about a phenomenon which they refer to as "a fundamental restructuring of the L2 learning dispositions" (p. 142), according to which English is learners' primary choice while non-world languages are losing their popularity.

5.2.3 Beliefs about learning and communication strategies

Consistent with their desire to master the language, students endorsed questionnaire items reflective of their willingness to participate in communicative activities. Most remarkably, they unanimously disagreed with the statement "You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly" (item 9). Also, the vast majority (14 students, 87.5%) found guessing unknown words acceptable and almost the same number, 13 students (81%), claimed that they enjoy practising with people whose English is better than theirs. Such beliefs were indeed reflected in students' behaviour in the English class. They were generally active, eager to participate in classroom tasks and most of them were willing to communicate in English spontaneously. As regards guessing the meaning of unknown words in a text, many students considered it as a challenge rather than a threat. As evidenced by

Excerpt 12, they also seemed to be aware of the benefits that such learning strategies bring to their language development. Moreover, by using negative wording to express a positive outcome in Excerpt 13, Benjámin gives proof of his mastery motivation.

> Excerpt 12 (Sára, p. 20)
> The reading is very good (and I like these exercises) because they try to teach what you have to do if you don't understand every word in a text. … I think such activities are also necessary for improving our English.

> Excerpt 13 (Benjámin, p. 18)
> I liked the reading task, especially the way in which we were doing it. I think it was a good idea to let us suffer with it. What I liked best was to work out the meaning of words.

Further entries in students' diaries demonstrate that their beliefs about language learning strategies also influence the steps that they take outside the English class in order to improve their knowledge, and these steps seem to be consistent with the above beliefs. Table 9 summarises the activities that students reported undertaking of their own accord.

Table 9
Extra curricular activities

Activity	Frequency
developing reading skills	12
developing listening skills	5
vocabulary building	3
developing communication skills	3
seeking help	3

On top of the list is reading followed by activities that develop listening skills, probably because these are the skills that can be easily improved individually. Mention is made of the various forms of media that are available to learners including newspapers and magazines, the radio and television, as well as the Internet. Many of them watch films in the original with or without subtitles and also read novels or graded readers. Another solitary

activity, expanding vocabulary, is mentioned by three students as a way of increasing their knowledge. Perhaps the most interesting example is given by Benjámin, who appears to find pleasure in leafing through his dictionary but, at the same time, expects to remember some of the words he is studying. The following quotation gives further evidence of his intrinsic orientation and motivation to master the language:

> Excerpt 14 (Benjámin, p. 4)
> Sometimes it happens that I look up a word in the dictionary and it turns into browsing and, by the time I realise it, I have read fifty entries. … But I always remember one or two such words.

Practising speaking outside the classroom is rather difficult for my students given the fact that there are hardly any native speakers of English around and the town is no longer a popular tourist destination. Nevertheless, three students seem to feel it important to create opportunities for extra practice and find partners for conversation in English among friends or even classmates.

An important learning strategy, asking for help, also appears on the list, even though only marginally. Not surprisingly, it is mentioned by those students who often encounter difficulties in their L2 studies. However, I find it reassuring that rather than giving up, in cases of uncertainty they turn to friends, parents, classmates or a private tutor.

The above findings might paint too rosy a picture of the group. Perhaps the colours become more subtle as I analyse students' answers to questionnaire items concerning accuracy. In fact, 14 out of 16 respondents (87.5%) agreed that it is important to "revise and practise a lot" and the same number felt it important to speak English with a good pronunciation. I also found that students generally welcomed activities related to grammar because they regarded accuracy essential for communicating successfully. This can be concluded from the following excerpts:

Excerpt 15 (Benjámin, p. 1)
We rarely consider that words ('empty words') are actually useless. The essence of language is grammar. Of course, words are important, but we only realise the importance of grammar when we discover that I understand this and I also understand that, however, a month ago I could not put the words together. But since then we have learnt some grammar and now I am able to do it.

Excerpt 16 (Judit, p. 6)
I am happy that we do a lot of grammar in English classes because I think it is very useful.
Of course, we have to speak, but it does no harm that, if we say something, at least it makes sense.

On the other hand, what I find more worrying is that, while only seven respondents (44%) reported feeling at ease when speaking with other people, there was a considerable proportion of students (five; 31%) who claimed the opposite. This finding warranted further examinations of possible sources of anxiety, the results of which will be discussed in the next section.

5.3 How pervasive is foreign language anxiety amongst the students?

5.3.1 Identifying anxious students

A rather unexpected finding came to the fore as I was analysing the initial diary entries. While most of the respondents gave accounts of their achievements and positive experiences when using the English language outside the classroom, three girls wrote about their self-perceived incompetence and feelings of apprehension. What makes it unexpected is the way in which they poured out their troubles and described their discomfort without being asked. These students represent three different case studies, which can be characterised as follows.

Noémi changed schools in the middle of September and joined the class a few weeks later. She was always quiet, extremely shy and appeared to have problems with the language right from the beginning. She addressed the first three entries in her diary to me and started off as follows:

> Excerpt 17 (Noémi, p. 1)
> Dear Miss,
> right now I have the feeling that I don't know anything in English. I can hear the English text and I don't understand a word. … I always learn the words but I completely forget them by the next day. And as for grammar, I cannot comprehend it even if it is explained in Hungarian. I often feel that we go on with the material too fast, at least I would need more time to understand each unit. … I would really love to learn the English language because I like it and I know that I will need it in the future.

With its 32 entries, often covering several pages written in Hungarian, her diary became the longest. She kept writing to *me* and it soon became obvious that she lacked confidence and also needed help and encouragement. Although her English improved over the months and, at times, she managed to feel at ease, every poor grade discouraged her and made her write comments like:

> Excerpt 18 (Noémi, p. 4)
> I speak English very badly. … My English is catastrophic. … I don't know how I could be helped, because I surely learn a lot and yet I think I'm at the same level as the beginner group.

> Excerpt 19 (Noémi, p. 33)
> I feel more and more stupid. I have a feeling that if I had to speak or write in English, I wouldn't be able to say a word, even though I practise the language.

> Excerpt 20 (Noémi, p. 45)
> I knew I would do badly.

She showed such a degree of uncertainty that I was convinced that in her case anxiety was not task-specific but rather a general trait.

Beáta was also at a disadvantage when she started her secondary-school studies. Unlike the others, she did German at primary school, so she had to work hard in order to

acquire the necessary basic skills and keep up pace with the rest of the group. Nevertheless, she seemed well-balanced and was a very conscientious student. The following remarks about her being anxious about speaking English were all the more surprising:

> Excerpt 21 (Beáta, pp. 1-2)
> I felt rather 'stupid'. I was afraid that the other person – who I was talking to – would perhaps laugh at me or look down on me if I mispronounced something or used a structure incorrectly. I don't know why I feel like this since, if I have to speak in Hungarian – in front of anybody, – I never have this feeling. I hope that this will pass if I learn the language properly.

> Excerpt 22 (Beáta, p. 22)
> I don't really dare to speak. Not because I am afraid of the others, but probably because I am afraid that I will say something wrong or silly and everybody will hear it. And I don't like it either to suffer in order to say what I want while everybody watches and waits. I know that you only have to get over with it once or twice and then it is easier. I haven't got over with it yet, I think.

Of the three students reporting considerable levels of foreign language anxiety, Melinda's case was by far the most unexpected. She was among the best in the class, hard-working, accurate and active, never seeming hesitant to volunteer answers. Yet, she opened her diary explaining that she chose to write in Hungarian because she felt unable to do it in English. To quote her:

> Excerpt 23 (Melinda, p. 1; p. 3)
> The aim of the 'diary' is to explore our feelings towards English. As a matter of fact, I don't feel able to express my feelings in English, because I think my English is rock-bottom. … If I had to talk to an Englishman, probably I wouldn't be able to blurt out more than two sentences. This is what annoys me most: I can't speak!!! Even if I understand what the other is saying, I cannot answer. When you speak in class, I understand most of it, but when you ask me, I fall silent. Of course it is also caused by my stage fright. When I have to speak I always have my heart in my mouth, but, thank God, I can hide it quite well from everybody, and I would like it to remain a secret.

> Excerpt 24 (Melinda, p.6)
> One last request: please write your answer in a simplified language since I don't think I could understand a more serious text.

Naturally, such comments called for further examinations of the problem. In order to discover how pervasive foreign language anxiety was in the group, I had to involve the other participants as well. As none of the rest mentioned feelings of discomfort on their own accord, I asked the students to answer more focused questions. These included reports on their feelings while writing a progress test and their views about the standardised proficiency test that they took at the beginning of year 10 and later in spring as part of the local end-of-year-10 examination.

5.3.2 Sources of anxiety

As it turned out, the progress test posed no threat to the students, as most of them reported feeling calm and relaxed while working on it. Apparently, they had got used to writing tests since, as Melinda remarked, "I've been doing it for 10 years after all" (p. 22). It also seemed to be reassuring for the students that they were familiar with the task types and they had enough time to finish the paper. The following quotes illustrate these points:

> Excerpt 25 (Sára, p. 17)
> *I like this test, because it asks what's in the book and no more or less.*

> Excerpt 26 (Benjámin, p. 17)
> Generally speaking, I didn't find the test difficult so I was working in a relatively pleasant state. … All in all, I hope I feel rightly that I have done a good job.

> Excerpt 27 (Zsófi, p. 11)
> All in all, it was difficult, but it was good that we wrote it in a double period and I had enough time to think and re-read it.

> Excerpt 28 (Kitti, p. 14)
> It helped me a lot that there was peace and quiet, I had enough time to think the tasks over and I didn't have to think about the following lesson. I was able to concentrate. … I felt good and I feel that I am improving.

The above quotes also suggest that the test posed an optimal challenge for the students, as they considered the tasks manageable. In addition, Kitti's remark in Excerpt 28 seems to indicate her mastery orientation.

Another reason for not feeling anxious was the fact that students came to the lesson prepared and, as a result, they were generally satisfied with the outcome. This can be felt from the following excerpts:

> Excerpt 29 (Emese, p. 7)
> I have revised everything for today so my conscience was clear and I wasn't so anxious.

> Excerpt 30 (Klára, p. 17)
> I felt good while I was writing the test, I felt prepared, I think I managed to learn this 'part' well. Of course, the weekend before the test I revised the material and did the tasks again, but it was easy because I have learnt since September and I have always understood the material.

> Excerpt 31 (Judit, p. 20)
> I started writing the test in a happy mood. I wasn't anxious at all, I felt prepared. … All in all, I think I have written a good test.

Of the three anxious students described above only Noémi reported feeling tense at the beginning of the lesson. As evidenced by the following excerpt, her apprehension can be explained by her fear of failure as well as her desire to achieve good results:

> Excerpt 32 (Noémi, p. 30)
> At the beginning I got worried when I saw task 3, I thought I wouldn't be able to do it. It was good that we were allowed to work on it in the double period because that way I had enough time to think about it. … It would be very good if I got a 5 but I don't have much hope. On the other hand, it was good that Sára helped me learn the day before, it helped a lot that she explained things again.

The same desire to attain good grades surfaces from Erika's report, moreover, just like Noémi, she also emphasises the effort that she has taken in order to succeed. To quote her:

> Excerpt 33 (Erika, p. 11)
> I think I did reasonably well, I would love to get a 5, I badly need one. I have learned a lot in order to know well and understand the material (since that is the point). Well, I'll see how it went, I have done everything.

Two other respondents mentioned initial feelings of anxiety, but explained it by generally being tense before writing tests. However, they also managed to relax while working and, on the whole, regarded it as a positive experience. Béla went even further and considered the test a challenge and, apparently, he realised that it was meant to measure their progress and the development of their language skills. In his own words:

> Excerpt 34 (Béla, p. 13)
> I wasn't anxious at all either before or while writing the paper. I don't think it is the same kind of test as in other subjects. This is more like a placement test, which shows us where we are. I am curious about my result.

This generally positive attitude towards progress tests is understandable if we consider the scores learners have achieved. As shown in Table 10, with the majority scoring 75 % or higher, they did a very good job indeed, which means that their development was satisfactory at the time.

Table 10
Progress test scores

Test scores in percentage (%)	Grade	Number of students
88 – 100	5	11
75 – 87	4	3
62 – 74	3	1

These test results also imply that most students could self-assess their achievements correctly. Perhaps the only exception is Kitti, who reported being content with her work whereas she wrote the poorest paper. As for Noémi, her hope to attain a maximum grade did not seem to be realistic, which might explain her exceptionally high level of anxiety.

As regards the two standardised proficiency tests, however, the students judge them from a slightly different standpoint. As my aim was to compare the results and thus obtain a

picture about the development of learners' English language skills, I gave students two versions of the paper, which included the same test in a different sequence. Nevertheless, there seems to be a difference between the ways in which some of the participants view the two papers.

The first sitting was considered by most of the students as a good opportunity to put their knowledge to test and to try themselves out in an exam situation. Although they were not all satisfied with their performance, they mostly found it a useful measure as well as guidance for future studies, which can be felt from the following excerpts:

> Excerpt 35 (Béla, p. 3)
> *I liked this exam. I like everything what is show me those things I know and those too what I have to correct. I think this one wasn't too hard but not too easy for me. It was OK. I don't know how was it done but I felt good of it. Will we do another like this?*

> Excerpt 36 (Klára, pp. 3-4)
> I was happy about the opportunity to try myself and get an insight into an English exam. … It was an absolutely positive experience and also a lot of good ideas for the future.

> Excerpt 37 (Beáta, p. 3)
> I had a really positive experience during the 'exam'. It was pleasant to talk to you – even if I didn't always say the right thing. I am happy that I discovered what the expectations are at an oral exam.

> Excerpt 38 (Zsófi, p. 3)
> I considered this language test a good thing, although I didn't do as well as I would have liked to. … At least I could try such a thing.

> Excerpt 39 (Franciska, p. 2)
> I think this 'conversation' was good, at least we can get used to speaking up in English and be braver. … Next time if we had something similar, I think everybody would do much better because we would be braver to express ourselves.

The second occasion, however, triggered a number of anxious voices. As the diary entries revealed, this was due to the fact that it was a high-stakes exam and, as such, students considered it a more serious threat. One possible reason for this was the fact that they were supposed to take the test in four subjects during normal school time. Being generally

conscientious learners, they wanted to meet the requirements both at the exams and in everyday classes, which they found rather stressful and complained about the heavy workload. Sample comments are:

> Excerpt 40 (Beáta, p. 17)
> Basic level examination. The phrase itself is rather terrifying. Not because I am afraid to speak up in front of others, but because we have to study continually the whole year round, learn accurately for every lesson and be at the top in everything. I think it is annoying because too much is expected from us.

> Excerpt 41 (Franciska, p. 13)
> Like every student, I also disapprove of the primary examination. It wouldn't be that bad in itself, but unfortunately, besides this, we have to come to school and there are the usual recitations and tests.

On the other hand, the English exam was put in a more favourable light. Because it measured procedural knowledge and required the use of various communicative skills, it was considered useful. No wonder that some of the opinions expressed at the beginning of the year were repeated, as illustrated by the following quotes:

> Excerpt 42 (Beáta, p. 18)
> Going on to the English exam, I find it useful without doubt because it gives a picture about how we progress, at what level we are.

> Excerpt 43 (Franciska, p. 13)
> I think English is a subject to which you can't start learning two days or at best one week before. It is about being able to use what we have learnt over the years.

> Excerpt 44 (Klára, p. 22)
> It is a pleasure to think of the English exam, the tasks that we have done recently helped a lot. … I look forward to the oral part because the one that we did last was very good and it is always good to try ourselves out in 'real' situations.

> Excerpt 45 (Judit, pp. 24-25)
> I liked the oral exam, I think it was good that we didn't have to pick a question card. At least nobody could swot anything and it really measured what our speaking skills are like. I think my oral skills have improved a lot since the test at the beginning of the year, I think I was more self-confident. I think this primary exam is a good way of checking our progress.

The data arising from the diary entries has also revealed that not everybody was happy to be tested. Two of the anxious girls described at the beginning of this section showed a considerable degree of apprehension, although Melinda communicated mixed feelings, as evidenced by the excerpt:

> Excerpt 46 (Melinda, pp. 25-26)
> I confess that I'm most afraid of English since tomorrow is the oral exam. Besides English, I did Chemistry, Biology and History (I took History today and I'm very happy because I got a 5), and really, I was most afraid of English. When we did the writing part, I thought that I did very badly but later I thought about it and realised that I hadn't done that badly after all. … As a matter of fact, my written test is quite good but I'm not completely satisfied with that 85%. I'm still hoping for the oral part. … It meant a lot that I could improve the writing test from 59% to 85%. … It is hard to believe that I have developed so much. Is that possible?

Apparently, Melinda's problem is caused by her perfectionism, while Noémi's case seems to be an example of communication apprehension or, in other words, fear of communicating in the foreign language stemming from her shyness and fear of failure. The following quote illustrates how anxiety blocks her memory in an exam situation:

> Excerpt 47 (Noémi, p. 42)
> I hope I will not fail the exam. There are quite a few reasons why I'm afraid of the primary examination. For one thing, it is an exam, as soon as I hear the word, my stomach is thrown into spasm. I'm not as much afraid of the written part since I'm always better in writing. There I can organise my thoughts better. But the oral part! Oh no! I dread it. When I'm anxious (and now I'm very anxious), I become speechless. … At the beginning of the year when we took a test like this, I was awful at the oral part. There was a 10-minute break after every other word because I had nothing to say since I couldn't remember the words. Not even the simplest ones. (her emphasis)

Yet another type of anxiety surfaced from the data, fear of negative evaluation, which refers to an apprehension about how an individual will be perceived by others. This is how Kitti wrote about her feelings before the exam:

> Excerpt 48 (Kitti, pp. 19-20)
> So the exam. … I'm a bit afraid of it. Why? Because I'm the type of person who is always afraid when she has to perform. … The English exam is the only exam for which we cannot prepare. That exam shows us what we really know. And it's good and bad too. … I'm not very good at English and the exam will show that to everybody. Until now it was only our small group that knew it but after the exam a lot of people will see it from my grade, and I'm afraid of what they will think of me. (She's a stupid girl! I would never have thought that! or they'll just be disappointed in me). Probably that is what frightens me. But everybody must be in such a situation because we learn a lot from it.

The above findings suggest that foreign language anxiety is not a crucial issue among the members of the group. Although certain manifestations of the phenomenon such as fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension may be concluded from the self-report data, they are restricted to exam situations and are only mentioned by a few students. Apparently, the regular progress tests do not provoke anxiety for two reasons. On the one had, students accept them as part of the classroom routine and claim to have got used to writing them regularly. On the other hand, they generally learn the material and sit for the tests well prepared, so they do not consider them a threat. It should be noted, however, that such tests do not comprise an oral component, which decreases students' anxiety level considerably.

Not unexpectedly, exam situations have brought the more anxious students' fears to the surface. Yet, if they disclosed feelings of discomfort, most of them referred to the examination in general. The English test was put in a more favourable light partly because of its relaxed atmosphere, and partly because they viewed it as a realistic and valid measure of their progress.

As an important finding, the data revealed three students who appeared to be extremely anxious. With two of them, anxiety turned out to be facilitating and thus acted as a motivational factor. These girls eventually became successful language learners over the

years, they achieved good results and graduated with a certificate of state language examination in English. The third student, however, seemed rather hopeless as she suffered from a considerable degree of debilitating anxiety. It slowed down her improvement and at times I could feel the danger of her giving up. I must admit that her case posed a real challenge for me and used up a lot of my energy and patience. Although she failed at the state language exam, I do not regard her entirely unsuccessful, as she performed fairly well at the school-leaving exam.

5.4 Discussion

The findings arising from the various sources of data reveal an optimistic group of students, willing to engage in activities in and out of class that develop their English language skills. The majority of learners appear to have a positive self-concept and they are confident about increasing their knowledge. Comparing their views and learning outcomes, it seems that in their case beliefs about the nature of language learning and the necessary communication strategies are better predictors of achievement than aptitude.

As regards the nature of language learning, students seem to realise that L2 learning is a complex process whereby the development of each language skill is equally important. The one area that they put special emphasis on is vocabulary development, which can be explained by their need for immediate achievement. When they learn new words and expression, they have the feeling that they have gained something and increased their knowledge.

Another important finding is that students appear to be aware of the differences between L2 learning and studying other school subjects and adopt their learning strategies

accordingly. On the one hand, they attribute the difference to teachers' instructional strategies and how they conceptualise knowledge and development. While in some classes they are supposed to acquire declarative knowledge, in L2 classes they are given the opportunity to make use of their existing knowledge through deductive reasoning and practice and develop various language skills. It is of particular interest that students' and teachers' differing conceptualisations of knowledge appears to be a recurring pattern in this study. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

On the other hand, the difference between students' perceptions of English versus other subjects arises from their attitude towards the various school subjects and the goals that they set for themselves. They seem to agree about the use of foreign languages, however, they express their preference for English as a global language. Furthermore, they seem to realise that social skills are part of communicative competence and thus they expect the English class to teach them those necessary skills as well. This is in line with Oxford (1990) and also O'Malley and Chamot (1991), who underline the need for developing the right social strategies, in other words, interpersonal behaviour in the L2 learning process.

The data also show evidence of a high degree of maturity and motivational intensity on the part of the participants. Although mention is made of various instrumental motives such as the utility of the English language, passing a high-stakes exam, and peer pressure, success appears to be the most important driving force stemming from learners' mastery orientation. This can be explained by the fact that competence has proved to be a more reliable measure of success for the students than feedback from the teacher, and the ability to communicate effectively seems to be of utmost importance. Furthermore, in agreement with Horwitz (1987), I can also claim that students' beliefs act as motivating factors and these motives interact with their strategy use. The above findings support this view, as students

were found to prefer and pursue activities that facilitate the development of their language skills. Thus, in their case motivation proved to be the best predictor of mastery.

5.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter of the dissertation was to describe my students' self-perceptions as language learners. Relying on a variety of quantitative and qualitative data, I investigated their conceptualisations of success and their beliefs concerning L2 learning, then I identified anxious learners. The findings revealed an enthusiastic group of students who consider the ability to communicate in English as the primary measure of success. Apparently, they hold rational beliefs about language learning and are generally confident about mastering English. As regards foreign language anxiety, the data surfaced certain feelings of apprehension, nevertheless, anxiety was not found to be pervasive amongst the members of the group. Although several students were inspired by instrumental motives at the beginning, most of them were gradually developing a mastery orientation.

The findings conveyed a useful message to the researcher teacher. Not only did they help me understand my students' needs and ways of thinking, but they also made me reflect on my own teaching practice. On the one hand, I understood that it was my responsibility to offer assistance for the anxious students and facilitate their learning by giving them encouragement and positive feedback. On the other hand, I realised that I could contribute to the development of their ability to become successful language learners by building a co-operative classroom atmosphere and creating situations which actively involve them and allow them, in their own words, to "use the language."

In this chapter of the dissertation I discussed the issues pertaining to the first research question and provided a picture of the participants as language learners. In the following two chapters I will focus on the impact of the classroom milieu on students' motivation starting with the impact of the teaching material.

CHAPTER 6

WHAT IMPACT DO CONTENT AND FORM OF TEACHING HAVE ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION?

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings related to the second research question with the aim of obtaining a deeper insight into actual classroom procedures through the eyes of the participants and thus gain an emic perspective on the various motivational factors. For this purpose, I gathered information from different sources in the second phase of the research. These included the students' self-report diaries, the teacher's diary, the observers' feedback notes, and the group interview, all of which produced a massive amount of qualitative data. In what follows, first I will analyse students' opinions concerning various task types and propose an explanation for their motivational influence. This will be followed by a description of learners' attitudes to different working modes such as pair-work, group-work and individual study. At this point, I find it appropriate to clarify the use of the term *task* in this dissertation. Unlike in recent studies investigating task-based language instruction (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001), the word is considered as an umbrella term embracing any type of work students undertake in an English class. In this sense, *task* is synonymous to *activity* and the two terms are used interchangeably.

6.1 What are students' perceptions of various task types?

6.1.1 Liked and disliked activities

In order to explore students' preferences, I asked them to evaluate the activities in which they were engaged in English classes. They were invited to give their feedback in their diaries and focus on the following issues:

(1) what they liked and disliked about specific tasks, including a jigsaw reading activity in

pairs, a role-play in small groups, and the tasks of a nation-wide competition organised by the Hungarian Ministry of Education as part of the World – Language Project;

(2) how they felt about the proceedings of the lessons; what they found useful, what they enjoyed doing, what they disliked and what they missed;

(3) what they remembered about classroom activities looking back on two weeks;

(4) how they felt during the lessons when external observers came to visit; what they liked about them, what they would have done differently, and whether they thought the other students enjoyed the lesson.

Further information revealing students' preferences was gathered from the focus group interview session, during which they were asked to discuss useful language learning tasks and activities as well as the good points of English lessons. The results, summarised in Tables 11 and 12, suggest that students have a positive attitude towards a wide range of activities. However, this finding ought to be interpreted with caution since the students were not invited to compile a list of their favourite classroom activities but to comment on the actual tasks that they were fulfilling at a specific time in the course of the data collection.

Nevertheless, their reflections are suitable for establishing the motivational influence of the tasks.

Table 11
Liked activities and their frequencies in students' answers

Task	Frequency
- reading	
- stories	40
- tasks on reading comprehension	11
- listening	
- tasks on listening comprehension	20
- listening to music	12
- communication	
- role plays	20
- pronunciation practice	16
- improvisation	11
- other oral communication activities	11
- writing tasks	5
- vocabulary building	45
- World – Language quiz	21
- grammar tasks	16
- translation	15
- games	14
- homework check	8

Table 12
Disliked activities and their frequencies

Task	Frequency
- improvisation	3
- reading	3
- homework check	3
- role plays	1
- listening to music	1

As can be seen in Table 11, on top of the list of favourable activities is reading stories that supplement the material provided by the course-book. The stories that students refer to are basically very similar texts and include different types of short stories meant to be read for pleasure, various passages related to the topic discussed in the given class, and texts introducing certain grammar points. Mentioned 11 times, it seems that reading passages in the textbook accompanied by tasks checking their comprehension are also appreciated.

The second most popular activity in the English class appears to be completing tasks on listening comprehension. The data arising from the students' diaries suggest that they realise the importance of aural skills and the necessity to practise and thus, to develop such

competences. Apparently, they enjoy listening to both songs and prose pieces such as stories or dialogues and find the tasks accompanying them beneficial. Another equally important activity, practising communication in the L2 is also often mentioned among the useful or best liked language learning tasks. As can be seen in Table 11, role-plays, pronunciation practice and improvisation tasks are by far the most popular of these kinds of activities, but mention is made of writing tasks as well. Such findings lend support to my previous claims that students are willing to engage in activities that enhance the development of their communicative skills.

Next on the list is vocabulary building, which appears to enjoy almost the same popularity as activities associated with communicative language teaching. Supposing though, that words are the building blocks of both comprehension and communication, this finding is understandable. Undoubtedly, students appreciate the utility of tasks that expand their vocabulary and thus bring them closer to their aim of improving language skills, which might explain their opinion. Although tasks related to grammar and translation, as well as games and homework check are at the end of the list, it can be concluded from frequencies of mention that these activities are not disliked either. Interestingly, even a seemingly boring task such as checking written homework was highlighted eight times.

As regards the competition organised by the Hungarian Ministry of Education as part of the World – Language Project, it deserves special attention. What makes it particular is the fact that the quiz questions are not related to one single language but rather represent different parts of the world, and include rare languages that are spoken by American Indian tribes and Caucasian peoples, among others. Another merit of the tasks is that, apart from different language skills, they require logical thinking, problem solving, creativity, research, and most importantly, teamwork. The discovery that the quiz was so popular with students

came as no surprise as I also found it highly inspiring. Excerpt 49, taken from my own diary, illustrates how I felt about my students' attitude at the time:

> Excerpt 49 (Teacher's diary, p.14)
> I have never seen students so excited and interested. The Ministry has a competition since it is the Year of Language Learning in Europe. We spent all two classes [i.e. the double period] discussing the tasks and allocating them. Brilliant ideas! Perfect for motivation!

To sum up, the list of agreeable activities is indeed comprehensive as it includes practically every event that can happen in a language lesson (see Table 11). It is rather difficult to find patterns: nevertheless, reading and oral communication activities, among others role-plays and improvisation, and also vocabulary tasks seem to be among the favourites.

However, the other side of the coin is displayed in Table 12, which shows that not all classroom activities appeal to the whole group. The list of disliked activities comprises improvisation games, reading tasks and homework check, followed by role-plays and listening to music. While frequencies of mention reveal only a negligible level of rejection, it is remarkable that some of the most popular activities appear on this list as well. In other words: the findings reveal individual differences in learners' likes and dislikes.

6.1.2 What makes tasks motivating?

The data gathered from the students' diaries and from the focus group interview uncover various reasons for their preference for certain tasks. The key words that surface include *fun, interesting, success*, and *creativity*. Furthermore, the content and topic of a given reading or listening text were also found to be particularly motivating. Stories seem to

motivate students because of their interesting plot and, as seen in Excerpt 50, humour can act as a kind of tonic for those who feel tired during the lesson.

> Excerpt 50 (Klára, p.32)
> I was a bit tired and I felt that the group was tired as well. I am 100% sure that it was because of the Friday morning and the end of the year. However, the *Real Bargain* story shook everybody up quite well. It was a very good text. I liked the punch line at the end.

Moreover, an exciting story line can maintain students' attention to such an extent that they forget about taking part in an L2 learning process and keep reading or listening to the story for the pleasure of doing so, thus indicating intrinsic motivation. This can be felt from Excerpts 51 and 52:

> Excerpt 51 (Focus group interview, p. 5)
> These passages were good, because everybody was curious about their ending, how they would end, and I think it is good. And also that each had a funny ending.

> Excerpt 52 (Benjámin, p. 26)
> I enjoyed the text that we listened to. It was interesting to find out what the estate agent would say and the story was also very interesting.

Besides the fun element appearing in a given task, it is also important for some students to learn something new, as evidenced by Excerpts 53 and 54. The two extracts reveal that both oral communication practice and reading tasks can have an influence on students' motivation if they foster learning.

> Excerpt 53 (Melinda, p. 21)
> I like these kinds of activities because they help to communicate and phrase sentences. And it is not indifferent either that they are good fun.

> Excerpt 54 (Beáta, p. 26)
> I liked the story because there were funny things in it. I also liked it because we could learn interesting new words through the story. It was interesting that historical things were blended into it.

The comment expressed in Excerpt 54, however, pinpoints another highly motivating factor: the possibility of acquiring specific content knowledge through completing the task. When

students encounter such situations, the foreign language fulfils a different function for them: it serves as a vehicle of obtaining information. As a result, they will be truly motivated to accomplish the task. Excerpts 55 and 56 support this assumption:

> Excerpt 55 (Klára, p. 31)
> I liked the story, not only because it was in English, but also because it was about history and I learned a lot of interesting historical information from it.

> Excerpt 56 (Franciska, p. 19)
> I wasn't here yesterday and I was told the story. And the story was also good. I like such materials that broaden my knowledge.

Similar motivational force can be attributed to extensive reading and listening, whereby the L2 is again a means to convey knowledge. An example is Excerpt 57, in which Benjámin expresses his enjoyment in listening to his well-liked legends about King Arthur in English.

> Excerpt 57 (Benjámin, p. 25)
> I liked the stories because I like legends and I had already read these, so it felt good to recall them. In English it provided the same enjoyment.

Another reason that students give for preferring certain reading passages and listening texts is that they supplement the material provided by the textbook and, as such, represent something extra, something to be curious about. This can be felt from quotes 58 and 59:

> Excerpt 58 (Zsófi, p. 7)
> It is good that we do not only learn from the book, but listen to, read and watch such interesting things. I like it that we do not only deal with the 'dry' material.

> Excerpt 59 (Karcsi, p. 14)
> The stories were good. … I prefer English classes like that. It is better than running through the book and 'That was it.'

Further interesting findings came to the fore about supplementary material. Apparently, the fact that it is not prescribed by the curriculum makes it more motivating for students, as evidenced by Excerpts 60 and 61:

> Excerpt 60 (Focus group interview, p. 5)
> It was good when we disregarded the curriculum, or there was surely some connection, but the key word was English, and we did not consider it as shirking because we were not doing the course book but enjoyed the English in it. It gave us a feeling of success that we could understand things that were definitely taken from the real world.

> Excerpt 61 (Klára, p. 5)
> Apart from being interesting, [these stories] were very useful. A lot of new words came up, expressions that are so 'English' and perhaps cannot be found in course books. They also gave me a feeling of success, because I felt that – Well, there is this nice long English story and I can understand it! I do not really know how to put it, but I think what made me feel successful was the fact that it was good to understand a complete story not included in the textbook.

Also, these two opinions seem to suggest that working with authentic material boosts learners' self-confidence and evokes a feeling of mastering the language.

Closely related to the above findings is students' apparent need to experience success. The patterns arising from their diaries reveal that tasks posing a certain degree of challenge are motivating. Excerpts 62 and 63 illustrate this standpoint:

> Excerpt 62 (Kitti, p. 18)
> [The reading task] was rather tough for me. I understood it with great difficulty, but it worked that we read it twice and at the second time I was better at it. … I think we need tasks like this, they are a real challenge, at least for me. And it feels good when I manage to understand it in the end. It was difficult but useful at the same time.

> Excerpt 63 (Emese, p. 8)
> It was a very difficult task, but I think it is good that we do tasks of such level of difficulty. At least we have to rack our brains.

The same comments were made when students gave their opinion about listening to songs. I found that they did not only enjoy the music but also liked the challenge that understanding song lyrics presented as well as the tasks that accompanied the activity. Excerpt 64 is an example:

> Excerpt 64 (Benjámin, p. 12)
> I was happy to listen to the song because I could try how well I was able to understand a more difficult text.

Even games are considered more motivating if they comprise an element of challenge and work, as seen in Excerpts 65 and 66:

> Excerpt 65 (Klára, p. 14)
> The game was useful: new words, we had to think and search in our existing vocabulary. I enjoyed it very much and would be happy to play it or another game again.

> Excerpt 66 (Erika, p. 8)
> It was very good to play, we had to think about the game and use our existing knowledge. I liked it a lot, I like playing games.

These findings seem to confirm Krashen's (1987) theory of "rough tuning", according to which frequent exposure to material that slightly exceeds learners' linguistic competence fosters development.

Further reference to the challenging nature of tasks reveals, however, that students are only willing to respond to challenges as long as they are within their reach (see Excerpt 67, for example). What Erika writes in Excerpt 68 suggests that a task can be demotivating if it is beyond the student's level.

> Excerpt 67 (Emese, p. 8)
> I liked it because I like listening to English texts. It is good because (I) have to listen very carefully in order to understand it.

> Excerpt 68 (Erika, p. 14)
> The reading on page 32 was very difficult for me. When I was reading it for the first time, I had no idea what I was reading about. And when we had to match the words, I hardly knew the meaning of any of them. That was the most difficult lesson during the week.

Words like 'it feels good' and 'I was able to understand' describe students' satisfaction deriving from the feeling of mastering the language. These findings give support to Nikolov and Józsa's (2006) claim that there is an interaction between success in L2 learning and students' motivation. Furthermore, as evidenced by Excerpts 69 and 70, the results are also

in line with Pintrich (2000b), who asserts that mastery orientation greatly increases learner autonomy:

> Excerpt 69 (Franciska, p. 12)
> [The reading task] was definitely good. It was rather difficult … but the clues and leading questions were so good that by the end I understood everything, even without a dictionary.

> Excerpt 70 (Máté, p. 7)
> This was a really difficult text. What I liked about it was that I managed to understand all of it with the help of only a few words.

Another finding arising from the data is the fact that active involvement in the learning process enhances motivation. Apparently, students prefer discovering new information and working out solutions to being given the answer, as evidenced by Excerpts 71, and 72:

> Excerpt 71 (Sára, p. 12)
> I liked it that our teacher did not tell us the solution but let us work it out.

> Excerpt 72 (Klára, p. 11)
> It was good that we had to find out the end of the story.

Similar comments were written about a task designed to measure reading comprehension. Although students found the text rather difficult to understand, they seemed to enjoy the challenge that the task posed and, as a result, they did not mind having to work hard in order to solve the problem in question. This is supported by Excerpt 73, which also reveals another example of mastery orientation:

> Excerpt 73 (Benjámin, p. 18)
> I liked the reading task, especially the way in which we were doing it. I think it was a good idea to let us suffer with it. What I liked best was to work out the meaning of words.

Students seem to appreciate activities in the classroom that require their active participation also because they inspire their imagination and stimulate their creativity. Excerpts 74 and 75 illustrate this point:

> Excerpt 74 (Klára, p. 16)
> It was a creative task and it was funny too. We had fun. I think it was very useful, too, because I had to speak.

> Excerpt 75 (Judit, p. 18)
> I find this activity useful because we practise speaking (dialogues) and it also stimulates our imagination, which is not a bad thing.

Interestingly, students also approve of the teacher's creativity. Extract 76 shows that a simple rearrangement of the furniture so that it should better suit the situation can attract learners to come onto the scene:

> Excerpt 76 (Beáta, p. 15)
> The 'railway compartment game' was lovely. I liked the way the teacher rearranged the classroom into a railway scene. It was interesting to be 'forced' to sit in the middle of the classroom and talk and being watched by everybody else. Although in a normal class also everybody listens when we say something, and yet, this was a different feeling.

In this case, Beáta was motivated to perform well in front of the others. It should be noted, however, that not everybody likes to act in front of an audience and there are students who find it difficult to cope with peer pressure. Not surprisingly, it was one of the most anxious students who wrote the comment quoted in Excerpt 77, expressing her feeling of discomfort caused by stage fright:

> Excerpt 77 (Noémi, p. 28)
> We practised acting out, which I don't like at all, because acting and I somehow do not match, but it was definitely useful. We laughed a lot. I don't like it when we have to act out something, so this activity was not really to my liking.

Perhaps naturally, creative writing was also found to increase motivation. However, as evidenced by Excerpts 78 and 79, it is not only because students find pleasure in producing their own piece of work but also because they are interested in their peers' products.

> Excerpt 78 (Focus group interview, p. 3)
> Tasks into which everybody can add their personality are good. For example, in the case of this story writing task, where there wasn't only one solution or one ending, but we could see how different people completed the story.

> Excerpt 79 (Melinda, p. 13)
> Last time I liked it a lot when we had to write a story. There were skeleton sentences and in between them we had to describe a character or a scene. It was strange that there were as many stories as there were we, students. It wasn't only funny but also suitable language practice.

A particularly important finding of this study is the fact that students are strongly motivated to get engaged in classroom processes if they believe that the outcome will meet their expectations. Given the fact that a number of students proved to pursue learning goals, tasks which facilitate understanding the material and learning as well as activities which provide opportunities for language practice and skills development were found to be especially inspiring. In some cases, students' self-perception determines the utility of the given task. In Excerpt 80 Benjámin is quoted, who does not seem satisfied with his ability to speak fluently, while in Excerpts 81 and 82, Kitti and Noémi express their wish to develop their listening skills:

> Excerpt 80 (Benjámin, p. 18)
> I enjoyed playing because it is speaking that I am at loggerheads with, so I hope that this exercise was to my benefit.

> Excerpt 81 (Kitti, p. 8)
> I think the use of today's lesson was that we tried to recognise and understand a text by listening to it and I am often not good at it.

> Excerpt 82 (Noémi, p. 22)
> It was good to listen to the tape. It is good for me to listen to it more often because that way I will be better at understanding it after a while.

Even drills are considered useful because they improve pronunciation. As Emese put it:

> Excerpt 83 (Emese, p. 8)
> I like repeating expressions after the tape because I think that besides speaking accurately, it is also important to speak with a correct intonation.

As illustrated by Excerpts 84 and 85, some students were found to display an instrumental motive to practise certain skills. While Judit does not specify the time or situation when she

will need good listening skills, apparently Erika has tests and exams in mind, which suggests a certain level of performance orientation.

> Excerpt 84 (Judit, p. 22)
> I liked this unit and the lesson was also good. I enjoyed it, although I am usually tired in the 6th-7th periods. I think it is good to do such listening activities because we will need them later.

> Excerpt 85 (Erika, p. 10)
> I would be very happy if we listened to music and completed song lyrics every Monday. I like it very much because it develops aural skills and so it will be easier to do the listening tasks of tests.

Consistent with my earlier findings, role-plays, tasks based on improvisation, and other oral communication activities were found to be highly motivating as they help students to achieve their ultimate goal: to be able to communicate in English in real-life situations. Examples of students' opinions are given in Excerpts 86, 87, and 88. In the third quote, Béla points out that the benefits of situational dialogues reach beyond the L2 classroom as they also improve general communication skills.

> Excerpt 86 (Géza, p. 13)
> I consider them useful by all means because we must be able to speak in real situations. I find them more important than knowledge gathered in our head.

> Excerpt 87 (Kitti, p. 12)
> I find such exercises useful because we get used to being able to speak in real-life situations and not only within the classroom context.

> Excerpt 88 (Béla, p. 11)
> I am of the opinion that activities of these types develop our speaking skills considerably. They include almost every element needed to get by in an English speaking environment. At the same time, they improve our improvisational skills, not only in a foreign language. I love such tasks and I think we should do them a lot more often.

Perhaps it is natural with teenagers that they enjoy language games and freely express their wish to play more often. What might be interesting, however, is the reason that they give for liking such activities. Again, development is the key word, which in the case of playing

Scrabble, for example, refers to improving their vocabulary. Excerpts 89 and 90 suggest high levels of consciousness on the part of the learners:

> Excerpt 89 (Noémi, p. 26)
> We practised words and we developed our vocabulary.

> Excerpt 90 (Melinda, p. 20)
> It was a jolly good game. … It is a very good game for improvement, excellent for vocabulary.

It also turned out that stories are not only motivating because of their content or the challenge that understanding them poses. Weaker students who need extra help with their studies welcome them because the tasks accompanying them facilitate learning vocabulary or understanding grammar points. This can be felt from Excerpts 91 and 92:

> Excerpt 91 (Erika, p. 18)
> I think the story was a good idea. We could learn a lot of new words and expand our vocabulary.

> Excerpt 92 (Noémi, p. 53)
> It is a good idea that we get stories because that way I find it easier to understand and remember grammar rules.

A similar finding is illustrated by Excerpts 93 and 94, in which both students express their desire to understand certain grammatical problems. This wish to understand the structure of the English language and the eagerness to know more suggests that students have indeed set themselves learning goals.

> Excerpt 93 (Kitti, p. 9)
> It was good to discuss grammar points also in Hungarian because they are difficult for me to use.

> Excerpt 94 (Zsófi, p. 5)
> The other thing which was a very good idea and extremely useful was that we summarised the tenses with the help of example sentences. It is much easier to understand them this way and they are much clearer.

Learning is the key word in Excerpts 95, 96, and 97, too, but there it refers to learning strategies. It seems that tasks which help students to develop effective strategies are motivating.

> Excerpt 95 (Sára, p. 20)
> The reading is very good (and I like these exercises) because they try to teach what you have to do if you don't understand every word in a text. … I think such activities are also necessary for improving our English.

> Excerpt 96 (Melinda, p. 24)
> I am satisfied with the method, it is better to get the gist at first. It helps when we translate other texts and, of course, enriches our vocabulary.

> Excerpt 97 (Benjámin, p. 15)
> I liked the way we worked on the song: the order, listening then reading, was good. And it was also good to revise describing things afterwards.

Furthermore, for students who have already developed successful learning strategies, tasks are motivating if they reinforce these strategies. This can be felt from Excerpts 98 and 99:

> Excerpt 98 (Kitti, pp. 12, 25)
> I am sure I can remember words, phrases, sentences more easily if they are connected to funny sketches, humorous comments and if I can associate them with a person. … I can remember words and expressions better this way because there is something I can link them to.

> Excerpt 99 (Benjámin, p. 16)
> It was useful because we had to use the expressions from the lesson in a playful way and so, perhaps, it will be easier to remember them.

A rather unexpected finding is that tasks which are generally not considered interesting seem to be motivating for some students. The two activities that emerge from the data include translating passages from English into Hungarian and checking homework in class. The question arises what makes them motivating for students. I found that translation raises awareness of the differences and similarities between the two languages, furthermore, it fosters the correct use of the mother tongue. Apparently, the two girls cited in Excerpts 100 and 101 have fairly high standards and enjoy the challenge of the task:

Excerpt 100 (Kitti, p. 7)
I liked it that the lesson was based on such an interesting story. The fact that we did some translation helped me improve my Hungarian.

Excerpt 101 (Klára, p. 10)
I liked doing this translation because it helped me realise how I could translate the text the easiest way and in a style most appropriate to the topic and so that it sounded the most natural Hungarian.

As regards homework, students seem to consider it a necessary part of the learning process; therefore, they require feedback on their work. See Excerpts 102, 103, and 104 for examples:

Excerpt 102 (Beáta, p. 16)
When we checked homework on Wednesday, it was good to find out what went well at home and what caused a problem.

Excerpt 103 (Zsófi, p. 12)
It is good that we sometimes check homework, especially when it is not unambiguous or not too easy.

Excerpt 104 (Judit, p. 22)
It was good that we checked homework because now I know what I wrote correctly and what I wrote incorrectly.

Quoted in Excerpt 105, Kitti goes even further and considers doing homework as a measure of her progress. No wonder that she is eager to see how well she can manage on her own. Again, these findings provide examples of mastery orientation.

Excerpt 105 (Kitti, p. 18)
It is always good for me when we check homework because that way it turns out how well I can do it on my own.

Finally, as mentioned before, the World – Language competition is worthy of attention. Although the quiz was not designed for EFL groups only, I decided to show the students the tasks because I found them extremely interesting. Still, it was surprising to see how willing they were all to get involved and none of them hesitated to volunteer to seek information, solve problems or work out answers. As their diaries reveal, apart from enjoying the variety of languages, they liked the tasks for the same reasons as they liked the language learning

activities described earlier in this chapter. The tasks were challenging and highly entertaining, and provided opportunities for discovering new information. On the other hand, students were also extrinsically motivated by the competition. Excerpt 106 gives an accurate summary of the benefits of the quiz:

> Excerpt 106 (Judit, p. 9)
> I think this language quiz is good for several reasons: (1) we become familiar with different languages; (2) there are funny tasks so it is entertaining; (3) we discover a lot of new things; (4) we can learn from it. I was happy to do my own task. … I didn't mind searching the library and the Internet because at least I worked on it and suffered to complete it. I hope we will get into the next round, as I cannot wait for the new tasks.

Another reason why students enjoyed the quiz was that they were all involved and thus had the satisfaction of contributing to the successful completion of the task, as seen in the following quotes:

> Excerpt 107 (Noémi, p. 18)
> I think it is good that we take part in this game. I enjoyed completing my task. It would be good to have such quizzes more often.

> Excerpt 108 (Klára, p. 9)
> By completing the tasks I learnt new words (in the languages that I study), I could learn about languages so far unfamiliar to me, I obtained new information in general, and besides, I was happy to do it in my free time. I think I did my share of the work, I enjoyed it very much, and I would be happy to be involved in similar things in the future.

The wide range of tasks also meant that everybody could opt for the one best suiting his or her interests and abilities. Besides, the fact that the questions were challenging made them even more attractive, which can be felt from Excerpt 109:

> Excerpt 109 (Benjámin, p. 10)
> This is what I think of the English quiz: The questions themselves were entertaining, highly demanding and compiled very well. I really liked the variety of the tasks. … I enjoyed [working on my share], it was a typical brain-twister based on logic, which I like very much and also hope that I am good at.

Moreover, their aptitude and different skills were also put to test and their whole personality was needed. Excerpts 110 and 111 suggest that students were happy to take up the challenge:

> Excerpt 110 (Emese, p. 2)
> I think it is a very exciting competition. There are good tasks through which we do not only practice English but also need logic and brain.

> Excerpt 111 (Beáta, pp. 5-6)
> I think this competition is similar to a situational task. What I mean is that there is the task and it does not only require language skills (English or mother tongue), but also imagination and creativity. And this is what matters, in my opinion. Not solely knowledge but also personal characteristics.

A recurring opinion that emerged from the data is that students completed the tasks with great enjoyment. The feeling reported on in Excerpt 112 is similar to the flow experience described by Csikszentmihalyi (1991):

> Excerpt 112 (Béla, p. 6)
> There is a big difference between what I thought of [the quiz] at the beginning and what I think now. I knew it would be good but not as good as it turned out. The tasks were really interesting, even to do them gave me a very good feeling. I liked a lot of other things, for example the teamwork.

Béla's last remark is also supported by Excerpts 113, 114, and 115. Students seem to appreciate it that everybody, including the teacher, did their share of the job, furthermore, other students in the class outside the English group were also involved.

> Excerpt 113 (Erika, p. 5)
> I liked the world language quiz very much. Everybody worked on it a lot.

> Excerpt 114 (Klára, p. 9)
> Thank you, Miss, for your help, together we made a super team. I hope the work will become a positive memory for you, too. (And, of course, the prize – the trip!)

> Excerpt 115 (Franciska, pp. 5-6)
> I think this quiz was a very good idea. What I really liked about it was that it had brought the group together, we worked together and looked things up together. At the beginning I didn't think that it would work out, that we would be able to answer 20 questions, but we managed. And it is also good that it wasn't only the English group but also the whole class that took part in solving the problems. … I hope we will get into the next round because every single task is very ingenuous and I would be happy to take part in one more round and do more activities like these.

As the findings reveal, co-operation within the group is as important as the task itself because it creates a pleasant atmosphere and motivates students to take their share and work towards a common goal.

6.2 How motivating and effective do students perceive different working modes?

Closely related to the above findings are students' views about different working modes, that is their preference for completing a certain task in pairs, in small groups or individually. In order to capture their opinion, I gathered data from the students' self-report diaries, the teacher's diary and the focus group interview and followed the same procedures as described in section 6.1 above.

The findings reveal that students prefer pair and small-group work activities, although each mode has its drawbacks, as will be shown later. An obvious reason for liking to work in pairs is that students find it easier to understand the material because whenever they have a problem or encounter difficulties with vocabulary or grammar, they can find immediate help. Pooling their knowledge enhances co-operation and also reduces stress. This can be felt in Excerpts 116, 17, and 118:

> Excerpt 116 (Beáta, p. 26)
> I always like working in pairs, because we know that we can count on each other. It was good to think over the answers together. It is always easier to work together.

> Excerpt 117 (Focus group interview, p. 3)
> Sometimes it is much easier if I know that there is a peer or several people who can help. One of us knows this, the other knows that, it is easier to solve the problem and also more enjoyable.

> Excerpt 118 (Melinda, p. 24)
> Preparation in pairs is much easier, because one will know what the other doesn't, and it is easier and quicker to work that way. … I worked with Noémi and we helped each other when we didn't understand something.

According to Béla, however, one of the "main benefits of working in pairs is exchanging information" (p. 19). His opinion is supported by the comment cited in Excerpt 119:

> Excerpt 119 (Emese, p. 13)
> The information gap was a good idea because we paid attention to each other and it was good to listen to the other and tell our own story.

Another reason why students find group work favourable is that it is inspiring and more enjoyable, as evidenced by Excerpt 120:

> Excerpt 120 (Focus group interview, p. 3)
> I think group-work hypes up the class because it helps with many things. Everybody is engaged more happily because it stirs your imagination if, for example, you have to finish a story or something like that. And I find it funny.

Also, the small-group set-up makes it possible for each student to contribute and, as a result, they are motivated to share ideas and listen to each other attentively. This is expressed in Excerpts 121 and 122:

> Excerpt 121 (Emese, p. 5)
> The group-work activity was useful, it is better to work like this than alone because we can share our opinions and thoughts.

> Excerpt 122 (Kitti, p. 12)
> I liked it very much and it was good to hear what the others had made up.

Furthermore, the smaller number of participants seems to reduce the level of students' anxiety, so the more reserved learners can also take an active part in the given task. This can be felt from Excerpts 123 and 124:

> Excerpt 123 (Erika, p. 13)
> It is very difficult for me to speak up in English, but when we act out a situation in groups, I manage to relax.

> Excerpt 124 (Erika, p. 9)
> I find such tasks useful because it is always easier to work in a group, everybody can succeed.

However, such co-operative activities also have their drawbacks, as their success often depends on how interesting the material is or how communicative the partners and group

members are. A positive experience is shown in Excerpt 125, while the opinions quoted in Excerpts 126 and 127 refer to less favourable instances:

> Excerpt 125 (Klára, p. 9)
> I think our team is capable of joining forces, and this topic interested everybody. Everybody liked it so much that we could work together more enthusiastically.

> Excerpt 126 (Kitti, p. 9)
> I didn't like the group-work because this topic is not very good.

> Excerpt 127 (Judit, p. 30)
> I worked with Benjámin, which wasn't very good because he just kept nodding … it seems that he understood everything. I understood what he was saying.

Finally, an interesting issue was raised during the group interview session. Some of the participants gave justice to individual work in the classroom claiming that students who are generally lazy or less active than their peers can take advantage of the situation and stay hidden without contributing to task completion. Such a comment is cited in Excerpt 128:

> Excerpt 128 (Focus group interview, p. 4)
> Group-work is all right, but it has a disadvantage, I think. If somebody would otherwise not work on their own but would just sit there and wait for the others to answer, then this person is not forced to do it, because the others do it for them. … So I think it is also good to work on our own, it is more difficult but good.

As the above quotes suggest, most of the time the students would opt for co-operative working modes, yet, they can see the relevance of individual work when the situation or the given task requires it. As Sára put it, "a little independence does everybody good" (p. 24).

6.3 Discussion

The data gathered from the self-report diaries and from the focus group interview suggest that the teaching material plays an important role in shaping learners' motivation. The students were found to adopt a positive attitude towards a wide range of tasks and

activities that are undertaken in an L2 class, however, they hold clear expectations. They seem to be willing to get engaged in practically any types of activities if they find them sufficiently interesting and enjoyable. Although this finding seems to be in line with Pintrich and de Groot (1990), who claim that emotions play a major role in motivating learners, a thorough examination of the data provides a more complex explanation for students' motivated behaviour.

The findings reveal that the same language learning tasks might exert different motivational influence on learners depending on the goals they pursue. Obviously, students are more motivated if their expectations are met on a higher level, but while those who set themselves performance goals value the utility of the task, students with predominantly learning goals are energised by hard work and involvement in the learning process. They are always willing to work out solutions for themselves and are also motivated by activities that inspire their creativity. This is especially true for demanding tasks, the accomplishment of which might bring them a feeling of success and proof of development. These results lend support to Nikolov (1999) and Julkunen (2001), who also found that students are intrinsically motivated by cognitively challenging tasks. However, such tasks are only motivating for students if the challenge involved is optimal, that is the task is slightly beyond their level but still manageable. This is in line with Krashen's (1987) input hypothesis, according to which students will only make progress, i.e. move from their current level of competence (i) to the next level ($i + 1$), if they understand input that includes language structures they have not yet mastered ($i + 1$). In contrast, if the input is way beyond their ability, it has the opposite effect and might demotivate learners. In other words, what is an appropriate challenge for one student might be frustrating for another.

Another finding that surfaced is that, by engaging themselves in the L2 learning process, students expect to develop their linguistic as well as their socio-linguistic competence. Consequently, co-operative working modes such as group or pair work activities were found to be more motivating than tasks requiring solitary attendance. Besides reducing stress and possible manifestations of anxiety, such activities make it possible for every student to contribute to the successful completion of the given task.

A particularly interesting result of the study is that situations where the L2 is a means of real communication proved to be highly motivating. Apparently, students enjoy reading or listening to stories for pleasure, especially if there is suspense because their plot is unpredictable. In such cases they continue with the task because they are interested in the ending of the story and they appear to forget that they are actually taking part in a language learning activity. Similarly, content-based tasks which use the L2 as a vehicle of conveying specific content knowledge were found to be highly motivating. Again, what seems to enhance students' motivation is the possibility to obtain information through the L2 rather than learning the language for its own sake.

An equally remarkable finding is the fact that teaching material which is not prescribed by the curriculum is more motivating. Students seem to find it challenging to read passages not written for educational purposes but taken from authentic sources. It gives them a feeling of success and also proof of mastery development that they can understand 'real' English not only textbook language.

The motivational factors that surfaced from the present study appear to be in harmony with the course-specific motivational components defined by Dörnyei's (1994) model of L2 learning motivation. The results show evidence that students' motivational intensity depends on their interest in the teaching material, the relevance of the material to

their L2 development, their expectancy of successful completion of tasks, and their satisfaction concerning mastery development.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter of the dissertation focused on learners' perceptions of the motivational characteristics underlying various tasks and activities undertaken in the L2 class. Analysing the qualitative data gathered from students' self-report diaries, I compiled a fairly comprehensive list of agreeable language learning activities and offered explanations for their motivational drive.

Consistent with the results discussed in Chapter 5, success was found to be a rather strong motive. Apparently, students are ready to get involved in a wide range of classroom activities provided that they are sufficiently interesting, challenging, and enjoyable. If the challenge is optimal, successful accomplishment of the task gives learners satisfaction, which results in an increase in their motivation. Students also proved to be intrinsically motivated by authentic materials not prescribed by the curriculum as well as by activities that enhance their mastery and are conducive to their development. As regards the organisation of various tasks, a clear pattern surfaced from the data revealing students' preference for co-operative working modes. This can be explained by the fact that besides reducing stress, opportunities for collaboration contribute to the development of their social skills.

The results carry important pedagogical implications in that they emphasise the teachers' role in raising and sustaining students' motivation. Undoubtedly, it is their responsibility to create a motivating learning environment and provide students with the

necessary scaffolding for the development of their knowledge and skills. Teachers should realise that learners' needs are only fulfilled if they are actively involved in the learning process and if they are assigned tasks and activities that improve both their linguistic and socio-linguistic competences.

Following the same train of thoughts, in the next chapter I will explore the motivational influence of the classroom climate and examine the role that the teacher and peers play in shaping that atmosphere.

CHAPTER 7

HOW DOES THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE CLASSROOM SHAPE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION?

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings pertaining to the third research question, the aim of which is to explore the atmosphere of the classroom and demonstrate its impact on learners' motivation. First, I will identify the factors that create this atmosphere and classify them according to who is responsible for them: the teacher, the students or both. Then, following a detailed description of how each component exerts its influence, I will discuss the main findings. For these analyses I gathered data from the following sources: the students' diaries, the teacher's diary, the focus group interview, and the external observers' reports.

7.1 What factors trigger students' choice of action?

The role of the classroom climate as a determining motivational factor was found to be emphasised both by students and colleagues. As it turned out, when giving their accounts about different aspects of learning English, students very often described their feelings about the lessons. Besides their views, external observers also seemed to consider it important to make comments on the general atmosphere of the English class, as evidenced by Excerpt 129:

> Excerpt 129 (Observer 1)
> From the initial chit-chat between [the teacher] and the students – all in English – it is clear that the students feel very comfortable with her. She herself seems confident and at ease with them, too. …Over all, I was pleased with [the teacher's] confident manner, her sense of humour, and her being very much at ease with the students and they with her. She clearly has a solid sense of what communicative language teaching is all about and of the fact that an interactive class, conducted in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, can be far more enjoyable than a stuffy, humourless class. No wonder the students didn't mind doing the assigned listening and speaking tasks and participating enthusiastically even at that late hour (probably the last hour of the day) on a Monday!

And indeed, students' diaries reveal that they "enjoy the lessons more and more", they are "happy to do interesting tasks", they are "satisfied with the lessons", and they like "to forget that it is the 6-7th period after a hard day". When asked 'What would you have done differently?', they answered in chorus 'More lessons!' Excerpt 130 is a perfect illustration of students' feelings:

> Excerpt 130 (Klára, pp. 27, 30)
> English as a subject and as a class is one of my favourites. In the break, when I realise what the next class is, I am happier and more relaxed before an English class. Now, towards the end of the year, it is quite difficult to concentrate on biology, chemistry, or physics. The English class doesn't seem too long EVEN at the end of the year. … Perhaps I have written too many good things but this is how I feel. I cannot remember any bad points. Or perhaps one, I would have been happy to take part in twice as many English classes.

As seen in Excerpt 131, even the most anxious student managed to feel at ease and enjoy herself at times:

> Excerpt 130 (Noémi, p. 30)
> I think everybody liked the lesson because we laughed a lot and the atmosphere was nice. It was a good feeling that I could laugh so much in an English class because I don't usually get the point. But now I did, and the lesson was good and not only for me. At least as I saw it.

In order to unveil the source of students' enjoyment, I gathered more specific information concerning the atmosphere of the lessons and actual classroom practices. The majority of

data was provided by the focus group interview, during which the participants discussed the following questions:

- What should an English class be like?
- To what extent do lessons meet students' expectations?
- What are the good points of the lessons? What activities do they find useful?
- What would they do differently?
- Do they get enough help from the teacher to reach their goals?
- In what fields do they feel that they are making progress?
- How are English lessons different from other classes?

This data was supplemented by students' diary entries, in which they were asked to compare English classes with science lessons like Physics and Chemistry, and by the comments that were made by external observers after visiting English classes.

A clear pattern seems to emerge from the data, which is consistent with Dörnyei's (1994) definition of the learning situation level. The findings uncover similar factors influencing the climate of the classroom and, consequently, students' motivational behaviour to the ones clustering around the teacher and the learning group in the multilevel model of L2 motivation proposed by Dörnyei (1994). As shown in Table 13, teacher specific variables are inclusive of the teacher's style, teaching methods, and her experience and personality, while group specific factors comprise group cohesion, goal setting and members' willingness to participate in the learning process. The only external factor that surfaced is the influence of the timetable.

Table 13
Factors influencing classroom climate

classification	factor	frequency
Teacher specific factors	teaching style	
	- pace of lesson	13
	- arousing interest	6
	- discipline in class	6
	teaching methods	
	- explanation/rote learning	13
	- variety	11
	- student involvement	9
	teacher's experience and personality	8
Group specific factors	group cohesion	7
	members' participation	7
	group goals	5
External factors	timetable	11

As can be seen from the list classified as teacher specific components (see Table 13), the most important criterion perceived by students is their ability to follow the material. In terms of teaching style, this is determined by the pace of the lesson. The next element on the list, students' expectation of interesting lessons, was also discussed in Chapter 6. However, it is remarkable that students seem to attach equal importance to discipline in the classroom. As for teaching methods, the quality of the teacher's explanation and her requirement of rote learning are given priority. Apparently, almost equally important is the use of a wide variety of tasks during the lesson and students' involvement in classroom processes. The third teacher-related factor, including experience and personality, refers to effective classroom management.

As regards motivational factors on the group level, three components emerge from the data: group cohesion, members' willingness to participate in different activities, and goal-setting. Group cohesion means the relationship of group members to one another, their willingness to co-operate and help each other, while group goals refer to the existence of a

common goal pursued by the members. As will be seen later, these components are in close interaction with each other, as group cohesion and the existence of group goals greatly influence students' participation in the learning process and their contribution to the desired outcome.

The third factor that surfaced as contributing to the climate of the L2 class is the school timetable, an external factor, which is beyond the control of the participants, either learners' or the teacher's. Nevertheless, students seem to find it important to mention it for two reasons. As a negative effect, an unfavourable arrangement of classes might result in students feeling tired and hungry, which is likely to undermine their motivation. On the other hand, the number of classes allocated for the study of different subjects might account for their success or failure, which in turn enhances or decreases their motivation.

In what follows, in sections 7.2–7.3 I will examine these factors one by one and explore how their interaction exerts its influence on students' motivation in the classroom.

7.2 What role does the teacher play in enhancing motivation in the classroom?

Data collection involved open questions asking students to compare English classes with others. Interestingly, some subjects were not mentioned, while with others there were recurring themes. The first teacher-related factor influencing motivation is concerned with the management of the class. According to the students, it is the teacher's responsibility to set the right pace that is appropriate for the group. They also expect the teacher to maintain discipline in the classroom as well as arouse and sustain learners' interest in the subject.

Timing seems to be important for several reasons. On the one hand, students need enough time to understand the material in order to be able to follow the lesson. If they are

overwhelmed by information, they may not be able to cope. As evidenced by Excerpt 131, such a situation is considered unsatisfactory, as they would rather set a lower standard and reach it than remember nothing:

> Excerpt 131 (Focus group interview, pp. 9-10, 16)
> The problem [with Italian] is that we went too fast at the beginning. We should have done that slowly and in more details. …We just write tables and *'Passato remoto'-s* and *'Participio passato'-s*, and then we don't even know which way to turn, let alone what Italian is or at least how to start talking. … We can't remember a thing. … We shouldn't run after the other group but aim at learning this language at a certain level. … Because this way rather than achieving a level, no matter how low, we won't know anything. I mean, we learn this language for four years and then we leave school and the whole thing gets lost.

The same finding, students' need for achievement as an important motivational factor emerges from the data cited in Excerpts 132 and 133:

> Excerpt 132 (Kitti, p. 10)
> I don't like it when I don't understand something, when we go on and I or somebody else lags behind.

> Excerpt 133 (Karcsi, p. 5)
> My translation was a fiasco. If I had had five minutes to scan it before we started, I would have done a much better job.

Time, it seems, is also crucial when students immerse themselves in an activity. As can be felt from Excerpt 134, they become disillusioned if they cannot complete the task by the end of the lesson:

> Excerpt 134 (Focus group interview, p. 6)
> I often felt on Fridays that it would be better to carry on with the task and not wait until Monday. When we got carried away with a topic that was good, and then it was bad that we could only continue on Monday.

However, the opposite tendency appears to be equally unfortunate. Students also voiced their criticism when they felt that a task "dragged on", or when "we spent too much time" on a given assignment even if they considered it useful. What makes this finding even more

interesting is the fact that such critical comments sometimes coincided with my own concern about the pace of the lessons. This is how I wrote about it in my diary:

> Excerpt 135 (Teacher's diary, p. 13)
> I don't know what it is, but I'm slow. I don't actually feel it in class, but when the bell rings I have the feeling these days that we have hardly done anything.

> Excerpt 136 (Teacher's diary, p. 18)
> That's strange, I seem to be losing my sense of time. We worked on <u>one</u> song throughout the lesson! …I think they liked it and they learned something, but I felt almost guilty when I heard the bell.

The findings also reveal that students appreciate intensive, orderly work in the classroom, and they find their peers' disruptive behaviour rather disturbing and, at times demotivating. Again, they hold the teacher responsible for maintaining discipline, as can be seen in their comparison of English with other subjects:

> Excerpt 137 (Klára, p. 27)
> We learned a lot but did it in a cheerful, intensive, orderly way. … I think it is very important for a student to know that there is 'order' in a given class so he can learn properly and respect the subject, and, undoubtedly, it depends on the group (the teacher and students).

> Excerpt 138 (Focus group interview, p. 16)
> We can't learn properly. … I don't want to hurt anybody but with that discipline in [the Italian] class, you can't pay attention. However hard I listen, I can't hear a thing at the back of the classroom.

Furthermore, apart from criticising some of their teachers for their inability to maintain order, they also propose solutions to the problem. Their advice includes punishing students, as in Excerpt 139, as well as ways of engaging their attention as cited in Excerpts 140 and 141:

> Excerpt 139 (Focus group interview, p, 20)
> [Discipline depends on] the teacher's personality. She should be sturdy, firm and strict in order to keep the discipline. … It would be important to have discipline, that the teacher could keep the discipline. … [The history teacher] should have been stricter when we were in Class 7, when the disturbing noise started. … She could allocate seats for those who keep talking, or make them write tests but this may not be a good idea.

> Excerpt 140 (Focus group interview, p. 21)
> The [Physics] teacher introduced this new thing that at the beginning of the lesson a few students sit in the front desks and write a test. This is because there was a lot of disruptive behaviour and they didn't learn for the lessons. But I don't think that it solves the problem because they keep talking in class. … I would try to make the lessons more interesting. … Students usually like watching or doing experiments, we could do more and then perhaps they would be more interested.

> Excerpt 141 (Beáta, p. 21)
> I think it helped everybody during the year that the [English] teacher tried to conjure the lessons interesting: sometimes by hard work and sometimes by games. It definitely had a positive effect.

Excerpt 141 also suggests that by arousing students' interest, teachers might enhance their motivation. The idea of stimulating and sustaining learners' interest is a recurring issue. As we could see in the previous chapter, students are willing to listen to the teacher and actively participate in the lesson if they are sufficiently interested. When asked how they would make classes more interesting for students, they listed those activities that they missed: for example, experiments in small groups in the physics lesson and project work, stories, and the use of atlases in history classes. Moreover, it seems that the teacher's enthusiasm and instructional style are better stimulants than the material itself. This can be concluded from Excerpts 142 and 143:

> Excerpt 142 (Focus group interview, p. 13)
> I think any passage could be presented so that you say it is very good, interesting and you read it again at home. I think it depends very much on what plate that pasta is served on. … It is very important how it is presented.

> Excerpt 143 (Focus group interview, p. 20)
> I miss the extra things, the interesting extras. … In the primary school I had a history teacher who taught it in such an interesting way that I liked learning it … and I read the supplementary material because I found it interesting. … And now these lessons are monotonous, and it isn't because of the topic. … Dull parts could be made more interesting by myths, stories and legends.

On the other hand, English seems to be a positive example. If students can see that the teacher is interested in her own subject and she is also an active participant in the class, it

can also act as a motivating factor. In line with Medgyes (1997), the findings highlight the influence of the teacher's favourable attitude, as evidenced by Excerpts 144 and 145:

> Excerpt 144 (Focus group interview, p. 19)
> It shows that the [English] teacher is interested … and looks things up if we ask her. We can see that she is interested in the language and so she can teach it much better.

> Excerpt 145 (Franciska, p. 6)
> I would like to thank you, on behalf of the whole class, for working with us and putting in so much work on the [World – Language competition] tasks.

The second teacher-related factor accountable for the atmosphere of the classroom refers to the methods that teachers employ and their concept of knowledge. Another recurring finding that emerges from the data is the fact that students are prepared to learn the material provided that they understand it. In contrast to this, if they do not understand what they are expected to learn, they lose interest and become demotivated, as evidenced by Excerpts 146 and 147. This is in line with Krashen's (1987) theory of comprehensible input (discussed in section 6.3).

> Excerpt 146 (Erika, p. 17)
> We can usually cover more in English because we understand it better. Unlike physics, which is difficult to digest even after a week. [English] is one of the best lessons.

> Excerpt 147 (Focus group interview, p.20)
> I lost the thread at some point and since then I haven't been interested. … My problem with physics and with other subjects, chemistry, for example, is that I don't understand the 'why' of many things. … The way these subjects are taught, I mean that we are not supposed to understand the rules, only know them. … And I don't like things that I don't understand. Rote learning is no use.

This last remark is also supported by Excerpt 148; moreover, it suggests that students do not consider what they have swotted useful knowledge.

> Excerpt 148 (Focus group interview, p.13)
> When we are asked in [the Italian] class … we got a sheet of paper and if somebody recited what was on that paper they got a 5, but that is swotting, I just retell it and that's it. Somehow I don't think it is useful.

Closely linked to the above standpoints is students' apparent desire to become involved in the learning process. One obvious reason that they give is that they find a lesson far more interesting if they are not only passive recipients but can actually participate in the work. What they miss is small group experiments in science lessons and project work in other classes, for example. Another point that they raise is the fact that taking part in the classroom processes helps them understand the material and later recall it. Excerpts 149 and 150 also suggest that they are willing to use their cognitive skills and engage in intensive work:

> Excerpt 149 (Focus group interview, p. 21) about the Physics class:
> Dictating the outline of the new material is boring. I miss some connection between teacher and student as between two people. What I mean is that besides solving tasks we could be involved. There aren't many opportunities to think and to talk about it. … I would try to find the answer to the whys, even if superficially. … In a secondary school class it is this connection that raises one's attention.

> Excerpt 150 (Karcsi, p. 5)
> The [English] lesson was good, not the type where you just sit bored, it was lively and it made us use our brains.

Involving students in the learning processes of an L2 class also means inviting them to take part in communicative activities so that they could improve their speaking skills. As seen in Excerpt 151, it meets their expectation:

> Excerpt 151 (Béla, p. 20)
> It is important to let students' improvisational skills emerge. I really liked yesterday's class and I think the others liked it too. As I saw it, everybody enjoyed it and this is inevitable. Otherwise it is impossible to work in a team, only if everybody has a good time.

As an interesting coincidence, one of the lesson observers also made a remark on how the English teacher tried to involve as many students as possible in the work. As he put it:

> Excerpt 152 (Observer 1)
> The focus of the class seems to be on communicative language learning. All the conversation is in English, except occasionally between students. In fact, throughout the class period, almost all of the conversation is in English, and students do not whisper things to each other when other students are responding to [the teacher's] questions. … There is very good prodding of students on [the teacher's] part ("Can you tell what it is", Good guess, but…", "What makes you think so", etc.) and they respond enthusiastically.

An equally important feature, variety also emerges as an inevitable characteristic of a good English class. Obviously, completing various tasks and activities makes a lesson more attractive for students. What is interesting, however, is that students also express their wish to develop different language skills. Sample comments are cited in Excerpts 153 and 154:

> Excerpt 153 (Focus group interview, p. 1)
> I think [a good English lesson] should be varied. There should be all kinds of tasks … reading, writing, comprehension, speaking. Different things like those extras that we did, passages, for example, or a game or an interesting task that hypes up the lesson and makes one lesson different from the other … so that they distinguish Monday lesson from Tuesday. … Double periods are good because those two lessons can be really many-coloured … more things can fit in.

> Excerpt 154 (Focus group interview, p. 2)
> Everybody should have the possibility to develop and in order to do that we should speak and write, I mean we should do different kinds of tasks. … It is perhaps easier to learn languages because they can be learned in a more colourful way than other things. It allows us more leeway … because in most cases we communicate with each other through language.

Finally, the third teacher-related component that was found to influence the atmosphere of the classroom is the teacher's experience and personality. Again, different subject teachers are compared and the findings seem to suggest that a helpful, attentive and reassuring teacher has better chances to motivate her students effectively. This is expressed in Excerpts 155 and 156:

> Excerpt 155 (Focus group interview, p. 19)
> I often turn to you [the teacher] with a problem in English and I always get an answer. As I see it, due attention is paid. And when I ask something the teacher listens … I can feel that I am not just one of many people, but she pays attention to me personally.

> Excerpt 156 (Focus group interview, p. 20)
> When somebody doesn't understand something we can always ask [the physics teacher].

At the same time, although they are critical about any professional inadequacy, they are inclined to attribute it to the teacher's lack of experience or to a non co-operative group. The quotes in Excerpts 157 and 158 illustrate this point:

> Excerpt 157 (Focus group interview, p. 14)
> It is bad for me when I ask something and she cannot give a clear answer. It makes me feel insecure. … Our teacher of Italian has just started [her job] so she hasn't got as much experience. I think this is also part of it.

> Excerpt 158 (Focus group interview, p. 18)
> They are there because they have to, they don't enjoy it and they can't see the beauty in it. Because I think a language lesson can also be enjoyable, and the Italian class could be enjoyable, but their behaviour holds the group back and it is very difficult for the teacher, too.

It is worthy of notice that, like in previous cases, the external visitors' observations appear to be in harmony with students' opinions. As demonstrated by Excerpt 159, they also emphasise the facilitating role of the teacher:

> Excerpt 159 (Observer 1)
> Perhaps the most desirable part of [her English] class was that the students actually spent time in speaking and listening and real life like communicative activities throughout the class. As a teacher, [she] was something like a helpful and encouraging intervener and guide, rather than following the artificial steps prescribed in a textbook.

Apparently, students have a clear picture of how classes should be taught. Furthermore, they are aware of teacher's responsibilities for creating a learner-friendly atmosphere in the classroom that facilitates their development.

7.3 How do peers contribute to a supportive atmosphere?

Apart from emphasising the role of the teacher in creating an inspiring climate in the classroom, students also seem to be aware of the motivational power of the group itself. The findings reveal three group specific elements that are thought to affect the atmosphere, which include group cohesion, common goals within the group, and active participation in classroom processes. In students' opinion, a cohesive group is characterised by members who know and accept each other and are also ready to offer help. A perfect description of such a group can be seen in Excerpt 160:

> Excerpt 160 (Focus group interview, p. 2)
> I think it is very important what the group is like … we need tasks through which we can get to know each other. … The group can work together much better if they know each other. We know what the other is better or less good at, what they like or don't like, and so we can adapt to each other and we can make headway by helping the other and those at the top can pull those who need it.

The last remark referring to the necessity of a leading personality in the group is also supported by Excerpt 161, where *help* seems to be the key for improvement. On the other hand, Excerpt 162 suggests that students should pay due attention to every member, as the success of the group depends on the achievements of the individuals. Apparently, success is viewed as a measure of their development.

> Excerpt 161 (Beáta, p. 20)
> I like the group in which I am learning the language. The best thing is that there is always somebody to look up to, there is a leading person who helps others.

> Excerpt 162 (Benjámin, p. 21)
> I think that the small number (and the constant, unchanging number) has been to our advantage … We have forged into a proper community, and I could trace the signs of improvement in many students. I hope that everybody will acquire the necessary knowledge by the end of the year, that is, the dynamism of our development won't get stuck.

A recurring pattern that came to the fore suggests that students' goals determine their behaviour in the classroom. This is conveyed in Excerpt 163, which illustrates the problems arising in the Italian class, where the target group is mixed with students coming from Form B. As seen in the quote, the problem lies in the difference between students' orientations. Although both groups appear to have instrumental motives for learning Italian, the students in the target group seem to display a positive attitude towards the language and are willing to work hard, whereas their performance-oriented peers have a negative attitude and expend only minimal effort.

> Excerpt 163 (Focus group interview, p.17)
> They don't want to work, they don't realise that it would be to their benefit … We are sensible … we realise that we have to do it because it will be good for us. … They aspire for good grades … we, on the contrary, don't consider grades so important. What is essential is that you should know [the language] and be able to use it in N years' time.

This lack of a common goal makes it impossible to establish group norms, which obviously hinders efficient work in the classroom and, consequently, students' development. Their disapproval of such uncooperative behaviour is cited in Excerpt 164:

> Excerpt 164 (Focus group interview, p. 13)
> It isn't very good that the two classes are together. Not because I want to praise ourselves, but if we get a task, our group does it. The other half, instead, goes like 'Not again', 'Why don't we postpone the test?' and it does no good to our progress.

On the other hand, engagement in the activities may have a positive effect on the whole atmosphere of the classroom and can greatly influence the learning outcome. A positive example is given of the English class and it seems that the fact that all the members contribute to the successful completion of tasks evokes a 'we' feeling and strengthens cohesive ties:

> Excerpt 165 (Beáta, p. 21)
> Learning was facilitated by the fact that the group was active, everybody is ready to work when there is a role-play.

> Excerpt 166 (Klára, p. 25)
> I think the atmosphere of the classroom greatly contributes to my enjoying doing English, as do the happy moments and the fact that everybody works together intensively.

Students' views are supported by an external observer's following comments:

> Excerpt 167 (Observer 1)
> All seem to enjoy this activity, and there is little hesitation among students to volunteer and go in front of class. … Students busily work on this, and except for two boys, every other pair seems to be ready to perform in just a few minutes. Two pairs volunteer to perform and do a very good job of it.

However, these motivational factors interact with each other. Apparently, active engagement both causes and is facilitated by a friendly atmosphere, as explained in Excerpt 168:

> Excerpt 168 (Zsófi, p. 16)
> I think the majority of the group liked what we were doing … I am of such opinion because the group sticks together and we like working in small groups. It never happens that somebody is excluded or doesn't dare to talk.

As regards students' engagement in the lesson, another interesting finding surfaced from the data: co-operative atmosphere may also hold the attention of the quieter students. Although they do not play such an active part as some of their peers, they may still feel involved and thus enjoy the lesson. To quote an observer:

> Excerpt 169 (Observer 1)
> Of course, as is common in most second language classes, there are always some students who participate freely more than the rest of the students. This class was no exception. I noticed at least five students who barely responded or participated unless any of them was forced to do so. … But they were, at all times, attentive and were surely grasping what was going on in the class.

And indeed, even the shyest student reported feeling at ease and enjoying the class. As seen in Excerpt 170, in her own way she also participated in the learning process, albeit passively.

Excerpt 170 (Noémi, p. 30)
It was good that I understood almost everything. … I had a feeling of success. … I think everybody liked [the lesson] because we laughed a lot, the atmosphere was good. It felt good that I was able to laugh so much in an English lesson, since I don't usually get the point, but now I did and it was a good lesson. And it wasn't only good for me. At least this is what I noticed.

Finally, mention should be made of the school timetable, the only external factor that students seem to hold responsible for their motivated behaviour in the classroom. On the one hand, they voice their complaints about being tired and hungry in the 6th and 7th periods after a hard day, as illustrated by the following excerpts:

Excerpt 171 (Noémi, p. 19)
I liked everything only I was a bit tired and hungry.

Excerpt 172 (Focus group interview, p. 7)
I think it was very difficult for everybody in the 6-7th period on Monday. Everybody is exhausted. The group isn't active … The first five classes include all the difficult subjects: Physics, Biology, Chemistry, (in chorus) Maths.

On the other hand, they attribute their successes and failures to the frequency with which they have different classes. With this respect, English has an advantage over the other subjects, as it is taught in five lessons a week. As they put it:

Excerpt 173 (Beáta, p. 21)
What is good in this subject is that we have classes every day and so you pick things up in every lesson.

Excerpt 174 (Focus group interview, p. 12)
I think another problem with the second foreign language is that we learn it in three classes a week and it is very little.

The above findings suggest that students have a clear perception of various classroom processes and they also seem to be aware of their own role in shaping an inspiring atmosphere.

7.4 Discussion

A clear pattern seems to emerge from the data explaining the influence that the classroom climate exerts on students' motivation and demonstrating how the different motivational factors interact with each other. The findings also raise important questions concerning the organisation of the lessons and general classroom management.

One of the central issues that surfaces from students' self-reports is that they have a full picture of how a lesson is supposed to function. Given the fact that they pursue specific goals, they expect the teacher to create an atmosphere where they can attain their goals. Apparently, in the English class the tasks are pitched at their level thus providing them with opportunities for development. They can perceive their progress, as there is a harmony between their goals, the task types and their development.

Closely related to this is the question of discipline. The findings reveal that students are highly motivated by consistent work in the classroom, which seems to be dependent on both the teacher's instructional strategies and their peers' attitude. They hold the teacher responsible for maintaining discipline either by conducting a well-paced class and implementing strict measures or, more preferably, by stimulating and sustaining learners' interest. It seems that the presentation of the learning material is often more important than the material itself, moreover, students are extremely motivated if they perceive their teacher's enthusiasm and interest in the subject. Students' expectations of an optimal teacher's style appear to be consistent with Heron's (1999) proposition that a good group leader is more like a facilitator. In his description, the facilitator is firm and decisive in her way of controlling the group at the outset, and then provides students with the necessary scaffolding for their development by gradually granting them more autonomy as the group

matures and cohesive ties are built. Thus, as a good facilitator, the teacher may find ways of creating a co-operative and supportive classroom climate, which appears to play a pivotal role in shaping students' motivation.

Concomitant of a co-operative classroom atmosphere, learners' active participation in the learning process is a recurring issue in the present dissertation. The findings suggest that students are rather critical of themselves and their peers in this respect. When comparing English with other subjects, they explain their peers' reluctance to get engaged in classroom activities with their obvious lack of intrinsic goals. With regard to the English class, however, they attribute their motivated behaviour to a common group goal and to the fact that all the members are willing to contribute to the successful completion of a given task. Apparently, their wish to master the English language enhances their cognitive engagement, which ultimately leads to a positive learning outcome. This seems to be in line with Meece (1994), who examined goal orientation in relation to self-regulated learning and found that students pursuing mastery goals become more successful learners, as they engage in activities more actively and use highly regulated learning strategies.

What appears as a result of particular interest is that there is often a difference between students' and teachers' conceptualisations of knowledge and what learning and development involves, which offers a plausible explanation of why learners' attitudes and motivation differ in various classes. Students state explicitly that understanding is the key to development, however, in classes such as Physics and Chemistry, for example, they often fail to understand the material. Given the fact that in these classes the main emphasis is put on declarative knowledge and rote learning, students see a basic conflict. Furthermore, they are perfectly aware of what they will need in the long run and they question the usefulness of such knowledge. By contrast, they report feeling more confident in the English class, where

procedural knowledge is given priority. Obviously, such perception increases their motivation.

As can be seen from these discussions, the findings are indicative of a considerable level of learner autonomy. On the one hand, students are capable of deciding whether the teacher can explain the material so that they understand it; on the other hand, they can give an opinion about the way they acquire knowledge. They are able to assess and exercise control over their learning, which seems to lend support to Spratt, Humphreys and Chan's (2002) assertion that intrinsic motivation leads to learner autonomy.

Yet again, motivational characteristics prove to interact with each other. The findings reveal that co-operative teaching methods make it possible for students to get involved in the learning process. By discovering knowledge for themselves and by scaffolding one another's learning, they have better chances to understand the material. This in turn motivates them to participate in classroom activities, which eventually fosters their development. In line with Dörnyei (2007), these results underline the motivational influence of the classroom environment and shed light on the importance of motivating instructional strategies.

7.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore the interaction between the various elements that contribute to a motivating classroom climate. Following a thorough analysis of a massive amount of qualitative data, I identified several motivational factors that cluster around the teacher and the learning group, similarly to Dörnyei's (1994) proposition of teacher and group specific components on the learning situation level discussed in section 2.2.4.1. The teacher-related elements emerging from the study I have conducted include the

teacher's style and teaching methods as well as her experience and personality, while group-related characteristics comprise group cohesion, members' engagement in classroom activities, and the importance of a common group goal. In addition, the school timetable surfaced as exerting external influence on learners' motivation.

Consistent with the results presented in previous chapters of the dissertation, the students were found to display a high degree of maturity and developing autonomy and self-awareness as language learners. Besides voicing their need of a co-operative atmosphere and effective classroom management, they also appear to recognise their own responsibility for developing their skills and knowledge.

The findings provide the teacher-researcher with invaluable feedback. On the one hand, they confirm my conceptualisation of knowledge and educational philosophy. Like my students, I also firmly believe that 'knowing how' is equally or even more useful than 'knowing what' and it seems that by conveying procedural knowledge, my teaching practice meets their expectations. On the other hand, as data on other classes were also analysed to triangulate the findings related to English classes, students' criticism of certain teaching styles has given me inspiration to create a motivating learning environment. This is even more important as I cannot but agree with Dörnyei (2007, p. 735), who claims that "the motivational character of the classroom is largely a function of the teacher's motivational teaching practice, and is therefore within our explicit control."

Having identified the variables underlying L2 learning motivation, in the next chapter of the dissertation I will outline the temporal changes in students' orientation and motivational intensity.

CHAPTER 8

HOW DOES MOTIVATION CHANGE OVER TIME?

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings pertaining to the fourth research question, which addresses a current issue in L2 learning research: the temporal aspect of motivation. First, I will examine the relationship between students' experiences about learning English and their proficiency level. This will be followed by a discussion of the changes in their goal setting over the years. For these analyses qualitative data was obtained from the teacher's notes and students' self-report diaries, while their proficiency was measured by the standardised scores described in sections 4.3.1 – 4.3.2. Given the fact that the dynamic nature of motivation is an overarching focus of the study (see Table 2 in Chapter 4.3), data relating to this issue was taken from all four phases of the research.

8.1 What is the relationship between proficiency level and motivation?

As an introduction to the diary study, students were asked to note down their general impressions about English language learning, concentrating primarily on positive influences. Basically, they touched upon two aspects. On the one hand, they described pleasant experiences; on the other hand, they gave examples of various techniques that they were employing in order to practise and improve their foreign language skills. Their answers were consistent with the findings discussed in Chapter 5 in that comprehension and the ability to communicate with foreigners proved to be principal sources of joy and satisfaction, revealing a developing mastery motive. In addition, instrumental motives such as travelling,

interpreting for parents and friends during the summer holiday, and giving directions to tourists were mentioned as opportunities to use the language in real-life situations. In such cases, students experienced a feeling of success, which can be illustrated by the following quotations:

> Excerpt 175 (Kitti, p. 1)
> When I went to a concert in Hősök tere, I talked to somebody who was English. I liked it that I could talk to him and I COULD UNDERSTAND HIM!!! It was lovely! (student's emphasis).

> Excerpt 176 (Judit, p. 2)
> I felt proud of myself, as not many of my friends would have remembered how to say that.

> Excerpt 177 (Sára, pp. 1-3)
> During the last school year there were already many words and expressions in my mind, but I felt I couldn't speak English. Because I couldn't communicate – I mean I was too shy to open my mouth. … But after my trip to Slovenia, I 'got brave'. In that camp I had to speak English if I had a problem, and all day every information and every conversation that I caught was in English. So I started to think in English, and when I was thinking in English, I was strong enough to speak. I felt this progress and it was a big delight to me! … And we laughed very much because we made fun of everything. It was the next step, when I could make fun in English and not only in Hungarian. … I realised what a pleasure it is to speak in a foreign language and see the people's face.

A similar idea is expressed by Klára, although in her case the experience is connected to learning French, her second foreign language. She draws an interesting parallel between the two languages and emphasises the need for a live contact with the target culture. Furthermore, as seen in Excerpt 178, she states it explicitly that such opportunities considerably enhance her motivation to learn the language:

> Excerpt 178 Klára (p.1)
> I have been pondering on why I sometimes feel the French language a bit closer (for emotional reasons, I suppose). I love learning English, as a language, I really like the method that we use for learning it. But what I miss is that I don't have any connection with English people. It is very good to learn a foreign language (in my case French) and correspond with young French people. I can understand their letters and learn a lot from them. Although rarely, but we meet and it is unbelievable how much I can learn from them personally, the spoken language which cannot be acquired from books, etc. And it is a good feeling to get a glimpse of their culture and way of life. It reinforces the 'wish to learn' and your aim will be to know more so that you could share more and more things with your foreign language friend.

Although understanding spoken and/or written English is a more passive experience, it evokes the same feeling of success. Apart from giving them pleasure, it is also regarded by students as a measure of their developing skills. Excerpts 179 and 180 support this assumption:

> Excerpt 179 (Benjámin, p. 7)
> I put it down as a positive experience when I changed into an English speaking channel on TV and could understand a lot both from the news bar and from what the newsreader was saying. I experienced the same while surfing the Internet. I was able to understand long passages that contained quite a few unknown words. … I believe this is a sure sign that my English is improving, increasing.

> Excerpt 180 (Béla, p. 10)
> I am not always satisfied with myself, though I often experience a feeling of success when I understand a sentence or a passage in everyday life (TV, captions, song lyrics). I think I have developed a lot.

Obviously, students are willing to undertake such extra curricular activities that might develop the language skills necessary for enjoying the successes described in the above quotes. Excerpts 181 and 182 provide examples of students' motivation to practise reading and communication in English:

> Excerpt 181 (Kitti, p. 4)
> I searched the Internet and found some lyrics of my favourite singer and printed them. Day by day I read them and I understand them!! It is a very good feeling.

> Excerpt 182 (Karcsi, p. 1)
> Learning English is an activity that I often pursue, and with pleasure. … Doing my homework is not the only purpose of learning, but I also often talk to Géza and to the others in English. Learning English is a pleasure for me.

However, as students' level of proficiency increases, they become more and more autonomous language learners. Apparently, they are aware of exactly what specific skill area needs improving and what tasks they are supposed to perform in order to reach that sub-goal. This seems to be in line with Ushioda (2001), who views motivation from a temporal perspective and claims that students' rationale for learning an L2 derives from experience at first, whereas goal-directed motivation evolves over time. Excerpts 183 and 184 give proof of students' feelings of success related to more specific experiences such as understanding certain grammar points and L2 forms:

> Excerpt 183 (Benjámin, p. 7)
> I think the best thing that has happened to me recently in connection with English is that (I hope) I've managed to realise those differences, relationships, and similarities about verb tenses that so far I have not been able to understand.

> Excerpt 184 (Kitti, p. 10)
> I think I have developed since the beginning of the year. I have fallen behind a little recently, but I think I am making good progress. It is a great step forward for me that now I can understand verb tenses more clearly than before.

What appears as a result of particular interest is that students' own perception of the development of their knowledge and skills is a highly influential motivating factor. This can be concluded from the following quotes, in which Kitti gives proof of her mastery orientation by describing her willingness to take risks when getting involved in conversation in the classroom, while Benjámin gives a rather detailed self-assessment of his developing skills:

> Excerpt 185 (Kitti, p. 17)
> Even I notice it now that I speak more often and I think it is mainly due to the fact that my pronunciation is better than it used to and it motivates me. And also I cannot help it when we talk in class and Karcsi, Klára and Béla lead the conversation. I would like to speak like they do (especially like Karcsi).

> Excerpt 186 (Benjámin, p. 20)
> I can perceive my development quite clearly. I realised already at the beginning of the year – more precisely from the proficiency test – that my listening comprehension had improved dramatically. My vocabulary has been increasing continuously during the year (which is thanks to the English computer games besides the lessons). This has brought about an improvement in my reading comprehension, so now I can understand a genuine English newspaper article or an excerpt from a book.

Further to this, Klára provides tangible evidence of her intrinsic motivation. As seen in Excerpt 187, she finds pleasure in the very act of learning English and underlines the frequency with which she undertakes that activity.

> Excerpt 187 (Klára, p. 15)
> I think I am satisfied with my English, I really enjoy doing it and learning. I can get so carried away with it that there are times when I do not want to stop (either at home or in class). I think I am making progress (partly thanks to the above mentioned things). I read a lot in English (magazines, books). … ENGLISH is a positive experience for me. (student's emphasis)

These findings support Józsa's (2002b) assertion that the operation of mastery motives provides feedback for the motive itself and learners' perceptions of their increasing skills strengthen the motive. Interestingly, however, even if students are not completely satisfied with their progress and even if they realise their shortcomings, they are motivated to expend extra effort in the hope of improving their skills. Excerpts 188 and 189 provide perfect examples of what Ushioda (2001, p. 120) calls "effective motivational thinking", whereby learners' positive beliefs in their ability to overcome weaknesses sustain their interest in learning the language.

> Excerpt 188 (Beáta, p. 20)
> If I wanted to evaluate my efforts in English, I would say that I have improved. I can feel that there are a lot of shortcomings, but somehow it does not distress me – on the contrary – it encourages me to work harder.

> Excerpt 189 (Géza, p. 12)
> I think my knowledge has come to a standstill after quite a rapid development. Now I only have time to broaden my vocabulary hoping that my terribly halting, slow speech will become fluent. … My reading is also slow, but I would like to change it with the help of books.

Naturally, such a positive attitude towards learning English and the pursuit of specific goals had their influence on the whole atmosphere of the classroom. The students were active participants of the classes, they were making good progress, and slowly, even the shyer ones joined in various activities. It is no wonder that their enthusiasm also motivated me and made it really enjoyable to work with them. The following quotes from my own diary illustrate how I felt about it:

> Excerpt 190 (Teacher's diary, p. 17)
> This was a good lesson: students had to speak a lot. We discussed jobs and who should be
> paid most. Students had to give reasons and everybody could contribute. Some were eager to say something (Karcsi, Zsófi, and even Máté wanted to contribute). There was a lot of English used.
> Excerpt 191 (Teacher's diary, p. 24)
> It was a most wonderful lesson today. … They were really eager to express their opinion. Klára, Béla, Kitti (!) and Karcsi spoke most of the time and also Judit. But then others joined in: Melinda, Zsófi, Franciska, and even Emese said something. We also took notes of new vocabulary. I found it most enjoyable. They have never spoken so much in English!

Besides my evaluation, the students' development can also be confirmed by language proficiency measures administered in years 10 and 11. The first such test was a standardised achievement test battery complied for secondary school students at the age of 16 as a basic-level examination. The tasks were designed to cover level A2 and, partially, level B1 of the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001). A detailed description of the test battery can be found in section 4.3.1.

The students took the test twice in year 10: first in September 2003 and then in April 2004, which made it possible for me to trace the improvement of their English language

skills. Their achievement in the different components of the test was also compared to the results of a nation-wide survey administered to a representative sample of year-10 learners in the 2002-2003 academic year (Józsa, 2003; Nikolov, 2003). The results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14
Results of the Basic-level exam in year 10

Paper	September 2003	April 2004	Grammar schools
Reading	56.6%*	68.1%	51.6%
Listening	88.7%	93.1%	87.3%
Writing	32.8%	65.2%	52.0%
Written test total	55.3%	72.6%	63.5%
Oral exam	83.3%	91.5%	no data

*Note: Scores above 60% represent level A2 of the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001)

As can be seen in Table 14, the students' English improved considerably during year 10. Although the figures show a development in all four skills, an especially noticeable change could be witnessed in their reading and writing skills. While in September the mean score was below 60% on both components, towards the end of the year scores in reading reached 68.1%, and in writing 65.2%. Nevertheless, the most outstanding results were the 93.1% score on the listening paper and the 91.5% score in the oral exam in April 2004.

Besides mean scores, the group's development can also be assessed by individual achievements. Considering the written test, in September only six students out of 16 (37.5%) obtained results above 60% placing them at level A2 of the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001). By the end of the year, however, their number had risen to 14 (87.5%). Even though Noémi and Emese were still below level A2, they also showed some improvement: Noémi obtained 36% compared to her score of 32% at the first sitting, while Emese's score had risen from 33% to 58%.

Comparisons with other grammar school students is only worth making on the basis of the results produced in April 2004, when the students were in the target age group. As shown in Table 14, the students performed above average in all three skills measured by the battery. Apparently, they excelled in the listening paper, which is probably due to the fact that the tasks were relatively easy (Nikolov, 2003). At the same time, it is remarkable that they achieved 65.2% in writing and 68.1% in reading, while the mean for 16-year-old students was 52.0% and 51.6% in those two skills. My students' total average of 72.6% – compared to the country average of 63.5% – convinced me at the time that their English language skills were developing at a good rate.

This result is presented from a different angle in Figure 3, which shows the distribution of all the surveyed grammar school groups according to their achievement in the three papers of the written exam. As indicated by the red dot, my group's performance was in the upper third.

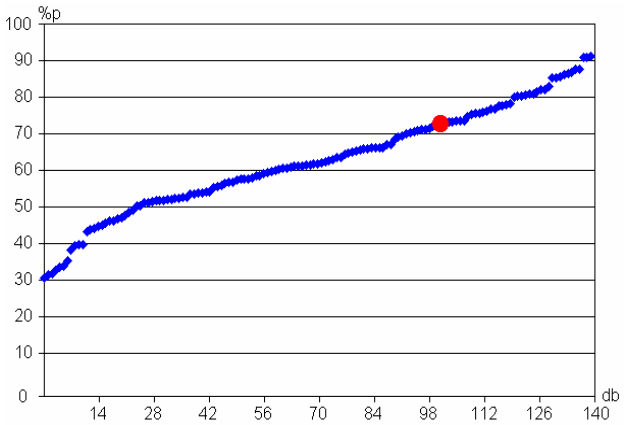

Figure 3 The group's performance on the basic-level written exam compared to other groups[3]

[3] The diagram was made with the help of a software developed by Józsa (2003)

Unfortunately, the groups' oral performance cannot be compared to other schools, as that part of the exam was not organised in such a wide circle. However, the results suggest that students' oral communication was always better, as their performance was very good both at the first and at the second sitting. Each student achieved scores of above 60%, moreover, in April 2004 six of them obtained maximum points. A possible reason for such good results is that the oral component might have been too easy for the participants. This was also suggested by the external rater, who remarked that the students were probably ready for more challenging tasks.

The other language proficiency measure, administered in January 2005, was the written component of a complete school-leaving exam at advanced level, compiled for piloting purposes in year 11. The tasks were designed to cover level B2 of the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001). For a detailed description of the exam papers the reader is referred to section 4.3.3. The students took the test in January 2005, and their achievements were again compared to those of a representative sample. This time, however, the comparison included a wider circle of students, as the only available official analysis could not provide sufficient information about the participants' background (Major & Einhorn, 2005), and there was no separate data of grammar-school students' achievements. The results are shown in Table 15.

As can be seen in the table, this exam yielded more modest results than the basic-level exam in year 10. One possible reason for students' poorer performance is that they were tested too early and many of them were not yet at level B2. Nevertheless, with a mean score of nearly 60%, students' achievement may be considered satisfactory. Interestingly, this time they excelled in the writing tasks with an average score of 73.54%, and all but one student proved to be at the expected level in that skill. As regards the other three papers, the

picture is more varied and there are far broader differences between students' scores. However, when considering individual performances, it is also worthy of mention that nine students out of 16 (56.25%) did score above 60%, and only one student had a result below 40%.

Table 15
Results of the pilot school-leaving exam

Paper	Secondary schools	My students
Reading	35.20%*	53.95%
Language in use	40.76%	51.87%
Listening	41.60%	56.66%
Writing	45.23%	73.54%
Written test total	39.93%	59.01%

*Note: Scores above 60% represent level B2 of the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001)

Although the figures also show that my students wrote the test relatively well compared to other students in their age group, this finding should be interpreted with caution. As mentioned before, the participants of the nation-wide survey were drawn from rather mixed educational backgrounds. In all probability, a comparison with only secondary grammar schools would have revealed a different picture.

To sum up thus far, despite the individual differences between the students, the results of the standardised language proficiency measures administered in years 10 and 11 gave proof of their dynamically developing English language skills. Furthermore, as will be shown in section 8.2, all but two students achieved the desired level (B2) by the time they graduated from school, and most of them did so by the end of year 11. Therefore, their own

views on their development were in line with their objective indicators and also in harmony with their goals.

8.2 How do students' changing goals interact with their motivation?

The findings suggest that the motivating experiences described in 8.1 were closely related to the goals that learners set themselves. As discussed previously in Chapter 5, students appeared to formulate an explicit long-term goal at a rather early stage of their studies: to master the English language. The factors underlying their motivation included instrumental elements in most cases, which ranged from the simple reason of English being a global language to more specific ambitions such as the ability to use the language for intercultural contacts, or having a better position on the job market in the future. Although their motives underwent certain changes over the years, the ultimate aim of mastering the language was always in their mind. As can be seen in their diary entries, they documented their own development in mastery indicators saying what they 'can do' in English.

As students' skills developed, they seemed to recognise their weak points and aimed at perfecting their knowledge by practising those skills. The following excerpts support this assumption:

> Excerpt 192 (Karcsi, p. 13)[4]
> *I plan to work on my grammar in the summer and I'll go to England for 3 weeks and I think it will help too.*

[4] Excerpts printed in *italics* indicate that students wrote the diary entry in English.

Excerpt 193 (Noémi, p. 27)
I'm not satisfied with my English yet, but I think that I have improved since the beginning of the year. I would definitely like to improve my comprehension and speaking skills. I like it when we listen to the tape because that way we practise listening comprehension.

Excerpt 194 (Zsófi, p. 9)
My English is developing, but it isn't what it should be yet. It still should be polished. My vocabulary needs expanding. I will have to read more and watch films. It would be good to go abroad and speak English there.

These quotes also suggest that it is the mastery motive related to such small tasks and specific language skills that sustains motivation and leads to success in the long run. Apparently, students shape their goals accordingly and goal achievement is indicated by their successful completion of the educational task.

An obvious shift could be noticed in students' motivation when they were facing an exam situation. Even if it was just a case of a local test, the immediate aim to pass the exam was a powerful driving force, as evidenced by the following excerpt:

Excerpt 195 (Erika, p. 2)
This year I will have to work really hard, because I would like to sit for the basic internal exam in English. I have chosen the first foreign language, because I don't think that one and a half years of the other [language] have provided enough knowledge. I have been learning English for six years, perhaps I know more.

This inspiration to expend a greater effort intensified when students were working towards a high-stakes external language exam, which was supposed to grant them such privileges as bonus points at university admissions and exemption from language classes for the rest of their studies. Such attitude is illustrated by Excerpts 196 and 197:

Excerpt 196 (Géza, p. 20)
I would like to devote more time to [English]. I would like to develop my lexical knowledge so that it should match my language learning aptitude, and I would like to obtain a booklet certifying advanced level knowledge.

Excerpt 197 (Karcsi, p. 1)
[My knowledge] will increase, and it should increase, as I would like a language exam by the end of the year.

And indeed, students' commitment to improve their knowledge and skills had a positive effect on the learning outcome. This is evidenced by the number of certificates they obtained at various external state language examinations, which is summarised in Table 16.

Table 16
Number of students obtaining certificates of state language exams at level B2

type of exam	by September 2005	by graduation (2006)
Origo	4	4
TELC	4	5
Pitman	2	2
EURO	1	1
Advanced level school-leaving	1	2
Total number of exams	12	14

The table shows that by the beginning of year 12, i.e. September 2005, twelve students out of 16 (75%) had passed a language exam covering level B2 of the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001), and their number rose to 14 (87.5%) by graduation in June 2006. There were only two students who did not sit for any of the external language exams, but chose to take the school-leaving exam at intermediate level. Nevertheless, their achievement can be described as fairly good, as they both obtained scores of 60% or above by that measure.

Comparing this finding with students' aptitude data (see Table 8 in section 5.2.1), it seems likely that in most cases motivation was a better predictor of the learning outcome than language learning aptitude and students' cognitive abilities only indicate that they needed enough time to master the language. This is evidenced by the fact that out of the seven students who scored below the sample mean (61 points) on the HUNLAT (Ottó,

2002), five graduated from school with the same certificate of language proficiency as their peers with higher aptitude scores. Obviously, those students' motivation compensated for the differences in their aptitude.

It is worthy of mention that the language exams represented a turning point in students' language learning career and also divided the group. Four of them decided to take advantage of the opportunity to quit English classes and devote their time and energy to other studies. It might be interesting to note, however, that three of those students took extra classes in Italian, their second foreign language, and eventually passed an external state language exam in it. At the same time, two thirds of the students with exam certificates continued their English studies in year 12, albeit with different aims in mind. Excerpts 198 and 199 provide evidence of high levels of learner autonomy suggesting that those students took responsibility for their own development:

> Excerpt 198 (Zsófi, p. 15)
> I would like to develop further. I don't want to forget the language. English is very important for me, so I would like to devote more time to it.

> Excerpt 199 (Melinda, p. 33)
> Next year, even if I have the exam, I'd like to come to classes partly in order not to forget, partly for pleasure and perhaps develop further. Well, you will definitely meet me next year. ☺

Another finding that came to the fore is that although the language exam was a necessary goal, it was also an unpleasant burden for some of the students. In Excerpt 200, it is expressed rather explicitly that students find it easier to focus on mastery once the pressure of performance fades into the background:

> Excerpt 200 (Kitti, p. 22)
> I would like to go on studying English irrespective of the result. But I feel that if there is no pressure, I am more open and at ease. I think that despite having taken the language exam I still don't have a tidy picture about the language in my head. And I would like to do something about it.

On the other hand, a good exam result might fuel students' motivation. It helps them realise that they have acquired a great deal of knowledge and this in turn strengthens their ultimate goal of mastering the language. This interaction between instrumental and mastery motives is evidenced by Excerpts 201 and 202, suggesting that in such cases students are willing to devote extra energy in order to achieve that goal:

> Excerpt 201 (Benjámin, p. 22)
> I think that the ultimate aim of learning a language is not passing an exam but knowing the language itself. I would like to continue my English studies and it takes practice. It motivates me these days that I am very good at reading and listening comprehension (TV programmes, games).

> Excerpt 202 (Klára, p. 29)
> Right after the exam I felt that it took me closer to English. I experienced a feeling of success, but it motivates me to try and reach a higher level. And I am trying! ☺ Never have I thought for a second of not coming to English classes next year. I consider it ill 'tactics' decision to quit the language. I would like to develop in every field next year and I'm looking forward to the reading circle.

Clearly, the above findings give proof of students' mastery motivation defined by Ames (1992a), Pintrich (2000a, b), and Pintrich and Schunk (1996), among others (discussed in sections 2.1 and 2.2.3). Apparently, for most students a language exam is merely a phase in their studies, perhaps a confirmation of their developing skills, whereas the ultimate aim is to master the language. And indeed, those who continued their studies were willing to expend further energy in order to perfect their knowledge and skills even in the final year of the secondary school, and besides, they appeared to find pleasure in the very act of learning English.

However, it is also interesting to examine some of those students who were not found to pursue mastery goals. Two examples are Erika and Franciska, who seem to represent learners with a predominantly performance orientation. Although they both reported finding pleasure in learning English, they also emphasised the extrinsic value of exams. Apparently,

Franciska's primary goal was to obtain a certificate of state language exam at level B2, thus ensuring bonus points at university admission. This can be concluded from the fact that she discontinued her English studies after the exam and concentrated on the other subjects of the school-leaving exam.

The other case was different, as Erika never sat for an external language exam which granted exemption from visiting classes. Although she spoke favourably of classroom activities and felt that she was making progress, test results and grades seemed to play an important role in her motivation. It is apparent from such responses as "My test was a fiasco," "I was afraid that the test would be difficult," and "I got a 5 on the test on Friday and it made me very happy" that a demonstration of ability was indeed important for her. However, such extrinsic motivation could not compensate for her relatively low language learning aptitude (see 5.2.1 in Chapter 5) and, as a result, she became a less successful language learner than most of her peers.

8.3 Discussion

A clear pattern seems to emerge from the findings suggesting an interaction between students' proficiency level, their motivating experiences about learning English and the goals that they set themselves at various stages of the learning process. Apparently, as their L2 competencies improve, novel experiences bring them satisfaction, which in turn directs them towards more specific short-term goals.

The findings reveal that students have rather high expectations already at the outset and all of them seem to work towards the same ultimate goal: to master the English language. In the case of institutionalised learning, such a long-term goal is usually

accompanied by more specific incentives like passing various exams and obtaining a certificate of the state language exam, for example. Once students reach those immediate targets, however, their attention is refocused on the original aim. Furthermore, the success of the exams enhances their aspiration for higher levels of knowledge. Success as a motive seems to be a recurring theme in this dissertation, which confirms Oxford and Shearin's (1994) claim that past success motivates students to work towards more ambitious goals and engage in more challenging tasks.

A similar change can be observed in the L2-related experiences that influence students' motivation. At an early stage, their actions are inspired by the pleasurable sensation caused by using the language in simple real-life situations or establishing intercultural contact. As their proficiency increases, however, their feelings of success are also evoked by the recognition of their own progress. The fact that students are aware of their developing knowledge and skills strengthens the mastery goal and, in turn, shapes their intrinsic motivation. This is in line with Ushioda (2001), who has revealed a regular pattern in the evolution of effective motivational thinking. Viewing motivation from a temporal perspective, she assumes that goal-directed motivation evolves slowly in the course of the learning process. The findings also lend support to the views expressed by Ushioda (1996) and Dörnyei (2000) concerning the dynamic nature of motivation. Students' engagement in the L2 learning process is indeed determined by the continuous ebb and flow of their motivation, which is subject to various internal and external factors.

It follows from the above discussion that there was a clear trend in the change of students' motives over the four years of the investigation. At the beginning they were inspired by general instrumental motives such as passing an exam or using English in real-life situations. These were gradually replaced by more specific mastery motives eventually

leading to the attainment of the general goal, which, however, was no longer a prime goal. Instead, the emphasis had shifted to development, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of students stayed in the class even after they had passed the desired exam and gained exemption from attending classes. Although this pattern reveals an interaction between instrumental and mastery motives, it also suggests that mastery motivation is a better predictor of the learning outcome. This confirms Ramage's (1990) findings, according to which students who continue their L2 studies tend to be mastery oriented, as opposed to their discontinuing peers with a primarily instrumental orientation.

At this point, mention should be made of the beneficial effects of the above desrcibed motivational characteristics on the teacher's motivation, which suggests a constant interaction of the various motivational factors discussed in this dissertation. Students' motivated behaviour in my classes, their reflections expressed in their diaries, and their satisfactory progress over the years provided invaluable feedback on my instructional practice and confirmed my beliefs about L2 teaching. I often experienced a feeling of success with these students, which strengthened my sense of self-efficacy and, consequently, greatly enhanced my intrinsic motivation to teach. My enthusiasm was undoubtedly perceived by the students and, as discussed in Chapter 7, this in turn further increased their motivation. These findings are consistent with the proposition that teachers can only inspire their students if they are sufficiently motivated themselves (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Medgyes, 1994, 1997; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

The above analyses also shed new light on Dörnyei's (1994) conceptualisation of L2 learning motivation as a multilevel construct (discussed in section 2.2.4.1). On the one hand, students' motivation seems to be rather stable at the language and the learner levels. On the other hand, the findings suggest that the temporal dimension is apparent at the learning

situation level exerting its influence primarily on course-specific motivational components. This means that with the development of students' L2 mastery, their expectancy of success and their satisfaction concerning the learning outcome also undergo certain changes and shape their mastery motivation. However, as shown in Chapter 7, these changes occur in interaction with the motivational influences of the learning environment.

The motivational changes discussed in this chapter suggest that Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) process model of L2 learning motivation is applicable to the whole course rather than to the various tasks carried out over the years. The boundaries of the different phases described in the model may be established as follows. The pre-actional stage in an educational context refers to the beginning of the learning process, when students set general aims determined by their beliefs about language learning, as illustrated by the following comments: "It is important to speak foreign languages," "English is understood all over the world," and "I will need it in the future." The actional stage covers the longest period, as it spans practically the whole course running until the students take the school-leaving exam or another exam granting a certificate of equal currency. During this phase, learners pursue different goals, undertake various tasks, and learn to apply the necessary learning strategies in order to reach their aims. Phrased differently, the motivational factors discussed in Chapters 5–7 come into force at this stage. In the post-actional phase, students evaluate the learning outcome and plan their further engagement in the L2 learning process. As a result of this retrospection, some students may decide to discontinue their studies. Successful learners, however, either aim at higher levels of proficiency and work towards mastering the language or direct their energy to a new FL. Thus motivation to study EFL turns into motivation to learn an L3.

8.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore the temporal aspect of L2 learning motivation. Based on the qualitative data obtained from students' self-report diaries and their achievements in standardised proficiency measures, I analysed the interaction between learners' L2-related motivating experiences and the development in their goal setting over the years. Further to this, I examined the motivational changes on the three levels proposed by Dörnyei (1994) and also demonstrated how the process model of L2 learning motivation (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998) applies to an educational context. The main findings of the investigation can be summarised as follows.

As regards the changes in students' motivation, annual cycles can be observed. At the beginning of their studies, their motivation is undoubtedly enhanced by their experiences about L2 learning and use. As their level of proficiency increases over the years, these motivating experiences develop and this development is reflected in the ongoing changes in their goals. These reflections are on mastering small steps towards the long-term goal: to acquire L2 proficiency. This involves working towards various aims in the course of their studies always focusing on immediate incentives such as understanding certain language points, mastering a task, or passing an important exam, for example. On achieving these sub-goals, they experience a feeling of success, which encourages them to channel their energies into pursuing more ambitious goals. Alternatively expressed, students become highly motivated if they experience that they are making progress. This finding lends support to Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt and Shohamy's (2001) claim, according to which students' motivation increases if their needs are met.

What appears to be a finding of particular importance is that the participants of this study proved to be successful language learners, and in most cases motivation proved to be a better predictor of success than language learning aptitude. Although the notion of success might carry different meanings for different individuals in the group, most students were found to have become autonomous learners who had developed a considerable degree of self-awareness over the years. As a result, almost all of them had achieved the desired level of English language proficiency by the time they graduated from secondary school. Moreover, the majority continued their studies even after they had gained exemption from attending classes, thus giving proof of their mastery motivation. In addition, I assume that this result also qualifies the teaching methods. Such obviously good practice is discussed by Syed (2001), who has proved that good quality teaching maintains learners' interest.

It should be emphasised that the time factor was found to exert its effect on L2 learning motivation at the learning situation level (Dörnyei, 1994), and this finding conveys an important message for teachers. Their responsibility is highlighted again, as they play a pivotal role in shaping their students' motivational thinking by creating a stimulating environment where they have a good chance to attain their goals. In agreement with Meece (1994), I believe that teachers' instructional strategies greatly influence students' motivation. Good practice involves scaffolding their learning by encouraging active participation in the learning process and assigning small-scale, achievable tasks so that they can take meaningful mastery steps toward their ultimate aim.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

The dissertation was concerned with secondary-school students' motivation to learn English. My aim was to arrive at a better understanding of the various motivational influences in institutionalised L2 learning and to examine the relevance of the different theories described in motivation literature to everyday teaching processes. My investigations focused on (1) the interaction between the various classroom-related motivational factors; (2) the evolution of students' motivational thinking over the years; and (3) the role of the teacher in shaping learners' motivation. To address these issues, I conducted participant research involving a group of my own students at the secondary grammar school where I am a practising teacher of EFL.

A unique feature of the study is that it was a longitudinal investigation lasting for four years, thus making it possible for the researcher to trace the continuous ebb and flow of students' motivation. Moreover, the use of self-report qualitative data allowed the examination of the investigated issue from an emic perspective. Each phase of the data collection procedure was guided by a specific theme. The first phase provided information about students' self-conceptions as language learners and their language learning aptitude. The second phase focused on the classroom milieu exploring actual teaching practices and their effect on motivation. Phase 3 examined students' EFL development and the changes that their increasing level of proficiency caused in their orientation. Finally, the fourth phase looked into the evolution of mastery motives. Such systematic data gathering yielded a massive amount of verbal data, which I analysed continuously applying qualitative methods.

9.1 Summary of findings

Four primary research questions were formulated in the course of the investigation. The aim of the first research question was (1) to analyse students' conceptualisations of success in learning English, (2) to show how their beliefs about L2 learning influenced their motivation, and (3) to find out how pervasive foreign language anxiety was in the group. The research was inspired by a study conducted by Williams and Burden (1999) and the findings modified their categorisation of success in learning an L2. Rather than highlighting performance at school and the importance of good exam results, my students defined success as the ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations. They tended to attribute internal reasons such as effort, attitude, and motivation for their successes and failures and they assessed their development on the basis of feedback from the teacher as well as by their self-perception of competence. Several students proved to have developed an internal measure of success and compared their performance to their own abilities. Success emerged as an influential motive, a finding which was also confirmed in later phases of the research.

Furthermore, it was found that students had a positive self-concept and were generally optimistic and confident about their development. It is an important finding of the study that they were aware of the differences between learning an L2 and other subjects at school. On the one hand, there appeared to be differences between the instructional strategies that their teachers employed. While in certain classes the students were expected to absorb declarative knowledge, in L2 classes the main emphasis was on procedural knowledge and skills development. On the other hand, there were differences between learners' goal setting. In the case of most subjects only part of the students wished to acquire higher levels of knowledge, whereas in L2 classes everybody pursued the same goal: to develop

communicative competence including social skills. Considering English, this goal was expressed more explicitly, in all probability because of its privileged status as a global language.

As regards foreign language anxiety, although the findings unveiled occasional feelings of apprehension, in most cases it could be defined as facilitating anxiety given the fact that it acted as a motivational factor, a driving force to achieve better results. It should be mentioned that one student was found to suffer from debilitating anxiety, however, in her case it turned out to be a character trait. On the whole, it is apparent from the results that anxiety was not pervasive amongst the students. Even the most anxiety provoking situation – writing tests – was put in a favourable light. This was partly because the tasks were considered manageable, thus posing the right level of challenge, and partly because these tests measured procedural knowledge allowing students to keep track of their own progress.

The second research question examined the motivational influence of the teaching material through an analysis of students' perceptions of various task types and working modes. Although the students adopted a favourable attitude towards a wide range of classroom activities, the findings brought certain individual differences to the surface, as students assessed the tasks in light of the goals that they were pursuing. Performance-oriented students appreciated the utility of classroom activities that gave them opportunities to practice their skills, while their peers with predominantly learning goals were motivated by appropriate cognitive challenges. They preferred the discovery approach to the tasks, which allowed them to work out solutions and make use of their creativity. Apparently, successful completion of the task enhanced their intrinsic motivation.

It is an interesting finding of the study that authentic material which was not prescribed by the curriculum aroused students' interest and triggered engagement in the

given activity. Viewed from the students' perspective, such materials represented 'real' English, where the L2 was a vehicle of conveying specific content knowledge.

As for students' perceptions of different working modes, co-operative techniques were found to be more motivating for several reasons. Firstly, students were involved in the learning process and everybody was expected to contribute to the outcome to the best of their knowledge, which fostered team spirit. Secondly, collaboration in pairs or in small groups reduced stress and alleviated feelings of anxiety; and thirdly, such techniques developed students' socio-linguistic competence as well.

The third research question focussed on the climate of the classroom and my aim was to identify various teacher-related and group specific motivational characteristics and examine their interaction by looking into actual classroom practices. My investigations found that the students had a clear understanding of the learning process and effective classroom management. As their attitudes towards different school subjects were greatly influenced by their goals, they expected the learning environment to help them achieve those goals. They needed a supportive atmosphere which was characterised by consistent work, well-paced lessons, discipline, and also peer co-operation. Consistent with the findings to the second research question, students' mastery motive proved to enhance their cognitive engagement and the development of highly regulated learning strategies.

It is a particularly important finding of the study that students appeared to be capable of assessing and exercising control over their learning. A basic conflict was unveiled caused by the difference between students' and teachers' conceptualisations of knowledge and the learning process. It was found that students considered understanding as the key to development and, consequently, they failed to see the purpose of rote learning and declarative knowledge. On the other hand, the English class surfaced as a positive example,

where procedural knowledge was given priority and where students' expectations were met. The fact that their goals, the classroom tasks, and their progress were in harmony apparently fostered their motivation. All these findings suggest that the participants of the study reported on in this dissertation became autonomous learners who took responsibility for their own development.

The fourth research question addressed a current issue in L2 learning research, as it dealt with the temporal dimension of motivation by examining what influence students' developing proficiency and the changes in their goal setting exerted on their motivation. The findings revealed an interaction between students' proficiency level, their motivating experiences, and the goals that they pursued at various stages of the L2 learning process. The changes in their motivational behaviour indicated a discernible trend roughly corresponding to annual cycles. It was found that at an early stage they were mostly inspired by positive L2-related experiences and instrumental motives. Over the years, however, these were complemented by mastery motives, as students set themselves various short-term goals. By attaining these sub-goals they became aware of their progress, which strengthened their mastery goal. This in turn enhanced their intrinsic motivation and had a positive effect on the learning outcome. Consequently, students achieved the original goal of passing a high-stakes language exam, which had lost its importance by that time, as their attention was transferred to mastery development. These findings give support to the views in the literature that motivation is a dynamic concept and students' motivational thinking evolves over time.

Most importantly, the study modified Dörnyei's (1994) concept of motivation as a static construct. It was found that the temporal dimension was apparent on the learning situation level affecting course-specific motivational variables. Furthermore, the present investigations revealed that the process model of L2 motivation proposed by Dörnyei and

Ottó (1998) can be applied to an institutionalised setting, where the different phases of the motivational process described in the model correspond to the various stages of the learning process.

9.2 Limitations of the study

Before drawing any conclusions, it is necessary to mention the limitations of the present study. Perhaps the most serious limitations lie in the research design, particularly in the sample size and the use of self-report data collection instruments. The small number of participants (n=16) does not allow the generalisation of the findings, neither was it the primary aim of my investigations. On the contrary, I intended to examine the relevance of the literature to everyday teaching practices in one particular institution. Nevertheless, the dissertation provides sufficient details and a thick description necessary for the reader to judge the transferability of the results.

Potential problems associated with self-report instruments include self-deception, subject expectancy, and fatigue among others. Yet, such data collection techniques are widely used in qualitative research, as they are the most effective means to gain insights into students' actual thoughts and feelings during the learning process. As regards the study I conducted, I ensured that the findings were dependable by using member checks during the data gathering procedures and peer debriefing during the analysis phases. Furthermore, credibility was enhanced by careful triangulation of the data sources and prolonged engagement of the participants. Paradoxically, this latter measure might also be considered a hazard, as longitudinal investigations often face the problem of unmotivated respondents and fatigue effects. To minimise such negative influences and also to motivate my students to

give their reflections continuously besides their everyday obligations, I turned their diaries into dialogue journals by responding to their entries immediately. Moreover, I wrote my answers in English, thus providing them with additional language practice. To enhance the trustworthiness of students' responses, I preserved anonymity throughout the research and quoted them under false names in the dissertation.

Another obvious limitation is related to the researcher's status in this study. One of the drawbacks of participant research is that it might yield distorted data and biased interpretations. However, I believe that the fact that the participants were my own students was to the benefit of the research, as my familiarity with their learning environment resulted in a deeper understanding of their motives and actions. Besides, my frequent encounters with the students and the prolonged data gathering led to a closer contact between the teacher researcher and learners, thus creating an atmosphere of trust. Naturally, I was perfectly aware that such a situation was likely to have a powerful effect on the students' motivation. Yet again, I considered it an advantage, as it served the very purpose of the study: to explore motivational influences in an educational context. Nevertheless, to counterbalance for possible biased interpretations, external observers were involved in the research and students' language development was documented by the results of standardised proficiency measures.

In sum, although every effort was made to avoid potential pitfalls that are characteristic of qualitative investigations, further research is warranted to test the transferability of the findings. It would be desirable to extend the examination by involving a larger population, preferably from different educational backgrounds. Furthermore, it would be necessary to tap practising teachers' views and thus examine the dynamic nature of L2 learning motivation from various perspectives and angles.

9.3 Pedagogical implications

Despite the limitations of the study, its findings carry important pedagogical implications for practising L2 teachers and teacher educators alike. The most important message is that teachers indeed play a pivotal role in shaping their students' motivational thinking over the years and it is their responsibility to create a learning environment which is sensitive to learners' needs. This study has shown that secondary-school students place particular emphasis on goal achievement and thus their behaviour in the classroom is primarily directed by their immediate incentives. Moreover, their self-reports gave evidence that success is a salient motive. Therefore it is necessary to give students grounds for satisfaction by assigning manageable tasks that bear appropriate levels of challenge and by engaging them in activities that foster the development of their linguistic as well as cognitive and social skills.

Students' opinions voiced in the present investigation indicate that they have a clear understanding of the learning process and are rather critical of outdated classroom procedures. Teachers' ineffective methods and insufficient rapport with learners are mentioned among the negative influences that might lead to demotivation in the long run. To avoid such a situation, teachers can employ motivating instructional strategies and use inspiring teaching materials. Furthermore, it is desirable to strike a sensible balance between declarative and procedural knowledge and to improve students' reasoning skills by involving them in the learning process. Consequently, teachers can shift the emphasis from demonstrating knowledge to learning, thus creating a supportive atmosphere in the L2 class. Effective classroom management enhances students' motivation, which ultimately has a positive impact on the learning outcome.

In sum, progress is best achieved in a co-operative learning environment where students' needs and expectations are taken into consideration. In such circumstances, students are likely to become intrinsically motivated, they set themselves learning goals and rather than being passive recipients of knowledge, they actively participate in the learning process.

Besides addressing practising L2 teachers, the study also conveys useful messages for teacher educators. It implies that it is necessary to put special emphasis on teachers' educational philosophy and their instructional choices. Therefore, when designing teacher development courses, teacher educators may want to include practical guidance. In other words, they may want to advise novice teachers on what pedagogical practices to follow so that they can arouse and maintain their students' motivation and scaffold the learning process.

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Appendix A

Interview questions used by Williams and Burden (1999)

1. Do you like French?
2. What do you like the most? The least?
3. Do you want to do well in French? Why? Why not?
4. How well do you think you are doing?
5. Give me an example of when you did well.
6. When you do well, what are the main reasons?
7. Is doing well up to you or someone else?
8. Do you ever not do well?
9. Give me an example of when you did not do well.
10. When you do not do well, what are the main reasons?
11. Is this because of you or someone else?
12. What do you have to do to do well in French?
13. How can you tell how well you are doing?

Key questions asked in the present study

1. Szereted az angolt?
2. Mit szeretsz legjobban? És legkevésbé?
3. Szeretnéd, ha jól menne az angol? Miért? Miért nem?
4. Szerinted mennyire megy neked jól?
5. Mondj egy példát arra, amikor sikerélményed volt.
6. Amikor jól megy, annak mi az oka?
7. Tőled függ, hogy jól megy-e, vagy rajtad kívülálló tényezőtől?
8. Előfordul, hogy nem megy jól?
9. Mondj egy példát arra, amikor valami nem sikerült.
10. Amikor nem megy jól, annak mi az oka?
11. Ez tőled függ, vagy rajtad kívülálló tényezőtől?
12. Milyen tanácsot adnál annak, aki szeretne jól tudni angolul?
13. Mi alapján tudod megítélni, hogy jól megy-e neked az angol?

Appendix B

Belief questionnaire (Sheorey, 2007)

Vélemény a nyelvtanulásról

1. Más tanulókkal (barátokkal, osztálytársakkal, stb.) összehasonlítva milyennek ítéled meg globális angoltudásodat egy hatfokú skálán?

Gyenge					kiváló
1	2	3	4	5	6

2. Mi a véleményed az angoltanulásról? (Kérem, csak egy választ jelölj be)

   1) _____ nagyon érdekes
   2) _____ kicsit érdekes
   3) _____ érdekes
   4) _____ olyan érdekes, mint más tantárgyak
   5) _____ nem érdekes
   6) _____ Nincs véleményem / Nem tudom

3. Kérlek, fejezd be a következő mondatot: „Azért tanulok angolul, mert, _____
   _____
   _____

Vélemény a nyelvtanulásról – felmérés

Kitöltési útmutató: Az alábbiakban véleményeket fogsz olvasni az idegen nyelv, például az angol tanulásáról. Mindegyik állítást 1-5-ig terjedő számsor követ, a számok jelentése pedig a következő:

az „1” azt jelenti, hogy egyáltalán nem értesz egyet az állítással,
a „2” azt jelenti, hogy nem igazán értesz egyet az állítással,
a „3” azt jelenti, hogy nem tudod eldönteni,
a „4” azt jelenti, hogy többnyire egyetértesz az állítással,
az „5” azt jelenti, hogy teljesen egyetértesz az állítással.

Miután elolvastad az állításokat, kérlek, karikázd be azt a számot (1, 2, 3, 4 vagy 5), amelyik kifejezi a véleményedet. Nincsenek helyes, illetve helytelen válaszok.

Személyes véleményedre vagyok kíváncsi, kérlek, válaszolj őszintén.

1. A gyerekek könnyebben tanulnak idegen nyelveket, mint a felnőttek.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Vannak olyanok, akiknek jó nyelvérzékük van.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Vannak könnyebben és nehezebben tanulható nyelvek.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Nyelvtanulás szempontjából az angol _____ .(Válassz az alábbiak közül, és karikázd be a megfelelő számot): 1 = nagyon nehéz nyelv 2 = nehéz nyelv 3 = közepes nehézségű 4 = könnyű nyelv 5 = nagyon könnyű nyelv	1	2	3	4	5
5. Szerintem jól meg fogok tanulni angolul.	1	2	3	4	5
6. A magyarok könnyen tanulnak idegen nyelveket.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Fontos szép kiejtéssel beszélni az angolt.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Ahhoz, hogy jól beszéljek angolul, ismernem kell az angolszász népek kultúráját.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Jobb meg sem szólalni, amíg az ember nem tud helyesen beszélni angolul.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Könnyebb nyelvet tanulni, ha az ember már beszél egy másik idegen nyelvet.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Akinek jól megy a matematika és a reál tárgyak, annak nem mennek jól az idegen nyelvek.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Legjobb nyelvterületen tanulni angolul (pl. Angliában, az Egyesült Államokban, Kanadában, stb.)	1	2	3	4	5
13. Szívesen gyakorlok olyanokkal, akik jól beszélnek angolul (anyanyelvi beszélőkkel és/vagy magyarokkal).	1	2	3	4	5
14. Helyes dolog találgatni egy ismeretlen szó jelentését.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Ha valaki napi egy órát szánna az angol nyelv tanulására, mennyi idő alatt beszélne folyékonyan? (Válassz az alábbiak közül, és karikázd be a megfelelő számot): 1 = kevesebb, mint egy év 2 = 1-2 év 3 = 3-5 év 4 = 5-10 év 5 = Napi egy óra tanulással nem lehet megtanulni angolul.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Szerintem nekem jó nyelvérzékem van.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Az angoltanulásnál az a legfontosabb, hogy sok szót tanuljunk.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Az angoltanulás során fontos sokat ismételni és gyakorolni.	1	2	3	4	5
19. A lányok jobb nyelvtanulók, mint a fiúk.	1	2	3	4	5
20. A magyar diákok szerint fontos jól tudni angolul.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Könnyedén beszélek angolul másokkal.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Ha az elején megengedik, hogy hibázz, később nehéz lesz megszabadulni a hibáktól.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Az angoltanulásnál a legfontosabb a nyelvtan tanulása.	1	2	3	4	5

24. Azért szeretnék megtanulni angolul, hogy megismerkedhessek angol anyanyelvűekkel (amerikaiakkal, angolokkal, stb.)	1	2	3	4	5
25. Könnyebb beszélni angolul, mint megérteni a beszélt vagy írott nyelvet.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Fontos magnóval gyakorolni.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Más angolt (vagy egyéb idegen nyelvet) tanulni, mint a többi tantárgyat.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Az angoltanulás legfontosabb eleme a fordítás magyarról angolra.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Ha jól megtanulok angolul, nagyobb lehetőségem lesz jó állást szerezni.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Azok, akik több nyelvet beszélnek, nagyon okosak.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Szeretnék jól megtanulni angolul.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Szeretnék angolul beszélő barátokat szerezni.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Mindenki meg tud tanulni egy idegen nyelvet.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Könnyebb angolul írni és olvasni, mint beszélni vagy megérteni.	1	2	3	4	5
35. A nyelvtanulás során sokat kell magolni.	1	2	3	4	5

Köszönöm, hogy kitöltötted a kérdőívet. Kérlek, írd ide, ha bármilyen megjegyzésed van a kérdésekkel kapcsolatban.

Appendix C

Proficiency test – oral examination

Task 1

Questions asked by the examiner:

1. What's your name?
2. Could you spell your surname, please?
3. How old are you?
4. What's your favourite school subject?
5. What subject do you dislike, if any?
6. What's your favourite food?
7. What are your hobbies?
8. How many sisters or brothers do you have?
9. What does your (older) sister/brother do?
10. What pets do you have?
11. What TV programmes do you watch?
12. How often do you do sports?

Task 2

Here are six pictures. Choose one of them and talk about it.

Task 3

Choose 3 of these 6 situations, then we will act them out.

1) Your friend is coming to visit you. Give him/her directions from the nearest station or bus stop to your home.
2) Tonight you would like to go out with your friend. Ask about the place, the time and where to meet.
3) You would like to find out about trains to London. Ask at the ticket office about the times and the price.
4) You would like to cook something nice with your friend. Discuss what you like or dislike and why.
5) You want to travel abroad for two weeks, so you go to a travel agency. Ask the travel agent about places, times and prices.
6) You would like to buy a new pair of jeans at a shop. Ask about makes, sizes, colours and prices.

Appendix D/1

Sample pages from students' diaries

2004. márc. 08.

Dear Our Diary!

I am very happy because I found a new pen friend... (an American).
My father's cousin has an American wife, and now they have a baby... So I wrote them a "Congratulations" card... in English, because I wanted to be ~~gentil~~ friendly, and I wanted to practising my English :) I send my email address too. Few days later, I received Jessica's (the American wife) mail. She wrote a lot, and I am very, very happy, because I understood whole the letter. I think she didn't write me a difficult letter, but it was long... :) So we are pen friend now!

That's great, Klaudia. I think is a wonderful idea to have a pen-friend, if you like writing letters. It's good practice and also

enjoyable.
a chance
one day?

Remélem k
ment ő is kén
megismerhetn

2004. márc. 25.
Dear Our D

Az alapvizsgák
gondoltam, k
keresztül az
fogok izgulni
el nagyon.
franciából és
vizsgázni, és
fáj a fejem.
vizsga példái
oldunk meg
is, ami szerin
legjobb módj
van vizsgázni

Sample pages from students' diaries (continued)

2004. 06. 10.

Ahogy azt már említettem a hétfői ~~beszéd~~ beszélgetésünk alkalmával, egészen nyilvánvalóban ~~észleltem~~ érzékeltem fejlődésemet.

Már az év legelején, konkrétan az év eleji elvégzett felmérésnél feltűnt, hogy a szövegértésem ugrásszerűen megjavult. Szókincsem az év során és tavaly nyáron is egyfolytában javult (ez az órák mellett lehetséges elemül az angol nyelvű számítógépes játékoknak köszönhető). Ez a vonta maga után az írott szövegértésem javulását is, tehát egy igazi angol újságcikket vagy könyvrészletet is képes vagyok megérteni. Az év elején – meg év közben folyamatosan – megtartott igeidőkkel foglalkozó órák is hasznosnak váltak, azt nem merem állítani, hogy ez is * ~~jól meg~~ biztosan megy, de tény, hogy sokkal(?) jobban használom az igeidőket is.

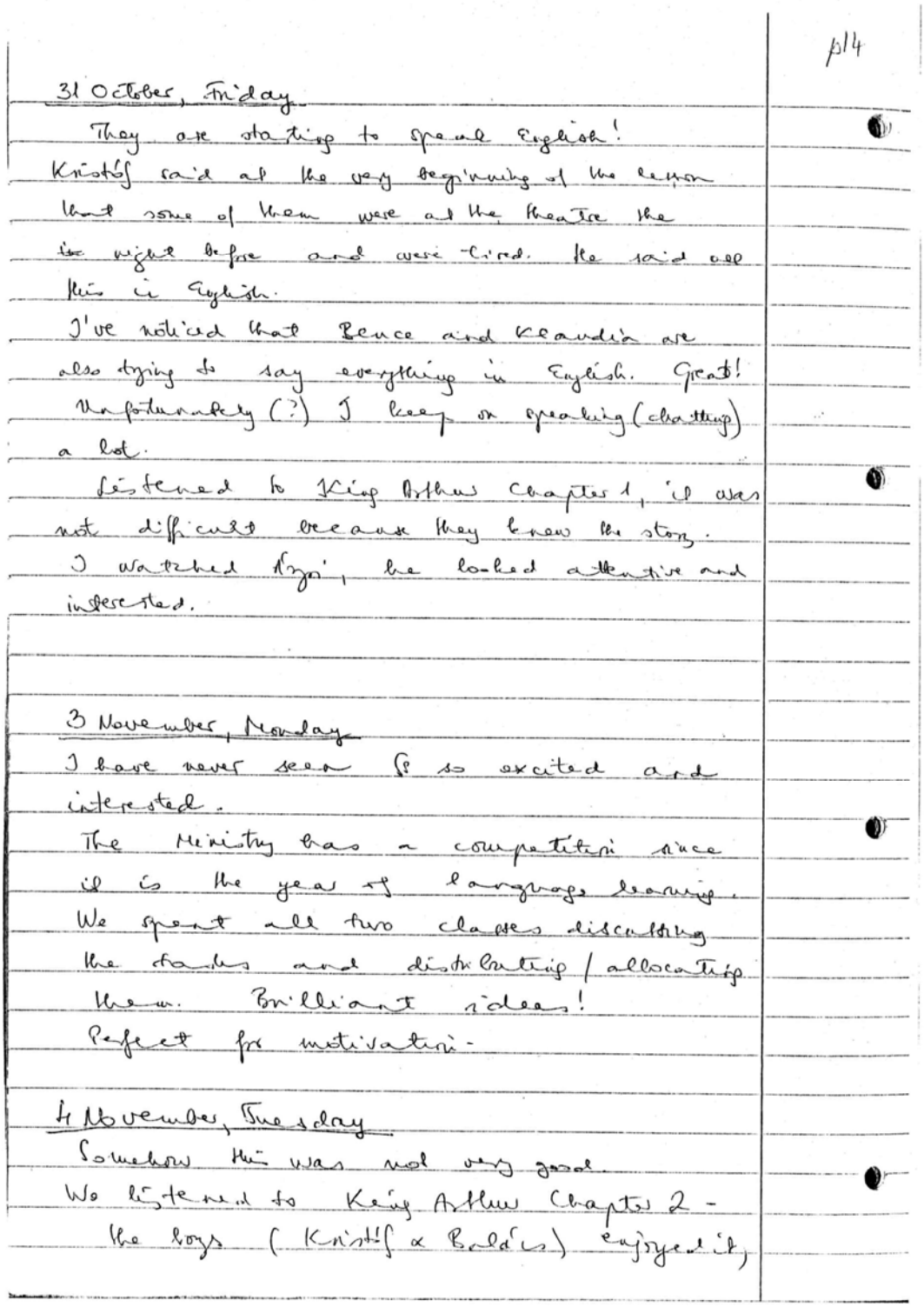
Igyekeztem fejleszteni a beszédkészségemet is, főleg az év végén. Ez azért van, mert a francia osztályozó-vizsgára készülve rájöttem, hogy a vizsga anyagából egyedül a beszéddel vannak nagyobb gondjaim, és ~~a~~ igyekeztem angolon is ez irányban fejlődni. Ebben még nem éreztem igazi nagy változást, de úgy gondolom,

hogy jövőre igyekszem

Egyébként érdekes, ho[…]
viszonyítva a franciát (fo[…]
legalább két évvel le[…]
foron sajátítottam el.
amit angolból tudtam, é[…]
franciából. Persze az el[…]
még nagyobb léptekben t[…]
(Úgy értem, hogy a n[…]
szakasza a leggyorsabb,
a végső csiszolgatás h[…]
tartson) – említettem
az a baj, hogy az e[…]

Végezetül szólok a csop[…]
a kis létszám (és az ál[…]
elsősorban vált, így g[…]
tennénk azt 25 – 30 – a[…]
lódtunk, és idén (?) […]
a javulás jeleit. Az
elsajátítja a szükséges […]
lendülete nem akad m[…]

Sample pages from the teacher's diary



p14

31 October, Friday.

They are starting to speak English!
Kristóf said at the very beginning of the lesson that some of them were at the theatre the the night before and were tired. He said use this in English.
I've noticed that Bence and Klaudia are also trying to say everything in English. Great!
Unfortunately (?) I keep on speaking (chatting) a lot.
Listened to King Arthur Chapter 1, it was not difficult because they know the story.
I watched Ágnes, she looked attentive and interested.

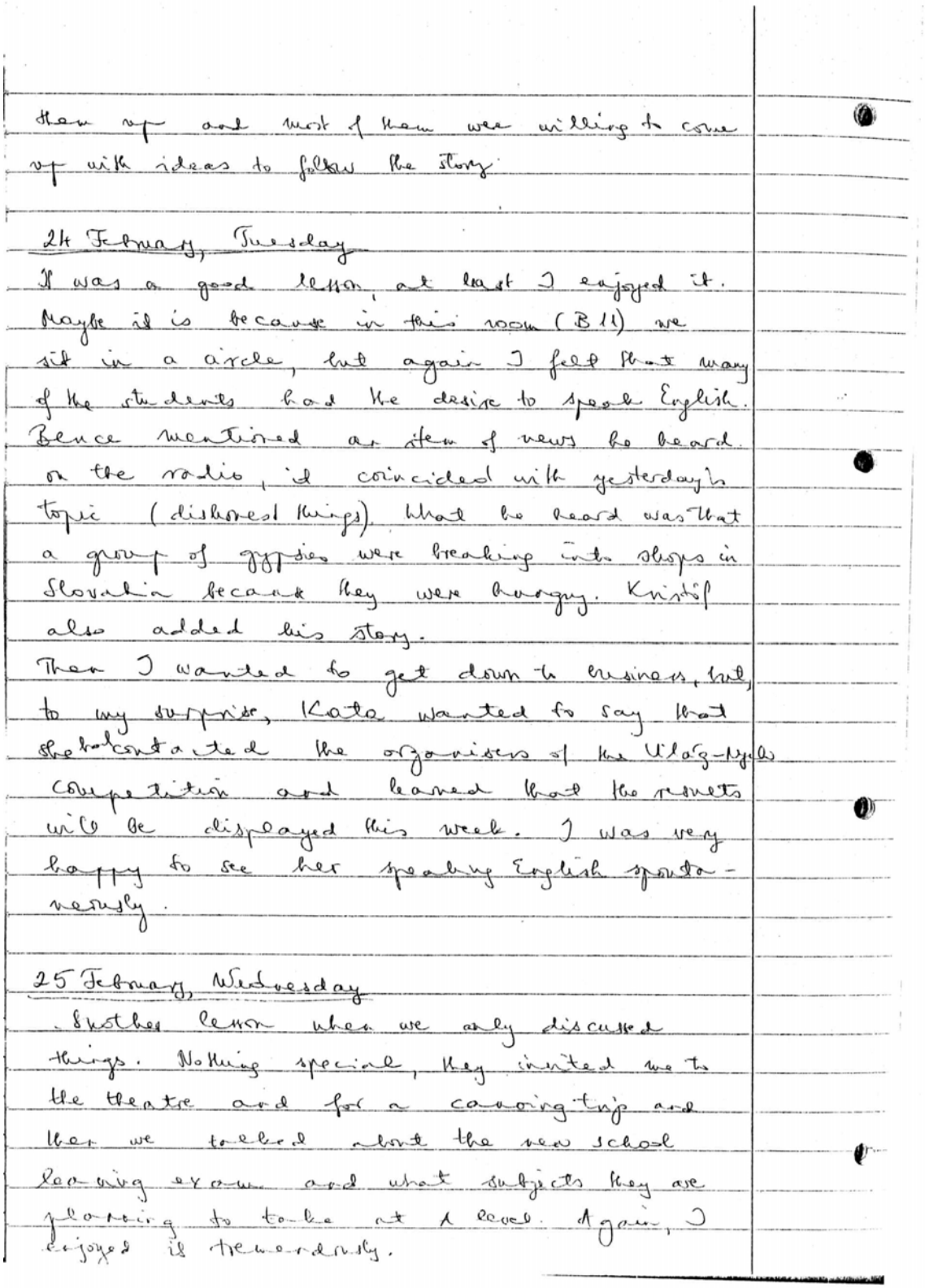
3 November, Monday

I have never seen Ş so excited and interested.
The Ministry has a competition since it is the year of languages learning.
We spent all two classes discussing the tasks and distributing / allocating them. Brilliant ideas!
Perfect for motivation.

4 November, Tuesday

Somehow this was not very good.
We listened to King Arthur Chapter 2 - the boys (Kristóf & Boldi) enjoyed it,

Sample pages from the teacher's diary (continued)



them up and most of them were willing to come up with ideas to follow the story.

24 February, Tuesday

It was a good lesson, at least I enjoyed it. Maybe it is because in this room (B 11) we sit in a circle, but again I felt that many of the students had the desire to speak English. Bence mentioned an item of news he heard on the radio, it coincided with yesterday's topic (dishonest things). What he heard was that a group of gypsies were breaking into shops in Slovakia because they were hungry. Kristóf also added his story.

Then I wanted to get down to business, but, to my surprise, Kata wanted to say that she had contacted the organisers of the Világ-Nyelv competition and learned that the results will be displayed this week. I was very happy to see her speaking English spontaneously.

25 February, Wednesday

Another lesson when we only discussed things. Nothing special, they invited me to the theatre and for a canoeing trip and then we talked about the new school leaving exam and what subjects they are planning to take at A level. Again, I enjoyed it tremendously.

Appendix D/3

Excerpt from the focus group interview

Date: 8 June, 2004
Place: Room B11
Participants: 10. C

Diák 1: … mert azt is fejleszti, a beszédet. Szerintem, legyen sokoldalú. Mindenféle feladat legyen. Tehát, legyen, ahogy gyakoroltuk is alapvizsgán, legyen olvasásos, írásos, értés, beszéd. Mindenféle, hogy meg így legyenek ilyen köretek, mint amiket vettünk, ezek a szövegek, például, vagy egy-egy játék, vagy olyan érdekes feladat, ami miatt, ami tényleg úgy nem ilyen száraz anyaggá teszi az órát, hanem így feldobja, és ami miatt az egyik óra különbözik a másiktól, hogy ne folyjanak össze, szerintem.

Tanár: Az egyik angol óra a másiktól?

Diák 1: Igen. Tehát hogy ha az legyen, hogy ha visszatekintünk például egy napon, akkor így nagyjából el tudjuk mondani, hogy hétfőn ezt csináltuk, kedden ezt, szerdán ezt, és ne az legyen, hogy hát egész héten ezt csináltuk, és akkor így összefolyik az az egy hetünk. Angolóra az, ami így legyen, ami meghatározza a hétfőit, keddit.

Diák 2: Tényleg kell, hogy valami legyen, vagy hogy érdekes legyen az óra, hogy ne az hogy tényleg csak így azért járjon be az ember, mert muszáj, hanem mert szeret odajárni, és emiatt izgalmas legyen.

Tanár: Mitől érdekes egy nyelvi óra?

Diák 2: Hát hogyha van lehetősége mindenkinek kibontakozni, és ehhez pont szükség van arra, hogy mindenki, hogy lehessen beszélni is, írni is, tehát többfajta gyakorlatot végezzünk, mert van aki nem annyira szeret beszélni, de hogyha írni kell, hát hogy abban jobb, de az írásban eleve mindenki valamilyen módon rá van kényszerítve, hogy mégis mondjon valamit, vagy hát magából adjon valamit. Ez a nyelvnek szerintem így az előnye. Most elnézést, hogy eltérek a konkrét órától. Hogy könnyebb, azért könnyebb talán tanulni, mert sokkal sokszínűbben lehet tanulni, mint más dolgokat. Mert sokkal szabadabb mozgásteret biztosít az, hogy nyelvet tanulunk, de hát ez az, hát jó, most nem akarok olyan lenni, de az emberek így kommunikálnak leginkább egymással, tehát a nyelven keresztül, tehát beszélhetünk, mint ahogy magyarul.

Diák 1: Szerintem az is nagyon fontos, hogy milyen a csoport. Mondjuk ezen nem nagyon lehet mit órán változtatni. Szóval, szerintem, kellenek olyan feladatok is, ami tényleg azt segíti, hogy ne az legyen, hogy ő az. akivel angolórára járok, de azt sem tudom, hogy hány testvére van, vagy akármi. Szóval hogy ne az legyen, hogy nem ismerjük a másikat, hanem legyenek olyan feladatok, amivel a nyelven keresztül megismerjük a másikat, és ne legyen az, hogy nem köti őket össze, és szerintem ez az, ami miatt a csoport is jobban tud együtt haladni, hogy ismerik már a másikat. Tudjuk, hogy körülbelül mi az, amiben jobb, amiben kevésbé jó, mi az amit szeret, mi az amit nem, és így tudunk egymáshoz alkalmazkodni, és tudunk úgy haladni előre, hogy segítsük a másikat, az elsők meg húzzák, akiket kell.

Diák 2: Szerintem ezért jó a csoport, meg a pármunka. Jó nem most az, hogy megismerni egymást, de néha sokkal könnyebb, ha tudom, hogy van egy társ, vagy van több ember, akivel, aki segít, egyikük ezt tudja, másikuk azt, könnyebb megoldani a feladatot, élvezetesebb is.

Diák 3: Szerintem is ez a csoport munka, ez szerintem az órát azt feldobja, mert végül is sok mindenben segít. Mert szerintem azt végül is mindenki vidámabban csinálja, vagy örömmel, mert az kicsit megmozgatja az ember fantáziáját, ha például egy történetet kell befejezni, vagy valami ilyen. És az szerintem mókás (nevetés).

Diák 2: Jók az olyan feladatok, amikbe mindenki belerakhatja a saját egyéniségét. Például ez a történetes is olyan, hogy ne az legyen. hogy csak egyféleképpen lehessen megoldani, vagy a végén csak egyféleképpen jöhet ki, hanem ha így ránézünk az egyik emberre, hogy ő hogy oldotta meg a feladatot, akkor úgy nagyjából sejthessük például, hogy azt ki csinálta, hogy ne az legyen hogy így ilyen sablon megoldás van, hanem hogy akármi. De a kereteken belül.

Diák 4: Szerintem az is fontos, hogy ki milyen kedvvel jön be az angolórára, mert például nem mindegy milyen aktivitással vagy milyen beleéléssel foglalkozik egy adott feladattal, mert lehet, hogy ha mindenkinek ilyen teljesen letört kedve van, akkor ülünk és írunk, vagy mit tudom én mit csinálunk, egyébként meg nevetgélés meg beszélgetés meg minden van, tehát ez az amiért érdekes, hogy kinek milyen kedve van.

Diák 5: Én meg még a csoportmunkára visszatérve, hogy tényleg jó, meg minden, csak van egy hátránya is szerintem, hogy valaki, aki így magától nem dolgozna annyit, csak így mit tudom én így ül, és így jó, mondják a többiek, akkor az így nincs rákényszerülve arra, hogy csinálja, mert megcsinálják helyette a többiek. Szóval nem biztos, hogy nem tudom, hogy kinél van így, meg nem azért például, csak szerintem ez a hátránya. Szóval jó az is, hogy ha külön dolgozik az ember, nehezebb, de jó.

Diák 6: Mondjuk az angolórának, szerintem, mint ahogy ez az iskolának is az egyik célja, az általános iskolának, hogy kijavítsam magam, és a középiskolának, hogy normális társadalmi lényt formáljon belőlünk, és szerintem erre nagyon alkalmas a nyelvi óra is, pont ezek miatt a csoportfoglalkozások miatt, vagy amiatt, hogy mindenki elmondhatja azt, amit ő gondol, és ezáltal is gyakorolja a nyelvet. Ez, nyilván ez egy ilyen mellékes dolog, de nagyon fontos. A nyelvhez is fontos, mert nyilván nem az lesz, hogy megtanulom a nyelvet, de nem vagyok hajlandó beszélgetni senkivel, és akkor kimegyek Angliába, mondjuk, és ott ülök, hát akkor, jó, lehet, hogy megértem, hogy mit beszélnek körülöttem, de nem tudom, szóval, kell.

Tanár: Próbáljatok visszagondolni erre az évre, hogy mi az, ami, akkor mi az, ami megmaradt, mi az, ami úgy jó volt? Most nyilván már mondtatok dolgokat, de hogy mi az, amit szívesen csináltál az órákon?

Diák 2: Hát én a csoportmunkákat, azokat mindegyiket szívesen csináltam, vagy szerintem érdekesek voltak, és ezek közül több meg is maradt. Amikor kellett egy történetet írni, hogy voltak megadva mondatok, és azután kellett írni például. Meg hát volt több. Hogy amikor például házi feladat volt, és azt utána órán megbeszéltük, vagy kellett egymáshoz menni és kérdezgetni. És ezek így jók voltak.

Appendix D/4

An observer's report

Class Observation
Heitzmann Judit
April 5, 2004
Baja, Hungary

When we arrive at the classroom, the students are waiting outside as the classroom is locked. We get in and the students follow. I take a seat on the back bench. The classroom is rather drab with pale green walls, two chalkboards in front, and long and short benches and [uncomfortable] seats for about 18 students. From the initial chit-chat between Judit and the students—all in English--it is clear that the students feel very comfortable with her. She herself seems confident and at ease with them, too. They talk about previous week's competition in which some of the students had fared well.

The class begins, with 14, relatively quiet and well-behaved students (10 girls, 4 boys). The focus of the class seems to be on communicative language learning. All the conversation is in English, except occasionally between students. In fact, throughout the class period, almost all of the conversation is in English, and students do not whisper things to each other when other students are responding to Judit's questions.

Judit begins by talking about a song, describes its contents, and asks students to refer to the textbook—everyone has one—on p. 43. They talk briefly about the things shown in the text. She then plays the tape and asks them to point out the things talked about in the song from among those shown in the text. Lots of Q&A follows the playing of the tape, which is played two more times. There is very good prodding of students on Judit's part ("Can you tell what it is," "Good guess, but . . .," "What makes you think so", etc.) and they respond enthusiastically. Next, she directs the students to p. 39, which has a cloze passage and asks them to fill in the blanks. This "controlled listening comprehension" seems to work well.

The next activity is somewhat like the 20-questions game. Students volunteer to go in front of the class and are given an object, with their hands behind their back. Other students ask various yes-no questions and try to guess the object the student is holding. The objects are, respectively, a light bulb a comb, and a toy car. All seem to enjoy this activity, and there is little hesitation among students to volunteer and go in front of class.

Next, there is another taped listening comprehension activity, a story about a little lift boy. Students are asked to listen to the tape and guess the name of the little boy. It's almost a "trick" exercise as it begins with the words, "Imagine you are a lift boy. . . ." Judit has to play the tape 3-4 times before one of the students finally guesses that it is their own name.

The last activity of the day is a pair exercise in which the students have to develop a telephone conversation between two people and then act it out in front of the class. Students busily work on this, and except for two boys, every other pair seems to be ready to perform in just a few minutes. Two pairs volunteer to perform and do a very good job of it.

General Comment/Suggestions:

Perhaps the most desirable part of Judit's class was that the students actually spent time in speaking and listening and reallifelike communicative activities throughout the class. As a teacher, Judit was something like a helpful and encouraging intervener and guide, rather than following the artificial steps prescribed in a textbook. Of course, as is common in most second language classes, there are always some students who participate freely more than the rest of the students. This class was no exception. I noticed at least five students who barely responded or participated unless any of them was forced to do so. There is not much a teacher can do than gentle prodding in these cases. But they were, at all times, attentive and were surely grasping what was going on in the class.

I must say that I was not surprised by the manner in which this class was conducted given the fact that Judit has considerable teaching experience as an EFL teacher. Over all, I was pleased with Judit's confident manner, her sense of humor, and her being very much at ease with the students and they with her. She clearly has a solid sense of what communicative language teaching is all about and of the fact that an interactive class, conducted in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, can be far more enjoyable than a stuffy, humorless class. No wonder the students didn't mind doing the assigned listening and speaking tasks and participating enthusiastically even at that late hour (probably the last hour of the day) on a Monday!

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Appendix E

Frequency of responses to BALLI questionnaire

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = undecided
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. A gyerekek könnyebben tanulnak idegen nyelveket, mint a felnőttek.	0	0	2	7	7
2. Vannak olyanok, akiknek jó nyelvérzékük van.	0	0	0	4	12
3. Vannak könnyebben és nehezebben tanulható nyelvek.	0	0	0	7	9
4. Nyelvtanulás szempontjából az angol _____ .(Válassz az alábbiak közül, és karikázd be a megfelelő számot): 1 = nagyon nehéz nyelv 2 = nehéz nyelv 3 = közepes nehézségű 4 = könnyű nyelv 5 = nagyon könnyű nyelv	0	1	8	5	2
5. Szerintem jól meg fogok tanulni angolul.	0	0	2	7	7
6. A magyarok könnyen tanulnak idegen nyelveket.	0	2	6	8	0
7. Fontos szép kiejtéssel beszélni az angolt.	0	1	1	5	9
8. Ahhoz, hogy jól beszéljek angolul, ismernem kell az angolszász népek kultúráját.	0	6	5	3	2
9. Jobb meg sem szólalni, amíg az ember nem tud helyesen beszélni angolul.	10	6	0	0	0
10. Könnyebb nyelvet tanulni, ha az ember már beszél egy másik idegen nyelvet.	0	2	4	8	2
11. Akinek jól megy a matematika és a reál tárgyak, annak nem mennek jól az idegen nyelvek.	9	5	2	0	0
12. Legjobb nyelvterületen tanulni angolul (pl. Angliában, az Egyesült Államokban, Kanadában, stb.)	0	1	1	7	7
13. Szívesen gyakorlok olyanokkal, akik jól beszélnek angolul (anyanyelvi beszélőkkel és/vagy magyarokkal).	0	0	3	3	10
14. Helyes dolog találgatni egy ismeretlen szó jelentését.	0	0	2	6	8

1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
15. Ha valaki napi egy órát szánna az angol nyelv tanulására, mennyi idő alatt beszélne folyékonyan? (Válassz az alábbiak közül, és karikázd be a megfelelő számot): 1 = kevesebb, mint egy év 2 = 1-2 év 3 = 3-5 év 4 = 5-10 év 5 = Napi egy óra tanulással nem lehet megtanulni angolul.	0	3	6	4	1[5]
16. Szerintem nekem jó nyelvérzékem van.	1	2	6	6	1
17. Az angoltanulásnál az a legfontosabb, hogy sok szót tanuljunk.	0	2	4	10	0
18. Az angoltanulás során fontos sokat ismételni és gyakorolni.	0	0	2	6	8
19. A lányok jobb nyelvtanulók, mint a fiúk.	2	5	7	2	0
20. A magyar diákok szerint fontos jól tudni angolul.	0	0	6	9	1
21. Könnyedén beszélek angolul másokkal.	2	3	4	7	0
22. Ha az elején megengedik, hogy hibázz, később nehéz lesz megszabadulni a hibáktól.	2	2	6	1	5
23. Az angoltanulásnál a legfontosabb a nyelvtan tanulása.	2	6	1	4	3
24. Azért szeretnék megtanulni angolul, hogy megismerkedhessek angol anyanyelvűekkel (amerikaiakkal, angolokkal, stb.)	1	4	4	7	0
25. Könnyebb beszélni angolul, mint megérteni a beszélt vagy írott nyelvet.	4	6	4	2	0
26. Fontos magnóval gyakorolni.	0	0	2	5	9
27. Más angolt (vagy egyéb idegen nyelvet) tanulni, mint a többi tantárgyat.	0	0	1	5	10
28. Az angoltanulás legfontosabb eleme a fordítás magyarról angolra.	0	4	9	2	1
29. Ha jól megtanulok angolul, nagyobb lehetőségem lesz jó állást szerezni.	0	0	3	5	8
30. Azok, akik több nyelvet beszélnek, nagyon okosak.	1	4	6	3	2
31. Szeretnék jól megtanulni angolul.	0	0	0	0	16
32. Szeretnék angolul beszélő barátokat szerezni.	0	1	1	6	8
33. Mindenki meg tud tanulni egy idegen nyelvet.	0	0	4	8	4
34. Könnyebb angolul írni és olvasni, mint beszélni vagy megérteni.	0	4	7	4	1
35. A nyelvtanulás során sokat kell magolni.	7	5	4	0	0

[5] There were two missing responses