

Understanding Secondary School Students' Motivation to Learn Spanish

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Abstract

Taking into consideration the crucial role of motivation in learning foreign languages, the author of this text, who is also a high school Spanish teacher, decided to conduct a study whose aim was to discover which factors motivate high school students to learn this language and how students' motivation changes depending on the time they have been learning the language.

The study involved two groups of high school students whose third language was Spanish (after Polish and English). The first group included first-year students aged approximately 15-16, and the second group included third-year students aged approximately 17-18. A total of 30 people took part in the study (15 in the first group and 15 in the second group). The research tool used in the study was a survey including several parts, which was inspired by the survey created by Zoltán Dörnyei and Ema Ushioda in 2021, included in the book *Teaching and Researching motivation*. The students were asked to respond to sixteen statements based on a Likert scale, where each number from 1 to 5 represented a different level of agreement.

Having analysed the survey results, one could come to the conclusion that first-year students are much more motivated to learn Spanish than third-year students. The results from this part were as follows: Year I – 45.55% of students motivated; Year III – 31.68% of students motivated. Therefore, it is necessary to eliminate demotivating factors and support situations that motivate students in order to teach Spanish to high school students as effectively as possible.

Keywords: motivation; high school; third language

1. Introduction

Motivation is an essential element of the teaching process. Acquiring a second language is much easier when it is high. A motivated student is more patient and tolerant of making their own mistakes. On the other hand, according to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), low motivation causes discouragement to perform various tasks and improve one's skills. Due to the undeniable importance of high motivation in a teaching process, it is essential to ensure that students are always willing to work and acquire new knowledge.

This article aims to explore how high school students' motivation changed over time. The author seeks to determine whether students' motivation to learn Spanish after nearly three years remained the same as at the beginning. This insight is not only of academic interest but also has practical implications.

2. Explaining motivation

In this part of the article some theoretical background is going to be provided, the types of motivation are going to be described, and the aim of the research is going to be explained.

2.1. Theoretical background

The definition of motivation was presented, among others, by Cruz (2021), who explained that motivation is a quality that everybody desires, but it is challenging to maintain while working towards achieving a goal. In addition, as explained by Valhondo (1995), the concept of motivation has been approached and defined from multiple perspectives. Ochsenfahrt (2012), in her book, indicates that it is difficult to define the term “motivation” because it is a multifaceted term, and it is not possible to provide just one exact meaning. The author explains that motivation can be described as someone's general desire or willingness to do something. She also acknowledges that, mainly due to social or psychological factors that give purpose to human behaviour, motivation can be explained as a stimulus for action toward a desired goal. There is a factor that combines both definitions: an objective. That means that a person is motivated when they want to achieve or improve something. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), there are three components of motivation in the context of learning foreign languages: desire to achieve a goal, genuine effort, and attitudes toward language learning. Motivation can also be treated as a characteristic that measures the duration of an activity a human being performs.

Ardila (2001) indicates that motivation is crucial in learning. The author states that this phenomenon comprises three components: exploration, knowledge of results, and possibilities. This perspective is also shared by Ledesma de la Mora and Guadalupe (1979), who point out that the knowledge acquired depends on the student's level of motivation. In addition, the authors identify the most critical general characteristic of motivation. Firstly, they realize that seeing or observing motivation is impossible. It can only be deduced based on someone's behaviour. Secondly, there is a strong connection between motivation and interest, suggesting that motivation can be influenced by cultivating interest. Introducing more interesting activities can not only attract attention but also cause an increase in motivation. A high level of motivation helps individuals to persist in their activities or adjust their behaviour to achieve their goals. As it is presented by Mercer and Dörnyei (2020), motivation is strongly connected with active involvement which is crucial while conducting lessons in contemporary classrooms.

2.2. *Types of motivation*

According to Gallardo (2018), we can recognise different types of motivation. The author explains the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, positive and negative motivation, personal and social motivation, as well as long-term and short-term motivation.

2.2.1. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

The main difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is the personal attitude towards the case. According to Woolfolk (2006), the first type of motivation is an internal and natural tendency to explore knowledge and learn new things. It is an innate curiosity for novelty. An example of this type of motivation is exploring knowledge based on interests. Ledesma (1977) explains that motivation is intrinsic when the knowledge of the subject is a sufficient reward for a person learning it. Extrinsic motivation, however, occurs when completing a task serves only to achieve a goal. It is possible to list many examples of this type of motivation. A person may want to study to earn more, get a promotion at work, complete their studies with good grades, or even, for children, receive praise from a teacher or parents. As Woolfolk (2006) indicated, in this type of motivation, we are not interested in the subject itself. It merely serves as a means to obtain something else.

2.2.2. Positive and negative motivation

According to Leiva (2021), positive motivation arises when an individual wants to obtain a benefit. On the other hand, negative motivation arises when an individual wants to avoid a punishment, leading them to complete the task out of fear. Furthermore, as indicated by Naidu and Krishna Rao (2008), negative motivation aims to control the adverse effects of workers and induce them to work positively. It is based on the concept that they should be punished if someone does not achieve the desired results. Punishments and reprimands are the most popular ways to evoke anxiety and, as a result, improve performance.

2.2.3. Personal and social motivation

There is also a difference between personal and social motivation. As Gallardo (2018) indicated, personal motivation is also known as primary motivation. This type of motivation is also intrinsic, and it can be characterized by the fact that the reward is aimed at satisfying an individual's own needs. Social motivation, on the other hand, is also known as secondary motivation. This type of motivation can be characterized by the desire to ensure the well-being of others. Socially motivated people generally want to achieve a feeling of security, respect, a sense of belonging, or social recognition.

Ocaña-Fernández (2019), however offers a different definition of primary and secondary motivation. According to the author, primary motivation is driven by basic needs. This type

arises naturally and is regularly reactivated. Secondary motivation, on the other hand, is explained as a phenomenon related to learned needs like friendship, love, or fame.

2.2.4. Long-term motivation and short-term motivation

There is also a distinction between long-term motivation and short-term motivation. The first one appears when the goals that somebody wants to achieve are distant, and the second one occurs when the goals are to be achieved within a short time.

3. Characteristics of teaching Spanish

Taking into consideration the characteristics of teaching Spanish, it is crucial to outline the main features of this language. Benítez Pérez (2009) identifies the fundamental issues related to the teaching of the Spanish language as a foreign language (FL). Firstly, he considers what kind of vocabulary should be taught during Spanish classes. The author believes that the type of vocabulary taught is more important than how Spanish vocabulary is taught. The author emphasizes that the key is to choose the vocabulary that would be most useful. On average a Spanish native speaker uses two thousand words, which is enough for he or she to communicate freely. Educated speakers, on the other hand, typically use about five thousand words. This suggests that vocabulary frequently used by native speakers of the language should be preferably taught first, so that these people who learn Spanish could master the ability to speak as soon as possible.

The question of which pronunciation pattern should be taught is also somewhat controversial. The type of pronunciation that is considered most prestigious is the one used in the Iberian Peninsula. For this reason, it is often adopted by Spanish teachers and is much more popular than the widely used varieties in South America. From a practical standpoint, this is not a particularly useful approach. The pronunciation used in the Iberian Peninsula is certainly considered exemplary, but its use can lead to minor misunderstandings when communicating with the majority of Spanish speakers worldwide.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that a Spanish-speaking teacher may not be able to adjust their pronunciation to suit the needs of their students. As a result, students are often exposed to just one specific pronunciation. It could be beneficial to introduce students to the range of pronunciations in the Spanish-speaking world. Students should be aware of the regions where they may encounter different pronunciations, thereby avoiding potential confusion.

The author of this article believes that every teacher should consider the situation of his or her students and teach them the pronunciation and vocabulary that will be most useful to them. According to Paulson (2013), this case may be simplified by comparing different Spanish words and structures to the ones used in the students' native languages. He indicates that it is crucial to raise students' awareness of the similarities between words in their native language and their Spanish counterparts.

4. The study

The present study aims to determine what factors motivate high school students to learn Spanish as a FL and if their motivation level increases or decreases over time. The author wanted to point out the aspects that encourage students to learn Spanish, as well as those that limit their motivation. The motivation level of students who were in the first year was assessed and compared with the motivation level of another group who began learning Spanish nearly three years earlier and were in the third year at the time of the research. Therefore, this study's goal was to determine whether third-year and first-year students remain as motivated to learn Spanish as when they started or if their motivation has decreased or increased. The research questions were as follows:

- Q1: Does students' motivation to learn Spanish increase or decrease between first and third year?
- Q2: What short-term and long-term motivational factors encourage students to learn Spanish?
- Q3: What factors discourage students from learning Spanish?

4.1. Participants

Two groups of students took part in the research. They were the students of one of the high schools in Opole (a city in southwestern Poland). The FL teaching pattern in the school is as follows: English is taught at an advanced level as a mandatory language. It is obligatory for students to study a second FL of their choice. Apart from Spanish, there are languages such as German, Italian, French, German, and Russian that can be chosen. Spanish and German are taught at different levels: it is possible to learn the language at the elementary level or to choose the higher level. French, Russian and Italian are taught only at the elementary levels.

It should be noted that Spanish is the most frequently chosen language as the third taught language in this school (Polish and English are obligatory). Most students start learning Spanish from the initial level, and in the following years, they decide not to take the Matura exam (the Polish national high school leaving exam, required for university admission-similar to the British A-levels) in this subject. To investigate the variability of motivation among students, two research groups were examined. In total, there were thirty participants. The participation in the study was voluntary.

The first group was composed of fifteen first-year students from three different classes. The profiles were biological, humanistic, and linguistic. All the students in this group began to learn Spanish in September (the same school year as the research was conducted). This language was new to them because they had not had prior instruction in this language.

The second research group was formed by fifteen third-year students who attended the same secondary school. Their profile was humanistic, which means that they were learning history and social studies at the extended level when the research was conducted. This group of students also began to learn Spanish at high school and they had not received Spanish classes during primary education.

The two research groups were taught by the same Spanish teacher and attended Spanish classes twice a week.

4.2. Instruments

In order to investigate the level and sources of motivation among students, the author of this article created a survey with sixteen questions of different nature (fifteen of them were closed-ended while one of them was open-ended).

The first twelve questions were closed-ended and used a Likert scale. The students had five options to choose from and indicate whether they agreed with a statement. A rating of five indicated that the student agreed with the presented statement. A rating of four corresponded to “I rather agree”, while three indicated “I have no opinion about it.” Choosing two meant the student partially disagreed with the statement, and one indicated complete disagreement. These closed-ended questions referred to the level of motivation among students to learn Spanish and the level of interest in Spanish culture and language. Apart from closed-ended questions, the survey also contained an open-ended question related to the aspects that most discourage students from learning Spanish. By adding an open-ended question in the survey, students could express their opinions on Spanish lessons, present their attitudes towards the subject, and explain what factors motivate or demotivate them when learning Spanish.

The survey also included two multiple-choice questions. The first referred to long-term motivation, where students had to indicate which factors motivated them to learn Spanish. Students could choose among the aspects such as the desire to choose a specific field of study in the future, the desire to acquire a specific profession in the future and the possibility to travel without problems to Spanish-speaking countries.

The second multiple-choice question addressed aspects related to short-term motivation and classroom environment. Students had the opportunity to choose options such as the kindness of the teacher, cooperation with other students, individual work, the help received from the teacher and other students, presenting exciting elements of the lesson, such as films and songs, introducing interesting vocabulary, the possibility of performing additional tasks, obtaining positive grades, having enough time to absorb the material, and having tests announced in advance to allow for preparation.

Finally, there was also a sentence to fill in where the students were asked to indicate whether they were more, equally or less motivated than when they started learning Spanish. The survey also contained an open-ended question in which the students had to enumerate the factors which discourage them from learning Spanish.

4.3. Procedure

Participation in the study was voluntary. The author of this research, who was also their Spanish teacher, created the survey online using Google Forms. When there was an equal

number of answers from both the first-year students and the third-year students, access to the survey was closed.

4.4. Data analysis and results

The data analysis method which was used was the descriptive analysis. The author of this article decided to use percentages and visualise the detailed data with the use of tables. There are the results presented below.

4.4.1. Closed-ended questions (Likert Scale)

This section presents the results of the first part of the survey, which consisted of closed-ended questions. In the first question the students had to respond to the general sentence, “I am motivated to learn Spanish.” This example clearly shows that third-year students were much less motivated to learn Spanish than first-year students.

Table 1: “I am motivated to learn Spanish”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 6,7% | 20% | 26,7% | 20% | 26,7% |
| Year 3 | 2% | 40% | 33,3% | 0% | 6,7% |

Table 1 shows the results based on the third-year students’ answers and the results based on the first-year students’ answers are very different. Among the first-year students, the most frequently chosen responses were: “I have no opinion” and “I agree.” In the group of third-year students, the vast majority, representing 40% of the total (six people), chose the option: “I rather disagree.”

The second statement in the survey concerned receiving good grades in Spanish. The responses in Table 2 clearly show that both first- and third-year students want to receive good grades. In both research groups, the option “I agree” was chosen by 46.7% of those who were surveyed.

Table 2: “It is important to have good grades in Spanish for me”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 0% | 13,3% | 20% | 20% | 46,7% |
| Year 3 | 13,3% | 13,3% | 0% | 26,7% | 46,7% |

The third statement that the students had to consider was: “Improving my language skills is important for me.” The purpose of including this statement in the survey was to investigate if students were willing to learn Spanish more and thus use it better. Based on the responses, improving language skills is critical both for first-year students and for third-year students. 46.7% of respondents from the first year stated that improving language skills is crucial for them. Another 26,7% chose the option: “I rather agree.” In the third class, 33.3% of

respondents stated that they agree with the statement and another 33,3% indicated that they rather agree. The exact results are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3: “Improving my language skills is important for me”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 0% | 13,3% | 13,3% | 26,7% | 46,7% |
| Year 3 | 6,7% | 13,3% | 13,3% | 33,3% | 33,3% |

In the fourth statement of the survey, the students were asked if they were interested in Spanish. According to the survey results, Spanish is a much more interesting language for first-year students than for third-year students. The vast majority of the third-year students (46.7%) did not have an opinion about this issue. 26.7% of third-year students were not interested in Spanish as a language. Data is reported in Table 4.

Table 4: “I am interested in the Spanish language”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 13,3% | 13,3% | 20% | 33,3% | 20% |
| Year 3 | 26,7% | 6,7% | 46,7% | 13,3% | 6,7% |

In the fifth statement of the survey, the students had to answer whether they were interested in Spanish culture. In both groups, students’ answers were positive. In the first year, the option: “I agree” was chosen by 40% of the students, and in the third year by 46.7% (results are presented in Table 5).

Table 5: “I am interested in Spanish culture”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 6,7% | 13,3% | 20% | 20% | 40% |
| Year 3 | 13,3% | 13,3% | 13,3% | 13,3% | 46,7% |

In the sixth statement of the survey, the author of this study wanted to examine the involvement of students in Spanish classes. Students had to decide if they agreed with the statement: “I like to speak up during Spanish lessons.” Most students from both groups who participated in the research stated that they disagreed with this statement. However, the responses of the first-year students were more varied (see Table 6). In the third year, more than half of the students said they disliked contributing to Spanish classes. In the first year, such a statement was given by only 33.3%. Also, it is essential to mention that 26.7% had no opinion on this issue.

Table 6: “I like to speak up during Spanish lessons”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|--------|
| Year 1 | 33,3% | 20% | 26,7% | 6,7% | 13,33% |
| Year 3 | 53,3% | 13,3% | 26,7% | 0% | 6,7% |

In the seventh statement of the survey (see Table 7), students were asked whether they perceived progress in their language skills in relation to their use of Spanish. In the first year, 26.7% of the students said they noticed the development in their language skills. The exact number of students stated that they did not have an opinion on the issue. Among third-year students, 46.7% said they did not see any progress. The same number of students stated they had no opinion on the issue.

Table 7: “I observe the development of my language skills”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 13,3% | 20% | 26,7% | 13,3% | 26,7% |
| Year 3 | 46,7% | 0% | 46,7% | 6,7% | 0% |

The eighth survey statement regarded students’ willingness to do additional tasks as homework. The answers to this statement were very diverse in both research groups (see Table 8).

Table 8: “I like doing extra tasks from the Spanish classes”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 6,7% | 33,3% | 33,3% | 13,3% | 13,3% |
| Year 3 | 26,7% | 20% | 20% | 13,3% | 20% |

In the following statement (Table 9), students were asked if they were interested in participating in additional Spanish classes. The vast majority of students in both groups indicated they were not interested in a proposal of this type. In both groups, 46.7% of both groups selected the option: “I disagree.”

Table 9: “I would like to participate in additional Spanish classes”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 46,7% | 13,3% | 20% | 13,3% | 6,7% |
| Year 3 | 46,7% | 20% | 20% | 6,7% | 6,7% |

The tenth statement of the survey focused on students’ plans to achieve language proficiency. The answers by the groups were different. Most first-year students said they plan to be fluent in the future. 33.3% chose the option: “I agree,” and another 20%: “I rather agree.” The answers in the third year were negative. There were 33.3% of students who said that having graduated from high school, they would not be interested in learning the language in order to speak fluently in the future. Another 20% said they probably would not want to become competent in the future (see Table 10).

Table 10: “I would like to speak Spanish fluently in the future”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 6,7% | 13,3% | 26,7% | 20% | 33,3% |
| Year 3 | 33,3% | 20% | 26,7% | 13,3% | 6,7% |

In the eleventh statement of the survey, students had to indicate whether they liked attending Spanish classes. The vast majority of first-year students selected 5 or 4 corresponding to the options “I agree” and “I rather agree.” The responses of the third-year students were completely different. The majority indicated that they did not like attending these classes. Detailed data on the responses of both groups are presented in the Table 11.

Table 11: “I like Spanish lessons”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 13,3% | 13,3% | 26,7% | 33,3% | 13,3% |
| Year 3 | 13,3% | 33,3% | 13,3% | 26,7% | 13,3% |

The last statement asked the students to indicate whether Spanish lessons were stressful. Most of the third-year students said they had no opinion. However, most of the first-year students indicated that Spanish lessons were not stressful for them. The opinions of the first group and the third are quite divided. 13% of first-year students disagree with the statement that they find Spanish classes stressful. Another 27% indicated that they tended to disagree.

Table 12: “Spanish classes are stressful for me”

| | Disagree | Rather disagree | No opinion | Rather agree | Agree |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| Year 1 | 13,3% | 26,7% | 26,7% | 20% | 13,3% |
| Year 3 | 26,7% | 6,7% | 40% | 13,3% | 13,3% |

Another closed-ended question in the survey asked to what extent the first and third-year students were motivated to study Spanish. The students had to determine whether they were less, equally, or more motivated than when they started learning Spanish. 60% of third-year students said they were less motivated. In contrast, the majority of first-year students (66.7%) indicated that their motivation remained the same as when they began learning, approximately six months prior to the study (see Table 13).

Table 13: “I am... motivated to learn Spanish”

| | More | Equally | Less |
|---------------|------|---------|-------|
| Year 1 | 6,7% | 66,7% | 26,7% |
| Year 3 | 0% | 40% | 60% |

4.4.2. Long-term motivation factors

There were also two questions regarding both long-term motivation factors and short-term motivation factors in the context of Spanish learning. Firstly, the students were asked to indicate the long-term motivation factors that most encouraged them to learn Spanish. The respondents could choose between factors such as the desire to select a specific university in the future, the desire to have an excellent job, and the desire to travel. The students could choose all the options that applied to them. As shown in Table 14, the most frequently chosen

factor in the two groups was a desire to travel. Furthermore, the aspiration to secure an excellent job in the future was more important for the first-year students than for the third-year ones.

Table 14: “What motivates you most?”

| | University | Work | Travel |
|---------------|------------|-------|--------|
| Year 1 | 13,3% | 46,7% | 80% |
| Year 3 | 6,7% | 33,3% | 93,3% |

4.4.3. Short-term motivation factors

In the second multiple-choice question, students were asked to choose which factors related to short-term motivation were the most important to them. Options included a good atmosphere in the Spanish classes, the teacher’s positive attitude, the possibility of cooperation with other students, individual work, and the teacher’s willingness to help.

Table 15: “What motivates you most while having Spanish classes?”

| | Atmosphere | Teacher’s positive attitude | Teacher’s help | Cooperation with other students | Individual work |
|---------------|------------|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Year 1 | 80% | 67% | 40% | 20% | 0% |
| Year 3 | 26,7% | 40% | 40% | 40% | 0% |

As Table 15 shows, the most motivating factor while having Spanish classes among first-year students was atmosphere in the classroom. The second most frequent answer was teacher’s positive attitude. The answers of third-year students were more divided. Both atmosphere in the classroom and teacher’s positive attitude were not as motivating for them as for first-year students.

The students could also indicate other factors that motivated them. There was a multiple-choice question used. The majority of first-year students indicated that a sufficient amount of time to learn is the most motivating factor for them, while in the case of third-year students using songs and videos during Spanish classes was the most important. The other specific information is presented in Table 16.

Table 16: “What are the additional factors that motivate you?”

| | Songs and videos | Additional tasks | Sufficient amount of time to learn | Good grades | Attractive vocabulary |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Year 1 | 33,3% | 6,7% | 60% | 46,7% | 20% |
| Year 3 | 66,7% | 20% | 53% | 60% | 26,7% |

4.4.4. Summary

To summarize the data collected in the closed-ended questions, which were created using a Likert scale, the author of the article calculated the average of responses that showed that the

students were motivated to learn Spanish (responses rated 4 and 5). The author added the percentage of responses to the statements in which the students agreed that the level of their motivation increased. The data presented below shows the proportion of students in both groups who were motivated in this regard.

- The first-year students: 45.55%
- The third-year students: 31.68%

As can be seen, the motivation of 15-year-old students in their first year of secondary school is almost 14% higher than that of 17-year-old students in their third year. This means that in this particular case as students learn Spanish, their motivation decreases.

4.4.5. Open-ended question

The last part of the questionnaire consisted of an open-ended question. The students had to indicate which aspects discouraged them the most from learning Spanish. The first-year students mentioned aspects such as introducing too many issues in a short time. The first-year textbook contained an overwhelming amount of new content that was very difficult for beginners. The amount of teaching material that the teacher had to introduce was too large in comparison with the number of hours of the subject per week. This was the most frequently mentioned factor in the first-year students' survey responses. They also indicated that the subjects included in the school curriculum were too numerous and that they needed more time to acquire their knowledge. For this reason, they needed help to acquire the material accurately and, therefore, to use the time in the lesson most efficiently. Another discouraging element that the first-year students often mentioned was the large number of tests and quizzes. The students mentioned that they had to review the material often at home and spend much more time learning Spanish than they would have liked. The last aspect that first-year students often mentioned as a demotivating factor was the relatively complex Spanish grammar. They pointed out that the inflection and conjugation of verbs were very difficult to learn and, consequently, made the learning process tiring. They noted that, unlike learning Spanish vocabulary, learning Spanish grammar required much time and work, which often led to frustration and resentment.

Additionally, one student expressed the belief that teaching Spanish in high school involved too much grammar. The same student indicated that they would be more motivated if they could learn more vocabulary necessary for an ordinary conversation instead of learning grammar. Furthermore, he or she suggested that putting greater emphasis on sentence structure and developing speaking skills in Spanish than Spanish grammar would increase their motivation.

The responses obtained from the third-year students also showed that they felt that too many topics were introduced during Spanish lessons. The students responded that there was so much material that they could not adequately prepare for other subjects, especially for the subjects that they chose to take their Matura exam. In their surveys, the third-year students said they sometimes had too little time to learn the required material in Spanish, and they complained that tests were performed too frequently. Among their answers, some participants

questioned the need to know Spanish grammar. The respondents believed that too many tenses were not used daily.

Furthermore, there were many comments regarding verb conjugation. The students pointed out that it took much work to learn verb's conjugation, especially at the beginning. Furthermore, the students pointed out that while constructing a sentence, too many grammatical aspects always had to be considered, which made it easier to make a mistake. In some surveys, third-year students stated that working with the textbook seemed monotonous and they would prefer to learn by playing.

4.5. Discussion

Having analysed the results presented above, introducing videos and songs as lesson elements was much more necessary for third-year students than for first-year students. The author of this article believed that this was because of the fact that older students had to acquire much more knowledge in a variety of subjects, and they missed learning through games. For this reason, almost 70% of third-year students indicated using audiovisual materials, such as videos and songs, as a factor that encouraged them to learn Spanish. On the other hand, the first-year students who had just started secondary school were much more aware that high school education differed from primary school education and did not contain the elements of playing. The other confirmation that first-year students were much more motivated to learn Spanish was that they wanted to prepare well for tests. The students appreciated the fact that they would be notified about the term of the tests with plenty of notice. There was 60% of the first-year students who appreciated that tests and exams were given on predetermined dates and that they were announced in advance. This aspect was also significant for the third-year students because more than 50% indicated that it was an essential factor for their motivation. For students in both research groups, it was also essential to obtain good grades. We could observe that the first-year students were much more motivated to learn than the third-year students, who would prefer to participate in enjoyable and effortless Spanish lessons.

Also, one could conclude that initial stages of learning Spanish were characterised by a dynamic development of linguistic skills, which did not develop so dynamically during the further stages of learning. This might happen because, having reached a specific language level, it became increasingly difficult to fill the knowledge gaps. Additionally, students were less motivated and involved in learning than initially.

On the basis of the data included in Table 15, we could conclude that individual work was not a factor that motivated students, regardless of their level of Spanish language proficiency. In both research groups, there was no person who would identify the possibility of doing individual work as a motivating factor for learning Spanish. On the other hand, students liked to work and do tasks in groups. A positive atmosphere in Spanish classes was much more important for first-year students. It was also the factor pointed out by this group of students most frequently: 80% of first-year students indicated the positive atmosphere during Spanish classes as a motivating factor for learning the language. Also, a large proportion of first-year students (67%) identified the teacher's positive attitude as a factor that made them more

motivated to learn Spanish. Among third-year students, it was impossible to distinguish a specific factor that would be the most motivating for them. There were 40% of third-year students who indicated factors such as the teacher's positive attitude and willingness to help and the possibility of working in groups with other students.

The open-ended question confirmed the author's previous thesis that the students attending the third year of high school had been already very tired of learning and they had longed for a less demanding way of acquiring knowledge. Another demotivating factor that third-year students often mentioned was that Spanish classes often took place in the last lesson. Because of that, they were often tired after the day, and they lacked the strength to continue their learning. The respondents believed that if Spanish lessons were held earlier, it would be easier for them to concentrate on the topic and work more actively and efficiently.

The motivation which appeared among both the first-year learners and third-year learners could be described as positive. Due to the fact that the atmosphere during classes was pleasant, there were no tasks that would be done by the students out of fear. According to the data presented in Table 12, the minority of students was stressed during Spanish classes, which indicated that their motivation could be described as positive.

Unfortunately, the amount of data presented in the survey was not sufficient to clarify if the type of motivation presented by the students in both groups could be characterised as personal or social. This topic could serve as a solid foundation for additional studies.

Moreover, students were discouraged mainly by complicated grammar, short amount of time to acquire knowledge (these factors were selected mostly by the students who attended the first year), the lack of games during classes and being tired and overwhelmed by the knowledge which needs to be acquired before Matura exam from other subjects, so there was no time to study Spanish (these answers were indicated by the third-year students).

Having analysed the survey results, it was clear that high school students' motivation in this particular case had declined over time. According to the research, while students' proficiency levels increased, their motivation decreased. Many first-year students were very motivated to learn Spanish. They knew that learning required sacrifices and they were prepared to master the material despite difficulties. They were also often interested in Spanish culture and considered Spanish a beautiful language. Most respondents planned to master the Spanish language well and use it in contact with foreigners, in their future work, and during their travels. First-year students were usually satisfied with the way of teaching.

Third-year students were much less motivated to learn Spanish. Although they were more proficient (mastering many tenses, grammatical structures and vocabulary)-they expressed little interest in the Spanish language and culture. Most third-year students said they did not find Spanish classes as attractive as they had found initially. Furthermore, only a small percentage wanted to continue their Spanish studies after high school to become more proficient.

The author suggests that third-year students' reduced motivation to learn Spanish might also be due to the fact that they treated this subject as supplementary. For this reason, they preferred to use their time to master their skills and acquire knowledge from the subjects they would be examined about in their Matura exam. Because of that, their interest in the Spanish language and their desire to improve their language skills declined.

5. Conclusions

Answering the questions presented at the beginning of the article, the author would like to indicate that students' motivation to learn Spanish decreased in this particular case. Among short-term motivational factors there was positive atmosphere during classes and teacher's positive attitude (both indicated by first-year students). Among long-term motivational factors there was mostly the willingness to travel (which had been selected by both first-year students and third-year students). It showed that the type of motivation which appeared with more frequency among the two groups was extrinsic motivation (they wanted to learn Spanish in order to travel). A significant difference was observed between the demotivating factors identified by first-year and third-year students. First-year students indicated that they aimed to achieve the best possible academic results and, therefore, expressed a need for more time to master the material. They also reported that the number of subjects introduced was overwhelming. In contrast, third-year students indicated that a more motivating approach would involve learning through play and placing greater emphasis on Spanish vocabulary rather than on Spanish grammar.

Despite the difficulties, teachers must ensure that students' motivation increases from its initial level or (at least) remains at the same level. Research has shown which motivation techniques students find most effective. It has also been possible to identify which factors affect students negatively in terms of their motivation. With this knowledge, it becomes possible to reduce the barriers to learning Spanish within the school environment, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of instruction. This information might serve as a guide for teachers aiming to improve their methods and strategies to maximise students' motivation. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the findings of the present study should not be overgeneralised. The research groups were relatively small; therefore, the results cannot be considered representative and cannot reflect the situation in the whole educational surrounding. It should be also noted that the findings might more accurately reflect the overall situation in schools if the study was conducted across multiple schools and grade levels, and involved classes taught by a range of different teachers.

Recognising the need for more research on motivation to learn Spanish, the author hopes this article will inspire further research. It would be appropriate to find out what motivates students from different schools and environments in order to develop effective learning models that could benefit both beginners and more advanced language learners.

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Appendices

Survey

Klasa: I//III

Zaznacz, w jakim stopniu zgadzasz się z poniższymi stwierdzeniami.

5- zgadzam się

4- raczej się zgadzam

3- nie mam zdania

2- raczej się nie zgadzam

1- nie zgadzam się

1. Jestem zmotywowany/ zmotywowana do nauki języka hiszpańskiego

2. Zależy mi na zdobywaniu dobrych ocen z języka hiszpańskiego

3. Doskonalenie kompetencji językowych jest dla mnie istotne.....

4. Interesuję się językiem hiszpańskim.....

5. Kultura hiszpańska wydaje mi się interesująca.....

6. Chętnie zabieram głos w dyskusji na lekcjach języka hiszpańskiego.....

7. Dostrzegam swoje postępy w doskonaleniu umiejętności językowych.....

8. Chętnie podejmuję się wykonania dodatkowych prac.....

9. Jestem zainteresowany/ zainteresowana uczęszczaniem na dodatkowe zajęcia związane z językiem hiszpańskim.....

10. W przyszłości planuję osiągnąć biegłość językową.....

11. Lubię uczęszczać na zajęcia języka hiszpańskiego.....

12. Lekcje języka hiszpańskiego są dla mnie stresujące.....

Zakreśl maksymalnie trzy aspekty dotyczące motywacji długoterminowej, które najbardziej Cię dotyczą:

- chęć zdobycia nowej wiedzy

- chęć zdobywania dobrych ocen

- chęć podjęcia określonego podjęcia określonego kierunku studiów

- chęć zdobycia dobrego zawodu w przyszłości

- możliwość porozumiewania się z obcokrajowcami w tym języku
- chęć podróżowania

Zakreśl maksymalnie pięć aspektów dotyczących motywacji krótkoterminowej, które Cię najbardziej motywują:

- dobra atmosfera na lekcjach języka hiszpańskiego
- życzliwość nauczyciela
- współpraca z innymi uczniami, praca grupowa
- praca indywidualna
- gotowość pomocy ze strony nauczyciela
- gotowość pomocy ze strony innych uczniów
- wprowadzanie ciekawych elementów takich jak piosenki i filmy w trakcie zajęć
- wprowadzanie interesującego mnie słownictwa
- możliwość wykonywania dodatkowych zadań
- uzyskiwanie pozytywnych ocen
- wystarczająca ilość czasu na przyswojenie materiału
- fakt, że kartkówki są zawsze zapowiadane

Wymień aspekty, które najbardziej Cię najbardziej zniechęcają do nauki języka hiszpańskiego:

.....

Zakreśl odpowiednie słowa, tak aby dotyczyły Ciebie:

Jestem tak samo/bardziej/mniej zmotywowany/zmotywowana, jak na początku mojej przygody z językiem hiszpańskim.

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