Teaching Strategies in Motivating Global English Learners

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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date **31. January 2022**

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.   A bibliography is appended.

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STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for deposit in the University's digital repository**.**

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Section 1

Table of contents

4

List of submitted papers and their citations up to 31 January 2022 (self-citations excluded)

Paper I. (2016) Perceptions and use of English by secondary school students from Central Asia. *Journal of Language and Education, 2*(2), pp. 23-32. Doi:10.17232/2411-7390-2016-2-2-23-32. **Authorship: 50%**

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Paper II. (2018) Bulgarian University Students' Learning Style Preferences in ESL Classroom. *Journal of Language and Education, 4*(2), pp. 30-47. Doi:10.17323/2411-7390-2018-4-2-30-47 **Authorship: 100%**

- Al-Sayadi, N. M. M. (2021). English Language Speaking Needs Analysis of Yemeni Grade 12 Students in the Light of 21 ST Century Requirements: Ibb City Public Schools as a Model. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.14855.93605 Retrieved 28 January 2022, from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352652202_English_Language_Speaking_Needs_Analysis_of_Yemeni_Grade_12_Students_in_the_Light_of_21_ST_Century_Requirements_Ibb_City_Public_Schools_as_a_Model
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Paper III. (2019a) University students' preferences on English teachers' nationality and teaching style: Gender based differences. *Edulingua-Journal of Applied Linguistics, 5*(1), pp. 1-21. Doi:10.14232/edulingua.2019.1.1 **Authorship: 100%**

Paper IV. (2019b) New language-new emotions? The role of emotional intelligence while learning foreign languages Mongolia. *Mongolian Journal of English Language and Culture Studies, 9*, pp. 20-32. ISSN 2410-1389 **Authorship: 100%**

Paper V. (2019c) Emotions, Learning-autonomy and Gender-specific Attitudes in the ESL Classroom. WoPaLP - *Working Papers in Language Pedagogy 13,* pp. 65-81. HU ISSN 1789-3607 **Authorship: 100 per cent**

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I dedicate my thesis to Siarl, my partner in crime.

Section 2

Abstract

During the period 2014-2020, I carried out seven studies to address a variety of problems English language learners and teachers face in post-communist European and Asian countries. While previous studies exist about this subject, undeniably, within the last decade, societies have become more complex, and identities, emotions and social spaces have been dramatically affected and re-negotiated by globalisation. This thesis, based on my seven articles published, addresses the need to consider global English learners, along with their specific and often unique circumstances, and the factors that inspire them to learn the language. My articles target attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language, motivation and demotivation, emotions in the classroom, learning style preferences, gender and identity. While many of these concepts were worthy of being investigated on their own, I chose to focus on their cross-thematic interaction. In fact, the findings indicate that human emotions and behaviour do not exist in a vacuum, but they influence each other and give direction to further behaviours and opinions.

My examination of the articles' synthesis and results also resulted in new knowledge relevant to the field. These new concepts include: 1) integrative motivation that focuses on non-territorial, professional or imagined communities that can be accessed through the English language; 2) new teaching strategies and materials that accommodate global English learners without being invasive in terms of culture and identity 3) the need to teach English language-related emotional intelligence factors in order to prevent inappropriate or ineffective communication styles and content 4) the need to consider gender-related differences in learning styles and emotions in the classroom. By building on the coherence and new knowledge in my articles' findings, I developed a new framework. The culture-wise sensitive use of this framework provides an effective guideline for teachers and learners of any background. The framework's principles recommend that learners should be directed towards a culturally less invasive, identity-safe and emotionally more accommodating learning environment. In such conditions they may become more engaged, autonomous and adaptive in their own learning processes, yet they can continually relate their needs, social spaces and motivations to the successful use of the target language.

Preface

I was born in Hungary and my mother tongue used to be Hungarian. At the age of ten, after moving to Italy, I found myself daily in the garden of a faraway-from-everything farmhouse with an old Italian dictionary, devouring the words and having long conversations with myself in Italian. I even went to the cinema with my thick dictionaries. No one told me to do so, I was offered no reward and, paradoxically, I was not particularly interested in integrating into Italian society either. I just wanted to learn Italian, and I succeeded very well. Italian became my first language; it completely substituted my native Hungarian. In my early twenties, I moved to Catalonia and decided to learn Catalan, in which I quickly became proficient and it became my new language, my *first* language. A new first language, again. I learnt Catalan through the medium of Italian. At the same time, I had learnt Spanish as well to a very good level, but avoided it as much as I could as I did not feel that I identified with it. Interestingly, Spanish, which I absolutely needed, but never liked, was not too difficult to learn.

By my late twenties, my husband and I moved to Mongolia. I was very keen to learn Mongolian, a language that truly fascinated me (and still does). Weeks, months and years passed, yet I was not able to learn to express myself in Mongolian, even at a very basic level. In my frustration, I started to learn English through the medium of Catalan and through my own merciless immersion programme, through English itself. I already had some proficiency in English, but had never actively used it before. Words stuck in my head after reading them for the first time and, while in Mongolia, wanting to learn Mongolian, I polished my English to an acceptable degree. In the years that followed, although highly motivated, I had virtually zero success in learning Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Bulgarian.

Throughout the last fifteen years, I have considered Catalan my first language at home, but I work, plan and research in English only. I limit my Spanish skills to moments when I am really angry, and I occasionally watch Italian films, but long years without practice bore its fruit, and I am not fluent in Italian anymore. From 2020, when I enrolled on this PhD programme, I had the possibility to start learning Welsh at UWTSD. Honestly, I started the Welsh course with a bit of anxiety due to the fact that my last language learning intents were rather disastrous. To my surprise, I love to learn Welsh and, even though I have massive brain fog as the result of having had Covid months ago, I find the energy and the motivation to keep up with the classes. Also, while learning Welsh, another very unexpected linguistic scenario twist has –again- reshaped my understanding of foreign language learning and use. I have had the possibility of connecting with Welsh speakers and learners in Patagonia. There, in order to be understood, I had to start using Spanish again. At first, I felt very uncomfortable using Spanish, but I soon discovered that Argentinian people, culture and the variation of Spanish used there is radically different from the European versions of it. I love speaking Spanish now, and I practice the Argentinian dialect every time I have the opportunity. That is possibly the most drastic emotional change I have had towards a language. It is a very interesting journey, as the cultural and dialectal approach of Spanish just changed my viewpoint entirely. This experience is the absolute confirmation of all my research trajectory so far, and it entirely validates the points made in my thesis.

As for now, although I currently live in Hungary, my Hungarian is messy and forced, just the same as my Hungarian identity. Nevertheless, all these languages and cultures have influenced

my thinking style and processes. Even the languages I do not speak fluently influence me through their culture and cognitive style, in which I am perfectly 'fluent'. I am unique, just as everyone else. The last ten years, working as a teacher internationally, made me realise that just the same as me, there are some very complex, dynamic and non-linear stories in foreign language-learning that are worth exploring. Therefore, at least in part, I did so. My own experience has helped me to never underestimate or oversimplify other learners' struggles and realities. I absolutely agree with Ken Robinson (2009, p. 166), who stated: "*One of the essential problems for education is that most countries subject their schools to the fast-food model of quality assurance when they should be adopting the Michelin model instead. The future for education is not in standardizing but in customizing; not in promoting groupthink and "deindividuation" but in cultivating the real depth and dynamism of human abilities of every sort*."

Chapter 1. Introduction

The aim of this reflective overview is to consider how new knowledge outlined in the selected seven studies, published between 2016 and 2020, made a significant contribution to the field of linguistics and education. The articles' objective was to unveil the complex dynamics between teachers and students in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, and the strategies that may foster or hinder motivation and learning success. The findings of the papers allowed a complex and new approach to emerge, while respecting the wish of learners to maintain and honour their cultures and identities. Such an approach was sorely needed in a new global era, internationalisation, massive foreign-language learning and new communication styles (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Yuan, Li & Yu, 2018; Galloway & Numajiri, 2019). More than a decade ago, these emerging complications were partly outlined by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009, p. 1), who stated that "*Over the past decades the world traversed by the L2 learner has changed dramatically - it is now increasingly characterized by linguistic and sociocultural diversity and fluidity, where language use, ethnicity, identity and hybridity have become a complex issue*".

1.1 Background of teaching and learning English as a foreign language

During the past decades, foreign language teaching and learning has become customary worldwide, targeting individuals of all ages, cultures, creeds and economic backgrounds. English has become the more widely taught foreign language in the world, partly due to the cultural, educational and economic assets of the countries where it is spoken. English is taught at institutional level ranging from pre-kindergarten classes, primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities and evening courses. Besides this, millions of learners pay for private lessons with tutors, or benefit from volunteers' willingness to teach English, either in organized sessions in classrooms or via online meetings. This fervour is not simply a new fashion to fade soon. Nowadays, English is the language of many international business negotiations and technology-related jobs. In many countries, English as a foreign language is not an extra skill: it has become an unwritten rule that is understood and accepted by both employers and (future) employees (Xie, 2017).

Throughout history, similar mass language learning scenarios have been associated with political oppressions and invasions, where inhabitants of foreign lands were 'invited' to learn a foreign language and to adopt its culture and religion. While the current world situation is more sophistically intricate, a great number of countries still have uneasy emotions towards the extensive need to incorporate a geographically and culturally foreign language into their everyday lives to the degree of being balanced bilingual. This situation is further entangled by the ever growing international and intercontinental migration, where individuals decide to polish their existing English knowledge, or learn English as opposed to learning the target country's own language. Noah Chomsky stated in the mid-1960s: "*Language embodies the world view of a culture and is unique to the culture that created it. It reflects values and concepts that are deemed to be the most important by a culture. A language describes the culture it comes from.*" (Chomsky, as cited in Maynard & Nyambi, 2012, p. 67).

Unfortunately, Chomsky's description no longer echoes English language learners' perceptions and attitudes. During the global rush to learn English, many of its cultural and identity related elements were ignored by new learners and users (Crystal, 2000). Such an

approach towards the learning and use of English should be considered by the English teaching industry. New strategies should be created in order to fit in within the aims, needs, motivations and specific circumstances of the learners without becoming too relaxed about the quality of their services (Brevik & Rindal, 2020). This should be accomplished by helping individuals to establish appropriate learning goals and strategies, and avoiding teaching techniques that are not in line with their desired goal (Yuan, Li & Yu, 2018).

Historically, foreign language teaching and learning has not been of primary need for an average person, except in bi- and multilingual societies where language contact is a vital part of everyday life and languages are acquired simultaneously and/or in a natural context. Within such an environment, learning an additional language, at least to a certain extent, is embedded in a familiar cultural, cognitive and psychological ambience (Dorian, 2006). Nowadays, foreign language learning is not necessarily happening by being exposed to it and by having regular contact with its speakers. This, in particular, is the case of the English language. The latest statistics available from the British Council (2013) state that, in 2013, around 1.75 billion people were proficient to a 'useful level' in English as a second language. Furthermore, a further growth of 40 per cent is estimated in the demand for English in the near future, particularly in Asian, African and South American countries. The statistics also state that even in Russia, English language education is compulsory from grade four (age 10-11) and, for future civil servants, fluency in the English language is going to be compulsory.

 However, such demand does not necessarily reflect equal development in new teaching strategies that adapt to these new circumstances. It is vital to point out that not only are the practices and accepted strategies of foreign language learning under continuous change, but learners' aims and motivation as well (Dörnyei & Ottó 1998). In the case of learning English, students may not necessarily want to emigrate to an English speaking country and adopt its culture. Many learners are motivated to learn it as part of personal growth, for diplomacy, international business, for academic reasons, for travelling or to become a 'global citizen' who can work, live and communicate with individuals from a variety of geographical and cultural backgrounds (British Council, 2013). English, as a lingua franca, can also be considered as intellectual and cultural capital which promotes economic advantages, advanced cognitive flexibility and ensures an increased social space for its speakers (Weininger, 2003).

While English as a foreign language may seem an obvious asset to learners, researchers in this field offer a somewhat negative picture about learning-success rates (Gan, Humpreys & Hamp-Lyons, 2004; Souriyavongsa, Rany, Abidin & Leong, 2013). Unfortunately, despite the amount of time dedicated to it, the intensity of the courses and the highly qualified teachers, many learners fail to acquire a level which enables them to function in English according to their expectations. Additionally, regardless of effective teaching strategies, learners might not be willing to use the language outside the classroom (Xie, 2017; Shvidko, 2017). Foreign language education in general is a very time consuming activity and requires considerable economic resources either from the state or from the individual. Thus, learners' often low achievement points toward the necessity to re-examine the already existing teaching strategies and sometimes erroneous perceptions about motivation in this field.

1.2 Context – research questions

The studies presented for this PhD by Published Works were carried out with the aim of gaining new and deeper understandings of where foreign language education might be improved. During my experience of more than ten years as a teacher and lecturer in foreign countries, it became clear that many attitudes and educational strategies urgently needed a new perspective and modernization. The schools, private institutes and universities where the studies were carried out were found in Hungary, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia. In all these countries there was much emphasis placed on English language education, yet their inhabitants had relatively few chances to use it in their everyday life, and they rarely met foreigners in person. For the participants in these studies, English language education was either chosen voluntarily or presented as a compulsory subject during their educational path. In both scenarios, students had a very wide range of life circumstances and world-views, therefore, their perceptions, emotions and motivation toward learning English was expected to differ considerably. The aforementioned countries lie in different geographical zones, and have very different cultures and languages from one another. Nevertheless, in terms of English language education, their mainstream schools and their bilingual schools followed very similar patterns.

The presented seven articles provide a very clear panoramic view of the possible factors that are not fully understood, properly considered or are even wrongly assumed or completely ignored in the aforementioned countries' foreign language educational strategies. The articles consider motivation, including the lack of it, as a crucial element of possible learning success. Motivation, being a non-linear and non-static concept, was analysed from both learners' and educators' viewpoints. The articles intended to clarify the most common scenarios found in the classroom and behind the scenes, such as teacher-student emotional dynamics and educational strategies. The possible differences in perception, according to the students' gender, helped me to understand their opinions about learning, teachers and identity. Unveiling students' emotions was a crucial step in the deeper interpretation of how their sense of identity activates a variety of emotions towards the teachers and the target language itself. On the other hand, what was also of key importance was investigating whether the teachers' identity and emotions condition students' perceptions and learning practices, and whether they would further activate positive or unwanted behaviours and learning outcomes. This was so, because identifying these possible variables was perceived to help create a point of agreement between the groups. The triangulation of culturally embedded identity, emotions and the *perception* of the English language's *status quo* was examined from the students' perspectives. Considering the impact of foreign language learning in mainstream education with mostly local educators, as opposed to bilingual education with both local and foreign educators was also seen as a crucial factor. In addition, perceptions in consonance with the gender of the students further clarified attitudes. In the seven papers, a wide range of hypotheses and research questions were considered, with the aim of gaining a comprehensive view.

The questions below summarise the key research issues considered not individually in each paper, but rather throughout the entirety of the studies.

1) Which factors foster and hinder motivation in students to learn English?
2) Does learners' gender affect their learning styles, learning autonomy, emotions and motivation?
3) Are students conditioned by the teachers' nationality, teaching style and emotions?
4) Do learners perceive their national identities under threat in private or state bilingual institutions?

Chapter 2. Contextualizing teaching and learning English as a foreign language

This chapter aims to present the literature on which the articles were based. As the structure of this chapter covers the entirety of the concepts investigated, it was considered more intelligible to organize the ideas not in chronological order, as they appear in the articles, but rather in a reflective fashion that organizes the main ideas. While aiming to be concise, yet to cover every aspect of this psycho-linguistic maze, it was impossible to ignore Scott's words: "*The relationship between teaching and research is among the most intellectually tangled, managerially complex and politically contentious issues in mass higher education systems*" (2005, p. 53).

2.1 The need for English

A fact that has deeply influenced my wish to study the learning and teaching processes of the English language was the perceived need for it in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. During my ten years spent in Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria and Hungary, I observed that, according to locals, it was shameful for younger people (up to their forties) not to be able to have a simple conversation in English. The knowledge of English was also seen as the key to happiness by accessing better and higher paying jobs, international education or high social status. Not surprisingly, on the official and on the personal level, individuals perceived that the key point was to develop and master good oral and written skills in English (Üredi & Ulum, 2019). When I started to work in Mongolia in 2010, the biggest surprise was that textbooks used in higher education were mostly found in English, as there was limited appropriate material in the Mongolian language. This situation appeared to seriously impact students' knowledge and preparedness, particularly because their foreign language skills in most cases were seriously under-developed. For example, in particular, medical textbooks in Mongolian for students were dangerously scarce, pushing future and practising doctors to learn foreign languages in order to acquire proper knowledge and skills. Only recently, in 2019, the Mongolian Government acquired the rights to translate a variety of medical textbooks into Mongolian from English, with the help of foreign-trained highly competent doctors (Montsame, 2019).

Besides the official requirements, younger generations often recognized that English language has become a necessity in the sectors of tourism, media and the internet. In Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan, where mining (with foreign collaboration) and tourism provide a considerable part of the country's income, the English language and its education has become a priority. Moreover, including Hungary and Bulgaria, foreign trade is mostly undertaken in English. Such strategy allows more international business opportunities and increases the companies' visibility through the companies' websites. On the personal level, people often follow news, celebrities, YouTubers, influencers, and bloggers and vloggers on different platforms through the medium of English.

To address the increasing need to learn English as a foreign language in recent years, language learning institutions flourished in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. They offered a range of courses from general English to specific knowledge focused courses in the areas of business, medicine, aviation, etc. However, while English teaching business continued to increase and spread, the quality of their services were often questionable (Sammons, David & Grey, 2016; Thomas, Kyriakides & Townsend, 2016). Such unfortunate low-quality language education

was often due to the institutions' choice of teachers. Local teachers were primarily equipped only to transmit grammatical knowledge. Foreign teachers were often contracted based exclusively on their passport and their physical features. To illustrate, foreigners teaching in Asia were mostly expected to be white and preferably handsome, but not of Asian background. In Eastern Europe, foreigners' education and being a native speaker of English also counted. For example, a native speaker of English who studied mathematics or biology, was perceived as perfectly qualified to teach English, regardless of his/her knowledge about the language itself. These facts were fundamental to understand why language education was not reaching its potential. Unfortunately, many of the 'teachers' in my studies, even with the best intentions and real interest in teaching, often said they had difficulty in implementing strategies and understanding educational psychology. During the last decade, I have informally asked many teachers about their teaching methodology. Local teachers believed in discipline, while the foreigners believed in 'being positive' and 'going with the flow'. The next section will provide an overview as to why such factors were not satisfactory per se, and which other elements should be taken into consideration.

2.2 Motivation, identity, gender and emotions: Unquantifiability and non-linearity

Although the English language has become a need for many and it has been heavily promoted by the education systems and workforces, not everybody wanted to learn English strictly for need. In today's interconnected and international world, many learners consider the knowledge of English as part of their personal development and cultural and intellectual assets (Weenink, 2008; Fang, Chen & Elyas, 2020). During my studies, significant elements surfaced and gave a different, unexpected turn to my understanding of language learning motivation. In fact, in my homeland, Hungary, language learning was historically associated with migration to a richer land. Such massive migrations had roots in historical and political events, such as the revolution of 1956, when many Hungarians had to leave. Bulgaria, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan were no different in this sense, as foreign language learning was strongly correlated with migration to other nations and the ability to be able to feed the family. This 'forced migration' from lands of war and poverty shaped new linguistic scenarios for the migrants and for the host country as well. In optimal circumstances those individuals fully, or, at least partially, became adapted to the host country's language requirements (Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006). While such practices were common even a few decades ago, nowadays these countries have relatively stable economies and individuals often prefer to stay and find solutions for their situation at home. Paradoxically, language learning, English in particular, flourishes more than ever. Therefore, at least from the perspective of the English language, notions of migration should be viewed in a new light.

Many students and even most teachers who participated in my studies viewed migration not as a concept of necessity, but associated it rather with curiosity, adventure, studies, research, or preference for a different culture and/or climate. In their case, English was perceived as a global currency, particularly for frequent travellers. While motivation in such contexts could be defined as instrumental, where the language is used as a tool to achieve one's goal, a new aspect of motivation emerged as well. Although this new motivation was instrumental too, as English is used for purposes other than for migration, it also became integrative, as learners wanted to integrate themselves (without giving up their identity and values) into the

community of global English speakers (Galloway & Numajiri, 2019; Chen, Chen & Fang, 2021).

Motivation for learning English has been studied from a myriad of perspectives. As Dörnyei (2006) stated, motivation is an exceptionally complex issue involving (and entangling) various areas of an individual's life. In fact, it was not necessary or realistic to isolate and focus on only one type of motivation in foreign language learning, as motivations may coincide, overlap or even fluctuate in magnitude and intensity over time (Fryer, 2019; Teng & Lixun, 2020). Whereas it was important for me to focus on learners' motivation to learn a foreign language, factors that demotivated students were not to be overlooked. Wimolmas' (2012) study with Thai undergraduate students pointed out that students could be disappointed or even lose interest and motivation to learn English if a specific language learning content or approach was forced on them from a wrong or useless perspective.

Throughout the years when I worked as a teacher and conducted studies, I often met demotivation and loss of interest among students of all ages, due to inappropriate teaching methodologies and unrelatable, if not unintelligible, textbooks. For example, a great number of topics in English learning textbooks focused on the British Royal Family or American holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Independence day, but also presented a variety of topics that were disagreeable to some learners. Such 'uncomfortable' topics were related to gender issues, such as the LGBTQ topics, and locally unacceptable manifestations of gender-atypical behaviours. A good example is that, in Bulgaria, students tapped their ears and laughed nervously when, during a British Council listening exercise, the male actor spoke with a very feminine voice. While some Western students were more used to such variety of non-traditional approaches, most Asian and Eastern European students I taught considered these issues not fit to be learning material. Another uncomfortable theme was the dress code and the often presented 'Western lifestyle' pictures. Although certain clothing and make up fashions, such as those of the 1970s and 1980s is to be considered history now, illustrations and detailed explanations of it in textbooks provoked unease among students and resulted in an uncomfortable activity. Therefore, Boy George may not be the most ideal candidate to illustrate 'everyday life in Britain' when teaching Central Asian students from Buddhist and Muslim backgrounds. Another unwelcome feature was the learning/singing of national anthems. While, as a curiosity, an anthem can be played if there are no objections, no activity should require students to learn it or to sing it, because such pieces have necessarily political implications. Cultural content in such textbooks should not be completely eradicated however. Cultural needs should be taken into account when teaching material, syllabi and teaching strategies are created and developed for a specific country. This is a necessary measure, responding to the reality that individuals vary in personality, cultural background, goals and attitudes, and their motivation may differ in definition, nature and beliefs (Parker, Taylor, Keefer & Summerfeldt, 2018). Consequently, policy makers and teachers' attitudes should reflect students' needs and motivation as much as is possible and be culturally acceptable. Then, as Nuri Gömleksiz (2010) points out, even students with limited talent and skills, but a very high degree of motivation, will be able to become the most successful language learners.

Being selective about the cultural content of teaching strategies, topics and textbooks was also important as my focus was on countries where English has never been culturally present, and the language has only recently gained common and massive interest. In these ex-socialist

countries where the submitted studies took place, English language learning was historically not important. On the contrary, historically there was a considerable effort at governmental level to teach other languages, such as Russian and German, and socialism-related cultural facts and world-views. In these countries, many students' motivation to learn a foreign language was inextricably linked to the condition of preserving their national, ideological and cultural identity (Galloway & Numajiri, 2019). In time, most of the socialist countries opted for a more open and favourable attitude towards learning English for a variety of purposes, yet, their methods may have drastically differed from approaches in other parts of the world (Pavlenko, 2003). Attitudes regarding English education in countries such as the People's Republic of China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation indicate that, whilst the benefits of knowing a foreign language were welcome, the cultural elements of it were seen as not compulsory, or even deemed unnecessary. As Cohen (2004) pointed out, in the educational setting, Mongolians were often suspicious that the foreign teachers' backgrounds, culture, political and religious ideologies and teaching styles would interfere with students' developing social-cultural spirit according to the Mongolian standards. As he further explained, in order to prevent the foreign influence, in the early 2000s there was an attempt to create a 'Mongolian English' which would only focus on using the English language as a communication tool, yet avoiding immersion in its cultural elements and language-related social features. The same strategy was popular in China (Teng & Lixun, 2020) and in Russia as well (Pavlenko, 2003). In Hungary in the late 1980s, when I took my first English classes at school, the main references to 'English speaking cultures' were the series Baywatch and Dallas, while on the British side, Mr Bean and You rang m'lord? As all foreign television material was carefully dubbed into Hungarian instead of using subtitles, subtleties, different accents or cultural differences were hard to perceive. Pamela Anderson and Lady Diana spoke with the same official Hungarian accents. While all seemed fascinating for the eye, it did not help in placing English in a realistic context in the learners' heads. Needless to say that, at that time, the general moral values taught at school did not match any of the panoramas offered in those foreign productions. In fact, teachers did not teach any English language related mannerisms, appropriate communication styles or emotional recognition across cultures. The ineffectiveness of such policies was evident, when later, in my late teenage years I wanted to offer help to a confused tourist in Budapest's main train station, at that moment, comically or tragically, I realized that while I had acquired all the vocabulary to help, in class, the teacher had never instructed us how to politely address any issue with a foreigner. All the knowledge accumulated over the years was unusable in a needed circumstance. The teachers by that time did not find it necessary to bother with such details.

While more than two decades have passed since that incident occurred, nowadays teachers in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are not necessarily better prepared, or have a greater understanding of all the implications of teaching a foreign language. A significant problem that I perceived often came from the teachers' and institutions' unpreparedness and their attempt to teach English as a simple school subject. In fact, in the institutions where the studies took place, this strategy failed on numerous occasions, as neither the desired grammatical knowledge nor the fluency was achieved (Akbari, 2016; Teng & Lixun, 2020). Due to inefficient teaching strategies, learners often considered English as more difficult than other subjects. The main difficulty stemmed from the need to harmonise listening, speaking, writing and reading skills. Additionally, having to internalise new grammatical structures, and

culture-related information, but not having real opportunities to practice the learned material did hinder learners' enthusiasm (Akbari, 2016). I perceived that learning a foreign language was also heavily conditioned by the individual's first language. This factor presented unexpected challenges both in its acquisition and further use (Nor & Rashid, 2018). Moreover, if teaching strategies failed to match learners' specific needs and perceptions, negative academic emotions emerged (Schutz, Cross, Hong & Osbon, 2007). It seemed, therefore, vital to investigate emotions in the classroom. During the time period of my investigations, research on positive emotions in the classroom, and towards the teachers in particular, were sharply on the rise. Available studies pointed towards the importance of promoting positive emotions, as they greatly conditioned the learning experience, classroom behaviour and ultimately motivation (Linnenbrink, 2007; Op't Eynde, De Corte & Verschaffel, 2007; Ketonen, 2017, Aktan, 2019). Nevertheless, I perceived an important gap here. In fact, emotions and cultural variables were usually investigated separately. However, I felt that the relationship between emotions and events could vary depending on the learners' culture. Thus, students perceiving emotions in a dissimilar fashion could condition their attitudes towards foreign-language learning.

When I decided to investigate emotions in the classroom, learners' and even teachers' gender was important. Gender differences seemed particularly significant, as often learners' gender offered an additional if not determining direction on cultural variables, emotions, goals and motivations (Chaffee, Lou, Noels, & Katz, 2019). I relied on Connell's (2005: 1801) words as an impetus for considering gender and emotion: "*Gender inequalities are embedded in the multi-dimensional structure of relationships between women and men, which, as the modern sociology of gender shows, operates at every level of experience, from economic arrangements, culture and the state to interpersonal relationships and individual emotions*". The focus of the presented papers and this reflective analysis was not exclusively on gender inequality. Nevertheless, Connell's idea inspired me to consider gender as a decisive factor in learning. From a purely anatomical viewpoint, male and female brains display biochemical and functional differences throughout different stages in life (Gibbs, 2009). Moreover, cultural and sociological criteria and physiological factors may impact and govern the individual's cognitive and emotional development according to his/her gender (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Šarić Drnas, 2020). In many cultures, societal and traditionalist views urge if not force individuals to embrace what seem to be appropriate for males and females (Kissau, 2006). Such theories, regardless of their perceived accuracy and ethicality, indicate that gender is a factor to take into account in education in many countries. Indeed, differences in motivation and emotions towards learning in general have been detected among male and female learners (Hayat, Salehi & Kojuri, 2018). Furthermore, in the case of foreign-language learning, research has unveiled that abilities traditionally attributed to females, such as social interactivity and verbal communication skills in general, facilitate language acquisition, and that females' outlook, conduct, and attitudes differ from those of male students (Nikitina, & Furuoka, 2007).

Interestingly, there were many existing studies regarding female students' more positive attitudes towards the English teacher's persona and teaching skills. According to research, they also achieved proficiency faster and better, and displayed more pride, enjoyment, positive attitudes, satisfaction and strategic use of English than their male peers (Weis, Heikamp &

Trommsdorff, 2013; Główka, 2014; Dewaele, Macintyre, Bordeau & Dewaele, 2016). In light of this, it seemed that male students were considerably inferior in their attitudes, capabilities and learning success. However, such theories had a very narrow focus and failed to consider male students' side and reasons for their apparent 'inferior' attitudes. In fact, I wanted to investigate such attitudes from a broader perspective. My intention was to identify the differences between male and female learners' aims and motivations, not to incite unnecessary competition between the two groups. My intention with the research undertaken for the papers presented was not to advocate for the design of two different curricula, but to be more flexible with the learning activities and materials whenever it could be adapted to genders' different needs. In fact, learning goals and styles were of major importance in maintaining –or even developing- motivation. Therefore, it was not surprising that whenever teaching style – learning style differences emerged among teachers and learners of different gender, frustration levels were considerably more elevated than in a same-gender student-teacher interaction (Oxford, 1993).

2.3 Learning styles and learning autonomy: their specific connection to foreign language learning

The previously mentioned possible differences in emotions and gender in language learning was seen as strongly connected to the learners' learning styles. Relying on Mehrdad and Aghar (2013), the term 'learning styles' can be best defined by its three behavioural aspects in an individual: 1) cognitive style, or the patterns of beliefs that might condition students' behaviour in a learning situation; 2) the prospect of identifying and pursuing situations consistent with one's own learning patterns and 3) the tendency to practise specific learning strategies and to avoid others. These definitions were perceived of particular interest, as most participants in my studies had already established communication styles based on their own culture. However, it seemed to me that in learning a foreign language, such communication styles and teaching and learning strategies needed to be negotiated. Preferably, teaching styles should have been flexibly adapted to students' needs (Manning, 2007; Felder, & Henriques, 1995). Moreover, in the main teaching practice, a more generalised view on the selection and presentation of teaching material was preferred. Books, workbooks and visual and audio materials were selected in order to satisfy all learners in the classroom. While seemingly practical, this approach failed to realise that learners have individual goals, necessities and attitudes towards learning a foreign language. These attitudes may not be sharply separated in black and white groups, and may significantly be conditioned by the students' character, previous learning experiences and their view on education (Oxford, 1993). In fact, in a considerable number of societies, teacher-student power structure was rigidly established. In these circumstances considering students' preferences in the classroom was even seen as inappropriate, given educators' established role in society (Bada & Okan, 2000; Xiao, 2006). In the countries I investigated, which had all been under communist rule at one point, this attitude has definitely survived, although had softened somewhat in Bulgaria and Hungary as opposed to Central Asia.

During the period of the studies from 2014 to 2020, many teachers experienced student' unwillingness to accept and resistance towards specific educational strategies and activities in the classroom. While some learners preferred memorising grammar rules, and to be rather passive participants, others preferred to be actively involved in learning activities. However,

collaboration could hardly be forced, it had to be negotiated (Oga-Baldwin, 2019; Oxford, 1993). Therefore, I felt it was essential to identify students' current needs and preferences. It was also important to design and implement suitable activities that might transform teaching into a more enjoyable and successful experience (Parkinson & Dinsmore, 2019). Also, I perceived that this strategy might help students to establish more active and autonomous attitudes, which would enable them to take charge of their own learning. Nevertheless, gaps between teacher and learners' views on this matter was seen to result in negative learning outcomes (Schmidt, Boraie & Kassabgy, 1998; Mehrdad & Ahghar, 2013).

Interestingly, more self-conscious learners reported being capable of transferring some of their already consolidated learning strategies into new situations. As a result, they were able to master new skills to thrive in their less dominant learning styles over time. Thus, learners being aware of their own learning style shaped their identity, their attitudes and the way experiences were perceived and understood, and their ability to use previous structures and knowledge in new situations (Mulalic, Shah & Ahmad, 2009; Muijs, Reynolds & Kyriakides, 2016).

Having overviewed how motivation, identity, gender and emotions affect foreign language learning, the need naturally emerged to find empirical ways to empower students to increase and strengthen their own potential; namely, developing learning-autonomy. Learning autonomy is defined as the ability to take charge of one's own learning (Holec, 1981; Benson, 2011). Thus, learners becoming self-aware and autonomous in their own knowledge-acquisition was seen as crucial in the process of further cultivating their ability to make convenient choices in educational settings, and to construct their own life circumstances (Martin, 2004; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). I found that Reinders' (2010) framework of *constructivism* provided learners with a broader variety of language-learning strategies. His approach prioritised the establishment and (re)formulation of new knowledge-acquiring strategies instead of focusing only or mostly on traditional teaching-learning practices. Nevertheless, Reinders himself acknowledged that in order to successfully apply his model, students should already be fully aware of their own learning styles and strengths. Moreover, definitions of proactivity and self-motivation should have the same meaning for both teachers and learners. Thus, examining and establishing patterns in individuals' learning styles helped me to identify specific cognitive and behavioural features. These aspects acted as crucial factors in understanding and developing learner-autonomy.

Unfortunately, identifying one's own learning style and the use of learning autonomy did not come naturally to many, mostly because learners were not acquainted with its existence and importance. In fact, if teachers themselves were not knowledgeable about such practices, the possibility of helping their students develop autonomy was very scarce, this leading to teacher-dependence and a less positive overall learning outcome. Therefore, I found that teachers' understanding about learning-autonomy, and their competence to transmit it, is a key factor to successful learning (Nakata, 2014). During their training, pre-service teachers should have access to courses that facilitate such knowledge. Unfortunately, none of the teachers to whom I had the opportunity to talk during my studies had ever attended such courses, and teaching learning-autonomy to their students was a nearly impossible concept for them to grasp. Most of them believed, that their role as a teacher was contrary to the concept of autonomous students. However, later many acknowledged, that although learning-autonomy was a very

unusual idea, it made sense, and would make both their and their students' life easier. Furthermore, according to my studies, a highly positive aspect of learning-autonomy was that it could be developed despite external, often incontrollable psychological and physical circumstances. Such factors included dislike/bias towards the teachers, low quality of education provided, and cultural, religious and gender-wise expectations (Cohen, 2004; Nakata, 2014; 2016; Chaffee; Lou; Noels & Katz, 2019). The following chapter focuses on the methodology that was applied in the case of the articles and this thesis. It also highlights the complex ethical steps that were followed in order to ensure participants' emotional and psychological wellbeing.

Chapter 3. Methodological approach

3.1 Geography of the studies

I worked in a range of countries in Europe and Asia over the last decade. Although I carried out studies in each of them, not all these studies were included in the thesis. I decided for the cohesiveness of my PhD by published works to include only those countries that had common features from a language learning viewpoint. In fact, for a better understanding of the heterogeneity in foreign-language learning related scenarios, the participants for the studies were carefully selected from different educational, cultural, social and economic backgrounds. The included studies were carried out in four countries, namely Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria and Hungary. None of them has English as an official or unofficial second language. Also, they have never been under British rule, therefore have no possible fossilized cultural or linguistic elements to rely on when learning English as a foreign language. In fact, all these countries were part of the Eastern bloc until the 1990s, where languages such as Russian and German instead of English served as *lingua francas* and were taught in all the schools. The population of each of these countries ranges between three and ten million, with an extensive history of migration to different, yet not necessarily English-speaking countries, for a variety of purposes.

3.2 Considering the gaps in foreign-language learning research

Designing research for an improved understanding of foreign language teaching and learning required a sensitive approach towards the participants' complex emotional needs. It was crucial to validate their anxiety and capacity, and to respect their linguistic and cultural identity. The challenge was to capture and to convey properly such needs while taking into account the individuals' ability to adjust to or adopt new systems and strategies. Attempts to interpret human behaviour in artificial language-learning scenarios based on merely cognitive processes would oversimplify the experience and bias the future design of successful educational strategies. Therefore, empirical approaches, where a wide range of social and psychological features were considered, amplified understanding and positive prospects on the subject in a very noticeable way.

While I consider that the articles submitted form a coherent whole, from which meaningful conclusions emerged, I also realize that some concepts and issues could have been investigated additionally. One such factor that could have added to the quality of the studies was to include the variable of extroversion-introversion. I now admit that understanding attitudes and emotions in light of extroversion-introversion additionally to male-female differences may have somewhat challenged my findings. Moreover, including questions regarding motivation-saturation may have helped to discover how much motivation was effectively inspiring and useful. This could have unveiled some factors that are seen as meaningless and unrelatable motivational strategies that are unprocessable and may eventually turn into apathy or demotivation. Although I found these concepts retrospectively relevant, they do not decrease the value my studies and can be a great topic for future research.

3.3 A brief philosophical rationale

I feel it is important to clarify that my approach when undertaking all my studies aligned with interpretivist epistemology. While during my first three studies I used exclusively quantitative methods, this was simply due to very restricted access to the participants and, by no means did I intend to interpret things from the positivist viewpoint. Although I acknowledge that mixed methods would have reflected more my interpretivist stance, the data gained through only quantitative methods were still valuable. Reflecting on my approaches and research methods, I can also see how I evolved as a researcher. In fact, during the last six years, my conviction against a purely positivist approach in studying human behaviour grew considerably, which reflects well in the fashion in which I structured and wrote this thesis.

3.4 The thesis

The writing of the thesis constituted desk-top research by revisiting the articles submitted. Although all the information was based on previously published material, the entirety of information reviewed again also needed to be systemically organized according to the main ideas described in the articles. In order to produce a work that detailed all findings and answered all questions, it was essential to understand the methods and the reason behind them that were applied in the articles.

3.5 Qualitative approach and triangulation

The presented articles encompassed the review of primary and secondary sources, quantitative, qualitative and observation techniques. When choosing the methods, two main factors were taken into account. The first and most important issue was to reduce participants' bias towards the researcher. In all cases, I carefully considered whether my person would alter participants' responses or behaviours (Wragg, 1978). Class-observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews were applied only in those studies where positive conditions were met. For example, in certain circumstances where the participants were not familiar with me, younger students could have been too distracted by the presence of a foreigner. In the case of older students and teachers, they could have been too prone to express politically correct views, if asked face to face. Nevertheless, when participants knew me, they were selected regardless of their previously expressed opinions on education. This way, all views expressed had importance, regardless of whether they were favourable or not towards me or my studies' outcome. These factors were always considered in the context of the particular country together with its customs and culture.

As most of the time students' and teachers' attitudes and perceptions were at the focus, the data, when qualitative, required an inductive analysis. Semi-structured (papers IV and VI) and unstructured (paper VII) interviews allowed not only the exploration of 'core' and 'officially acceptable' opinions of the interviewees, but their personal stories and experiences also (Shank, 2006). This encompassed reading, reflecting on, inferring from and interpreting the raw transcripts and notes taken during the interviews. From this process, I developed interpretations of the data and derived explanations and understandings which fairly and comprehensively explained the phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

During the analysis of my interviews, the steps traditionally used in thematic analysis allowed me to interpret my data in a comprehensible and reproducible fashion. The flexibility of thematic analysis fitted well with my often complex findings. I used the constructionist epistemology approach to understand the way my participants made meaning of their experience. Furthermore, in my data interpretation process, I adopted experiential orientation in order to accentuate meaning and meaningfulness as attributed by my interviewees. Moreover, by predominantly using inductive approach, I feel I fully respected the data, yet, I could also construct a narrative that would reflect my participants' reality, without forcing their responses into my possible preconceptions. Finally, by using latent coding, the analysis of the data allowed me to consider participants' complex views and perceptions, so I could interpret and not simply describe the gathered data.

During the thematic analysis I acted in accordance with the following steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019; Byrne, 2022):

1) Familiarised with the data and generated an initial list of ideas.
2) Generated initial codes for my data by organising them into meaningful groups (i.e.: emotions; behaviour of gender groups, etc.) and
3) Identified codes (in vivo and values coding).
4) Identified the main themes (i.e. expectations, circumstances, bias or previous experiences); and designed a preliminary thematic map.
5) Identified relationship between codes and themes.
6) Rearranged themes if or when necessary, as some themes needed refinement by either separating them into two different themes or merging them into one.
7) Ensured a clear distinction between the themes.
8) Reviewed my code extracts to see if there was a coherent pattern.
9) Reworked my themes when necessary (i.e. in some instances, emotions proved to be a too general theme, as it involved too much information on too many levels).
10) Considered the validity of the themes in relation to the research.
11) Defined and named the themes.
12) Wrote an analysis about each theme and identified the 'story' behind them.
13) Identified the relation between the themes in order to construct the meaning of the participants' answers.
14) Identified clearly all my themes, having focused on the extracts that best captured the essence of each theme.
15) Wrote up the report. While writing, I focused on going beyond simply providing data, in order to tell a 'story' that made and argument and gave answers to my research questions.

The choice of written semi-structured interviews in the case of paper VI was very important as the event took place in the classroom with the observation of the classroom teacher. The students were fluent enough to express their opinions verbally as well, but the written form ensured anonymity and they felt more freedom to express their real thoughts. The guiding open ended questions helped them to express specific concerns, yet to maintain the focus of the investigation.

Class observation alongside unstructured interviews were used in paper VII. This was perceived appropriate, as '*a major virtue of qualitative studies is their capacity to tell a well-*

substantiated story' (MacNaughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford, 2010, p. 171). In fact, the unstructured interviews often happened at crucial moments, when both students and teacher may have felt less pressure to express socially or even professionally correct views. Capturing such moments opened a secret door, which would have remained closed unless the perfect timing allowed otherwise. In fact, in the presentation of these results, the comprehension of the broader view and essence of certain situations was facilitated by including "*the most noteworthy quotes...to give readers a flavour of what statements were made in support of particular themes*" (Breen, 2006, p. 472).

Class observation was also crucial in the success of paper VII, as most of the learners were familiar enough with me so as to ignore my presence and to behave according to their usual routine. Much information came to the fore when the behaviour of the students was observed during the Mongolian teachers' lessons as opposed to the foreign teachers' class. In this paper, qualitative methods, such as observation and unstructured interviews were applied, and these methods enabled me to see the situation not only from one perspective, but to apply triangulation of data. Methodological triangulation was particularly important as the usage of a variety of methods to examine and understand a single event helped to form a clearer picture (Soteroula, 2014).

In papers V and VI, both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were used, mostly because of the teachers' preference. In both cases teachers found the idea of filling a questionnaire unimpressive, yet they were happy to answer interview questions in a written form at home at a time convenient for them. It was very important not to pressure the teachers time wise, as that might have influenced the content and quality of their responses. On the other hand, in the same studies learners were given questionnaires, many with open-ended questions. They were asked to complete these in silence and there was a clear time frame for them to finish. This was considered a preferable method in order to avoid them discussing the 'solutions'. Peer bias was just as important to avoid as researcher bias (Wragg, 1978). Also, the rather strict time frame helped them not to overthink the answers, but to express their most immediate thoughts and feelings regarding specific ideas.

3.6 Quantitative approach

In the case of papers I, II and III, only quantitative methodology was used. This was due to the fact that, during the allowed time frame for the study, no students or teachers were available for interviews. While mixed methods would have been preferred, after careful consideration, I believed that the findings would still reveal some understanding about learners' attitudes and preferences. As previously stated, papers V and VI featured questionnaires as well. Quantitative data were always collected by questionnaires specifically designed by me for each study using the Likert-scale as the preferred method for the measurement of the participants' answers. The adopted quantitative research methods intended to acquire self-reported data from the participants with the aim of reporting existing conditions and determining points of reference to be used for comparisons, and/or demonstrating the connection between specific events (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012). These data were always analysed by taking a percentage of the students' and teachers' opinions, which in turn were organized into graphs, tables and figures. Retrospectively, I must acknowledge a weakness in my statistical analysis, which was largely descriptive. I should have used inferential statistical

analysis, particularly where I argued for considerable gender differences in some of my studies. In fact, my conclusions on gender differences derived partly from my observations, but were not fully clear from the statistics.

Some of the questionnaires contained a section with open-ended questions, which enabled the participants to clarify and substantiate their ideas, thus, their perceptions were not reduced to simple numbers (Basit, 2010). The results were interpreted by content and narrative analysis. In a few cases (papers V and I) the questionnaires were translated into Hungarian and Russian respectively as the participating students' proficiency was not good enough to perfectly understand the questions in the questionnaire.

All participants were selected using non-probability or purposive sampling, since my aim was to target a particular group (English learners) and not the general population (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The sample size and background always accurately represented the intended target group. Depending on the focus of the study, different schools were chosen that would guarantee the representation of the desirable strata. For example, institutions with single-gender education were not considered, as some of the papers' focus was gender differences in the classroom. Schools with a majority of native English speaking students were also discarded, as their identity and attitudes towards language learning (which, in this case would be their first language) would have conflicted with the local students' struggles and viewpoints.

3.7 Literature reviews as primary and secondary data sources

Literature reviews as primary and secondary data source were considered of key importance in the design of the studies. Reviewing previous studies was particularly helpful in avoiding repetition of older concepts and theories, and it highlighted new paths where new research and knowledge was needed. In particular, gaps were found between academic theories on teaching and realistic, classroom and learner-friendly practices. Also, in previous literature, concepts such as emotions or learning-style preferences were investigated in a mostly isolated fashion, and did not consider the cultural background and previous educational style of the learners. By identifying such gaps, I could analyse previous literature reviews as a conscious way of formulating and establishing new knowledge from a social constructivist viewpoint (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007). Moreover, the careful examination of other academic works considerably enhanced research design, data analysis techniques and helped to contextualize findings within a broader understanding and knowledge. The literature review was always processed by content analysis, by carefully reading and placing the relevant material into categories and subdivisions based on their meaningfulness and contribution to the research in question. Therefore, the emerging research and new knowledge continually travelled back and forth between the older literature and the concepts investigated and my aim of producing new academic concepts and understandings. While keeping informed about the historical and latest scholarly findings, the selection of such materials was extremely careful, avoiding the consideration of books, papers, presentations and theses from journals and sources of questionable background (Cartney, 2012).

3.8 Ethical considerations

In all submitted papers, trustworthiness was considered a key principle which guided research design, data collection procedures and representation of the findings. Drawing upon Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for evaluating qualitative studies, four major concepts were taken into account. *Credibility*, which represents the researcher's trustworthiness in handling and evaluating the data, *transferability*, or the prospect of the findings' applicability in other contexts, *dependability*, or the evidence that the findings could be consistent if replicated in a variety of contexts, and *confirmability*, or establishing that the findings are derived from the data, instead of the researcher's imagination, interest or bias. Finally, I perceived continuous reflexivity as a positive path in augmenting trustworthiness throughout the studies (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004; Cousin, 2009; Cartney, 2012).

The ethical principles followed throughout the entirety of the studies were rigorously based on the ethical guidelines provided by the British Education Research Association (BERA) (2018). BERA's key concepts that shaped and directed every aspect of the studies were respect for all participants, respect for knowledge reviewed and acquired, and respect for the quality of previous and newly generated educational research. In the case of each study, all individuals' dignity and freedom were respected, and on all occasions participants were treated impartially and sensitively regardless of their age, gender, nationality, socio-economic background and cultural identity. Therefore, before proceeding with data collection, consent for conducting the studies was obtained from the schools' directors and teachers. All participants, students and teachers were properly informed about the aim of the studies, and that no financial benefit or higher grades were offered for their contribution. In paper VII, young students from 2nd grade (six years) onward were observed. In this particular case, the observation did not require any kind of communication or activity with them. According to local (Mongolian) customs, the classroom-teachers bear all responsibility for the children in their classes during school time. Therefore, with the classroom-teachers and the administration's consent and knowledge, I had the opportunity to conduct this study.

All valid participants volunteered and no one was forced or misled regarding the nature of their collaboration. Also, their anonymity, as well as the option to withdraw their participation were guaranteed. Here, it is important to emphasise the '*voluntariness*' of participation in the studies, as participants were sometimes my students and colleagues, and they might have felt pressure to participate in the projects (Pritchard, 2002, p. 6). Such attitudes would have seriously compromised the integrity and validity of the studies. To minimise research bias, I first explained the nature of the study and that it was aimed to understand students' and teachers' attitudes better. All teachers were offered the opportunity to participate in each study, yet, in the beginning, not many were interested. Here emotional validation had a great impact. I demonstrated gratitude for their time in listening to me, and all teachers were assured that I was fully aware how busy they were with their everyday responsibilities at school. Nevertheless, I made continuous efforts to speak about the study with the few teachers who decided to collaborate openly in each project. As these conversations focused on teaching strategies and how to improve student-teacher relationships, many more teachers became interested and offered to participate in the studies.

In the case of papers VI and VII, English speaking Mongolian teachers offered to translate for their only Mongolian speaking colleagues and to explain the aim of the study. Some of these only Mongolian speaking teachers decided to collaborate as their children also attended the school and they wanted to understand better the impact of bilingual schools on children. Nevertheless, there was much prejudice from the only Mongolian speaking teachers and many did not want to participate. Unfortunately, in such schools, foreign teachers earn up to six-seven times more salary than local people, and are often expected to work less. It is understandable that this practice caused some negative feelings. In the case of all studies there were both students and teachers who chose not to participate. Their decisions were accepted and no differential treatment or any form of insistence followed.

The only somewhat different scenario was in the study described in paper V. Here initially two teachers agreed to a written interview. However, when official consent was requested from the institute's director, she became very interested in the results. When she realised that only two teachers answered the interview questions, the director held a special meeting with all the teachers of the department (including the ones that previously filled the interview sheet) and she asked them the interview questions. This was undertaken under her own initiative and I was not aware of it until I received an e-mail with the director's summary of that meeting. The summary contained positive, negative and rather humorous opinions and descriptions. The content of the director's letter was included in the study, as I perceived it empirical and very relevant data that complemented well my research.

On average, the attitudes from the majority of teachers and students were very positive in all studies. They were keen to express their perceptions and concerns about a particular event, person or educational strategy. This required consideration of additional ethical responsibilities as, in some instances, older students filling questionnaires expressed anxiety regarding whether I would disclose the findings to their class teachers. In fact, this concern was not completely unfounded, as teachers were curious and fearful of the older students' written responses. These teachers would often ask me to show the original questionnaires but this request was never granted. One of the reasons was that teachers could identify their students' handwriting and these students later might experience negative attitudes from the teachers. At the same time, the viewpoints of participating teachers were not shared, as these might have often caused considerable difficulty for them with the schools' management and directory board. Therefore, quotations in the papers were handled with the utmost sensitivity, ensuring that it would not be possible to identify specific individuals from them. This was achieved by not identifying participants according to their name or the grade in which they were teaching or studying, and by simply referring to them by a number or, in the case of the students, by the grade they attended. As there were many tenth grades, and up to 30 students in each class, it was virtually impossible to identify the participants. Moreover, the quotations of the teachers were often edited in terms of length, and the quotations from the children had to be corrected because of grammar deficiencies or improper expressions. Such corrections, however, remained faithful to the content and the intensity of the expressed opinions. After the publication of the articles, all teachers and administrators had access to my papers.

Chapter 4. History, coherence and synthesis of the submitted papers

My seven submitted papers were born as a result of a very conscious effort to explore and understand a variety of problems and facts currently found in the English-language teaching and learning industry. While all my articles aimed towards solving one key theme, namely an improved understanding of motivational dynamics of learning global English from a social-emotional perspective, their content focused on a wide range of topics. The substantial amount of findings well illustrated the complexity of the situation without becoming confusing, or aimlessly wandering towards non-related concepts or domains. This chapter, therefore, describes the flow of events leading to the studies, the articles' relationship to each other, and the main convergence of their findings.

4.1 Paper I - Kyrgyzstan

The earliest paper (I) dating back to 2016 was inspired by my own experience and frustration while working as a teacher at an English-language medium school in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. It was clear from the beginning that the very heterogeneous cultural, racial and linguistic background of the children influenced their attitudes towards learning English and towards the teachers. Learners' expectation of how and where they would use English later in their lives was not even considered by the school's official policy or by the teachers either. As an additional problem, most teachers insisted on teaching the way that was customary in their own country, ignoring local children's culture specific goals and behaviours. This resulted in not so positive outcomes, such as negative attitudes and behaviour and low learning success. Students' enthusiasm and determination was rapidly decreasing as well.

Throughout the school year it become apparent to me that there should be much more understanding regarding learners' perceptions and motivations. Hence the need for the first study emerged. The mentioned school was considered an elite institution where only children from privileged backgrounds were enrolled. Therefore, it could by no means be said to be representative of the whole country's perception. Hence, the study I designed to unveil such perceptions was also carried out in two more institutions. Two of them were regular schools where English was simply taught as a subject, with the difference that one was in the capital city while the other was located in a very poor region attended by children coming from the Uzbek minority. Another issue that inspired this study was the fact that learners of different genders seemed to have different perceptions and attitudes. It seemed to me that male students' needs were often ignored by the language-teaching materials used by the school. As a result, based on 182 learners' questionnaires, paper I, 'Perceptions and use of English by secondary school students from Central Asia' was published. The findings revealed clearly that students, depending on the location of the school, (rural or city), the educational programme, (English as a subject or bilingual education) and their gender, had significant differences in their viewpoints regarding the use and usefulness of the English language. There was a clear tendency to use English more by students of English-medium schools. Nevertheless, although the vast majority of the participants believed that English may have been a good asset, very few considered it a language that could be used in contexts other than the classroom in their current circumstances. A very interesting difference was how male and female students differed in their viewpoints on many aspects regarding language learning. The reason behind this I found in the traditional view of gender roles. Kyrgyzstani males generally

marry very young (often at age 18-20) and are expected to be the generous providers for their wives and their wives' extended families. In the poorer regions, such enormous pressure often doesn't allow them to invest in things that do not result in immediate economic benefit. On the other hand, females have a greater tradition of working in education and, therefore, becoming an English teacher, or being able to teach subjects through the medium of English, was a very tempting economic and social opportunity for them.

4.2 Paper II - Bulgaria

While the findings in paper I unveiled some attitudes to language learning, the process of the investigation and my own growing experience as a teacher raised many more questions and possible themes to be considered in future research. By that time, in 2016, *inclusion* was a concept heavily promoted all around the international educational sphere. Paradoxically, from many schools' viewpoint, inclusion meant simply ignoring individual needs under the mantra 'we are all equal and worthy', and teaching all students in the same style. While the theory behind this was intended to be beneficial, in reality, instead of *including everybody,* teachers were encouraged to ignore special talents and needs. As I taught a variety of subjects, I became aware of the tendency that, from a young age, learners had rather clear learning styles and preferences in most subjects, except in foreign language learning. This fact provided inspiration for my next project, which was carried out in another country, Bulgaria.

In Bulgaria too, gender-differences continued to be of primary importance, and my study there focused on learning style differences in the four main skills, namely listening, reading, writing and speaking. Paper II, 'Bulgarian University Students' Learning Style Preferences in the ESL Classroom' revealed that students were mostly not able to clearly recognize or define their learning style preferences. This was probably due to the fact that learning a foreign language is a culturally and psychologically different process than learning any other subject via the individual's first language. Interestingly, in some domains, male and female students showed some sharp differences again. Around the same time, in 2018, I had many informal, but thought-provoking conversations with fellow teachers. Bulgarian students were mostly very respectful in class, but they would complain to other teachers and to management about a number of things, including a teacher's persona, teaching style and the difficulty of his/her lessons. Learners very often blamed teachers for their lack of learning success. The management had quickly and rather creatively reduced these concerns to a teacher's nationality, namely foreign or local. Although there seemed to be some food for thought in that, in informal chats, teachers were not completely convinced regarding the accuracy of that conclusion. Long hours of brainstorming were dedicated to deciphering what strategies to avoid and how to teach better. While trying to satisfy this curiosity, I was particularly interested in the aforementioned topics, as they were recurring phenomena in other countries and in a variety of schools as well. As I was neither 'local' nor 'native', this gave me a neutral perspective on the subject. As a result, with the same participants as paper II, I conducted an additional study.

4.3 Paper III - Bulgaria

In paper III, 'University students' preferences on English teachers' nationality and teaching style: Gender based differences', I identified some key factors regarding how male and female learners of English perceived their teacher and what they considered beneficial for their

learning success. There was some substantial propaganda in most language learning institutions where I worked. They mostly advocated for native English-speaking teachers. Nevertheless, I found that students had no considerable preference for them, but expressed a strong wish for well qualified English teachers, regardless of their nationality. It was interesting to see that, while native speakers were welcome, positive attitudes towards them were shown only if they were real teachers with demonstrable teaching skills. The results, again, showed differences according to the students' gender. Female students expected teachers to show more continuous reinforcement, giving more opportunities to exhibit their work during the lesson and providing more time to complete their tasks. Male students displayed a greater need for practical and not too challenging knowledge-focused learning content and strategies.

The more information I had, the more areas to investigate came to the fore. For instance, particularly in the case of students who started to learn English during or after adolescence, I observed strong emotions and resistance towards certain socio-cultural concepts. These learners practised behaviours according to their own culturally acceptable standards while speaking English, which they believed was perfectly acceptable. Nevertheless, certain behaviours and their associated language use could not be maintained in English-speaking situations as both the manners and the message would have been considered rude. When I pointed this out to the students, I observed a strong emotional response and shock on their part. For example, Bulgarian students had considerable resistance towards using 'excuse me' in the setting of asking for information, as they felt this was apologetic and ridiculous. Mongolian students had similar reactions towards courtesy words, as in their culture their daily use is not seen as appropriate. In fact, in Mongolia it is perfectly acceptable to walk into a shop, and to simply ask (or shout) 'How much' pointing to an object, then to say nothing, but to pay and walk out. This is culturally acceptable *there*. It became increasingly clear to me that students had no proper understanding of how important such concepts were. I witnessed this on many occasions when acting out situations during the English lesson. Students acted the same way as was socially acceptable in their countries, simply using English words.

Another issue that persisted was that I had to repeatedly point out that I did not want to be called 'teacher', Ms Flora or Flora teacher, simply because that was not the correct way to do it. However, my request resulted in complete and unchangeable resistance. This might seem to be a minor issue, but the reason behind it needed to be addressed. Upon my insistence and questioning, a considerable number of learners pointed out that they just wanted to learn English, but *not to become* English; therefore, in their opinion, their attitude was completely reasonable. Additionally, local English teachers (in mostly every country in which I have worked) had taught mostly grammar to their students. Pragmatics was virtually non-existent in local lesson plans. Therefore, students had little idea how to express themselves in English appropriately, or at least without appearing to be rude. A study, therefore, was specially designed to address these challenges.

4.4 Paper IV - Mongolia

Paper IV, 'New language-new emotions? The role of emotional intelligence while learning foreign languages in Mongolia' examined students' attitudes towards the cultural aspect of the English language. I also wanted to investigate their understanding of a specific type of

intelligence associated with speaking a foreign language. This study emphasised how motivation to learn English nowadays is not necessarily related to the students' wish to move to an English-speaking country and to integrate themselves into its society, which is sometimes seen as the loss of their own identity. New, emerging motivations were observed, such as academic motivations, learning a lingua-franca for travel purposes, commerce or for personal growth. These motivations did not happen in a static or linear fashion. A softening and negotiating agent against identity-conflict needed to be found. The role of foreign-language related emotional intelligence (EQ) was considered. This was seen as an enabling element for successful communication and negotiation of thought in an international setting. The fact that learners understood the significance and use of foreign language related EQ relieved their fear of losing or damaging their identity by learning English.

4.5 Paper V - Hungary

During my earlier studies, it was impossible to ignore the massive impact of emotions in the classroom and how they influenced learners' perceptions. As a logical step, I wanted to see to what degree students were aware of their own emotions, and to what extent those emotions influenced their learning. It was also very important to explore whether the teacher's persona could be a considerable force in learning success in general and/or a relevant factor in developing students' dependence or autonomy (Karimi & Nikbakht, 2019). Consequently, paper V, 'Emotions, Learning-autonomy and Gender-specific Attitudes in the ESL Classroom' described how emotions towards the teacher and towards the self, and gender in the classroom, conditioned students' disposition in developing autonomous learning habits. This study shed light on the fact that students mostly understood their role and responsibility in language learning. Paradoxically, at the same time, they were very dependent on their perception of their teachers' 'likeability' and 'skills' in their learning success. The findings also revealed that, again, gender had a considerable effect on emotions and beliefs about classroom events and students' view of their own capabilities. Significantly, teachers admitted not having any professional training on how to motivate students. Moreover, teachers were unaware of how to inspire students in developing learning-autonomy, therefore, they felt that learners' success relied on their shoulders exclusively.

4.6 Paper VI - Mongolia

Emotions and motivations in the classroom seemed to be very tightly connected to me. My next study continued on a similar path; I needed greater understanding of emotions in the classroom. This was particularly important as I had noticed on many occasions emotional breakdowns in a more or less intensive fashion during my and other teachers' lessons. This was true of students of all ages (from six to those in their twenties). While the probable reason behind such breakdowns was partly an accumulation of non-classroom related events as well, learners would often complain that they were not understood by the language teachers, and that learning English was *different* from learning other subjects. Paper VI, 'Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and De-motivating factors in the ESL Classroom' examined this topic. Here, I investigated the dynamics among students' and teachers' emotions and their impact on their foreign language learning. During this study, it became clear that learners' cultural/linguistic identity and emotions towards language learning were strongly correlated (Coetzee-van Rooy, 2002). As opposed to many current fashionable

positive psychology theories, paper VI's findings revealed that, in ESL classroom settings, negative emotions must be taken seriously. In fact, the emotional validation of students' sometimes negative emotions towards learning a new language and its perceived cultural elements, was of critical significance. The impact of validation, or acknowledgement and acceptance that learners' feelings and perspectives were valuable was a crucial finding for both learners and teachers in order to design future strategies. In my research, teachers' validation of students' identity, struggles and anxiety during the learning process ensured a psychological comfort-zone for them. Such validation also acted as a very strong motivator towards learning and having more favourable attitudes in the classroom in general. Notably, both learners and English teachers mirrored each-other's emotions in the classroom, which led to fluctuating emotional stability and similar beliefs were transferred to liking the English language itself.

4.7 Paper VII - Mongolia

My earlier studies mostly focused on specific factors as part of foreign language teaching and learning. My seventh paper aimed to give a holistic, realistic and unsweetened description of the psychological aspect of teaching and learning English in Asia. I investigated emotions and identity behind the official façade of institutions promoting bilingual education, without a proper understanding of it and without the tools to ensure its success. Paper VII, 'The Students, the Local and the Foreign: Drama of Identity and Language in Mongolian-English Bilingual Schools' unveiled many uncomfortable scenarios. This paper provided an overview of the discrepancies between teachers and the non-existent school policies regarding the cultural elements of multilingualism (Gkonou & Miller, 2020). Actually, students' identity was shaped in a school environment where English language and foreign customs were present, while aiming to introduce learners to the concept of global identity. I also found that foreign and local teachers' considerable lack of willingness or capacity to collaborate for the sake of balanced learning outcomes heavily affected students' behaviours towards each group. This final study unveiled some interesting points that helped to connect a variety of factors that I discussed in the previous papers. For example, it provided an additional view on the ongoing discussion on local and foreign teachers. It also revealed how identity and language use conditioned motivation and learning style. Finally, my seventh paper confirmed indirectly that foreign language related EQ should be promoted in order not to offend individuals' culture identity.

While my articles' findings point to a number of negative features in foreign language learning, they do so with the absolute intention of finding a solution to them. The studies were all designed to understand the universal dynamics among students, teachers, identities, motivations and emotions. Without such detailed examination I had no capacity to design new strategies that would not be overly generalised, but which would aim to connect and fill the most relevant gaps (Hays & Reinders, 2019).

Chapter 5. Contribution

In this chapter I offer a reflective overview on the key findings of my studies and my lived experiences in Bulgaria, Hungary, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan. It is important to state that I never intended to compare Asian and European countries. I viewed them as simply places with very similar fossilized educational strategies due to their socialist past. Moreover, in none of these countries was English present historically and culturally, yet it was actively promoted in education and was extensively required and used in workplaces. With my research papers, I aimed for a comprehensive view of English as a foreign language education. Thus, the main findings throughout my articles are presented not in a linear fashion, but by concepts that form a solid, holistic argument. The synthesis of these concepts served as the basis for designing further solutions in addressing emerging needs and developing new strategies.

5.1 Attitudes that may condition Motivation

I investigated possible factors of convergence and divergence between learners' attitudes and motivation in papers I, II, III, IV, V, VI and VII. My findings highlighted a rather complicated scenario. Previously, many studies on attitudes and motivation described possible and existing motivational dynamics (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006; Brown, 2007; Nuri Gömleksiz, 2010). My own experience as a teacher made me question the extent learners were really conscious about their motivation and goals. In my research most of the students did not explicitly express negative attitudes or lack of motivation towards learning English in general. Nevertheless, there were many neutral attitudes and much uncertainty regarding the aim of learning and the real usefulness of English in their immediate and future lives. Many learners lacked a real and clear sense of why they were learning English at all. However, almost unanimously, all learners throughout my studies acknowledged that English will be very useful in at least one area in their future lives. To my surprise, teachers also had little understanding of the complexity of the situation. Many of them taught English as simply a school subject, without considering the pragmatic implications of learning a foreign language. In fact, many teachers were not well-equipped in understanding the language's beyond-grammar implications. They never had had formal instruction about how to develop and foster students' motivation. Most of the learners were not conscious of their own and the teachers' limitations either. Consequently, both teachers and students succumbed to a rather unproductive learning routine without actively seeking out solutions, or a goal and direction which could enhance their own positive attitudes and learning success.

5.1.1 Perceptions on motivation

Interestingly, most teachers and members of school administration to whom I spoke assumed that students *necessarily had* some kind of motivation for learning and that its nature just needed to be discovered. In my experience, learners not being unmotivated did not necessarily mean they were motivated. Throughout papers II, III, IV, V, VI and VII, it became clear that learners' motivation or demotivation were often linked to their overall classroom satisfaction, their liking of the teachers themselves and relatable teaching strategies. Motivation, as students perceived it, was mostly a classroom phenomenon, often forced by extrinsic factors, such as parents or teachers. This context/space dependence in motivation was somewhat understandable, as most learners had no possibilities of practising or using English outside the classroom. Nevertheless, this proved to be a cognitive trap, and thus very little effort was

made to improve English, if there was no clear idea of where to use it. These findings were revolutionary to me, as I never considered motivation to be a context-dependent phenomenon before.

A great exception to classroom related and externally forced motivation agents was the Internet, the only platform where all four skills, namely listening, speaking, writing and reading could be practised. While this may seem ideal, most students used the Internet for online games and social media where the content was full of slang and grammatically incorrect or even contained bad language. Unfortunately, I did not research this phenomenon, yet, during my time as a teacher, it seemed to me that learners did not associate their love for navigating on the internet in English with being more motivated to learn the language in the classroom. My hypothesis here was that they saw the classroom as a formal kind of motivation, regardless of whether it was an external or internal one. However, nurturing their English knowledge while navigating on the Internet was linked to a motivation that stemmed from relatability to the context and content of the learning situation.

5.1.2 Flexibility in motivation

While my papers' key results on motivation were based on the general attitudes, yet, in the case of university students, approaches, beliefs and motivation were slightly different and more on the positive side of the spectrum. In fact, as papers II, III and IV show, university students were more intrinsically motivated and had less cognitive rigidity. The two most interesting concepts that surfaced were flexibility and adaptability in their perceptions on motivation; and that integrative motivation became rather non-territorial, focused on a somewhat specific context. In fact, it astonished me that learners were very open and resilient towards the idea that motivation may fluctuate and change direction. While motivation, as an extrinsically pushed classroom factor still maintained a strong presence in their learning processes, they did not feel completely discouraged when the original source of motivation became of less importance or unattainable. Previously, Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) offered a very interesting model on the metamorphosis of language learning and motivation, which perfectly fits my findings.

5.1.3 A new type of integrative motivation

Another key factor unveiled in paper IV was the shifting nature of integrative motivation in particular. Traditionally, integrative motivation was understood as individuals wanting to move to a foreign country and to adapt to its linguistic and cultural customs to a great extent (Gardner, 2001). During my research I felt the existence of English as a lingua franca has challenged this traditional understanding in a variety of ways. For instance, university students did not perceive integration as necessarily territorial. Their understanding of integration was flexible and extended to communities with non-physically confined frontiers, such as online communities, academic research or travelling companions. These communities may be located in foreign lands where English is not officially spoken as a first or even as a second language. Such expatriate communities constituted of businessmen, engineers, teachers, healthcare workers, etc. The concept of no-territory-specific integrative motivation has a great importance. My findings provide further evidence for understanding motivation and for the design of educational strategies supporting it.

By considering all papers' findings, it became clear that new trends in motivation should not be overlooked or forcibly corrected, as it can demotivate learners. It is, however, important to consider the learning context, the kind of foreign language education learners received in their native countries and their culture-specific world-view. I accept that from the viewpoint of a native speaker of English, these new trends may sound very unnatural, even heading towards a diluted, faceless language without culture and proper identity. My uneasy answer to this lies in history, as the forced expansion of English was often understood through local cultural filters and values. This eventually produced resistance to a degree towards the identity-elements of English, whilst individuals wanted to retain the language's usefulness in practical domains.

5.1.4 Talent bias

Another key factor that conditioned learners' motivation was their perception of their talent for learning foreign languages. As detailed in paper V, the talent-factor considerably altered students' wish to deepen their skills and their perceived future success in achieving fluency in English. However, this reasoning in some cases was highly deceiving. Self-perception of talent, motivation, learning processes and success had no necessary correlation. This was heavily reinforced by the teachers as they observed learning dynamics and outcome on a yearly basis. In fact, as they commented, learners' motivation may change and learners may later develop more intrinsic drive and grit to succeed in learning a foreign language. These findings were important as they reduced a common negative bias on the talent factor. They also reinforced the idea that with motivation and engagement learners may succeed (Nuri Gömleksiz, 2010).

5.1.5 Reducing talent bias, rigid expectations and widening learners' comfort zone

Besides perceptions on talent, expectations from the teachers and parents also conditioned motivation. As I discussed in paper II and III, learning success in a foreign language should not be necessarily understood as a balanced set of skills in speaking, reading, listening and writing *immediately* and *simultaneously*. Theoretically, the proper knowledge of a language should encompass all these abilities. Nevertheless, in light of understanding motivation as an adaptable concept, students should not be pressured to instantly master the four skills together, setting the 'either fail or succeed' scenario. I feel that, within certain boundaries, more flexible strategies are needed. By using more educational psychology as opposed to rigid, mathematical measurements of knowledge and exact, expected outcomes, motivation can be enhanced. Instead of disheartening learners by pointing out the things they failed in, I found it advantageous to help students to understand their own strengths. I preferred to advise them on how the process of learning and the knowledge of foreign languages are beneficial cognitively, intellectually and empirically.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that any means are justifiable to provoke and nurture motivation. It is realistic to accept and respect the fact that some students may not be motivated to learn a foreign language at a given moment in their lives, or possibly never in the future. Not forcing learners out of their comfort zone when they are not ready may actually have a very positive effect in the future, while the opposite may be equally detrimental in the short and long term as well (Frawley, 1997). I feel that these differences in motivation were vital to consider in order to comprehend attitudes. Finally, a very important component in

language learning that further conditions attitudes are emotions, a factor which I largely explored throughout my research.

5.2 Emotions, emotional validation and foreign-language related EQ

During my teaching years, I myself experienced many emotions that I could not fully understand at that time. I found certain emotions that learners and my colleagues displayed equally confusing. Hence, I researched learners' emotions in papers I, II, III, IV and VI, yet emotions' manifestation and impact can be observed in papers V and VII as well. Several authors inspired me to consider the interconnectedness of emotions and learning (Linnenbrink, 2007; Schutz & Pekrun, 2007; Swain, 2013; Ketonen, 2017). Their research pointed out that emotions were impossible to separate from foreign language learning. In my papers, regardless of whether students displayed positive emotions, such as excitement or happiness, or negative ones, like anxiety or fear, or somewhere in between, such as apathy or boredom, they radically impacted their attitudes and motivations.

5.2.1 Emotional mirroring in the classroom

As I unveiled in paper VI, an obvious way in which emotions were influenced in the classroom was apparent in the teacher-student emotional dynamics. These dynamics I found to work in both directions with very similar intensity. In fact, the great majority of learners actively perceived the teachers' emotions and became 'infected' by them, adjusting their own emotional state to that of the teachers. This emotional mirroring affected the teachers as well. While teachers actively tried to control their emotions and actions towards the students, in terms of emotions, their success was limited. Whenever the learners displayed specific behaviours and emotions, it affected the teachers, and in turn, their emotional display and reactions were absorbed and reflected by the students. Moreover, while considering behaviour and emotion mirroring in the classroom, an interesting division surfaced and drew my attention to a striking difference. Learners reacted emotionally to foreign and local teachers very differently, as the two groups of teachers displayed very different emotional states in the classroom. My findings on emotional mirroring have interesting implications and reveal some of the reasons why language learning fails.

5.2.2 Teacher likeability bias that conditions emotions and motivation

As I detailed in paper V, emotions triggered by teachers were often associated with learners' own perceived competence on the subject, and/or their cognitive resistance towards it. Curiously, learners perceived that the likeability of the educators' persona and emotional attachment to them heavily conditioned classroom emotions, behaviour and learning success as well. Teachers who were not likeable were often seen as not competent either. Ironically, as paper VI highlights, teachers who were likeable and were perceived in an emotionally positive light were not necessarily respected. Nevertheless, likeable teachers enjoyed much more popularity. This unhealthy milieu, shed light on the great impact emotions had on teaching and learning. Learners were very much aware of the emotions-learning dynamics, and they believed that teachers should be the main providers of positive emotions and emotional comfort in the classroom. Possibly, this phenomenon was partly due to the last decades' growing fascination with positive psychology that includes the field of second language learning as well (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Lopez & Gallagher, 2009; Dewaele,

Chen, Padilla & Lake, 2019). However, positive psychology's role in education was somewhat misinterpreted by management and the teachers at the institutions I worked for between 2010 and 2019. The management often reminded teachers that they were completely responsible for the motivation of their learners. Unfortunately, there is virtually no research conducted on this topic. Nevertheless, the immense number of teachers' blogs and articles show a very different panorama and confirms my perceptions on this matter.

5.2.3 The correct use of positive psychology: emotional validation

In my experience, while positive psychology has been promoted and 'implemented' massively in English language education, it has been done mostly with modest understanding and skills. In my findings in paper VI, foreign teachers lacked proper training in how to use positive psychology in the classroom. However, they were captivated by the idea and started to use it according to their own understanding and cultural standards. This was often displayed by trying to transmit excessive kindness and an unrealistically positive perspective of learners' capabilities and future success. Regrettably, teachers often failed to acknowledge students' real struggles and needs. Learners perceived this as lack of real care and understanding. At the same time, learners expressed a great wish and need for real awareness regarding their learning difficulties and fluctuating motivation.

A turning point in my overall understanding of classroom emotions was the unanimous demand by the learners for teachers to validate their emotions, in particular, their negative feelings. These negative feelings ranged from current demotivation, troubles at home, or English learning anxiety and a sense of failure. Interestingly, some teachers were already aware of the massively positive effects of validating students' emotions and used this strategy *sometimes*. The fact that they used this only *sometimes* was due to their own lack of training in this field and the fact that this strategy went against trends in positive psychology, or even their cultural norms. Some other teachers (even against their very best intentions) were not able or had no circumstances whereby they could express caring and understanding attitudes.

Nevertheless, in my overall research I saw that understanding and validating learners' emotions was a complicated act to balance. As I described in papers III, VI and VII, in the classroom context, students' emotions appeared easily conditioned by brief negative experiences. These included the teacher yelling at them for not doing homework, asking them to stop chatting with their peers or even giving a negative evaluation regarding their progress. These 'micro-incidents' swiftly overwhelmed students' rational judgements towards educators and their attitudes. Nevertheless, learners hypothetically, and teachers based on empirical experiences, agreed that validating learners' negative emotions had an immense impact on the students' self-esteem, dignity, self-confidence and their positive relationship with the teacher.

Interestingly, an additional beneficial and constructive discovery surfaced in paper VI. I found that validating students (negative) emotions towards learning English and classroom practices enhanced greatly their positive attitudes and willingness to learn more. This, I consider, was due to the fact that being understood and validated partly eliminated students' anxiety regarding failure or being seen as incompetent by their peers or teachers. Validation also created a reassuring and more relaxing atmosphere in the classroom. The impact of this finding should be seriously considered by teachers. In fact, by pretending that learning English is an unchallenging and effortless experience, may leave students with even more emotional

confusion when those standards are not met. Students also may experience some emotional incertitude and agitation between a compulsory imposed positive viewpoint and their real emotions. Therefore, validating students' real emotions may be an inexpensive and greatly effective tool in foreign language teaching that will probably produce positive results.

5.2.4 Emotions displayed by different genders

While I found emotional validation a key psychological factor in learning and in providing a healthy classroom milieu, I analysed this further in light of emotions displayed by different genders. In fact, in my research, these differences were often sharply marked, and if ignored, they jeopardised learning success. The results in papers V and VI revealed that female learners' positive emotions, while practising English in the classroom, constituted mostly of pride and interest in learning English. On the other hand, anxiety, annoyance, shame and fear of disappointment were identified as the negative ones. Females perceived very similar negative traits in teachers' behaviour as well, anger, annoyance and disappointment being the most common. Although female learners viewed teachers as rather strict and serious individuals, they also acknowledged positive characteristics in educators' behaviour. This manifested mostly as interest both in their subject and the understanding of students' needs and circumstances. Interestingly, female students experienced more negative emotions throughout the *process* of learning English. Nevertheless, they displayed high motivation to learn English because they were interested in the subject itself and they took pride in their knowledge. Females tolerated well *some degree* of negative emotions linked to performance anxiety, and such emotions made them more resilient. In fact, female learners' positive attitudes towards learning new things, and their wish to perform well, helped them overcome most negative emotions during the learning process.

In general, male students exhibited some different attitudes, prioritizing fun as their main emotional state. Fun was a real empirical emotion felt, but also the emotion males *wanted* to perceive. They thought that having fun in the classroom would make them feel more motivated to learn. Interest in learning English was also identified as one of the main positive emotions during learning and a prime motivational force, yet not to the extent female students reported. Some male students also described excitement as a key emotion which they experienced during the English lesson. Unfortunately, annoyance and boredom were identified as the most prevalent negative emotions experienced by some. Additionally, fear of disappointment and anger were the main motivational agents. Male students, like females, perceived teachers' emotions very similar to their own. Thus, according to them, the ESL classroom was often a happy place. They believed that teachers often displayed happiness, excitement, fun and pride in their students' achievements. However, they also believed teachers to be angry rather frequently. Here, it may seem that male students had both contradictory and some rather negative emotions throughout the learning process. Nevertheless, 56 per cent of the male students thought that teachers actually did care about them personally and had positive perceptions on this matter. Female students had considerably less positive perception on being cared for, as only 30 per cent believed so. I correlated this strongly with the fact that male students also tended to perceive the classroom as a fun place and attributed more positive emotions to the educators teaching them. Although it is not explicitly discussed in the presented articles, but rather something I observed, male learners, displaying these attitudes were not unusual, but rather this was a peculiarity linked to their

age-related learning and coping mechanisms (Agu, 2014). However, I feel that it would be immensely wrong to assume that these emotions could not be modified to a greater or lesser extent with appropriate teaching strategies.

To my surprise, in paper VI, half of both gender groups stated that English was harder to learn than other subjects. Correlating with the finding of talent-bias in paper V, this was an important revelation, suggesting that students needed more guidance and a stronger psychological-emotional bond with their English teachers. Also, the perception of how difficult it was to learn English caused the shame of underperformance to be a common and very powerful motivator for both groups. However, in line with paper II and III, once there was no external force or visible evaluation such as marks on assignments and presentations, shame may not have had much impact at all. In fact, many learners greatly appreciated and believed in the usefulness of oral feedback, or their own empirical experiences of using the target language successfully. Thus, I feel that language anxiety needed to be taken very seriously and not *substituted* with positive psychology.

Additionally, a lot of consistency could be observed between emotions experienced in the classroom and emotions that motivate students to study harder. As presented in papers V and VI, the immense similarity of both gender groups' perceptions of their own academic emotions and how they interpreted the teachers' emotions and persona suggested two possible scenarios. On the one hand, students may interpret teachers' emotions via their own emotional filter. On the other hand, it may be attributed to the presence of clearly established and differentiated power-dynamics applied towards male and female students. This important theory was discussed by Kelley-Lawell (2010) in her study on teaching middle school students in a gender-responsive way.

5.2.5 Teachers' emotions

I found it too limited and partial to consider only the learners' side, therefore, I considered educators' view on classroom emotions as well. In paper VI, teachers declared they experienced a variety of positive classroom-related emotions, including joy, interest and pride in students' achievements. Nevertheless, as I previously stated, these feelings were mostly conditional and determined by student behaviour. There was a very fragile equilibrium established between students' and educators' emotions towards each other, a similar experience already described by Brown (2007). In my research, as expressed by all teachers, students' emotions were of great importance to them. Some educators stated they had clear strategies on how to supervise and handle diverse emotions expressed by the students. Although commendable, these strategies were based on their instinct and experience, not on established educational policies. Little consistency, order and careful planning of such methods were present among the teachers, leaving its successful outcome to their natural skills, as opposed to an organised, all-school practice. In fact, gender-oriented emotional attentiveness depended only on teachers' natural instincts and ad hoc emotional sensitivity. However, as I found, emotional stability should be one of the most desirable features in any classroom. To achieve this and to maintain a relationship of trust and mutual respect, an unambiguous, clear and unbiased power structure between students and teachers must be confirmed. Consequently, some of teachers' negative feelings, such as teaching-anxiety,

exasperation and shame could be minimized if their capability and potential to transmit and activate more positive emotions in the classroom was empowered.

5.2.6 Teaching English as an artificial language

Although, among teachers there was some degree of consciousness regarding personal emotions and perceptions, teaching practices fell into another reality. Emotions in foreign-language learning were found to have a different, yet related, direction in classroom routines. As I detailed in article IV, a very common practice by local teachers was to emphasize predominantly the correct use of grammar. This was coupled with an overabundance of written exercises and a limited number of oral assignments such as presentations. The rationale behind this was not wasting valuable time since local teachers assumed that once learners allegedly acquired a perfect command of English grammar, they would have time to learn additional cultural elements, language-related values and forms of expression. Mostly, students learnt the language as a simple code, without any training on how to use it with people from different cultures, with different thought-processes and communication strategies. This often led to very unpleasant real-life scenarios; such as not being understood at all or being misunderstood. In many cases learners were perceived as intellectually inferior or rude when trying to establish contact with other more proficient or native speakers of English. As the main goal of learning a foreign language was communication or the wish and necessity to understand foreign sources, the above mentioned strategy was very erroneous.

As I emphasized in paper IV, the lack of competence in communication in English often became visible when students travelled abroad or met foreigners for the first time, and had an intense culture-shock. This was inevitable as learners were taught only English grammar but not the cultural or linguistic pragmatics of the cultures associated with it. However, as many learners had no territory-wise integrative motivation, their learning had to follow a different route, not a culture-specific one. In fact, learning English as a global language necessitates different emotional intelligence skills, which may differ from those associated with the learners' mother tongue and culture. Often, learners experienced intense emotions and shock when faced with a radically different use of the English language as opposed to how it was practised in the classroom. For example, Mongolian learners, who internalised English as a simple code, stated that they would use it according to their Mongolian mentality and Mongolia-wide accepted behavioural norms. They believed that this may in due course be corrected if they would eventually develop territory-specific integrative motivation and would need to adapt to a specific country's culture. However, if the goal of learning English was aimed at any other type of motivation, difficulties surfaced, as communication goals were not met and frustration resulted.

5.2.7 Global-English specific emotional intelligence

Before and during the period of my research, emotional intelligence (EQ) as a personality trait was widely promoted and researched within the context of education in general, group dynamics and even morality (Goleman, 2006; Brackett, Mayer & Warner 2004; Boyatzis, 2006; Jordan & Askhanasy, 2006; Cefai and Cooper; 2009; Pavlova & Kornilova, 2013; Gershon and Pellitteri, 2018; Devis-Rozental, 2018). There was also a limited body of research on how learners' EQ conditioned foreign language learning success (Pishghadam, 2009; Zarezadeh, 2013; Oz, Demirezen, & Pourfeiz, 2015; Baklashova, Galishnikova &

Khafizova, 2016; Spirovska Tevdovska, 2017). However, English-language specific EQ was not considered as a key factor in successful language learning before my fourth paper. The finding of paper IV has drastically changed my understanding on teaching and learning English as a global language. For example, if in an international business setting participants from a variety of continents, countries or territories needed to have fluent communication in English, it would be impossible for all of them to use the English language mixed with their own culturally acceptable behaviours and communication styles. In the case of global English learners in particular, it would be very confusing to focus on the USA related variant, as that culture does not cover the general understanding and relatability of English learners and/or speakers. As I proposed, English language-related EQ, therefore, has to focus on some specific psychological, kinesiological and pragmatic application of the language, instead of culture-specific ones. This concept greatly facilitates successful communication among individuals and groups. Moreover, it would not be perceived as being culturally invasive towards the foreign speaker in international settings. In fact, the lack of global English-specific EQ could provoke an erroneously structured intellectual and moral hierarchy among the different speakers and could be perceived as a threat towards their own cultural and ethnic identity.

I feel that the concept of English-language specific EQ has the power to transform English language teaching and learning altogether. My theory has much relevance in multilingual and multicultural workplaces where English is used as a common language. In such environments personal and professional misunderstandings are common. This is often due to the fact that the message conveyed in English is naturally filtered through the individual's linguistic and cultural background and world-view. Such confusions may lead not only to friction and offence among co-workers but may seriously damage the working process. I observed these scenarios very often while working in Asia. A clear example of this was that people of Asian culture usually insisted very much on respecting their status and standing in workplace hierarchy. They usually expected Westerners to behave according to the Asian way while speaking English. Most Westerners did not perceive or understand these expectations and serious conflicts arose. The opposite was also true. Westerners' working style in Asia caused much distress to Asian colleagues, as there was a considerable mismatch between the content and fashion of how professional ideas were communicated and how they were understood. Thus, by teaching and promoting English-specific EQ, considerable difficulties could be prevented while preserving individuals' dignity and national identity. In fact, my theory promotes multiculturalism, tolerance and acceptance in a healthy way that leads to more harmonious learning and working environments where individuals should not feel inferior because of their background.

5.3 Identity and perceptions of the self

I considered identity and self-perceptions throughout all my papers. Reflecting on the nature of my studies and their overall aims, I examined identity from the cultural perspective. While I found that all four countries had strong identities, depending on their culture, they had reacted differently to external influences. The level of perceived cultural threat associated with foreign language learning varied, and this factor had to be tactfully, yet intensively, addressed depending on the country. Papers I, IV, VI and VII dealt with Central Asian countries, while papers II, III and V with Eastern European ones. All the four countries, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria and Hungary were part of the communist regime for several decades, which has

necessarily influenced education as well. Nevertheless, this past influence may have affected, but not erased, their original identities.

During the period of my research relevant to this PhD candidature, the topic of identity was of a different concern in Asian countries as opposed to European countries. This was a very important difference to consider, as I wanted to clarify the real nature of identity in the context of learning and teaching English as a global language. The differences in interpretation of identity by the Asian and European sides added new understanding to this topic and helped considerably in developing solutions for identity safe spaces in learning environments.

5.3.1 Identity through cultural lenses

European learners viewed identity as a personal factor, while Asian learners viewed identity as a national and cultural issue. This difference stemmed from the countries' geographical position, cultural and political views, their power-structure and past records of invasions. While these factors had to be seriously taken into account in European countries as well, European mentality required different strategies in foreign language teaching. For example, in Asia, an identity-related element in the English classroom was the perceived or suggested importance and hierarchy of the learners' mother tongue as opposed to English. In Mongolia and in Kyrgyzstan in particular, both learners and local teachers were very sensitive to the hierarchy of the languages. If lacking cultural sensibility, empathy and proper communication and teaching skills, foreign teachers had an immediate and unrepairable negative effect on students' motivation and learning-success. While this was mostly applicable to foreign teachers, local teachers' responsibility was of no less importance, in case they handled the English language learning experience from a nationalistic view.

5.3.2 The problem of cultural sensitivity: the responsibility of foreign and local teachers

The phenomenon of native against non-native foreign teachers in English language education has been extensively researched (Bell, 2005; Liu, 2009; Kamhi-Stein, 2009; Canagarajah, 2009; Medgyes, 2017; Al Darwish, 2018). However, I wanted to analyse this complex situation not simply stating the differences between foreign and local educators, but intending to understand the possible reasons for their behaviours. I felt that such understanding was vital in order to have a real contribution to the current knowledge and to be able to design new strategies that focused on the root of the problem, not simply on superficial issues.

In the case of foreign teachers, regardless of whether they were native speakers of English or simply coming from countries other than the host country, the biggest challenges lay in accepting and implementing locally understandable and sustainable communication and teaching strategies. A very common problem among such teachers was the assumption that all learners have the motivation to learn, and can/want to relate to the English language in the same way the teachers do. In reality, for many students, depending on their age, perceived talent, emotional state and world-view, motivation to learn English was not as high as assumed by the teachers. Moreover, as I observed, foreign teachers often lacked a proper understanding of the local culture, without being aware of it. This led to the use of inappropriate, often aggressive and 'positive' motivational strategies, which impacted learners in the worst possible way: a threat towards their values and national identity. This, in turn, created conflicts

with the local teachers as well, and negatively affected the whole institution and the desired learning outcome.

Additionally, as I described in paper VII, learners' social spaces and emotional health were severely under attack when learners perceived themselves intellectually and culturally inferior while learning English. Fairclough (1989) described well how school's 'hidden agendas' manipulate perceptions on social structures and social classes through discourse and power. While I knew this statement was true, I wanted to see how this mechanism exactly works. As detailed in paper I, male learners in general felt their identity threatened by learning English. These negative perceptions derived from *how* English was presented and taught. Referring back to the idea in paper VI that learners mirrored their teachers' emotions in the classroom, it is not hard to imagine what happened when the foreign teachers' attitude suggested that learners were incompetent or that their emotions and identity were irrelevant. Based on these findings, I felt that communication and identity were intertwined, and they were key factors that represent the learners' very essence and values. Thus, if communication was unsuccessful because of the erroneous fashion in which English was taught, learners perceived this as a personal failure, and linked these concepts directly to the English language itself.

Moreover, as I examined in paper VII, most foreign teachers' erroneous strategies stemmed from the school management's lack of clear policies and hiring practices. While there was some previous research about international schools' characteristics (Hill, 2015, 2018; Bunnell, 2019; Poole, 2019; Teng & Lixun, 2020), my reflective account includes my shared experiences with fellow teachers and exposure to many different institutions in different countries. Thus, I feel that my immersion in the 'foreign teacher role' for more than a decade allowed me to observe in depth its very complex character.

5.3.3 Lack of cultural sensitivity and training

The foreign teachers' situation was complex and often ambiguous. Foreigners were often told to be understanding towards learners' culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, most foreigners interpreted foreign cultures through the filter of their own culture, which often led to even more misunderstandings and bias. Foreign teachers were also regularly reminded by the schools to be cultural and global-minded ambassadors of the English language, which reinforced some teachers' cultural superiority. These teachers were expected to be visibly successful in their vocation, which created excessively aggressive and ambitious teaching practices on their part, particularly in private institutions. However, based on the findings of all my papers, for students to become linguistically and culturally fluent in a language may take a long time, depending on the learner's capability and motivation. Although learners often had very strong motivation, teachers had no time to allow for students' knowledge to consolidate. Such strategies had negative cumulative effects on the self-perception and motivation of the learners, which also interfered with learners' understanding of their own cultural and linguistic identity. In turn, learners' perceived slowness put extreme pressure on teachers and led to more negative teaching strategies.

An additional issue was that foreign teachers seldom lived in the target country for a long time. Their expatriate lifestyle focused on interacting mostly with other English speaking foreigners and locals who were fluent in English. My own experience as a foreign teacher for more than ten years in different countries allowed me to observe the implications of this way

of life in detail. Such experience cannot be reduced to clichés, yet some patterns repeated too often to be ignored. The schools' management played a considerable role in promoting disunity among the teaching staff and unhealthy teaching practices. In fact, foreign teachers were often purposefully separated from their local colleagues and were even encouraged to believe that they and their cultural background represented a superior standard. While, unfortunately, this was seen as a favourable approach by many of my foreign colleagues in the beginning, year after year we experienced that this was only a façade the school expected us to maintain. However, real teaching, grading and caring for the students was denied to us, and we were too often reminded that our presence was merely symbolic. Unfortunately, *all* institutions for which I worked had this strategy, and most foreign teachers eventually became unmotivated and cynical and started teaching in a very careless manner. It would be unfair though, if I didn't mention those foreign teachers who *really believed* in their cultural and moral superiority, and treated everybody else in a patronizing fashion. Thus, the imagined status of foreign teachers, and their apparent lack of responsibility caused much dislike among local teachers, this leading to very stilted relationships, which were perceived by the learners as well.

5.3.4 Teachers' cultural projection

Additionally, either because of ignorance, personal beliefs or the school's policy, when in the classroom, foreigners often treated learners as if they were expatriates as well. Teachers ignored the fact that speaking English to a certain degree did not mean learners necessarily identified themselves with the language and any of the cultures they attached to it. In fact, as described in paper I, when learners left the school early afternoon and returned to their homes, they continued to live their lives embedded in their own culture using their own language. Also, as paper VII points out, learners' native language, social space and perception of power strongly contrasted with the expectations of foreign teachers towards the student's imagined identity.

Paradoxically, in general, learners liked foreign teachers and cherished their time with them, yet, this did not necessarily and automatically lead to respect for them and to learning success during their lessons. Local teachers also influenced learners' identity and learning success. While, according to the students, there was no overall preference for local or foreign teachers, local teachers were more successful in classroom management and teaching in general. The prime reason for this lay in understanding learners' identity. This fact secured a bridge towards helping them to understand and interiorise at least the basic aspects of English. Moreover, as locals understood the learners' language, they were able to relate to their needs, cultural shock and/or cognitive dissonance linked to different expressions and behavioural norms in English. Nevertheless, local educators would often teach English from the local perspective, using defensive strategies against any identity-related component of the English language. The results in papers I and VII show that, while acknowledging and respecting learners' identity was a must, teaching English embedded in the local cultural norms in order to reinforce learners' identity was unrealistic and confusing. Learners' own identity was a concept that they had to fundamentally understand, nurture, enrich and expand to a degree that was perceived beneficial and acceptable to themselves. Thus, whether learners' English learning motivation focused on balanced bilingualism, using it only for specific purposes, or

simply as an addition to their knowledge-pool or cultural literacy, no nationalistic ideas promoted in the classroom should influence their learning behaviour.

5.3.5 A Mongolian classroom scenario: the link between identity and language hierarchy

Finally, as detailed in paper VII, a regular classroom scenario from Mongolia illustrates well that identity in foreign language learning had a very delicate equilibrium. As a general rule, whenever foreign teachers explicitly asked for silence in the classroom, students related this request only to speaking English, yet they freely continued their discussion in Mongolian. When the teachers expressed anger and explained that silence meant the total avoidance of emitting sounds in *any* language, students regularly, week after week, acted surprised, declaring that they were not actually speaking. When foreign teachers requested an explanation of this behaviour, students seemed perplexed, and some of them insulted the foreign teachers in Mongolian, thinking that they wouldn't be understood. This proved to be quite unfortunate, since some foreign teachers were fluent in Mongolian. At that point, teachers would reply to them in Mongolian, making it clear that they understood the insult and that it was inappropriate to say such things. As the schools' policy in Asia strictly forbade foreigners to speak any Mongolian in the classroom, learners were simply asked to switch back to English. The fact that students realised that some foreigners could speak their language caused no distress for them, or any change in their behaviour. Thus foreigners had some power in the classroom, yet, this power was exclusively related to the English language. Therefore, it was clear in most cases that learners assigned more value to their native language and to the local teachers capable of speaking it perfectly, but not to the foreign teachers who were fluent in Mongolian. At this point, language, ethnicity and identity were inextricably linked (Pătrașcu & Allam, 2017), and language and power became synonymous, even in circumstances that altered this bond for brief instances, such as lessons with foreign teachers (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin,1989; Fairclough, 1989; Jørgensen, 2006). While understanding and validating the psychological components in teaching English was vital, the practical strategies towards learning it were not to be overlooked. In fact, these elements could only properly be accommodated if learners had an understanding of their own learning style preferences and control over their own knowledge acquisition.

5.4 Learning styles and learning autonomy

Michel de Montaigne, a French Renaissance philosopher, in his book The Complete Essays (1993, p. 398) wrote: "*Knowing oneself…is the essence of wisdom"*. I feel this quote reflects well the imperative need to know our strengths, weaknesses and preferences in general. In a world where identity is constantly claimed, emphasized and nurtured, it would be expected that individuals have extensive understanding about (at least) their own self.

5.4.1 Lack of metacognition

In my research journey investigating learners' perception and use of English, learning style preferences, perceptions of teachers, emotions and English-related emotional intelligence, an interesting picture emerged. The lack of knowledge and/or interest of most participants in their own learning styles and capability to acquire knowledge on their own, in particular, the out of class eagerness to further develop their English skills became apparent. In fact, as I discussed in papers II, III and V, a noticeable number of students had no clear preferences

regarding educational strategies. If taken positively, this may have indicated the adaptability of students for the sake of learning. However, the number of neutral answers in these three studies revealed a high degree of a lack of self-awareness. Of course, I do not claim that literally no one had a clear understanding or preferences in relation to these processes. However, many neutral answers and constant contradictions in most opinions revealed a very serious lack of engagement, limited pro-active attitudes and understanding regarding learners' own responsibility in the learning process. My findings and observations show some contrast with previous research (Holec, 1981; Martin, 2003; Reinders, 2010). While these authors described well the situation, and offered strategies, these were, I believe, too generalised. Considering the fact that most learners were not aware of their learning style and need for learning autonomy at all, learners' capacity to implement any strategy without proper guidance was very moderate. Hence, I strongly advocate for teaching the concept and dimensions of learning styles *before* learners are expected to incorporate strategies of autonomy in their learning routine.

5.4.2 The need for conscientiousness, responsibility and autonomy

In fact, in paper II, it was rather difficult to investigate in detail students' learning style preferences, as every individual had a complex set of skills, personality traits, needs and preferences. Learning style preferences, therefore, made more sense in a specific context, rather than focussing on general attitudes. Here, my key motivation when researching such a difficult topic was to educate learners on self-conscientiousness and autonomy in learning. While this idea may sound simple, the findings revealed a very contrasting reality. Moreover, as I observed, the general belief in language learning institutions was that education had to take place in formal settings and the responsibility for its success fell on educators. Although I never doubted this theory's partial usefulness in early years, it became seriously counter-productive and wrong with older students, if completely relied upon. Unfortunately, most schools, and language schools in particular where I worked, promoted this view aggressively and proudly.

As reflected in papers IV and V, it became clear that learners acquired some English knowledge, but not skills to use and cultivate it further in life. In a classroom, where passive attitudes reigned, and educators' personality, teaching style and effort were the measure of possible success, motivation and learning outcome hardly flourished. In fact, as I discussed in paper V, learners relied excessively on their emotions towards the teacher. Interestingly, most learners acknowledged that learning English was important, since they would need it in the future. Even being very conscious of this need, most of them made little (if any) steps to prepare projects at home or to look for information when the lesson was difficult or missed. This was somewhat contradictory to the fact that they believed in the usefulness of doing homework. Previous research shows a rather polarised view on the topic of homework. On the one hand, there is a rather negative perception on how homework affects learners' cognition and life quality (Kralovec & Buell, 2000; Kohn, 2006; Bennet & Kalish, 2006). On the other hand, some research points to how well-designed homework may help learners to succeed (Redding, 2000; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). Nonetheless, in the aforementioned papers, teachers were perceived as the protagonists in learners' cognition. According to my findings, much pressure was placed on the educators, since learners actively expected them to be encouraging, skilful and to have extraordinary powers in order to pour knowledge into their

minds. In light of this, some students' viewpoint about learning-autonomy was best described as being like passive actors in the classroom who, in the best case, offered no resistance against the teachers' effort, if they were skilful and likeable enough to be considered fit for their role. Unsurprisingly, learners' lack of understanding of their own learning processes and responsibilities and being totally dependable on educators can have wider effects on their cognition than a simple passive attitude at school.

5.4.3 Learning preferences according to gender groups

Previously, researchers paid much attention to peer collaboration in the classroom, as well as listening, speaking, writing and reading skills in English as a foreign language learning (Tsang & Wong, 2000; Myles, 2002; Archibald, 2004; Lems, Miller & Soro, 2010; Goh & Burns, 2012; Arias & García, 2013; Folley, 2015). In paper II, some opinions and preferences were expressed with clarity regarding classroom activities. Some of my results were in line with earlier research but, three main concepts stood out in my research. One of the most interesting results was in relation to learning preferences and gender groups. For example, contradictory to what I anticipated, the most preferred way of learning English was in small groups and, in the case of most female students, individually. This was a curious fact, as I had expected female learners to prefer bigger groups, where their social skills could have facilitated their learning processes.

Also, in both gender groups, language anxiety prevented some students from liking and readily participating in certain activities that could further enhance their achievement. However, the eagerness of many to do homework and engage in small-group talking and problem solving activities suggested that students had some intrinsic motivation to learn English and understood somewhat their responsibilities in the learning process. Here, I felt that there was much wish to learn but little knowledge about how to do it efficiently if the right conditions were not present.

Finally, linked to my previous point, the most remarkable factor which emerged was the lack of metacognition. I interpreted the many contradictory answers and attitudes emerging in paper II as a lack of proper guidance in discovering, understanding and developing the student's individual learning style preference. This topic has been very rarely discussed in other academic papers. However, ignoring this factor is dangerous. In fact, a realistic diagnosis was needed before offering solutions, and I feel that this basic idea has mostly been overlooked. Whether this was part of the now-trending pseudo positive psychology mass indoctrination, or simply a means of considering efficiency in teaching by focusing on solutions only is unclear; without a prognosis it was impossible to establish a cure. Unfortunately, in my experience, institutions were not eager to learn about the deficits but, rather wanted immediate results. Often, it was felt that if learners had difficulties, that was perceived to undermine the institutions' prominence. Paradoxically, I felt that by helping individuals to understand their learning processes was not a sign of weakness. On the contrary, it was building a solid foundation for the learners and a logical and reliable strategy for the institutions themselves. With educators' assistance, metacognitive skills can open new horizons in foreign language learning, enabling learners to comprehend better and widen their cognitive capacities. In fact, as in most cases, learners do have an initial motivational force, it

depends much on the educators' consciousness to explain the benefits and teach strategies of learning-autonomy.

5.5 Gender differences in learning styles and autonomy

Throughout papers I, II, III, V and VI, I discussed gender differences in learning styles and autonomy. This topic shed light on some factors that should be taken very seriously in the L2 classroom. In this perspective, my findings deviated from many previous studies. Many papers seemed to be biased towards females, suggesting that female learners were far superior academically and emotionally in the classroom (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2007; Feery, 2008; Bozinovic, & Sindik, 2011). This idea inspired me to investigate the subject of motivation from the perspective of genders in more depth and from different angles.

5.5.1 Female learners' perspective

I found that female learners generally displayed some insecurity and the need for reassurance in different areas. Although they preferred teachers with a relaxed teaching style, educators with strict teaching styles were not noticeably disliked. Females showed a considerable wish for opportunities to exhibit their work. They also needed enough time to complete their tasks, to have continuous oral and written feedback and encouragement from the teacher. Their attitudes were characterized by perfectionism, attention to detail, a willingness to do research and to discuss and ask advice from fellow students. Females were very eager to learn English to a high standard and to use it widely, not only in classroom-settings. Moreover, the findings of papers V and VII, showed that female learners thought of learning English as not only a useful thing, but as an intellectual challenge and an asset, a factor which contributed considerably to their strong intrinsic motivation.

Surprisingly, however, in paper V, 71 per cent of female learners believed they did not have any natural talent for learning English, while only 29 per cent believed the opposite. In part, this phenomenon made female students more conscious of their language learning process. Moreover, their perceived lack of talent resulted in a more conscientious approach to doing homework, a greater willingness to help and be helped by their peers, and a more proactive approach to finding information related to their studies at home compared with the male students. Paradoxically, most female students were conscious of the fact that they were responsible for their own learning, yet, many of them agreed that their learning success depended on the teachers' likeability. Curiously, even more females considered the teachers' perceived skilfulness to be a key factor in language learning. Whilst these findings partially corroborate previously existing studies where female students exhibited faster learning, more motivation or much better attitudes towards the teachers, they also offer a new viewpoint on the complexity of the situation (Weis, Heikamp & Trommsdorff, 2013; Kiziltepe, 2003; Dewaele, Macintyre & Dewaele, 2016; Główka, 2014). In fact, the more detailed understanding my research unveiled on females' strengths, opinions and weaknesses allowed me to design more comprehensive strategies to help them throughout their learning.

5.5.2 Male learners' perspective

Based on my findings, male learners were commonly misunderstood by many previous researchers. While females were declared intellectually and emotionally more developed,

males' real problems and emotions in learning a foreign language were vastly overlooked (Główka, 2014; Dewaele, Macintyre & Dewaele, 2016). However, in my research, male students' learning styles and preferences portray an intriguing picture throughout papers II, III and V. The majority of them believed they had a natural talent for learning English or, at least, were not lacking in talent. In general, they displayed so much self-confidence and faith in their natural abilities that, instead of asking for further information and explanation when the topic was difficult, they preferred to wait for the clarification of concepts later, when more information was available. Importantly, male learners were very sensitive to possible scenarios where they could have appeared to be incompetent. Therefore, not too strict teachers and mostly oral feedback privately was a highly preferred combination for them.

An excellent paper by Chaffee, Lou, Noels, & Katz (2019) pointed out a key feature in males' language learning attitudes. The title of their work 'Why don't 'real men' learn languages' had already described the most important factor, namely that male learners see language learning from a different perspective. My findings showed a very similar panorama: males simply had different attitudes and needs. Actually, male students were rather sceptical about being able to learn from their peers and/or helping them with understanding difficult topics. Nevertheless, they found brainstorming in small groups, where they felt their opinions were validated, very valuable. Also, males preferred practical learning content and approaches, and empirical evidence of being able to use English in real-life settings. As for classroom practices, male learners were perceived to have more opportunities than females to talk about interesting topics during the lesson (Saito, Dewaele, Abe & In'nami, 2018), yet, most of them did not detect encouragement from the teacher to be creative. Finally, most male students were very conscious of their own role and responsibility in the learning process. However, more than half agreed that a skilled teacher could condition their success. Nevertheless, they were less dependent on the teachers' likeability than female students were. This fact may connect well with other data found in paper VI. As male students also thought the ESL classroom to be a happy place in general and, were emotionally not so dependent on the teachers, they took more control over their learning eventually when they could see the practical necessity and importance of excelling.

5.5.3 The teachers' perspective

On the same topic of gender differences in learning styles, the teachers reinforced most of the learners' opinions and offered some additional viewpoints. According to them, female students generally displayed a combination of lower self-confidence and more maximalist attitudes, as opposed to male students who had significant self-confidence and '*in general took things very easy*'. Additionally, male students used more video games and navigated more on the Internet. This behaviour had brought them in contact with practical English more often, a fact not to be confused with doing educational research for the specific goal of learning English better.

Interestingly, the marks received did not necessarily reflect students' perceptions. Although there were many male students with outstanding spoken English, many of them were described as '*too lazy*' to acquire correct grammar and to learn new vocabulary which fell outside of their interest. Therefore, in general, female students did better in tests, while male students used spoken English better and with more self-confidence, which contributed to their

positive emotions and more context-embedded intrinsic motivation. However, according to the teachers, depending on the class composition, the chemistry among the students, and specific (charismatic) personality traits of certain teachers, the outcomes did vary moderately.

I feel that my findings gave a concise and comprehensive view on gender differences in foreign language learning. My holistic perspective –as opposed to focusing on specific details in specific contexts- highlighted an excellent basis for a better psychological approach and more focused teaching strategies. Moreover, by a better understanding of gender differences, a clearer vision emerged on classroom emotions, identity and possible paths for teaching autonomy. I viewed the interconnectedness of every factor in my research as an excellent opportunity to create a concise and comprehensive theory and framework. This new theory and framework were designed for inclusivity whilst respecting individuality and contemporary needs that benefits learners, teachers and institutions in a balanced fashion.

5.6 A new theory and framework based on my reflections and considerations of the key findings

While my submitted articles covered a wide range of topics regarding learning English as a foreign language, each of them focused on a few key findings. However, after reflecting on these main findings throughout my preparation for this PhD, I felt that considering them as a wider collective whole also enabled a deeper and more solid contribution to the field through the creation of a new theory and framework.

During the last decade, I carefully examined a large number of new academic theories on foreign language motivation. Most of them targeted the understanding of one very specific aspect of learning. These theories seemed very useful on an academic level, as they were mostly descriptive and analytical, but I perceived that they offered very few practical solutions for teachers and institutions. Nevertheless, I found it useful to follow the latest academic research and tried to incorporate it into the daily life of school. Unfortunately, most teachers with whom I worked had no time to read, analyse and implement the latest research in their classroom routines. Many of them possessed no skills to translate complicated academic findings into empirical classroom practices. In paper V, I asked teachers whether they received specific training on the psychological aspects of language learning. The answer was negative. The only skills they had were the ones they developed throughout their decades of work. I also had the opportunity to discuss this topic informally with many more teachers. Fortunately, most of them were interested in educational psychology. Nevertheless, most teachers relied on random peaks of enthusiasm when they found a new concept, without understanding and researching well its context and socio-cultural applicability. However, to successfully implement a new strategy, well-designed steps were needed that fit real classroom and learning needs. In fact, I feel that both educators and learners must be able to relate to new concepts and strategies as the contrary may result in emotional turmoil, emotional-cognitive insecurity and a threat to learners' identity.

5.6.1 Defining adaptability and relatability

Throughout the research I have aimed to provide solutions as well as identifying problems. This PhD has enabled me to reflect on my work as a whole and, based on the key findings, has allowed me to suggest a coherent and practical new, holistic approach to English teaching. It

was absolutely impossible to consider all macro and micro variables across cultures, spaces and time that may affect the learning of a new language. Therefore, the findings of the presented articles targeted a specific new tribe, the global English learners/speakers, whose needs are addressed here. The fact itself that this new tribe has emerged, points toward a rather swift change in societies and in global dynamics. As such new situations often need new understandings and approaches, fittingly, the overall consideration of the articles' findings led me towards the concepts of *relatability* and *adaptability* as the two main elements to consider in learning English as a global language.

The Cambridge Dictionary (dictionary.cambridge.org, 2022) defines relatability as follows: *"The quality of being easy to understand or feel sympathy for"*. The example provided under the official definition allows one to further contextualise this relatively new word: *"Relatability is important, as the audience **must be able to sympathize** with the character's actions"* (my emphasis). Nowadays, the word relatability is mostly used in magazines, social media and blogs, but it is often avoided in academic studies. However, as social research in general aims to study real people, new trends and new realities should not be ignored but included and taken as a serious factor.

The other key term, adaptability, introduced here, reflects well the intention of this thesis: being adaptive to new needs. Cognitive and emotional adaptability should be a quality that both English learners and the industry that serves them possess. The Cambridge dictionary (dictionary.cambridge.org, 2022) defines adaptability as '*an ability or willingness to change in order to suit different conditions*'. From the perspective of human attitudes, this definition refers to both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Unfortunately, the conjunction '*or*' seems to encourage individuals to choose between options, but not to explore and exploit all possibilities. The Oxford Dictionary (Oxfordlernersdictionaries.com, 2022) defines adaptability as '*The quality of being able to adjust to new conditions*'. Although the two definitions have much in common, the combination of both ideas offers a clearer view on how the concept of adaptability is used in this thesis, which could be defined as follows: *The willingness to develop the ability to change in order to suit different conditions.*

In fact, during the past ten years, millions of lives have become considerably more dynamic and, therefore, (voluntarily or not) adaptable. Such changes could be either pushed by one's superiors in the workplace, by life circumstances or by own choice, in almost every domain in life. To the extent never seen before, an immense flow of information has been seen, processed and connected by engaged minds. This flood of information is by no means a passive concept. To the contrary, it is expected to be used dynamically in a variety of settings, which requires cognitive and sometimes physical adaptation. Unfortunately, drawing on the findings presented across all my papers, learners of English were often ignorant about their own learning processes, preferences, motivations, and goals. This was counterproductive, as adaptation to new circumstances and new concepts could have facilitated more motivation and engagement for them. In paper IV I specifically discussed learners' willingness to change their attitudes and perceptions, and the results were very positive.

Educators should be conscientious regarding building learners' understanding and capacity in a purposeful way, instead of submitting their intellect in a non-linear fashion to every surfacing trend and/or to morally or culturally non- acceptable requirements. This conflict can

be seen from early scenarios of learning English at school as a compulsory subject to graduating with a BA/MA in English. Unfortunately, across all ages, most learners who participated in my research showed no real understanding regarding when and how to use their new knowledge, or even how to use it properly in a variety of circumstances. In fact, as shown in papers I, IV, V, VI and VII, it was very hard and cognitively dissonant to adapt to possible circumstances and scenarios to which the learners could not relate at all. The main reason for this was that, in the English learning classroom, during the learning process, a real connection was seldom established with the target language. This happened either because of the very unfortunate and unrelatable design of the textbooks, or because educators themselves were biased towards certain aspects of effective language learning.

In my experience, learners were constantly told at home and at school, that 'learning English is good for your future'. This, in itself, was not a negative statement. Nevertheless, learning English for a better future sounded such a wide ranging and vague possibility that it was hard for students to establish a realistic motivational factor. However, for global English learners, depending on their culture, gender and identity, specific training strategies are needed. They need a clear understanding of their goals, motivations, sometimes the lack of it, and how to adapt to changes. In fact, based on all my findings, learners should be made aware that, despite fluctuations, the learning process should not be abandoned, but modified to a more relatable one. This will lead to continuous engagement and cumulative motivation where they can relate to new circumstances and how to use English within them.

5.6.2 Previous complexity theories and the use of ARM framework

Before defining the distinct nature of my framework, it is worth mentioning some quite recent theories that helped me to see language learning motivation in a new light. Larsen-Freeman (1997) had already used the ideas of chaos and complexity when referring to motivation in psychology, giving an obvious hint that motivation is definitely not a simple and linear concept. This was further developed by Mercer (2011), naming it Complexity, Continuity and Change, a theory which further explained and expanded academic understanding on the subject. Waninge, Dörnyei and De Bot's (2014) article on dynamics in language learning reaffirmed a key concept, that motivation is dynamic. The importance of these ideas lie in the fact that they attempted (with plausible success) to eliminate rigidity in understanding and researching motivation altogether. Al-Hoorie (2016) also offered some interesting insights on unconscious motivation, and how the learners' relationship to their L1 may bias their attitudes towards learning and using L2, mostly as a result of a threat to cultural identity.

The articles and the new framework which I present for this degree are very much in line with recent developments. While the aforementioned theories are significant and meaningful, I perceived a gap within them, through reflecting on the research I undertook. As both an active teacher and researcher with the privilege of having worked in lands with very different cultures, my goal throughout my research was to find specific elements in language learning motivation which could be universal to everyone. As the titles of the previous theories suggest, dynamicity, complexity and, to a certain extent, chaos, were investigated as a continuum of new trends in motivation. While they seemed accurate descriptions, the way these ideas can be implemented where they are most empirically needed, in foreign language learning are, at least, not easy. It is not hard to picture the reaction of any teacher or learner who is told that

their students' *motivation is complex, dynamic and somewhat chaotic*. Although this may very well be the case, probably, the reality should be presented in a more psychologically affordable fashion: Individuals should adapt and/or develop their motivation in a way that can be *relatable to their present or foreseeable circumstances*. These concepts are both easily understandable, teachable and can help individuals to analyse and organise their learning strategies and motivation.

I perceived it absolutely vital to build a bridge between the academic research community and learners' real empirical needs. Theories on foreign language motivation and new frameworks developed by academics should be of service to the target community. Here, I do not advocate for over-simplification of complex ideas, but there is a desperate need to make them empirically applicable to real-life learning scenarios. This need is well reflected in Bourdieu's words (1996, p.7) where he states: "*As I never accepted distinction between theory and methodology, conceptual analysis and empirical description, the theoretical model does not appear there embellished with all the marks by which one usually recognizes 'grand theory' (such as lack of reference to some empirical reality).*"

In my framework, the columns describe: 1) the factors to be validated; 2) the educational strategies; 3) the consequent benefits, and 4) the outcome. Nevertheless, the framework is not to be interpreted strictly horizontally. Hence, although all factors from all columns should be present in order to achieve success, by no means should one specific horizontal line of sequence be forced to be implemented without considering the overall objective of the framework. While the framework is primarily developed based on my studies and experiences whilst living in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, its principles could be adopted in other countries as well. In fact, the Adaptive Relatability Motivation (ARM) framework is designed in order to be used sensitively, considering learners' culture, language and religion, and according to the institutions' or individuals' possibilities and relatability. Therefore, the framework's adaptability ensures its applicability and relatability to many different cultures.

Table 1 Framework of Adaptive Relatability Motivation (ARM) in L2 Learning

Factors to be validated		Educational Strategies		Benefits		Outcome
Cultural identity		Focus on L2 usefulness		Multidimensional motivation		
Gender-related aims and behaviours		Helping students to understand their learning style preferences		Reduced identity crisis (or loss of fear to being forced into a new one)		
Current motivation	+	Teaching practices that promote autonomous learners	→	Perception of L2 as a positive force for personal, professional and societal growth and/or cultural literacy.	=	Adaptive relatability to L2 that motivates continuous engagement in its learning process
Emotions in the classroom		Teaching L2 related EQ		Becoming a proficient and a really emotionally intelligent foreign language speaker		

Chapter 6. Recommendations

Drawing on the entirety of my research presented for this degree, I offer four recommendations on how to implement and design culturally relevant, individual, and/or mission-related strategies based on the new Adaptive Relatability Motivation (ARM).

- **Eliminating teacher likeability bias and classroom dependent learning:** Shifting towards the promotion of cognitive and emotional independence from the teacher and focusing on individual learning style preferences in the path of developing learning autonomy.
- **Validating emotions, teaching through culture-appropriate strategies and emphasizing foreign language related emotional intelligence:** Helping students to understand and foster their identity, validating their emotions and motivation, while teaching cultural and pragmatic sensitivity of the English language.
- **Respecting gender groups' needs in the ESL classroom:** designing classroom strategies and learning content that genders can identify with without embarrassment.
- **Adaptability and Relatability:** Balancing needs, preferences and reality for continuous engagement.

6.1 Eliminating teacher likeability bias and classroom dependent learning

My first point focuses on preventing or eliminating both teacher likeability bias and classroom dependent learning. As discussed throughout papers III, V, VI and VII, emotions and learning are very intertwined. Based on the key result of these articles, I perceived it very important to empower learners to see the practical content of the lessons. They should focus all their cognitive resources on the learning goal, not on the channel through which it is delivered.

6.1.1 Teacher likeability bias

In the case of teachers who are perceived as likeable, there are equal benefits from focusing on their lessons instead of primarily on their personality. Being very dependent on a charismatic teacher may be counterproductive, as learners may be less motivated to develop learning-autonomy. While it is a greatly rewarding experience to have an engaging, positive and caring teacher, the desired outcome of any learning scenario is eventually knowledge acquisition in an appropriate, accommodating context, not mere entertainment.

Unfortunately, many educators are expected to be not only professional, but highly charismatic. I discussed this in detail in papers V, VI and VII, where students acknowledged, that if the teachers were not likeable, they would not learn anything from them. Paradoxically, in the results of paper VII, it became clear that teachers who were perceived as likeable were not necessarily respected. Therefore, this strategy does not necessarily offer a solution to motivation and autonomy either. Students also admitted that they naturally adopted the teacher's mood during lessons, this conditioning their attitudes and learning outcome. Thus, the measure of real responsibility students were willing to assume for their learning was very low and, in their eyes, such a strategy was mostly justified.

6.1.2 The role of management

During the time when the studies were conducted and I worked as a teacher, my personal experience was that students were often obliged to provide reports about teachers to the management. Such reports placed teachers in a vulnerable situation, forcing them to act in the classroom in ways that did not necessarily nurture knowledge acquisition and learning autonomy. There was much daily pressure on the teachers to be overly and unduly apologetic and forcibly entertaining. At this point, unfortunately, there was another factor to consider. Foreign language education was inseparably linked to high monetary benefits. Therefore, English language educators were required to be both highly charismatic and educators of the highest quality if they wanted to continue being employed.

The institutions in which I had the opportunity to teach and conduct research did aim for excellence in education according to their own understanding. However, their focus was not on knowledge acquisition necessarily, but on the creation of an exceptional experience for learners, mostly through amusing activities. Learners were very aware of this policy. Thus, they confessed that the learning period at school had become simply a burden for them. Such attitudes had seriously detrimental effects both on teachers' mood and the students' learning success. In paper V, VI and VII, I discussed these scenarios in detail and argued that teachers should and could embrace classroom practices that are centred on learning, and are emotionally caring for students *in that context*, instead of trying to win learners' good intentions and blessing by keeping them amused in the classroom. My conclusion, based on the key findings, was that the teaching strategies should not target learners' boredom or their wish for a cheerful and easy time in the classroom, but should facilitate their learning strengths, and how they can become autonomous in their studying processes.

6.1.3 From homework to relatable short projects

In paper V, I emphasised that teaching learner-autonomy should always be a priority in all classrooms, as learners from all backgrounds were capable of developing and mastering it (Sakai, Takagi & Chu, 2010). Through this practice, learners could develop emotional stability in their learning processes, while receiving cognitive reassurance and care by the teachers. As every classroom based learning scenario is time limited, assignments that can be executed at home are a great tool to develop such learner-autonomy. Moreover, as I pointed out in paper III, there wasn't a teacher and teaching style that would fit every student's need and preference (Gabillon, 2012). Hence, autonomy and metacognition should be prioritised.

Based on my key findings, I propose the modification of homework in its traditionally used form. The conventional concept of homework, besides being an outdated idea, has become a psychological threat to many learners, particularly in its meaningless, repetitive form (Kralovec &Buell, 2000; Kohn, 2006; Bennet & Kalish, 2006; Bomarito, 2017). As I suggest in the ARM framework, relatability (besides capacity) is key. Learners should have short *challenges* that allow them to work on personalised short projects at home (Redding, 2000; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). This should encompass the learners selecting the proper vocabulary and structure in a topic to which they can relate within a frame given by the educator. For example, if the topic is 'health', learners should be encouraged to choose any viewpoint or story they wish and to elaborate on it creatively. Relatability here is vital, as some learners may lose interest for example in elaborating upon a project on the benefits of

eating a number of vegetables each day. Instead, based on individual interests, and within culturally acceptable boundaries, some students may research the newest discovery in cancer treatment, while others may be investigating the effects of body building, etc. The same approach would be very beneficial with assessments. Learners should be given authority to develop their own tests and to write properly structured essays within the allowed confines. This flexibility and adaptability would also allow learners to feel more comfortable about assessment in general. Such practices would also encourage them as they would not be compared against other students, but would see the effectiveness of their own strategies, resulting in more learning autonomy (Xu, 2008 a,b; Benbenutty, 2011c).

6.1.4 Promoting autonomy: the importance of teachers' guidance

The above discussed strategies should greatly help both teachers and students to have a clear understanding of the boundaries and aim of the physical or virtual classroom itself. On the one hand, teachers should design their curricula and syllabi to be individual-centred, as opposed to being focused on their own skills. Excessive classroom dependence where learning is based on heavily monitored and supervised activities needs to be eliminated. On the other hand, learners should be constantly encouraged to expand their English language knowledge further in relatable domains. This, in most cases, needs some direction as well. While most teachers consciously or unconsciously know how learners could/should benefit from using English outside the classroom, surprisingly few educators teach or discuss it (Xie, 2017). Such things should never be taken for granted, but rather, by providing ideas and guidelines, educators should try to inspire students.

Finally, metacognition and how to develop learning autonomy could be a good topic of common brainstorming where learners may relate to some ideas and later develop their own. Arousing learners' curiosity may also help them to see opportunities to use English in fields they never considered before. Motivation to learn English should not be understood as finishing the exercises set by the teacher and sitting still during the lesson. Teachers should help learners to see beyond classroom-bound motivation and how to take practical steps to achieve their goals. However, to embrace such strategies requires much effort from both learners and educators, as giving up long-standing classroom practices may be socially, cognitively, emotionally and psychologically very demanding. The properly understood and locally acceptable use of positive psychology may be a great tool to achieve such outcomes and may help to broaden the comfort zone of individuals with secure steps.

6.2 Validating emotions, teaching through culture-appropriate strategies and emphasizing foreign language related emotional intelligence

My second point, namely validating emotions in the classroom, as detailed in papers III, IV, VI and VII, is a very challenging strategy. In many cultures, the student-teacher power dynamics vary, are often rigid, and hierarchy is unalterable. Therefore, validating, or even accepting the emotions of the learners may present a challenge (Weiner 2007). While this is particularly true of local teachers with local students, the scenario where foreign teachers teach local students can bring even more confusion. Nevertheless, every human being has emotions, thus, they can be validated in relatable ways. The focus of my strategy mostly lies in validating negative emotions which are caused while learning a foreign language. Excluding assessments, among the biggest anxiety and discomfort inducing realities learners encounter is

balancing their own cultural, moral and religious values, which may not necessarily coincide with countries where English is spoken (Fearon 1999). In such cases, local and foreign teachers should consider adopting slightly different, yet converging strategies.

6.2.1 The role of local teachers

As for local teachers, there is an urgent need to resist 'localizing' English language (paper VII). To a certain degree, it is understandable when local teachers approach the first lessons in teaching English from the local perspective, so the language becomes presented in a relatable way. However, to continue such strategies as if English should be understood and spoken only from a local perspective will confuse learners and will lead to failure when communicating with a foreigner.

A good example of filtering English through the local culture by local teachers is *Monglish*. While there is much emphasis in Mongolian schools on learning proper English, as pointed out in papers IV and VII, Mongolian teachers teach English through their own culture and world-view. This often leads to individuals speaking English with Mongolian grammar constructions and Mongolian language related emotional intelligence, resulting in fossilized interlanguage. Therefore, for an English speaking individual, *Monglish* could appear as an extremely rude communication style, and the intended message of the speaker could be easily misunderstood. Thus, local educators would do well to preserve and nurture local students' own cultural identity, without drawing unnecessary nationalistic and/or political parallels between the local culture and English as a language and a culture to which they see it as being attached (Heyward, 2004).

I strongly recommend that emotional validation at schools *must always* be implemented with a focus on personal and cognitive growth. Such an approach would clarify that English is not a threat, but an added value to the individual's existing competencies. Maintaining the autonomies of both the local language and culture and the English language does not exclude convergent and positive attitudes, but recognizes the worth and place of both entities.

6.2.2 The role of foreign teachers

As seen in paper VII, some foreign teachers (hopefully unwittingly) sometimes showed colonising behaviours and treated local students as expatriates. Whenever this attitude was present, it often reflected a real shock for foreigners when learners did not meet their standards. In fact, learners were often unable to respond as swiftly and correctly as expected during the lessons. Moreover, many learners of English were not able to fully understand foreign mentality and English related emotional intelligence. For these students, the speech of the foreign teachers was often not fully intelligible, as they understood most of the words, but not the connotations of their speech or the pragmatics.

Thus, based on my findings, I recommend that foreign teachers should make an effort to understand learners' limitations to a greater extent (Wang, 2013). Actually, students being able to make more or less complex sentences, or even fluently communicating in English, *does not* automatically result in having all the similar to pragmatic cultural and English-related emotional intelligence knowledge that foreign teachers possess. In fact, learners being able to express themselves to a certain degree does not signify that they understand the other

speakers' intended message clearly. These concepts must be introduced, clarified and taught without taboos, but in a culture and age sensitive fashion. In failing to do so, communication fails, and a lack of understanding of behavioural clues may seriously compromise learners' motivation, even self-esteem. Emotional validation, however, can make a real difference in such cases.

In paper VI, I detailed that Western teachers often claimed to be acquainted with the idea of positive psychology, but used it according to their own understanding. Being positive is an excellent quality. However, the type of emotional validation offered by the teachers should be culturally acceptable for learners. Foreigners should thoroughly research the local culture, and become acquainted with locally acceptable forms of education, societal expectations and management of emotions in and out of the classroom. For example, if a foreign teacher is always overly cheerful in the classroom, that may not necessarily suggest positivity to the learners depending on their culture or the context. In fact, according to the cultures found in Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan, displaying overtly positive and emotional attitudes equates to simple-mindedness. I do want to emphasise here that *understanding* the other culture's values *is not* necessarily the key point, but *accepting* it and *respecting* it will result in a positive learning environment.

6.2.3 Emotional validation according the learners' culture

The approach I propose, is to allow time for learners to feel safe, without unnecessary criticism or visible surprise and disapproval for their low level language skills. They are not English speakers with low mental capacity, but individuals with a different language(s), culture and world-view. Accepting this difference is a very effective form of emotional validation. Another strategy I recommend is showing respect for and gaining some understanding about learners' cultures in both an explicit and implicit fashion. For example, "This behaviour may be acceptable with your Bulgarian teacher, but not in my class!" may undermine learners' self-worth and may incite nationalistic feelings. However, such a strategy probably won't make them understand how their attitudes and behaviour is unacceptable. Instead, while reassuring learners about their good intentions, the different requirements and standards of the foreign teachers should be made absolutely clear. I cannot emphasise enough how important details are. Foreign teachers should never assume learners understand correctly all the pragmatic, cultural and behavioural implications of a foreign language. In my experience, even if learners believe they do so, this is most often their perception, not the truth.

As I considered in detail in papers I, III, IV, VI and VII, cultural sensibility in the classroom is vital, as learners from a variety of cultures were particularly vulnerable to foreign teachers (McKinley, 2005). Foreigners may emotionally validate learners by not openly discussing their weaknesses publicly. For example, learners in Asia may feel extremely humiliated if asked by the teacher in front of the class what do they find difficult. To them, this would be considered an irreparable loss of face and they probably wouldn't give an honest answer regarding their learning struggles. To a lesser extent, this phenomenon might be true in Eastern Europe as well, particularly among male learners. The strategy I recommend here is uncomplicated and effective. Simple pieces of papers should be anonymously thrown in a box at the end of each lesson with an actual difficult point written on them. Then these ideas

should be written on the board and learners asked to make a short investigation about a particular point at home. Linking learning-autonomy and emotional validation can be very beneficial. By sharing their findings, learners can feel empowered, and other students may relate more to their conclusions than they would to the teachers' explanation. In a later lesson, before moving on to more difficult levels without a solid foundation, the content of these presentations should be discussed without the necessity of finding out who has experienced a particular difficulty. If there is still a need for a teacher to intervene, or provide an additional explanation, such interventions should be sensitively expressed. Thus, acknowledging the difficulty of learning a foreign language, honouring learners' dignity and emotions, and helping with practical steps, is a greatly validating and motivating experience that will create a real positive and caring atmosphere (Swain, 2013).

6.3 Teaching emotional intelligence (EQ)

As I indicated in papers IV and VII, both local and foreign teachers have a duty to teach a range of English-related emotional intelligence concepts and skills to the learners (Valiente, Swanson & Eisenberg, 2012; Vesely-Maillefer & Saklofske, 2018). As an example, the proper use and mirroring of body language (Tipper, Signorini & Grafton, 2015) can be crucial when expressing respect for other individuals. Basic skills, such as appropriate forms of greetings, polite information requests, clarification of possible communication differences, understanding of social/professional hierarchy related cultural differences and respect for the concept of personal space should be taught explicitly. Otherwise, mistaken actions may have unfortunate consequences, and the other party may feel uneasy or even offended (Barkai, 1990). The use of short educational videos and the clear, detailed, yet simple explanations of certain actions may help learners to learn specific behavioural rules that will lead to successful communication. However, when using such visual material or demonstrations, identifying certain behaviours as 'right' or wrong' should be strictly avoided. By this, students' own cultural preparedness will be validated and acknowledged, yet, they will understand that other ways are acceptable and needed in other cultural and linguistic contexts (Gershon & Pellitteri, 2018). My recommendations here can, I believe, have a great impact. As I previously discussed, my Bulgarian students' opinion that they *simply wanted to learn English, not become English*, is an extremely common attitude in all countries where I worked. Such attitudes should be consciously clarified. It is imperative for students to learn English-related EQ without feeling that they have to renounce or modify their cultural or national identity. Moreover, I propose a strong and positive collaboration between local and foreign teachers that will serve as an excellent role model for learners. By their example, students may perceive the worth of both sides and how these sides can complement each other without harming learner's cultural identity.

6.3.1 Understanding non-verbal clues and the need for being specific

Another key concept to teach is understanding non-verbal clues when communicating in a foreign language. In fact, it is critical to teach how emotions and implied behaviours are expressed in other cultures (Sparrow & Knight, 2006; Sándorová, 2016; Mahboob, 2018). The teaching of expressions and interpretation of emotions should gradually encompass complex ideas, not only basic ones. For example, learners should eventually understand the difference between the other party being unhappy, or possibly disapproving and retreating from

interaction altogether because of the learner's perceived inappropriate behaviour. As Maclellan (2013, p. 2) points out: *"Our capacity for reflexive thought means that we are able to think about how others see us and who we are... This consciousness of our own identity - our self - is possibly our most important possession"*. However, sometimes it can be very difficult to discern non-verbal clues. For example, in a conversation, where non-verbal clues are not understood, individuals often simply don't react at all to the message. This is quite natural, as they may be trying to guess the other party's intentions, but not necessarily with much success. To avoid such uncomfortable situations, learners should be taught to ask for polite clarification (Leffert, Brady & Siperstein, 2009). If such a request is properly done, the discomfort can be eased and even a certain measure of bonding may take place.

Another crucial factor I recommend considering is the need to be specific. Being specific with regard to opinions and requests may seem a somewhat personal trait to many. However, being specific in communication may have an entirely different meaning according to the individual's culture and may easily lead to misunderstandings. In Central Asian cultures, non-verbal clues are more often used to express preferences, rather than expressing it verbally and specifically. The same strategies may not work well in English, and the expected outcome of the learner's communication goal may be entirely lost. As I point out in paper IV, it is equally important to understand the other party's communication style.

My papers submitted for this degree focused on Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria and Hungary. However, although not included in this thesis, I lived, worked and researched for years in a number of cities in Kazakhstan and Russia as well. There, I had the opportunity to teach students from nearly every Central and East Asian country and from an incredible variety of ethnicities and cultures. That experience also strengthened my conviction that understanding and teaching non-verbal communication clues in English are of key importance. The communication styles of all learners with whom I worked needed very careful analysis before reaching the conclusion that I properly understood their message. This could be illustrated by the use of the word 'no'. While certain cultures mostly avoid using this word (or even haven't got a specific word for it), other cultures will use it freely without any reservation. These practices are heavily embedded in the speakers' original culture. For example, Russian speakers of English will extensively use 'no' in their speech in order to be clear and to set boundaries without being offensive. Japanese speakers will avoid it at all cost as, according to their culture, that could be perceived as very rude and opinionated. Another example is the extensive and improper use of the word 'maybe'. I often experienced that Asian students answer 'yes' or 'no' questions with 'maybe'. They also attach 'maybe' at the end of sentences where doubt should not be expressed. Foreign teachers are often surprised to hear statements such as: 'I am eleven years old, maybe' or, 'This is my mother, maybe'. While this may sound amusing at the beginning, this phenomenon should be balanced by teaching and reminding one of the proper use of such words in the foreign language classroom. Therefore, as seen here, not being specific enough or not being able to understand non-verbal clues may completely prevent successful communication among speakers from different cultures.

6.3.2 Teachers' struggles to teach English-related EQ

The implementation of these ideas from the local teachers' perspective, who may have never travelled to English speaking countries themselves, can be a very difficult task. Most of these

teachers would not access educational psychology training during their university years. Moreover, even if they had travelled, studied or lived abroad, there is no guarantee that they would know how to teach English-related EQ, or even the fact that they should. In fact, such plans and strategies should be designed by professionals who have the capacity and sensitivity to do so, and who understand the local and foreign culture in a balanced way by being both academically trained and having been empirically exposed to both cultures for an extended period of time. There should be much emphasis on eradicating the practice of overwhelming learners with grammar and exercises, hoping that they will eventually gain all knowledge regarding EQ later. Pragmatic grammar and English-related EQ should be laterally and systemically introduced and taught, as opposed to sudden, unprepared and unplanned sessions. However, exceptions should be considered if special circumstances and/or empirical needs are present that require immediate intervention.

In the case of foreign teachers, they should participate in professional communities as well. This is particularly true as they may not be conscious of the very existence of, or the need to teach, English-related EQ, as this comes naturally to them. In the case of non-native foreign teachers (with a culture foreign to both the local and native English speaking countries), they may also need to revisit such ideas in order not to mix English-related EQ with their own cultural habits. Very importantly, such training should be effectuated before foreign teachers begin the school year, not drip-fed during the year. It is of key importance to set clear and coherent guidelines on the strategies teachers will need to follow, as teaching English-related EQ is *not* a concept based on teachers' personal preferences and cultural views (Chang, 2004).

As seen in papers IV, V and VII, validating learners' emotions and nurturing their autonomy is a complex task which requires teacher training in the first place. Societal and cultural factors are key in effective English language teaching; differences in learning among gender groups should receive greater emphasis (Sakai, Takagi & Chu, 2010). This is true, not only because of differences in the attitudes of both groups in certain contexts, but because many cultures require such differentiation.

6.4 Respecting gender groups' needs in the ESL classroom

The third point I propose is to consider the specific needs of different gender groups in the classroom. Drawing on the results of papers I, III, III, V and VI, yet without forcibly generalizing stereotypes, I suggest a way forward here. Considering my findings, I feel that the complete separation of gender groups in different classrooms may be advantageous. In fact, many cultures place emphasis on traditional gender roles in every area of life, thus, the importance of maintaining this practice in the foreign language classroom prevails as well. Moreover, by separating genders, much anxiety could be reduced and efficiency increased, as it gives opportunity to teach in a relatable way with relatable material (Dekhtyar, Weber, Helgertz & Herlitz, 2018).

As I discussed throughout papers I, II, III, V and VI, male and female learners have different perceptions and attitudes regarding learning and classroom practices. For instance, drawing on my key results, classroom practices that required role-play and excessive demonstration of communicative and soft skills demotivated male learners. In fact, forcing 'unmanly' activities on male learners, particularly in front of female students, did not necessarily result in positive outcomes. Moreover, forcing male learners out of their comfort zone was perceived as

offensive, childish and humiliating, and could result in a heavy loss of motivation and negative classroom behaviour. Here I propose to consider relatability and adaptability when dividing the classes by genders.

A classroom entirely made up of male learners would respond more positively and would engage better when the learning content and activities are relatable to them. This strategy can expand their comfort zone sensibly and gradually, can validate their identity and social space. This can also open new, safe paths for them in order to be adaptive towards topics and learning contents that would have been deemed unpleasant before. Here, there is no intention to design relatable syllabi in the first instance and later immerse them in completely unrelatable topics, but to widen their interest enough to be able to engage in a variety of learning content without feeling shame or stigmatization.

I propose that similar factors should be considered with female learners. They need emotional safety in the classroom, a higher degree of challenge and more intellectually oriented learning content. Moreover, more emotional validation may increase their motivation and widen their engagement and adaptability in a wide variety of contexts and situations. As I discussed in paper V, the average time for achieving self-confidence among female learners can be longer than among male learners. However, comparing the two groups, or proposing to have a competition between them, may result in the acquisition of a superficial knowledge pool, and may be covertly emotionally draining for female learners. Therefore, an all-female classroom may be an ideal place to show additional emotional validation and reassurance of their different learning pace. Finally, it is each institution's responsibility to consider individuals' who identify with the opposite gender and wish to attend one specific gender-segregated classroom.

6.5 Adaptability and relatability

After reflecting on the key findings of all my papers, I feel that the terms adaptability and relatability were the two concepts that described best the direction language learning should embrace. Hence, my fourth proposal focuses on adaptability and relatability as part of teaching metacognition and learning autonomy.

Teaching strategies and content should always be designed and directed in a sensitive, inclusive and differentiated fashion. Nevertheless, relatability to learning goals and context will mostly be a very personal experience, which may vary even among individuals of the same culture, belief and gender to a certain extent. As my papers unveiled, there was an immense combination of traits, past experiences and future expectations that determined individuals' opinions, and the concepts they identified as being relatable (Freiermuth & Ito, 2020). Similarly, motivation, whether clearly identified or not, should be a very personal, intrinsic force, as opposed to exposing learners to clichés or concepts of impersonal and unrelatable mass motivation dogmas.

As I discussed throughout all papers, positive strategies, such as emphasizing respect for learners' individual needs, wishes and motivation may effectively promote their adaptability in a variety of learning and life circumstances. My ideas were confirmed in a recent study by Kudinova and Arzhadeeva (2019). They illustrated well both the importance and the gap in adaptability research. They found that a group of ESL learners who participated in debate

classes developed considerably higher adaptability as opposed to the group who didn't. This, significantly points towards my idea that, whenever viewpoints can actively be expressed, and some degree of relatability to the teaching exercise is present (in the form of expressing one's viewpoint), positive results will be seen. However, institution based debate groups are mostly controlled, and may even conflict with the learners' world views and moral standards. I pointed out the importance and impact of these factors in paper VII, where the concept of identity amounted to a dramatic panorama. Therefore, I feel that the more relatability that is present in learning material, the more learning enjoyment and, therefore, learning success is to be expected. The following tool I propose is aimed at understanding and being able to link the dynamics of self-consciousness, learning autonomy and relatability that leads to adaptation.

6.5.1 Metacognitive diaries

Metacognitive diaries (Clipa, Colomeischi & Stanciu, 2011), without the need for exhaustive information, are excellent tools. They allow learners to organise their perceptions of their own learning habits, motivations and achievements, and to identify areas for change of direction or improvement (Matsumoto, 1989; Simard, 2010; Ma & Oxford, 2014). Reflecting on the results of all my papers, I feel the most important step in learning is to understand learners' own cognitive dynamics. The regular writing and (self) analysis of such diaries may enable learners to organise their thoughts on their progress. They may also gain reliable data on their own identified learning style preferences, and how to focus on changing needs and strategies that work. Based on the diary's content, learners may realize and accept that motivation may change. Adaptability during such change is not only perfectly normal, but at times is even desirable, and will lead to continuous engagement and lifelong learning habits. Metacognitve diaries also may help in renegotiating the connection between the wish, the need and the possibilities. In fact, as I found, it is vital to balance perceptions of talent against hard work and autonomy, or teacher likeability bias against learners' responsibility in the learning process.

Metacognitive diaries are not a widely used tool in Central Asia or in Eastern Europe. I recommend that teachers explain how such diaries work, as this might not be obvious to all learners. This may prevent learners simply amassing data without understanding its significance, which may lead to boredom and abandonment of the project. Importantly, this strategy needs to be adapted to the learners' culture and age. Moreover, teaching adaptability should not be limited to diaries, but the teacher should be flexible and adaptable in order to be a role model. As I previously emphasised, languages and their learning processes are not mathematical formulae. While there are rules that cannot be altered, creativity and adaptability through language teaching and learning should be a priority in the classroom. In this context too, a key concept I described previously, namely emotional validation, should be applied. Needless to say, teachers will not always understand learners' motivation or what they find relatable. Nevertheless, validating learners' relatability in order to ensure their adaptability and engagement is crucial.

6.5.2 The role of relatable textbooks

Another critical area where the English teaching industry fails considerably is in the content of textbooks used in the classroom (Vallenga, 2004). The design of these books often lacks coherence. Their content is often full of political, colloquial and unrelatable material.

Assuming that the authors wanted to introduce the learners to a variety of topics and cultural facts, such content may make sense. However, in the present era, it is necessary to consider global English speakers' specific needs and to create a more neutral branch of textbooks. It is also critical to design textbooks for adult learners that facilitate a gradual increase in knowledge without being too childish. Based on my research and experiences, even relatively young learners felt that English textbooks and certain teaching strategies were intellectually and culturally humiliating and, thus, not engaging for them. Textbooks should respect learners' dignity at all ages. Therefore, if designed carefully and based on a relatable project, learners will be happier to submit themselves to the less interesting, yet necessary parts of language learning, such as learning vocabulary, or practising grammatical points.

Based on my papers IV and VI, in textbooks for global English learners, English-related emotional intelligence and soft skills content should be prioritized. These textbooks would allow learners not only to gain practical knowledge, but learning would focus on skills they need and to which they can relate in their everyday lives. Furthermore, as cognition and meta-awareness grows, without the language being perceived as being invasive towards the learners' own culture and identity, adaptability and engagement may widen and learning success will result.

6.5.3 A positive outlook

In this chapter, I have offered some strategies based on my investigations and professional experiences. My framework of Adaptive Relatability Motivation (ARM) certainly offers, in my opinion, an optimistic outlook for designing a different, more accommodating language learning experience. In light of the entirety of my findings, Cozolino's (2013) Social Brain Theory perfectly aligns with the perspective of this thesis. The theory argues that interpersonal interactions among humans essentially mould and transform the systems and development of each-other's brains. As the brain is an organ of extreme adaptation, its formation is heavily conditioned by interaction with other individuals. Therefore, if positive role models and motivating circumstances are present, learners' social brains allow intellectual and cognitive growth. However, if learners do not understand or relate to classroom circumstances and to teachers and teaching methodologies, chaos and dissatisfaction will result, thus preventing learning success.

Heraclitus observed similar conflicts in human behaviour already 2,500 years ago, as he pointed out: *'A lot of learning does not teach (a person the possession of) understanding'* (Robinson, 1991, p. 31). Thus, no matter the length of time and the flood of English material to which learners are exposed, if the teaching methods and material are unrelatable, learning success will not occur. However, as outlined in this thesis, the combination of proper direction, metacognition and autonomy can transform the learning experience in its entirety. By implementing my strategies offered here, learners are likely to be more successful in new circumstances and will be able to transform their understanding of learning altogether.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

Unknowingly, I started to prepare this thesis about 29 years ago. Since then, all personal experiences happened through language learning lenses in different continents, countries and cultures. In 2012-2014, during my MA in Bilingualism and Multilingualism programme at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, much of the experiences and new knowledge previously gained started to become clear, and converged in sense, eventually forming a solid foundation. The seven papers submitted for this degree are products of a need to expand the understanding of foreign language learners' attitudes, motivation, emotions and requirements in relation to the acquisition of English. Above all, I had a wish to decipher why teaching and learning so often fails. At the beginning, the studies and articles were not designed with the purpose of becoming part of this degree; rather, they were intended to be used empirically in the classroom. The unexpected findings of the first three articles cumulated in a critical moment, where more research from a wider perspective was considered essential. From that moment, very conscious planning and organising of the new studies began with the aim of unveiling the mostly psychological side of foreign language learning. My goal was never to cover language learning psychology entirely, but to understand learners' new needs embedded in current times, and to discover how to empower their meta-cognition and autonomy in order to maintain engagement and motivation.

7.1 Chapter 1 - Introduction

In Chapter 1, I introduced the submitted papers' background and discussed the research questions. A proper understanding of the background of teaching and learning English as a foreign language was vital, as this information not only gave a brief overview of the industry itself, but also explained the direction of my studies (Xie, 2017, Brevik & Rindal, 2020). Briefly, I outlined some former trends, ideologies and new needs in the light of the historical context of the expansion of English (Crystal, 2000). Moreover, I highlighted first 'learners' not-so-voluntary first experiences of language instruction, and their becoming bilingual (and forcibly bicultural). Although the need for learning English continued for mostly geo-political and economic reasons, the strategies to teach it were not transformed and updated with the same speed as the learners' circumstances and motivations changed. In fact, many of those factors were ignored. I also reflected on how the rise of English as a global language continues to be widely misunderstood to this day, thus, a perceived necessary element of integrative motivation assumed by institutions needs urgent modification (Yuan, Li & Yu, 2018).

In the introduction, I also emphasized the importance of English as intellectual and cultural capital, which did not contradict older theories, yet compulsorily widened classroom and educational necessities and approaches (Weininger, 2003). Furthermore, I discussed that most learners of English have a very strong wish to gain practical knowledge of the language, but relatively few succeed in using it outside the classroom (Xie, 2017; Shvidko, 2017). Linked to this, I analysed how low learning success of English has serious time and monetary implications for learners, thus, teaching and learning strategies should be reformed urgently (Gan, Humpreys & Hamp-Lyons, 2004; Souriyavongsa, Rany, Abidin & Leong, 2013).

7.2 Chapter 2 – Contextualising teaching and learning English as a foreign language

In Chapter 2, I focused on contextualising teaching and learning English as a foreign language. A short examination of the journey that led English to become a lingua franca, a power-tool and a mark of distinction was needed in order to understand its legacy today. In fact, alongside the expansion of English and its associated powers, identities and emotions rarely have remained intact (Galloway & Numajiri, 2019). In many cases, English has been even re-shaped and adapted to local ideologies and circumstances (Pavlenko, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Teng & Lixun, 2020). However, as its growth continues, many individuals discovered advantages linked to speaking English as a lingua franca, while others were compelled to learn it by varying circumstances (Weenink, 2008; Fang, Chen & Elyas, 2020; Chen, Chen & Fang, 2021). Regardless of the impetus, English language teaching and learning has become a very profitable business from an economic viewpoint. Unfortunately, educators, for a variety of reasons, have failed to consider and respect learners' motivation, identity, classroom emotions and gender-specific needs (Schutz, Cross, Hong & Osbon, 2007). Moreover, there is little attention placed on the understanding of learning style preferences and learning autonomy, leaving many students classroom-bound regarding their learning and use of English (Felder, & Henriques, 1995; Schmidt, Boraie & Kassabgy, 1998; Bada & Okan, 2000; Manning, 2007; Mehrdad & Ahghar, 2013). Although, during recent decades there has been a considerable effort from academics to conduct research in foreign language learning, teachers could rarely benefit from it in practical ways in their classrooms. Such a gap inspired the direction and ecology of my seven articles submitted here.

7.3 Chapter 3 – Methodological approaches

In Chapter 3, I considered the methodological approaches used throughout both the articles and the thesis. A fundamental factor was addressed when clarifying the geography of the studies carried out. Both learners and teachers in Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria and Hungary shared the same background in learning English. The basic criteria focused on the fact that none of those countries ever had English as an official or unofficial second language. They also have never been under English rule and, therefore, have no possible fossilized cultural or linguistic elements on which to rely when learning English as a foreign language. In fact, all these countries had as *lingua franca* Russian or German, and have a relatively small population, which made them all eligible for comparison from the perspective of learning English as a global language. The similarity of their backgrounds also made these countries ideal candidates for understanding gaps between their perceptions and needs and the often very deficient English teaching strategies applied. Such teaching deficiencies, regardless of whether or not they were the fossilizations of communist or nationalist ideologies, clearly affected local educational strategies. Such biased teaching practices often prevented learning success, motivation, positive emotions in the classroom, or a positive approach towards English as a language in general.

To investigate the four countries' complex teaching and learning panorama, a variety of research methodologies were employed. Depending on the focus, the possibilities and the perceived need for a specific study, I used a variety of research methods. In order to obtain the most reliable and representative data, quantitative and qualitative research methods, triangulation of the data as well as an extensive literature review of primary and secondary

sources were applied (Wragg, 1978; Shank, 2006; Breen, 2006; MacNaughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; Soteroula, 2014; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019; Byrne, 2022). The methodology also examined ethical considerations regarding the preparation of the studies and the writing of this thesis. The ethical principles followed throughout the entirety of the studies were rigorously based on the guidelines provided by the British Education Research Association (BERA) (2018). Hence, all individuals' dignity and freedom were respected. At all times participants were treated impartially and sensitively regardless of their age, gender, nationality, socio-economic background and/or cultural identity. Such balanced consideration was important not only for the accuracy of the studies, but for an understanding of the entirety of the research context as well.

7.4 Chapter 4 – History, coherence and synthesis of the submitted papers

In Chapter 4, the synthesis of the articles was unveiled. Here, my structure of thought based on how the studies were designed and how they relate to each-other was placed in a timeline. Much detail was shared about my personal experiences and struggles as a teacher who was committed to learners' well-being, as well as the enablement of excellent test results. Throughout the many countries and institutions involved, I have considerably immersed myself in the difficulties of learners and in their learning conflicts, which made each study very personal. Finally, while there was a wide range of English teaching related issues discussed in the articles, chapter four gives a very comprehensive account of the relatedness of the studies and the cumulative fashion of their evolution.

7.5 Chapter 5 – Contributions

In Chapter 5, I offered insight into the complex findings as they connect many aspects of human behaviour. As this is a PhD by Published Works, all research questions were already answered and discussed in the articles. However, I did summarise all articles' research questions to four main points that were the main guiding theme throughout my thesis. The research questions focused on 1) the factors that may foster and/or hinder motivation in students to learn English; 2) how learners' gender affects their learning styles, learning autonomy, emotions and motivation; 3) whether or not students are conditioned by teachers' nationality, teaching style and emotions; and finally, 4), whether or not learners perceive their national identities as being under threat in private, or state bilingual institutions.

While many previous studies intended to discover learners' motivational direction and dynamics, I questioned whether that motivation existed at all, and, if so, what determined it (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006; Brown, 2007; Nuri Gömleksiz, 2010). A key finding was that learners' motivation was often taken for granted by the institutions. However, learners' attitudes and aims reflected a different panorama. Interestingly, when motivation existed, it was more often defined by identity, culture, social space and gender than simply the learning goal itself. Thus, whenever learners were forced into a wrong motivational mould, this entirely conditioned their emotions towards the classroom, the teacher and English itself (Wimolmas, 2012). Nevertheless, when learners' emotions and specific needs were validated and English language related emotional intelligence (EQ) was sensibly clarified and taught, it secured emotional stability both in and outside the classroom (Pishghadam, 2009; Zarezadeh, 2013; Oz, Demirezen, & Pourfeiz, 2015; Baklashova, Galishnikova & Khafizova, 2016; Spirovska

Tevdovska, 2017). Moreover, by feeling safe identity-wise, learners' flexibility grew and they became more aware of their motivational strategies and metacognition.

A very important factor I considered throughout most of my articles was gender differences in attitudes, in particular emphasizing gender related emotional and practical needs to be considered in the classroom (Kelley-Lawell, 2010). In particular, I focused on male and female learners' self-esteem, emotional stability, autonomy and possible different language learning aims. While some differences were subtle, others were worthy of being considered and incorporated into future educational policies. One of my key findings was that male learners were more independent, showed higher self-confidence and they focused more on learning English with practical purposes. Moreover, male learners showed high sensitivity regarding how feedback was given to them. Female students exhibited less self-confidence, believed they had less natural talent to learn a foreign language, and often they viewed English as an intellectual asset as opposed to a necessity. Female students also were more reliant on the educator.

Such differences in attitudes strongly governed perceptions towards the teacher. In fact, my results showed that there was a strong and often forced interdependence with the educator, but this happened mostly because of the fossilized educational strategies of the countries investigated. While I found that the teacher's persona was indisputably important, I consider emotional and cognitive dependence on the teacher a practice to avoid at all cost. Hence, I argue that teachers must facilitate strategies for learners to become autonomous and to find their own learning style preferences (Martin, 2004; Reinders, 2010; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). The participating teachers in my studies were mostly aware of the fact that some new strategies should be applied, but they were not sure how (Nakata, 2014). Many of them declared that, during their professional formation, they received very little or no instruction about educational psychology. During my decade of being a teacher in international schools, I observed that educational strategies are too often based on traditions and simple assumptions through the teachers' own cultural filter.

Moreover, international schools often breed resentment and silent competition between local and foreign teachers, and this is often due to unclear school policies and the schools' erroneous marketing strategy about foreign teachers (Fairclough, 1989). While foreign teachers are often put on a pedestal in a tokenistic fashion, real teaching and real contribution to education is denied to them, yet, they are often paid excessive salaries as opposed to their local counterparts. Such phenomenon naturally translates into conflict within the schools, of which students are consciously or unconsciously very well aware. This silent war often pushes teachers and even students to exhibit unhealthy and protesting behaviours. Thus, I recommend that teachers avoid nationalistic or colonising attitudes in order to maintain a balanced and neutral milieu in the classroom. I perceive this strategy as one which would prevent identity conflicts, yet would allow the process of English language learning to be healthy and productive.

Throughout my teaching years the aim that governed my wish to do research was not to simply to amass information but to *translate* all my findings into useful and accessible strategies from which students, teachers and institutions can benefit (Bourdieu, 1996). While I strongly advocate for respecting all individuals' identity, culture and gender, I also believe that

most human beings have very similar underlying needs. Hence, I wanted to offer some recommendations that are based on principles, as opposed to rigid rules that may create even more inappropriate teaching strategies and toxic environment.

During the writing on this thesis and while reflecting on my findings, I created new solutions and strategies based on the emerging perspective. In order to address and converge all my key findings, I developed a new framework. The Adaptive Relatability Motivation (ARM) framework suggests directing teaching and learning practices towards contexts and ideas that learners may find relatable. Relatability is a very natural human need and it is crucial in the learning process as well. Within a relatable context, I believe, learners would become more aware of their own learning preferences, and this would encourage positive attitudes towards autonomous learning as well. When these conditions are present and learners are not pressured into unrelatable motivations, or identity-challenging classroom conditions, they will be able to adapt their own motivation to their changing circumstances. Such dynamics may not only ensure continuous engagement in the learning process but it also allow learners to do it with more self-confidence, comfort and gratification.

7.6 Chapter 6 – Recommendations

As theory is incomplete without practice, based on my framework, practical teaching and learning ideas were provided. I emphasized the need for teaching English-related emotional intelligence (EQ), which is a particularly important finding I have. This concept provides a culture and identity safe method to have proper communication skills in using English as a global language. English related EQ goes beyond the traditional idea of intercultural communication. In fact, it targets individuals from all around the world who need to effectively communicate through the medium of English, without necessarily wanting to adapt to one particular English speaking country's culture or communication norms (Sparrow & Knight, 2006; Leffert, Brady & Siperstein, 2009; Maclellan; 2013; Sándorová, 2016; Mahboob, 2018). Here, by no means do I advocate against integrative motivation, but I acknowledge that the global nature of the English language created new needs, contexts and domains. Nevertheless, in order to effectively teach the English language and its related EQ, I do strongly recommend for foreign and local teachers to teach it in a culturally sensitive way (Chang, 2004). This is of paramount importance, as learners' motivation is often linked to their culture and world-view. In fact, motivating and teaching strategies that are non-relatable, or even incomprehensible to learners may be ineffective at best, and completely counterproductive at worst (Dörnyei, 2006; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

I also recommend the use of metacognitive diaries and personalized short projects that are relatable (Clipa, Colomeischi & Stanciu, 2011). This strategy may help learners to foster self-awareness and autonomy by documenting their learning and motivational processes and the growth of their knowledge (Matsumoto, 1989; Simard, 2010; Ma & Oxford, 2014). Moreover, here I advocate for English learning textbooks to be more relatable in their content (Vallenga, 2004). While it is impossible to create a textbook that satisfies the need of every learner, it is possible –and recommended- to avoid some very specific and unnecessary cultural and political content. Learners without traditionally understood integrative motivation cannot and do not want to immerse themselves in details that sometimes are culturally challenging or morally and identity-wise invasive. Some textbooks may even be difficult to understand at all

because of unrelatable content. However, I would like to emphasize that such adjustments are needed simply because of the global nature of English and the way it has become such, but might not be true in the case of other languages.

Finally, I propose gender-separated classrooms, where male and female learners can flourish enjoying a more relatable learning content and environment (Dekhtyar, Weber, Helgertz & Herlitz, 2018). I must point out here that I do not necessarily support gender segregation in general. However, for example, male students may develop more motivation and better learning results by the educator adjusting teaching strategies to their more practical oriented motivation. Moreover, if classroom activities do not force them out of their comfort zone by doing *unmanly* learning exercises, teaching and learning dynamics may become considerably more productive (Chaffee, Lou, Noels, & Katz, 2019).

The strategies I describe in my recommendations section are inexpensive and adaptable to many different cultures. Here I do encourage policy makers, administrators and teachers to use discernment and to focus on the part of my framework that is actually really necessary and culturally and religiously implementable in their institution. I completely discourage using parts of the ARM framework that are not relatable, or if the local strategies already work well. I believe that if a problem does not exist, it doesn't need to be solved.

During the writing of my recommendations, I made a very deliberate effort to benefit teachers, as they are often overlooked, yet expected to provide unrealistic results without proper training and instruction. Indeed, *"Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."* This quote, often attributed to Albert Einstein, but of unknown origin, summarizes well Global-English mass education. It also depicts the struggles of both teachers and learners which can and should eventually be changed. Everyone in education should feel respected and empowered, so this new capacity can be transferred to other areas of life as well.

While my thesis encompassed much empirical data and has offered recommendations, it also serves as a powerful impetus for further research. The few ideas provided here on teaching English-related EQ are absolutely non-exhaustive. More data, practical and empirical examples and illustrations need to be collected for the purpose of having a comprehensive overview on which English learners and teachers can rely. Moreover, the healthy boundaries of motivation need to be investigated. This is very important, as nowadays external motivation is often enforced on individuals in an unrelatable fashion and indigestible quantity. This could lead to learners and teachers being so overwhelmed that it could result in motivational immunity. Such immunity should be avoided at all costs as learning English is very important, if not compulsory for many millions of people worldwide. Their learning experience should be a meaningful one, connected to personal growth and better opportunities.

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Appendix 1: Co-Author Statement

With reference to the contribution to the conceptualisation, design, conduct of the research, analysis and writing the publication the following statement states out the contribution of each author on the paper **Perceptions and use of English by secondary school students from Central Asia** (2016).

Author 1, Flora Komlosi-Ferdinand **50 %**

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PAPER I

Perceptions and Use of English by Secondary School Students From Central Asia

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After almost two centuries of functioning almost exclusively through the medium of Russian, the governments of the now-independent Kyrgyzstan are trying to implement the knowledge of English among the population as an auxiliary tool of interaction with the rest of the world. Nevertheless, and despite the huge amount of money invested in English education, there is a lack of studies about the attitudes of the Kyrgyzstani students toward this language and the use that they intend to do of it. This paper analyses the attitudes toward the learning and use of English by Kyrgyzstani secondary-school students from four educational models in two regions of the country. A questionnaire given to 182 students from different local and foreign ethnic and language backgrounds was used to collect data. The results of the research show different approaches depending on the location of the schools and the educational program followed. For most students English may be a good asset but very few consider it a language that can be used in contexts other than the classroom.

Keywords: Kyrgyzstan, language attitudes, L2 acquisition, multilingualism, motivation

Introduction

Motivation plays an important role in the success of second and foreign language learning. It provides the starting impetus to initiate the process of learning another language and it is also the driving force to maintain the effort through the years, since it is responsible for determining human behavior by energizing it and giving it direction. Although there is not much agreement with regard to the exact meaning of the concept when related to scientific literature, it can be stated that etymologically, "to be motivated" or "to have motivation" means "to be moved to action toward something". Motivation is responsible for guiding human behavior by prompting and directing it and there is a great variety of theories and perspectives of how this happens. The reason for this range of opinions has its basis in the fact of human complexity since those psychological theories seek to explain why humans behave as they do; thus, it would be unreal to assume any simple and single answer. Therefore, basically every different psychological perspective on human behavior is associated with a different theory of motivation (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998, p. 117).

Motivation of learning a second language, in this case English, may differ depending on the country where the students come from and/or where the students learn the language. Therefore, Indian or Nigerian students, who have English as the interethnic official language in their respective countries, may re-

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gard English quite differently than Italians, for whom it is a useful international language, or than Quechua-speaking students from rural Peru, for whom English is only a foreign language like French or Chinese, which can be learnt only after mastering Quechua and Spanish.

For centuries the only contact between Central Asia and the rest of the world was carried out through Russia and other Russian speaking regions. The Russian language became the only vehicle to establish any communication with the world including many of the neighboring nations while English was only a curiosity related to the enemy, who lived in far-away countries (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 313). The collapse of the USSR in the 1990s provoked deep changes in those societies. New states such as Kyrgyzstan emerged in a world where Russian was not the only language of culture. Since then, the Kyrgyz government has tried to implement the study and use of English by assigning it a compulsory amount of weekly hours in all the schools. Moreover, prosperity within certain sectors of the Kyrgyz society has provoked the establishment of schools through the medium of English. This paper seeks to analyze attitudes and motivations of secondary-school students in different regions Kyrgyzstan where English has traditionally played a minor role.

Primary and secondary education in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has an educational system structured according to the Soviet model which has been partially reformed after the independence in 1991. Official figures show 99.2 percent literacy with no significant gender, ethnic or regional differences. Nevertheless, the situation is far from being considered good. There is an overload of subjects and hours which, along with other factors such as teachers' lack of motivation, produces a continuous and long lasting falling in educational standards and quality (Naumann, 2011, pp. 24, 25; Hou, 2011, p. 1). An indicator of this failure can be perceived by the results of the PISA reports. According to the 2010 Report, Kyrgyzstan was the country which scored lowest in all areas, namely reading, science and mathematics, far below the other two ex-Soviet states monitored, Russia which has an average OECD education level, and Azerbaijan, also among the last countries of the list (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Scores according to 2010 PISA Report

Reading	Reading (position)		Science (position)		Mathematics (position)	
First in World Rank	556	Korea (1)	563	Finland (1)	549	Taiwan (1)
United Kingdom	469	(14)	515	(12)	495	(22)
United States	-	(-)	489	(24)	474	(32)
Russian Federation	440	(37)	479	(33)	476	(32)
Azerbaijan	353	(54)	382	(55)	476	(32)
Kyrgyzstan	285	(56– last)	322	(57 – last)	311	(57 – last)

(OECD, 2010, pp. 22, 47, 53)

There are 2191 schools in the Kyrgyz Republic, which also include 54 private schools. Although most schools offer Kyrgyz-only or bilingual Kyrgyz-Russian education, there are institutions which use other languages. The most important group is the 203 Russian-medium education schools distributed all over the country. Russian schools are highly prestigious and in high demand by not only Russian parents but also by those from other ethnic groups; in fact, about 60 percent of students in the Russian schools come from Kyrgyz speaking families (OECD, 2010, p. 175). This clear preference for Russian education can be easily explained by the much higher performance of the students (425 for Russian speaking students, 362 for Kyrgyz speaking students according to PISA 2006) when compared with their counterparts in Uzbek (307) and Kyrgyz schools (302). For them, it is also a good opportunity to be fully competent in the lingua franca of Central Asia, Russian (OECD, 2010, pp. 175, 183). There are 91 Uzbek-only schools and other 192 bilingual or multilingual schools where part of the education is in Uzbek. Due to the lack of funds, some of the schools are shutting their doors and many Uzbek parents send their children to study in Russian-medium schools. There are also a few part-time schools where Tajik is used as instruction language (Eurasianet, 2013). A number of private schools in the main cities offer education either through the medium of English-only or through the medium of English and any other language such as Russian.

Languages and literature play an important role in primary and secondary education in Kyrgyzstan, since between 33 and 50 percent of the time is devoted to subjects including Russian and Kyrgyz grammar and literature and foreign language learning, usually English or German (see Table 2). Despite this fact, Kyrgyzstan occupies the last position in the PISA ranking in reading in the local language(s) and only a maximum of 7 and 1 percent of its inhabitants declare to

Table 2.
Language education in Kyrgyz medium schools in Kyrgyzstan.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
Kyrgyz Language	7	7	8	8	5	4	3	3/2	2	2	2
Kyrgyz Literature	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	2/3	3	3	3
Russian Language	3	4	4	4	2	2	2	1	1	2	2
Russian Literature	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Foreign Language	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	2	2	2	2

(OECD, 2010, p. 146-148)

know English or German, respectively (OECD, 2006, pp. 47, 53).

Methodological issues and considerations

Prior to the actual carrying out of the study, the authors realized that although English is taught in almost every school of the country, the approach toward this foreign language varied considerably from one school to the other, depending on factors such as public or private funding, rural or urban location, national, minority or foreign curricula. It was decided, therefore, to include schools from all possible backgrounds.

Participating schools

Four schools with different educational approaches and curricula were selected. Three of them are situated in the city of Bishkek and one in the province of Jalal-Abad. This selection was considered appropriate for the study as it basically includes representatives of all types of Kyrgyzstani students. The first school chosen is a National school in the city of Bishkek. It belongs to the main group of Kyrgyz schools, where students are supposed to study both national languages, Kyrgyz and Russian and a foreign language, English in this case. Students and teachers represent quite accurately the percental ethnic and linguistic composition of the city. There are a few hundred of schools where education is carried out in national languages which are not Kyrgyz. For this study an Uzbek school from the ethnically heterogeneous province of Jalal-Abad was selected. Education in this school follows the national curriculum of Kyrgyzstan except for the fact that students learn through the medium of their native language, Uzbek, while Kyrgyz and Russian are taught as subjects along with a foreign language, English. Since the object of this study is to observe the use of English among students, two private schools where English is used as a language of instruction were also selected. The first private school is a bilingual, or in fact a multilingual school, where education is offered through the medium of English and of the national languages, Russian and Kyrgyz. The second one is a small school which offers its services exclusively through the medium of English.

Sampling: participating students

A total of 182 students, 80 boys and 102 girls, from grades ninth to eleventh, the last in the Kyrgyz National Education System, took part in the survey (see Table 3). All participants were aged between 14 and 18. These ages were considered appropriate for the study of language attitudes since some scholars suggest that attitudes initially appear at the age of 10 and are clarified and consolidated during adolescence (Appel and Muysken, 1987; Siguan and Mackey, 1986 cited in Huget and Llurda, 2001, p. 271). Although most students belong to local ethnicities, there were some long-term resident and even Kyrgyzstan-born foreigners. The ethnolinguistic background of the participants varied according to the schools as specified in the following paragraphs and in Table 4.

Table 3.
Distribution of participants by sex and school

School	Boys	Girls	Total
(Uz) Minority-language (Uzbek)	27	30	57
(KR) Kyrgyz-Russian national	22	25	47
(EKR) Multilingual private	18	29	47
(E) English-only private	13	18	31
TOTAL	80	102	182

Table 4.
Distribution of participants by sex and school

School	Ethnic Kyrgyz*	Other ex-USSR nationals	Other
(Uz) Minority-language (Uzbek)	53 (Uzbek)	4	-
(KR) Kyrgyz-Russian national	29	18	-
(EKR) Multilingual private	20	5	22
(E) English-only private	16	3	12

*Ethnic Uzbeks for the minority language school

A total of 22 boys and 25 girls from a national Kyrgyz-Russian school (KR) accepted to participate in the survey. The ethnic background of the students in this school reflects the ethnic composition of Bishkek. Approximately 62 percent of them are ethnic Kyrgyz while the rest are mostly Russians (19 percent) and members of other ex-USSR nationalities such as Tatars, Volga Germans, Uzbeks or Uyghurs. As expected, most of the 27 boys and 30 girls of the minority language school (Uz) belong to the minority group, in this case Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks. In fact, only four students reported other nationalities, namely a Meskhetian Turk, a Russian and two Balkars from the Caucasus. A majority of the students in the multilingual school (EKR) are ethnic Kyrgyz. There are also representatives of some of the other local nationalities such as Uyghurs and Uzbeks. Russians and the rest of European minorities, however, are underrepresented. About half of the students are not from Kyrgyzstan although very few, if any, have English as their first language. This is due to the fact that the selected school was established by a Turkish organization; therefore, about 30 percent of the students are Kyrgyzstan-born children of long-term Turkish immigrants. The rest of the foreigners are usually children of Kyrgyz-Foreign mixed couples. Most Turkish and other foreign students are also fluent in Russian. Out of the 31 students who took part in the survey at the English monolingual school (E), 16 are ethnic Kyrgyz. The representative of the rest of the local nationalities is extremely reduced. The rest of the students are foreigners who mostly come from other Asian countries, especially Pakistan and Korea. Some of the foreigners are fluent Russian speakers, but a majority cannot generally interact in other language but English.

The instrument: the questionnaire

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire designed by the authors (see Appendix). It was written in English but since not all the participants had enough skills to fully understand the questions in that language, a Russian version was also produced. The document handed out to the participants contained a bilingual English-Russian copy of the questionnaire. These languages were preferred over Kyrgyz or any other local language since all the students were fluent in at least one of them. Moreover, since the survey was addressed to a highly intermixed multicultural population, it would have been unrealistic to prepare translations in the languages of the tens of minorities of the country, including not only Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Russian but also Tatar, Dungan, Tajik, Turkish, Korean as well as many others, plus an indefinite number of foreign languages spoken by the foreign students. To enhance success, students were allowed to answer in their native language, no matter what it is. The answers received were written in Russian, Uzbek, Kyrgyz and English.

The results are based on a five-point Likert scale questionnaire (from '1' strongly disagree to '5' strongly agree). Every school was codified into two main categories: *boys* and *girls*. A column for general results by school was also produced. This division is important since often attitudes toward languages may differ considerably according to gender (Fishman, 1991, p. 184).

The survey was implemented during the months of May and June 2015 after obtaining the permission from administrations of the four schools. It was handed out by local teachers who could give instructions to their students in their native languages about how to fill the questionnaire.

Analysis and results

The following analysis is based on the answers of local students from Kyrgyzstan as well as some foreign students from other Central Asian Russian-speaking countries since both groups may have similar attitudes toward English, a foreign language. Non-Russian foreign students were not considered for this study for two main reasons. Foreign students are but a tiny minority in the schools in Kyrgyzstan, therefore their attitudes cannot be representative of the attitude of Central Asians toward English. Moreover, the viewpoint that Europeans, Americans, Hindustanis and other students for whom English is a living language that is also used as a tool to live in foreign countries like Kyrgyzstan, may be totally different from the Kyrgyz, Uzbek or Central Asian Russian perspective, for whom English is a foreign language with not much value in local life.

Use of English within the family circle

In a country where for most people English is only a foreign language spoken far-away, the use of that foreign language within the family circle among the students of Kyrgyzstan is directly related to two main factors: the location of the school and the exposition to English during education, the latter being the most influential.

Bishkek is the only rather cosmopolitan center in Kyrgyzstan. For this reason, it is not surprising that the school situated in Jalal-Abad (Uz) reported no student at all using any English with their siblings, despite being one of the languages studied by all the students. Moreover, apparently none of their parents is fluent in English, therefore it cannot be used as a common language at home. The school focus is on the use of Uzbek as a daily language. Nevertheless, most students' families are also very interested in the learning of Russian since, according to some members of the Uzbek community, the Russian language can pro-

vide more opportunities to children than any other language (Eurasianet, 2013). Many families are also trying to migrate to Russia, where there are already more than 2 million Uzbeks (Sadykov, 2014). The third language studied is Kyrgyz, as the school is situated in Kyrgyzstan. Although this language is not generally appreciated by the Uzbek minority, it must be used in commerce, in official documents and in daily life when contacting local ethnic Kyrgyz. Kyrgyz is, therefore, a living language for the Uzbek minority. English is the only foreign language in the Uzbek school curriculum. There are not many opportunities to speak it in Jalal-Abad and, in fact, it is not necessary in any concrete field. The rest of the schools are situated in the capital city. In all of them, there are a few local and foreign families who use English in their daily life and even some students employ it to talk to their siblings, in most cases as an auxiliary language rather than as a real communication tool.

In the national school (KR) 6 percent of the fathers and 15 percent of mothers are reported to be fluent in English. Some of them have been living abroad, where they learnt the language but some others have learnt it in Kyrgyzstan due to reasons related to their jobs in a big city. Some students reported parents who are able to hold conversations in Chinese and other foreign languages as well. In spite of these favorable conditions, English is not used by any family in their private conversations. The number of students who use English as an auxiliary language is still residual since only a maximum of 2 percent of them would do it. Once again the reason for this lack of use of English must be attributed to the attraction toward Russian as an international language. In fact, most students from all ethnical backgrounds reported Russian as the common family language instead of Kyrgyz or any other language.

The situation in the two private schools where some or all subjects are taught through the medium of English differs in many senses from that of the two previous schools. In the multilingual school (EKR), about half of the students are foreign nationals. Most of them are Turkish, therefore the rate of families that use English in their daily life is as low as that of local families from Kyrgyzstan. However, there is a notable increase among the students who use English as an auxiliary language to talk to their siblings. In fact, about 1 in 3 students communicate in English along with other languages such as Russian, Kyrgyz and Turkish.

The most important rate of use of English was observed in families and students from the English monolingual school (E). This increment applies to both, those with Russian as first or second language, and foreigners from non-Russian speaking countries. One of the reasons that may explain the use of

English within the foreign families may be found in their countries of origin. A significant percentage of the foreign students come from India and Pakistan where English is employed on a daily base in all domains. Therefore, these families continue their life in English and other languages as they did in their home countries. It has also been observed that some of the local students come from mixed Kyrgyz/foreign families and from families that have lived abroad. This multicultural background helps parents and children maintain English as one of the common languages spoken at home. Education also plays a very important role in the use of the foreign language since about 42 percent of all the students (in identical rates in both, Russian-speaking students and foreign students) use English, mainly as an auxiliary language, to talk to their siblings. Nevertheless, there is a final reason that must not be forgotten. Most students who attend the English-only school come from wealthy families with possibilities to visit countries where English is spoken. Very often, these students consider English the language to talk to foreign friends and acquaintances while on holidays, creating in them a positive feeling of usefulness.

Use of English in spare time

English is not currently spoken in Kyrgyzstan. Due to this fact, all the questions related to the use of English during the students' spare time had to be designed taking into account the rather scarce opportunities that average Kyrgyzstan inhabitants have to speak and/or listen to material in English. These items deal with three specific fields, travelling abroad, music, and activities related to the Internet such as reading websites, watching videos or films in English, etc. They are formulated from two perspectives, students' *current attitudes* toward English ('*Do you like...?*') and their motivation to *develop skills* ('*I want to...*').

The first discernible detail is the marked difference between the answers of the rural school (Uz) and the schools situated in the capital city. In all five items related to this topic (Questions 2:4 '*Do you like watching TV, films or videos in English?*'; 2:5 '*Do you like listening to music in English?*'; 3:1 '*Knowing English will help me when travelling abroad on holidays*'; 4:8 '*I want to understand better English films, videos, TV*' and 4:9 '*I want to be able to read websites in English*', the school (Uz) in Jalal-Abad province scored much lower than the other schools (see Table 5). Nevertheless, it does not imply uniformity by the three schools of Bishkek since answers by the students also show some differences mainly provoked by the educational model followed by each center. The only generalized positive answer is to the item '*Knowing English will help me when travelling abroad on holidays*' (Question 3:1), since the

overwhelming majority of students of all the schools 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement.

Students' attitudes toward English in music, films and videos as reported in answers to questions 2:4 and 2:5 are rather neutral in Jalal-Abad (both under 4 points). Both bilingual schools, (KR) and (EKR), have similar behaviors, good disposition toward music but a colder approach toward videos and cinema. The reason for this behavior may be supported by the fact that language is not necessary to enjoy music, therefore students may like to listen to songs in languages that they cannot understand as long as the rhythm and the melody are pleasant. However, understanding dialogues in films and videos is vital to enjoy them. Understanding requires a higher competence in the target language, English in this case, which many students do not possess. The monolingual English school (E), probably due to the higher command of English that most students exhibit, have positive attitudes to both issues, always scoring over 4 points (Agree).

As for their motivation to improve their skills, the rural school showed even less interest in contrast with urban students, particularly girls from all three schools who would agree to do something in order to understand much better material written or spoken in English. Interestingly, the group with less motivation is that of the boys from the multilingual school (EKR) while the more motivated are the girls from the same school. In general, rural students have an apathetic attitude toward English

Table 5.
Use of English in spare time by schools excluding non-Russian speaking students

(Uz) Uzbek school	(KR) Kyrgyz-Russian sch.	(EKR) Multi-lingual sch.	(E) English sch.
Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total
2:4/Do you like watching TV, films or videos in English?			
3.85 - 3.62 - 3.73	3.57 - 3.70 - 3.63	3.25 - 4.00 - 3.77	4.13 - 4.67 - 4.45
2:5/ Do you like listening to music in English?			
3.44 - 3.70 - 3.57	4.40 - 4.74 - 4.57	4.25 - 4.81 - 4.62	4.63 - 4.83 - 4.75
3:1/ Knowing English will help me when travelling abroad on holidays			
4.46 - 4.12 - 4.29	4.90 - 4.88 - 4.89	4.88 - 4.88 - 4.88	4.75 - 4.83 - 4.80
4:8/ I want to understand better English films, videos, TV			
3.04 - 3.17 - 3.10	3.95 - 4.29 - 4.12	3.88 - 4.47 - 4.28	4.25 - 4.42 - 4.35
4:9/ I want to be able to read websites in English			
3.42 - 3.31 - 3.36	4.00 - 3.95 - 3.98	3.88 - 4.35 - 4.20	4.00 - 4.42 - 4.25

Use of English regarding studies

Although the students from Bishkek are more positive toward the idea of using English outside the classrooms than those in Jalal-Abad (Question 2:8), the disposition toward that practice is still very mild. Not even in the monolingual English school (E) the average answer reaches the 4-point 'Agree' level (see Table 6). This fact could imply that English is only learnt to pass exams; however, when asked directly whether that is their main reason to study it (Question 3:5), most students answered negatively. Only the students of the Uzbek school (Uz) of Jalal-Abad gave neutral answers (3 points), most probably because for most of them English is only a school subject which is not appreciated in general.

The idea of having good competence in English as a tool to have the possibility to study abroad is shared by most students (Question 3:2). Once again, the mildest are those from Jalal-Abad who only score 3.75. The more English is used in education, the more positive the answer is, from 4.04 in the national school (KR) and 4.56 in the multilingual school (EKR) to a strong 4.75 in the English school (E). It is also a fact that about 50 percent of the students who graduated from the multilingual school (EKR) have attended foreign universities and colleges, mostly in Turkey, which is promoted by the school administration as one of the ultimate goals.

The use of English for studying at university in Kyrgyzstan seems to be directly related to the possibility to study abroad (Question 3:4). Thus, according to the answers of the students from the English school (E) and the boys from the multilingual school (EKR), that is to say, those who have the possibility to complete their education abroad, English is not necessary to study at a Kyrgyzstani university. The girls of the multilingual school (EKR) do not discard that they may have to study in their country and that English would be an excellent asset. This notable difference between boys and girls in the same school may indicate either actual discrimination within a considerable number of families toward promoting girls education, or a subconscious reflection of this traditional practice in Kyrgyzstan (Naumann, 2011, p. 25). Nevertheless, it must be noticed that the described tendency has not been particularly observed within the urban families of the national Kyrgyz-Russian school (KR) or within the wealthier families of the English school (E).

Table 6.
Use of English in relation to education by schools excluding non-Russian speaking students

(Uz) Uzbek school	(KR) Kyrgyz-Russian sch.	(EKR) Multi-lingual sch.	(E) English sch.
Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total
2:8/ We should use English out of the classroom too			
2.84 – 3.46 – 3.16	3.67 – 3.62 – 3.64	3.00 – 3.88 – 3.60	3.75 – 3.66 – 3.70
3:2/ I want to learn English to study abroad			
3.73 – 3.78 – 3.75	4.24 – 3.83 – 4.04	4.60 – 4.56 – 4.60	4.60 – 4.83 – 4.75
3:4/ I want to learn English because I will need it at University in my country			
3.04 – 3.32 – 3.18	3.85 – 3.88 – 3.87	2.75 – 4.41 – 3.88	2.62 – 2.33 – 2.45
3:5/ The main reason to learn English is to pass exams			
3.23 – 2.86 – 3.04	2.76 – 2.13 – 2.44	1.85 – 2.94 – 2.63	2.88 – 2.33 – 2.55
4:9/ I want to be able to read websites in English			
3.42 - 3.31 - 3.36	4.00 - 3.95 - 3.98	3.88 - 4.35 - 4.20	4.00-4.42 - 4.25

Intention to use English in the future

The set of questions related to the use of English in the students' future lives included aspects such as their willingness to transmit English to the next generation (Question 2:10), their projects to use English in a country where it is actually spoken as a community language (Question 3:3) and their trust in English as a tool to have a good life (Question 3:10). The results are shown in detail in Table 7. The transmission of English to the next generation does not seem to be an issue for the rural students (Uz) since while most girls remain neutral to that option, many of the boys are directly opposed. Curiously, a similar behavior is observed among the boys of the multilingual school (EKR). All the rest of the groups agree to teach English to their children, the girls of all schools being more enthusiastic about it. The motivation to learn English in order to spend some time in an English-speaking country does not receive the support of the students of Kyrgyzstan in general. Only the students of the multilingual school (EKR) and the boys of the English school (E) agree with that item while the rest of the groups show a rather cold attitude. The answers to Question 3:10 show that although English is often considered an asset, students do not have faith in it as the key to have a better life.

Table 7.
Use of English in the student's prospective future life by schools excluding non-Russian speaking students

(Uz) Uzbek school	(KR) Kyrgyz-Russian sch.	(EKR) Multi-lingual sch.	(E) English sch.
Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total
2:10/ When I have a child I will teach him/her English			
2.85 – 3.40 – 3.14	4.10 – 4.29 – 4.19	3.75 – 4.41 – 4.20	4.13 – 4.75 – 4.50
3:2/ I am learning English because I want to spend some time in an English-speaking country			
3.56 – 3.41 – 3.48	3.95 – 3.75 – 3.85	4.50 – 4.47 – 4.48	4.38 – 3.66 – 3.95
3:10/ If I speak English, I will have a fantastic life			
2.23 – 2.44 – 2.33	3.45 – 2.75 – 3.10	2.13 – 2.94 – 2.68	2.38 – 2.33 – 2.35

Use of English related to future job's opportunities and money

English is perceived by most urban students as an asset in their future careers (see Table 8). In fact, all groups except the boys of the multilingual school (EKR) agree with the item 3:6 '*If I learn English, I will be able to get a better job*'. As for the Uzbek students of the rural school (Uz), they have a neutral view on the issue. This privileged position that English can offer the urban students is not considered as a key to economic or social advantages by any of the groups, according to the answers to two questions 3:8 and 3:7. To item 3:8 '*If I speak English, I will earn more money*' all the groups gave a neutral answer between 3.00 (Uzbek school (Uz) boys) and 3.90 (national school (KR) boys). Question 3:7 deals with the issue relating knowledge of English to acquisition of better category in the workplace such as the generic 'boss'. Again, most students gave apathetic answers and even some groups such as the Uzbek boys (Uz), the girls of the national school (KR) and the girls of the English school (E) answered negatively to the item (between 2.83 and 2.93). Due to these answers, it can be deduced that the possible advantages that English can offer are limited to *the choice* of a more pleasant job rather than a more remunerated employment. That perspective of *choosing* instead of *accepting any* job to make a life seems attractive enough in the capital city to help students pursue in their study of English.

Table 8.
Use of English regarding future job opportunities by schools excluding non-Russian speaking students

(Uz) Uzbek school	(KR) Kyrgyz-Russian sch.	(EKR) Multi-lingual sch.	(E) English sch.
Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total
3:6/ If I learn English, I will be able to get a better job			
3.44 – 3.59 – 3.51	4.33 – 4.39 – 4.36	3.86 – 4.47 – 4.25	4.13 – 4.17 – 4.15
3:7/ If I learn English, I will be a boss in my job			
2.93 – 3.50 – 3.21	3.52 – 2.91 – 3.22	3.00 – 3.53 – 3.36	3.38 – 2.83 – 3.05
3:8/ If speak English, I will earn more money			
3.00 – 3.67 – 3.33	3.90 – 3.42 – 3.66	3.75 – 3.59 – 3.64	3.50 – 3.33 – 3.40

Use of English in other personal domains

Popularity is a concept promoted in many films and TV soaps made mainly in the United States. A similar idea, that of leadership, is also promoted in many modern schools, with a special emphasis in international schools and in schools where education is carried out through the medium of English in countries where English is not a native language. The idea relating English to those concepts, however, does not seem to have permeated into the students' minds. Question 3:9 '*If I speak English, I will be more popular*' not only received the usual neutral answers from the rural students (Uz) and in this case from the boys of the national school (KR) as well, but also negative answers from all the rest of the groups without exception. Similar answers were given to the item 4:11 '*When I speak English I feel superior to others*'. The answers to these questions reinforce the idea that English, although practical in some domains, does not produce any superiority over those who speak Kyrgyz, Russian or any of the other local language (see Table 9).

Table 9.
Use of English in other personal domains by schools excluding non-Russian speaking students

(Uz) Uzbek school	(KR) Kyrgyz-Russian sch.	(EKR) Multi-lingual sch.	(E) English sch.
Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total	Boys – Girls - Total
3:9/ If I speak English, I will be more popular			
3.16 – 3.22 – 3.19	3.40 – 2.62 – 3.01	2.25 – 2.76 – 2.60	2.63 – 2.42 – 2.50
4:11/ When I speak English I feel superior to others			
2.72 – 2.85 – 2.78	3.35 – 3.00 – 3.17	3.13 – 3.47 – 3.36	3.00 – 2.58 – 2.75

Conclusion

In this study, the different attitudes toward English of Kyrgyzstani and other Central Asian students of different ethnicities are described and some data may contribute to a better knowledge of what those students expect of foreign languages and how they intend (if there is any intention) to use them in their lives. First, it must be emphasized that students have in general a positive attitude toward the learning of foreign languages, in this case English. That approach, however, varies considerably depending on the location of the schools and the programs implemented. Rural students, for example, are in general skeptic to assign any real life value to English. For them that language is a school subject that might open some possibilities as well as mathematics or sciences do. None of them report to use English at home; very few show interest in entertainment products in English and a considerable percentage of them deny that knowing English may contribute to have a better life. The reason behind this apathy may be the lack of opportunities to use a foreign language in rural Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, for most Uzbeks, as well as for most inhabitants of Central Asia, the language that needs to be mastered is Russian, since it may be used as a tool to migrate to the Russian Federation, where economic conditions are far better than in Kyrgyzstan despite the economic crisis (Luhn, 2015; Eurasianet, 2013). Urban students show similar attitudes toward English among them, although it is also noticeable that the more English is used in the classroom the more positive the approach toward the language is expressed. For most students in the national schools (which account for most of the schools in the country) English may be an asset but very few use it in their daily lives. For most Kyrgyz families Russian is still the language to learn and to speak. Britta Korth (2005, p. 132) points to this fact when commenting that Russian schools are overcrowded and work in two or more shifts. The situation is different within the private English and multilingual schools (no more than 30 in all the country). Some of the students use English to talk to their siblings, although very often that use is very limited due to the insufficient competence in the language observed by the researchers. Contrarily to what happens in other towns, the cosmopolitan environment of the conurbation Bishkek-Almaty helps students of all schools consider English a useful language, one of the assets to accede to more pleasant jobs. Students are also happy to consume music, films and internet resources in English although many of them express rather weak desires to improve the skills that they have achieved so far. Despite these positive results, the attitude of the students toward a language like English is far from that noticed in other regions such as the European Union where 67 percent

of the people think that English is the most useful language for personal development (European Commission, 2012, p. 69). This tendency, however, is likely to change as Kyrgyzstan continues its integration in international organizations and its visibility by other countries increases, attracting more tourism and investment.

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Appendix
Questionnaire (English version)

PART 1

Nationality (according to your passport):

Ethnicity (such as Dungan, Uyghur, Kurdish, etc.):

Common language spoken at home (*Name the language or languages*):

My mother's family (grandparents, uncles, aunties) speak (*Name the language or languages*):

My mother speaks fluently (*Name the language or languages*):

My father's family (grandparents, uncles, aunties) speak (*Name the language or languages*):

My father speaks fluently (*Name the language or languages*):

My father talks to my mother in (*Name the language or languages*):

With my brothers and sisters I speak (*Name the language or languages*):

PART 2

4/Do you like watching TV, films or videos in English?

5/ Do you like listening to music in English?

2:8/ We should use English out of the classroom too

2:10/ When I have a child I will teach him/her English

PART 3

1/   Knowing English will help me when travelling abroad on holidays

3:2/ I want to learn English to study abroad

3:3/ I am learning English because I want to spend some time in an English-speaking country

3:4/ I want to learn English because I will need it at University in my country

3:5/ The main reason to learn English is to pass exams

3:6/ If I learn English, I will be able to get a better job

3:7/ If I learn English, I will be a boss in my job

3:8/ If speak English, I will earn more money

3:9/ If I speak English, I will be more popular

3:10/ If I speak English, I will have a fantastic life

PART 4

4:8/ I want to understand better English films, videos, TV

4:9/ I want to be able to read websites in English

4:11/ When I speak English I feel superior to others

Bulgarian University Students' Learning Style Preferences in ESL Classrooms

PAPER II

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Students' attitudes towards learning and the perception and beliefs behind them may have a profound influence on learning behaviour and learning outcomes. Teachers' awareness of such needs and preferences will result in more realistic and useful teaching strategies which, in turn, will have a facilitative effect on the learning process. Thus, learners should be given opportunities to express their own language learning preferences, especially in reference to the definition of objectives in general and awareness of strategies for learning. Moved with the conviction that learners and their preferences are of crucial importance in the development of learner autonomy, 74 students in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, were asked about their perceptions and preferences on ESL classroom activities. The results showed that learners were not always able to clearly define their preferences. This may be due to the fact that learning a foreign language is a culturally and psychologically different process than learning any other subject via the individual's first language. Thus, educators have the additional responsibility to help learners to find their learning strengths, and by cognitive training help students to expand their learning style preferences. Also, implications from this study clearly display that teacher training programmes should seriously examine and implement innovative ways of teaching English considering students' identity, character, and limitations.

Key words: Learning styles, ESL, foreign language education, language transfer, motivation

During the last century, the generally embraced teaching practices were focused on the preparation of a wide assortment of teaching materials that would equally benefit all students in the classroom. This approach assumes that knowledge can be obtained regardless of students' learning abilities and personality, failing to acknowledge the fact that learners have personal preferences and attitudes towards learning a foreign language. Attitudes in the foreign language classroom vary significantly and are conditioned by the students' character, previous experiences at school, and the local education systems' view on the teacher-student power structure. Although university education differs from learners' previous experiences at elementary and secondary school, approaches towards language learning are usually well established by that time. Some individuals may prefer memorising grammar rules or words and phrases and listening to the teacher's explanations and taking notes. Other learners may prefer to be actively involved in learning activities, inclined to participate in more action-based language learning strategies, considering this as a useful tool that enables them to communicate with others who know that language (Oxford, 1993 66-67).

These attitudes towards learning, as well as the perceptions and beliefs which determine them, may have a profound influence on learning behaviours and learning outcomes. Therefore, it seems that language teachers should take into account such learners' needs and attitudes in making decisions about the types of activities they conduct in the classroom. Also, identifying the learners' needs and preferences, and devising and implementing suitable activities will make teaching more successful. This will help students to develop more active and autonomous attitudes which allow them to take charge of their own learning. However, gaps between teachers' and learners' views may result in negative language learning outcomes (Mehrdad & Ahghar, 2013, pp.102-103).

In this critical time of history, rapid demographic changes are swiftly shaping increasingly diverse societies. Globalization and an extensively technological world generate strong demand for English language learning around the world. Most developing countries assume that if their

inhabitants are fluent in English, there will be expanded opportunities in the educational and economic sectors (Moores-Abdool, Yahya & Unzueta, 2009, p.3). Therefore, teaching English and other foreign languages has recently become a world-wide phenomenon at all educational levels for people of all ages and backgrounds. This situation may present a challenge to teachers for developing successful teaching techniques that enhance both students' knowledge and motivation. Although considering students' learning style preferences may be a success factor in the classroom, these individual differences are rarely taken into account. The reason for this is that, except for very obvious cases, teachers may not even realise these differences in personalities. Therefore, deciphering motivation and learning style preferences is of fundamental interest to language programme designers, teachers, and administrators. Ideally, they should not only attract students to their institutions and educational programmes but need to provide them with the opportunity to learn according to their preferences and interests. Therefore, acknowledging different learning needs, demands, and attitudes is crucial for educators and for students themselves. Teachers should strive to use specific pedagogical techniques that strengthen and develop learners' autonomy. On the other hand, students should maintain their motivation in order to persevere and succeed in the challenging task of learning a foreign language (Schmidt, Boraie & Kassabgy, 1998, p.2).

Are learning styles important to consider?

"It would seem on the face of it that required ways of using a language might be quite closely related to preferred ways of learning a language" (Widdowson, 1983, p.33 as quoted in Horowitz, 1986, p. 445).

Taking individuals' learning styles into account is a relatively new approach. Traditionally, it was not even considered as a concept *per se*, therefore, students' learning styles forcedly had to coincide with the educator's teaching style. The power structure in education was strongly teacher centred, while students were expected to grasp the knowledge delivered. It can be said that the history of education had its dawn in households, where parents passed the necessary skills to their children. In that case, theoretical and practical skills were both sharpened in ideal ways:

1. Parents knew the character, strengths, and limitations of their child(ren) and could find the most suitable approaches to educate them.
2. Social and practical skills were both developed and tailored exactly for the needs of the child, considering the most likely demands he/she could meet later in life.

3. Education was not only focused on general subjects, but aimed for a holistic development with the intention of preparing children for life.

This individual approach grew impossible to maintain when education became accessible, and later obligatory, to the masses. Students with very different personalities, interests, and backgrounds were asked to attend classrooms where the educator's attention was divided in many directions. Moreover, due to some countries' governmental policies, the focus in education shifted towards the goal of children passing the exams with good marks, with an unsatisfactory emphasis on real cognitive development. However, some positive changes in those tendencies can be observed. A growing body of research suggests that in a growing number of institutions, students' learning preferences are taken seriously, and the findings are supported and implemented by educators and administrators alike (Mulalic, Shah & Ahmad, 2009, p.9).

Driven by the desire to place more attention on students' individual (language) acquisition differences and processes, the following seven points were collected as factors that help to improve the speed and quality of learning (Moenikia & Zahed-Babelan, 2010, p.1171)

- Visual (spatial): The using of pictures and images
- Aural (auditory-musical): The using of sound and music
- Verbal (linguistic): The using of words, both in speech and writing
- Physical (kinaesthetic): The use of one's body, hands, and sense of touch
- Logical (mathematical): The use of logic, reasoning, and systems
- Social (interpersonal): Group works, brainstorming, or learning with other people
- Solitary (intrapersonal): Working alone and self-study

The list of these seven points is a valuable tool in order to gain a fuller picture about students' preferences and/or abilities to access and absorb information and knowledge. However, deciphering the learning style of an individual lies in the combination of these points. As Mehrdad and Aghar (2013, p.103) point out, the term 'learning styles' is used to include three behavioural aspects of an individual: 1) cognitive style, describing patterns of inclinations and attitudes that influence what the student will pay the most attention to in a learning situation; 2) the likelihood to seek situations consistent with one's own learning patterns; and 3) the inclination to apply specific learning strategies and to avoid others.

Factors determining learning styles

Learning preference and capacity is empowered by many different factors such as (personal) circumstances, changing motivation, teachers' attitudes, and classroom conditions. Since these factors are not completely stable throughout time and evolving personalities, it is safe to say that there is no right or wrong permanent mix of traits that will work for an individual in all domains. Therefore, considering that each student has specific preferences for learning, it is easy to see the trouble of having many small sub-groups in one classroom with a teacher prepared to satisfy the peculiarities of each learning category. The analysis and grouping of the most similar learning style preferences may offer a temporary solution to this challenge. However, after reflecting on their learning, a few students reported that they were able implement some of their already well-working strategies and, based on them, develop new skills to succeed in their less dominant learning styles over time. This accomplishment may be of great importance, considering that the more an individual is conscious of his/her learning styles, and the more he/she is capable of expanding them, this will lead to more academic achievement and success later in life. Therefore, the value of the consciousness of one's own learning styles goes beyond academic success. This process shapes the students' identity and the way experiences are internally represented and acknowledged, and improves the capability to recall previous material or apply structures in new circumstances (Mulalic, Shah & Ahmad, 2009 p.10).

Rights versus abilities – can students determine their own learning needs?

Nowadays, many teachers experience student resistance when establishing educational activities in the classroom. Some students prefer more opportunities to participate in free conversation and dialogues, expressing their desire towards a more communicative approach. On the other hand, there are students who would favour more emphasis on grammar teaching. Collaboration can hardly be forced, but it can be negotiated. Although educators often acknowledge the need to decipher the ways in which learners differ in terms of needs and preferences, they may fail to discuss students' opinions when conducting language activities. This reluctance to take such preferences into account may be found in the belief that learners are generally not capable of understanding, analysing, and communicating what they want or need to learn, and they lack a clear strategy to achieve learning success unless especially directed by an educator. Moreover, in most societies, the teacher-student power structure

in the classroom is established in a rather rigid way, leaving no opportunity for learners to participate in decision-making on educational methodology. In most cultures, this would be even seen as highly inappropriate, given educators' established role in society (Bada & Okan, 2000, pp.1-2). Therefore, do students have the right and/or the capacity to express their learning style differences and expect them to be considered? Csíkszentmihályi's theory argues that an individual's attentiveness, motivation, and ability to concentrate will flourish when tasks and skills are on equal levels and both are on the high end of the spectrum. However, when the task is too hard and the student's skills are low, the psychological and emotional outcome may result in anxiety. On the other hand, when the challenge is considerably lower than the learner's skills, the completion of the task may produce boredom (Schmidt, Boraie & Kassabgy, 1998, p.6). Thus, carefully balancing students' learning style preferences, skills, and the learning task may lead to more motivated and engaged individuals, resulting in more fruitful education intellectually, emotionally, and economically.

First-language influence on second-language acquisition

> "Language from a multilingual perspective can be defined as a system of signs resting upon an underlying conceptual system that is unique to each culture. This definition implies that there is a linguistic and a conceptual level, which operate together in language processing and that the conceptual level is culture-specific. The conceptual system pulls together cognitive constructs and knowledge; language reflects this system"
>
> (Kecskes, 2008, p. 31)

Second or foreign language students use their first language structures and diverse strategies to accelerate the acquisition of the target language. This action occurs either consciously and intentionally by learners in order to overcome the limitations of their knowledge, or unconsciously because of the complete lack of proficiency in a specific context, or because the material learned was not fully automatized. This process is called "*language transfer*" (Karim, 2003, p.49). This is corroborated by Chomsky' universal grammar theory, in which he argues that individuals process and construct language through a profound structure that allows them to transfer their first language (L1) grammar skills to the target (L2) language (Chomsky, 1979, p.181-184). Since all individuals learn some language skills (including sign-language)

when acquiring their first language, this expertise is naturally transferable to the desired foreign language learning strategies. Therefore, both educators and learners should be aware of the degree L1 structure and skills are transferred in ESL classrooms, enhancing or hindering the acquisition of L2. Consciousness of such practices may be an invaluable tool to determine further educational strategies and instructional methods (Karim, 2003, p.53).

Karim (2003, p.54) proposes six critical points for how to convert students' L1 transfer into an advantage:

1. The careful observation of learners' L1 transfer strategies may help to comprehend the positive influences of such processes, directing them into correct L2 acquisition techniques.
2. Educators considering the advantage of L1 education already received may benefit from students' previous linguistic knowledge, skills, and mental schemata.
3. Once learners' positive transfer skills are identified, teachers may help students to use these skills effectively in L2 acquisition.
4. Educators' in-depth knowledge of their students transfer skills may help them to categorise students into corresponding study-groups according to their needs and abilities.
5. When the L1 and L2 possess similar grammar or structures, students may need additional instruction on how not to rely on L1 transfer in all domains of second-language learning.
6. The study of learners' early transfer abilities or negative transfer practices may help educators to identify possible common mistakes and to develop accurate and effective learning strategies.

Wang (2014, p. 59) reinforces the importance of directing L1 transfer skills wisely. He argues that, from a psychological perspective, learning in general is an accumulative process. Therefore, past educational experiences and activities greatly mould learners' attitudes and the courage to face new tasks where previous knowledge may not be completely useful. Thus, the amount of skills and knowledge acquired by an individual may shape his/her perceptions about new learning processes in the future. It may be of key importance to train learners how to direct their transfer skills from old to new situations. In foreign language learning, this strategy may help students to control their own learning, develop independent learning skills, find their authentic learning style preferences, and expand their intrinsic motivation and grit.

The general concept of first-language influence on second-language acquisition can further be analysed by its application according to the four main skills, namely listening, reading, writing, and speaking. It is also noteworthy to examine students' preferences for working individually, in pairs, in small groups, and in large groups.

Individual versus group working preferences

Some research suggests that individual learning in ESL contexts may be successful in groups of mixed ability, where low-achieving learners may need some additional time to gain sufficient knowledge in order to catch up with their peers. This hypothesis is based on the observance that learners may devote more attention and focus to a greater degree when they are not distracted by the other members of the group but are focusing on their own task (Arias & García, 2013, p.4). However, many other studies maintain that cooperative learning develops not only language learning skills, but builds character, shapes students' emotional intelligence, and develops better strategic skills (Reinders 2010, p. 40). Moreover, as shown in a study with more than one hundred college students, group learning enhanced class attendance and academic performance due to the pressure from the rest of the peers (Grimm, 2004, p. 1, 2). Competition in group-learning settings may be regarded as another factor that intensifies the desire to achieve more, to use the language skills acquired during the lesson, and to develop intrinsic motivation and grit. Also, competing against other groups awakens students' natural instinct to be the best when compared with the rest. This idea seems to be greatly supported by the Situated Cognition Theory developed by Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1998, p. 32), that combines learners' problem solving skills and domain specific knowledge for the success of collaborative learning (Grimm, 2004, p.3). Vygotsky's social cognition theory argues for the benefits of group-learning too (Frawley, 1997, p. 520). In his viewpoint, social interaction and shared problem solving are fundamental for full cognitive development. Vygotsky argues that while working in a group, peers' reactions may provide feedback to the individual on the actions displayed and reinforce acquisition of knowledge. Moreover, every step in the path of learning emerges and solidifies first in the social level and only after the expected reaction from peers or teachers can it become intrapsychological (Grimm, 2004, p. 4). Finally, Long and Porter (1985, p. 208-211) collected at least five points that benefit students during group work.

1. Increased opportunities to practice the language
2. Group work promotes the opportunities for students to polish the quality of their language skills.
3. Emerging errors during group work help educators to correct specific individual needs.
4. Reduces performance anxiety (in contrast with

when the student is asked to perform a task alone in front of the whole auditorium)

5. Through the variety of characters (and emerging errors) group work motivates students to express themselves more freely.

Listening and visual skills

> "*Listening, the recognition and interpretation of auditory stimuli is accepted as one of the most important features in children's learning... Listening skills are generally considered one of the four major components of language arts. However, it is widely recognized that the ability to listen attentively and critically is generic to children achieving success in all academic areas as well as in life in general*"
>
> (Buttery 1980, p.181)

In second language learning, listening is one of the most complex skills to acquire. Listening occurs in a variety of domains and contexts coming from individuals with different accents, volume of voice, verbal versatility, intelligence, and communication skills. Thus, for foreign language learners, listening and understanding the words and the grammar structures used in a particular situation and internalising the message sent can be a tedious and overwhelming challenge. This is particularly true when the learner is not only a passive observant of the events (i.e. watching TV, listening to a lecture, or observing a group of people interacting) but he/she is required to be engaged in a dialogue. Therefore, to be able to minimally function in the target language, it is necessary to develop good listening skills in order to have a general understanding of the situation and to decipher the other speaker's intention.

Although essential, teaching listening skills effectively in a second-language learning context has been neglected for a long time. Unfortunately, the challenging nature of teaching this skill has led professionals to overlook this problem. The complications of ignoring such difficulties may lead to students never fully developing listening skills, which, in turn seriously hinders further development in the acquisition of the target language. However, teaching listening has started to evolve recently. With new technologies in the classroom, the classical audio tools have given way to new activities that engage multiple senses while sharpening learners' auditory senses. TV, videos from the Internet, and video clips often with subtitles help students to establish a clearer picture in their minds about the information they heard. Moreover, some research suggests that audiovisual aids greatly enhance the comprehension of listening materials and have beneficial effects on language processing (Folley, 2015, p. 11-14).

When talking about listening and visual skills, body language, gestures, and facial cues should by no means be neglected. This is particularly true since human interactions and the understanding of the other individual(s) are often based on grasping the non-verbal cues emitted. Empirical studies show that English L2 learners exposed to active communication sessions with an English native speaker over an extensive period of time demonstrated that gestures played a crucial role in learning success (Gullberg & McCafferty, 2008, p. 137). Therefore, gestures and body language in general help with internalising the message, especially when they are used in a culturally comprehensible context.

Reading and comprehension skills

> "*Reading is a conscious and unconscious thinking process. The reader applies many strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author is assumed to have intended. The reader does this by comparing information in the text to his or her background knowledge and prior experience.*"
>
> (Mikulecky, 2008, p. 2)

Samuels (2007, p. 1) states that to fully understand a text, the individual must be able identify the words on the page and construct their definition. Therefore, reading and the comprehension of written material is crucial for the success in the acquisition of a foreign language. Reading instruction constitutes a big part of language learning: the usage of textbooks, worksheets, vocabularies, and online exercises all require the students to understand the meaning of the written text. Researchers Kintsch and van Dijk (1978), Rumelhart and Ortony (1977), Winograd (1977), and Rumelhart (1980) developed an information processing system to better comprehend how individuals process what they read. According to them, there are some facets of humans' information processing systems that interact continuously. When the individual concentrates on the already-known words and constructions during reading, this action is identified as a "concept-driven" or "top-down" mode. The opposite happens in the "data-driven" or "bottom-up" approaches, when the reader predominantly focuses on the information yet to be deciphered and on the peculiarities of the material to be understood. Therefore, the reader actively processes components of the text, while contrasting and comparing that information with his/ her previously acquired knowledge. At this phase of the task, prior understanding and knowledge initiates a presupposition about the text's full meaning. This

reciprocal process extends until the individual has a clear grasp of the text and his/her previous knowledge, eventually leading to comprehension of the material. As seen, reading and comprehension are complex tasks to perform. Reading in a second language, however, has additional complications and barriers to overcome. Most second-language learners use their first-language mental schemata to determine the points to notice and the strategies to apply when constructing the meaning, and ultimately when interpreting the message of the material. However, reliance on the readers' first-language processing system may significantly distort the meaning of the text. Therefore, when teaching how to read in a second language, additional care has to be placed on clarifying surging biases based on the individual's cultural background and first language (Mikulecky, 2008, p. 1-2).

When considering the acquisition of any foreign language, it is important to mention the role, limitations, and accurate definition of *fluency*. Being a fluent reader in the individual's first language should not be automatically assumed that he/she will have the same ability in the foreign language context. According to Lems, Miller, and Soro (2010, p. 148), fluency is defined when a person has native-like proficiency in the target language and has the ability to synchronously decipher, understand, and internalise the message of the text.

Achieving fluency in a second language may be a complicated task. In most cases language, culture, reasoning patterns, and social-behavioural norms are strongly connected, shaping the readers' conceptions of the world. Therefore, readers with diverse cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds may form different opinions on what a text signifies (Karim, 2003, p. 49). Thus, educators should not conclude that individuals who have excellent reading skills in their native language can produce the same speed, quality, and comprehension skills while reading in a foreign language. Consequently, professionals teaching a second language to students should be aware of the importance of not only focusing on vocabulary, syntax, and fluency but advising students to learn the target language within an appropriate cultural context. This "secondary literacy" teaches individuals not to rely on their first language, culture-specific interpretations, or biased cognitive structures when interpreting the text read.

Writing and analytical skills

The number of studies on writing in a second language has traditionally been unsatisfactory in comparison with the data available on the analysis of the other main skills (Krashen, 1984, p. 41).

Some researchers suggest that students' composing processes in a second language are largely similar to the schemata they use in their first language (Raimes, 1985, p. 231). This may concern both students and educators, since writing (along with the other three main skills) largely influences learners' capacity and accuracy in correctly acquiring a second language. Based on empirical research, Williams (2012, p.1) suggests three major areas where writing benefits, consolidates, and polishes a student's L2 development.

1. A comfortable pace – Students usually have more time to analyse, build, and construct the sentences in comparison to listening or speaking exercises.
2. Long lasting record – writing leaves stable and reinforced records in students' memories. This, in turn, enhances further positive cognitive processes in the internalisation of the target language.
3. The demand for greater precision – Writing activities require continuous and careful reviewing of students' explicit knowledge; this leads to more cautious planning, monitoring, and structuring of the material to be produced.

Writing and reading skills in a second language have overlapping dimensions; while readers are required to decipher the formal and cultural/social facets of the text, writers are expected to encode them. Therefore, writing should always be seen as socially and culturally placed. Therefore, during writing exercises, teachers are urged to be aware of the pitfalls of breaking down such tasks into solely component skills, ignoring the cultural significance of the text. Thus, as writing greatly consolidates learners' perceptions and comprehension of the cultural dimensions of the target language, a holistic approach to such exercises is highly recommended (Archibald, 2004). This, in turn, will help learners to consciously develop specific writing skills that will satisfy any reader-sensitivities of the target audience (Myles, 2002, p. 2).

While cultural components are fundamental aspects of writing in an L2, Tsang and Wong (2000, p. 41) propose that explicit grammar instruction enhances writing skills to a great extent. In their research, they state that students with intensive grammar training had increased readiness and ability to use mature syntax in their writing. Furthermore, Yau (1991, p. 268) argues:

> "*Although we should not cripple our students' interest in writing through undue stress or grammatical correctness, the influence of second-language factors on writing performance is something we have to reckon with and not pretend*

that concentrating on the process would automatically resolve the difficulty caused by these factors."

Speaking and creative skills

Speaking is a fundamental part of foreign-language education. Communication, syllabus contents, and any measurable learning outcome would be much more complicated to achieve without the spoken part of the target language in the classroom. According to Burns (2012, p.165) many students display the following attitudes in foreign language classrooms when asked to speak:

1. Most students have the ability to read and write well, but they lack the ability to transfer the same skills to produce speech.
2. Many learners express debilitating fear when asked to talk in the classroom due to shyness and lack of confidence.
3. Some students' speech has more resemblance to the act of reading a book. Natural expressions and intuitive communication seldom take place in foreign language classrooms.
4. Although some students would like to practice more speaking, the hardship of combining accurate vocabulary and grammar prevents them from succeeding.

Speaking in the desired second or foreign language is often regarded as synonymous with apprehension and anxiety among learners. Unfortunately, nervousness to perform well in this skill may even hinder the progress of L2 acquisition and/or have detrimental effects on learners' motivation to practice their communication skills in the target language at all. Nowadays, the use of communication-oriented strategies in foreign language classrooms places a considerable amount of pressure on students. Therefore, it is the educators' responsibility to consider students' individual capacities, limits, and character and to alleviate this anxiety while assisting them to achieve desired performance objectives in the target language (Tanveer, 2007, p. 1).

Researchers and foreign language acquisition specialists also reinforce the idea that there is a specific kind of anxiety while leaning and speaking a second language, differentiating this from the nervousness displayed while learning other skills or subjects (Guiora, 1983, p.8). According to them, this may be due to the fact that foreign language acquisition is a "*profoundly unsettling psychological proposition*" because it may pose a threat to the learner's cultural identity and world view. Therefore, is there a connection between speech anxiety in the learner's first-language and the target language to acquire? Individuals may be nervous in situations involving public speech regardless of whether they use their native language or not. However, as Tanveer (2007, p.3) points out:

"*Anxiety experienced when speaking in a second/foreign language seems to be more debilitating than the anxiety experienced when speaking in the first language. Anxiety while communicating in other than L1 goes a step further with the addition of the difficulties associated with learning and speaking a foreign language. In a foreign language, a speaker has to look for suitable lexis, has to construct an appropriate syntactic structure and needs to use a comprehendible accent, plus the demanding tasks of thinking and organizing ideas and expressing them at the same time*".

Educators are presented with a great challenge when teaching how to speak a second language. The acquisition of communication and speaking skills from a holistic perspective may enhance students' performance and their motivation to eventually master such skills. However, teachers should be knowledgeable about the proper nature of speaking competence and how diverse aspects of this skill relate to each other (Burns, 2012, p. 166). Johnson (1996, p. 155) points out that "*speaking is a combinational skill that involves doing various things at the same time.*"

In their "Second Language Speaking Competence" framework, Burns and Goh (Burns, 2012, p. 167) present a model that involves language knowledge, core speaking skills, and communication and discourse strategies. According to them, learning to speak in a foreign language implies mastering the above-mentioned skills in order to display fluency, accuracy, and culturally appropriate attitudes.

Therefore, a combination of the following three aspects should be considered to enhance speaking skills in foreign language classrooms:

1. *Knowledge of the language itself*: Correct knowledge of the sound patterns (being able to pronounce the language), grammar, vocabulary (lexis and spoken structures), and the speech's correct pragmatical and social embeddedness
2. *Core speaking skills:* Learners' capabilities to process speech accurately and to improve fluency. It also requires aptness to structure the speech based on previous clues: observing anterior failures in understanding, foregoing utterances and communication-mismatches, as well as directing and controlling the flow of speech as it develops.

3. *Communication Strategies:* Learning and enhancing cognitive approaches and strategies in order to counterbalance deficiencies of knowledge in the target language. Also, developing metacognitive skills, such as the conscious planning and structuring of the speech, and mastering interaction competence by asking for clarification, repetition, and confirming correct understanding (Goh & Burns, 2012, p. 53).

Hypothesis

The magnitude of the task of deciphering global linguistic behaviour, motivation, and learning style preferences as a whole lays beyond the possibilities of this research. However, in recent times, there has not been such a study carried out on Bulgarian written in the English language. Therefore, the above-mentioned four main skills and the individual versus group working preferences were considered an optimal base where Bulgarian students' attitudes towards L2 acquisition can be analysed.

According to my hypothesis, Bulgarian university students were rather reluctant to participate in most educational activities carried out in the ESL classroom. Prior to this study, during informal discussion with colleagues and learners, most students expressed clear ideas about their dislikes, yet most of them could not identify their own learning strengths or learning style preferences. Only a few students suggested having a clear learning strategy or a learning style preference. However, as a paradox, many declared to be very motivated to learn English well and declared to be working hard in order to achieve this goal. Therefore, I was intrigued to unveil 1) what learning strategies and activities are perceived as the most beneficial by the learners and 2) to what extent students are conscious of their learning style preferences.

Method

A survey was conducted in order to investigate whether learning style preferences can be considered a decisive factor for success in EFL classrooms among university students in Bulgaria. In order to collect data, quantitative research methodology was used by inviting students to complete paper-based questionnaires.

Participants

The study was conducted in two universities, one private and one national, in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria.

The number of participants was 74: 23 male and 51 female students between the ages of 16 and 57 years old (See Figure 1). For the purpose of this study, a convenience sampling method was used to determine the appropriate subjects. Individuals attending university courses were the most convenient to select because, at least hypothetically, none of them were forced to attend lessons. Therefore, supposedly, they were all motivated to some degree to succeed in their respective studies. At the time of the research the majority of the learners were pursuing bachelor and master's degrees related to linguistics or/and English language in an array of degree programmes at the university and were studying at varied language levels (intermediate and advanced). Some of the students, however, attended specific EAP (English for Academic Purposes) courses, while some who participated were enrolled in programmes of English for general purposes.

The wide age gap of the students was not considered an inconvenience in this case since some scholars suggest that attitudes start to appear at the age of 10 and are clarified and consolidated during adolescence (Huget & Llurda, 2001, p.271). Therefore, at the time the study was conducted, all participants theoretically had clear learning style preferences and established learning habits. Moreover, Grimm (2004, p.1) suggests '*generalizations about the whole population can be expanded when more people at different grade levels are studied*'. Before the questionnaires were distributed in the classroom, the research objectives were made clear and the opportunity to participate or withdraw at any moment was given to all participants.
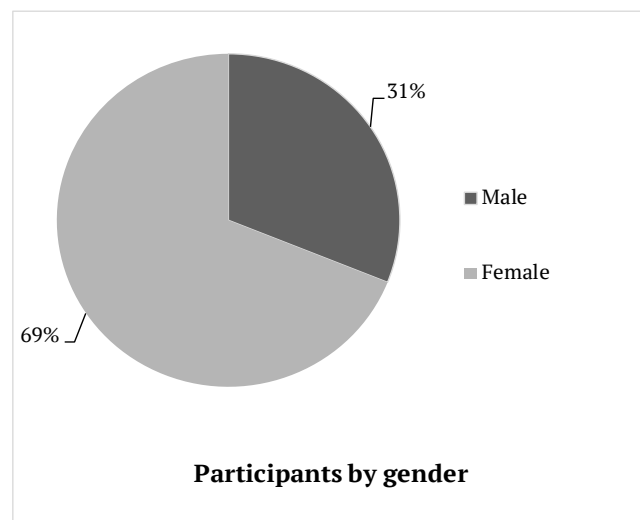

Figure 1. Participants by gender.

The proportion of the genders in this study reflects the general percentage of males and females attending university courses and specific English language courses in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria.

Materials

The data was obtained by a self-completed questionnaire developed by the researcher especially for this study. The chosen quantitative research method aimed to collect self-reported data from students with the intention of describing existing conditions or identifying points of reference to be used for comparing conditions or determining the relationships between specific events (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012, p. 74).

The questionnaire itself consisted of some closed-ended questions and some other questions where the answers had to be marked on a five-point Likert-scale (from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree).

Although the study was made in Bulgaria and mostly with Bulgarian students, the questionnaires were written and completed in English. However, before administering the instrument, the students' understanding on the wording and on the meaning of the questions was verified. Moreover, at any time participants could ask, clarify, and have the meaning of some particular words or questions in the questionnaire translated.

Procedure

To guarantee the scientific validity and understandability of the questionnaires, a pilot study was conducted. Two Bulgarian and two foreign researchers on education and linguistics were asked to read the questionnaire and provide advice on the clarity, wording, and content of all of the items. Moreover, a group of six students gave their opinions on the questionnaire. After including some of the suggestions, paper-based questionnaires were administered to the students by the teachers working in the respective institutions. All of the students were informed by their English teachers about the objectives of the research. Therefore, all participants were aware that no monetary compensation or better grades were offered as a reward for participating. Students were also informed about the anonymous nature of the questionnaire and how their names would not appear in any article, study, or statistics. Also, a short paragraph at the beginning of the questionnaire informed students about their right to withdraw at any moment.

The questionnaires were filled out in the classroom; however, no questions were discussed aloud among the students and a respectful attitude could be observed. The distribution of the questionnaires took place in May 2016. This was considered one of the most opportune moments since learners were not over-stressed or too busy with exams.

The results were based on the five-point Likert scale questionnaire, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Two main categories were separated according to gender and percentages were taken for each group/question.

Results

The data obtained via the '*students' learning styles preferences*' questionnaire was analysed with the intention of shedding light on students' inclinations, biases, and desire to participate in different educational classroom activities. Through the study, gender differences, language anxiety, decisiveness, and learners' choices for working individually, in pairs, small groups, or large groups in the ESL classroom were examined.

Individual versus team working preferences

The findings showed some clearly marked opinions on individual versus group working preferences among Bulgarian students. To the question "*Do you like learning individually?*" (See Figure 2) females expressed mostly positive attitudes by 59 percent, while males' viewpoints were rather divided on the matter. When asked "*Do you like learning in pairs?*" (See Figure 3) both genders' opinions were divided. The most positive viewpoints could be observed when asked "*Do you like learning in small groups?*" (See Figure 4). Almost half of the participants favoured working in small groups, while the third of the males expressed dislike and 30 percent of the females gave neutral answers. When asked "*Do you like learning in large groups?*" (See Figure 5) viewpoints were inversely proportional to the answers given to the question dealing with working in small groups. Half of both male and female students disliked or strongly disliked collaborating in this format, while one-third of the males expressed positive opinions while almost one-third of the females remained neutral.

Listening/visual skills

To the general question "*Do you like learning by listening?*" (See Figure 6) 61 percent of male students answered positively, while only the half of the female students were of the same opinion. Females did slightly move towards being neutral on this topic. Opinions were more clearly expressed when asked more in detail about listening exercises. When presented with the question "*Do you like learning from radio and/or podcasts?*" (See Figure 7) both male and female students expressed their dislike by 40 percent. Although on both sides there were 35 percent positive
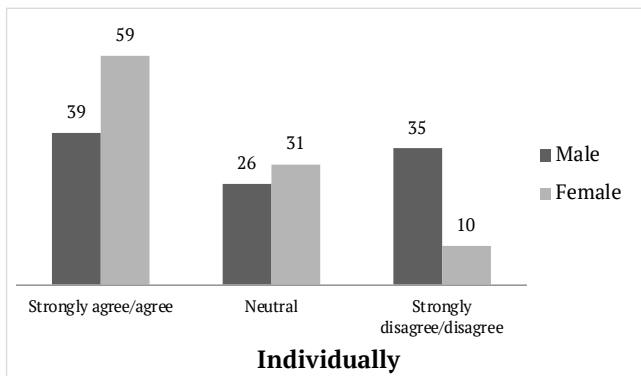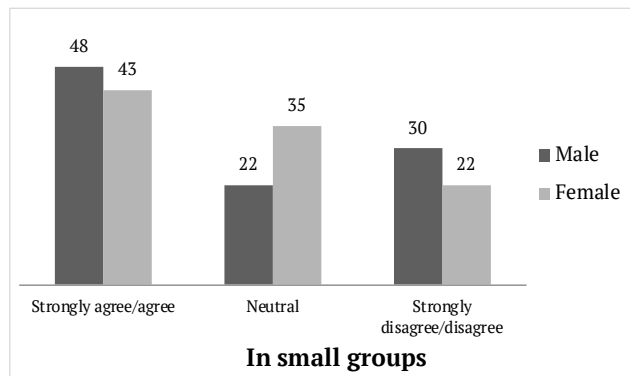
Figure 2. Learning individually (percentages).

Figure 4. Learning in small groups (percentages).
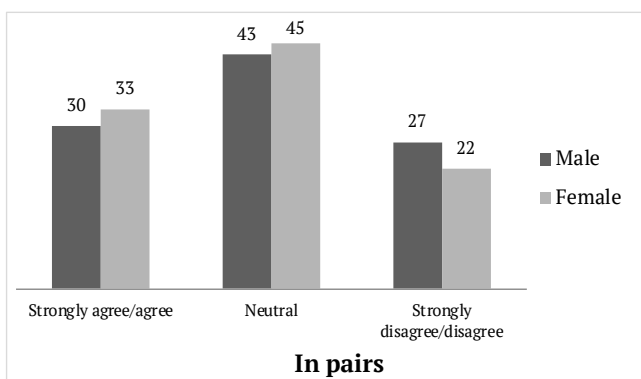
Figure 3. Learning in pairs (percentages).
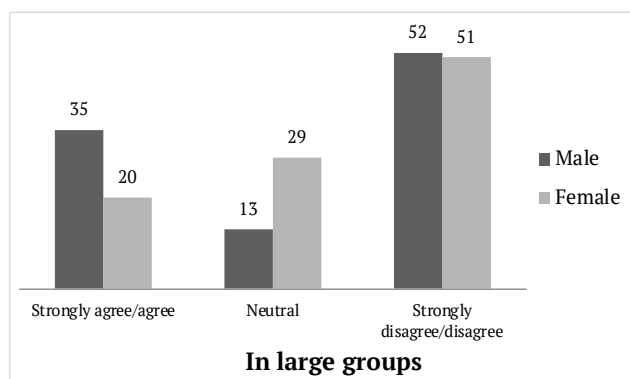
Figure 5. Learning in large groups (percentages).

answers, yet the high number of negative answers on only listening without visual aids shows that this option may not be very successful.

When considering the question "*Do you like learning from CDs, applications or online?*" (See Figure 8) male students' viewpoints were divided by almost the same number of answers on the positive and on the negative sides leaving 26 percent with neutral standpoints.

When considering the question "*Do you like learning from CDs, applications or online?*" (See Figure 8) male students' viewpoints were divided by almost the same number of answers on the positive and on the negative sides leaving 26 percent with neutral standpoints. On the same topic, female learners were more favourable, almost half of them.

About 40 percent showed neutral attitudes on this kind of activity. A positive turning point was clearly observable when answering the question "*Do you like learning from television, videos and films?*" (See Figure 9). About 75 percent of both sides agreed that listening exercises were enjoyable. Viewpoints on the topic "*Do you like songs, karaoke - fill in the missing words?*" (See Figure 10) were mostly neutral, clearly moving towards negative in the case of males. When asking students "*Do you like getting information from guest speakers?*" (See Figure 11) the answers were divided between neutral and positive, leaving very few opinions on

the negative sides. The final question on listening and visual skills "*Do you like getting information from planned visits to museums, galleries, etc..?*" (See Figure 12) had a rather neutral feedback on both sides, the rest of the opinions being equally favourable and disliked by female students, while male students had a slightly higher number of positive than negative thoughts on this matter.

Reading/comprehension skills

Bulgarian students' answers show enthusiasm when asked "*Do you like learning by reading?*" (See Figure 13). The majority of both male and female students found reading an enjoyable activity. On the other hand, when asked "*Do you like learning by reading and taking notes?*" (See Figure 14) fewer positive, more neutral, and even some negative answers were given.

The answers to the question "*Do you like learning from analysing written material?*" (See Figure 15) showed similar attitudes. Half of the male students expressed neutral opinions, while 39 percent liked this activity. Female students showed a more positive approach with 61 percent in favour of analysing written material, while the rest's viewpoints were divided among neutral or negative answers. The question with the most negative answers was "*When*
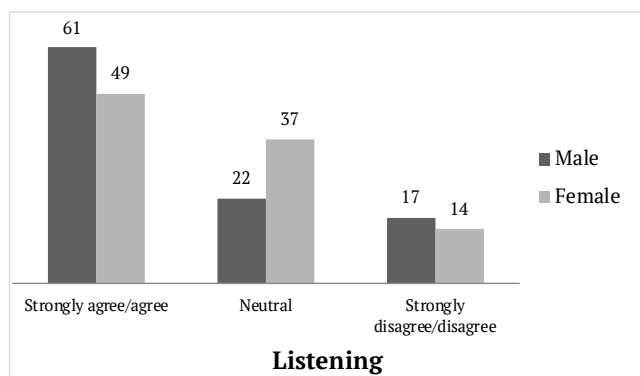
Figure 6. Do you like learning by listening? (percentages)

Figure 7. Do you like learning from radio and/or podcasts? (percentages)

Figure 8. Do you like learning from CDs, applications or online? (percentages).

Figure 9. Do you like learning from television, videos and films? (percentages).

Figure 10. Do you like songs, karaoke - fill in the missing words? (percentages).
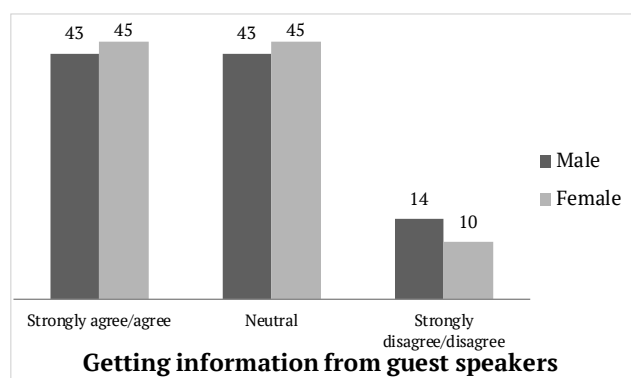
Figure 11. Do you like getting information from guest speakers? (percentages).

learning new vocabulary do you like learning by reading without looking up or translating words?" (See Figure 16). Both male and female students agreed by about 40 percent that assuming or guessing the meaning of new words (even if placed in an already familiar text) was not preferred by them. To the same question about 25 percent of both genders reacted neutrally and only an average of 32 percent enjoyed this challenge. When asked "*Do you like learning from the whiteboard?*" (See

Figure 17), students showed evenly neutral attitudes, except female students where 61 percent were favourable of such an activity. Lastly, when asked "*Do you like learning from pictures, posters and/or cards?*" (See Figure 18) half of the students agreed or strongly agreed on the likeability of this activity. However, 39 percent of the males and 29 percent of the females showed neutral attitudes, which left the category of disagree/strongly disagree with rather weak support.
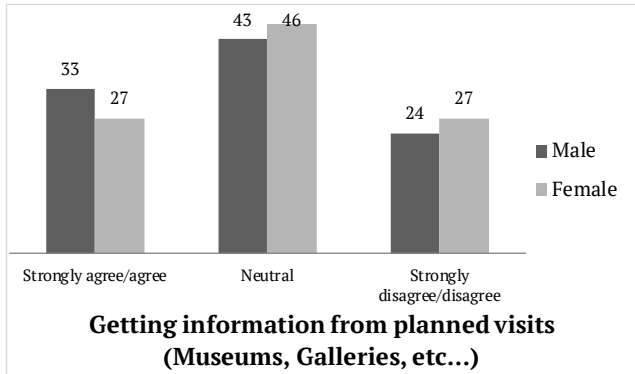
Figure 12. Do you like getting information from planned visits to museums, galleries, etc..? (percentages).

Figure 13. Do you like learning by reading? (percentages).

Figure 14. Do you like learning by reading and taking notes? (percentages).

Writing/analytical skills

Bulgarian students' preferences on writing activities varied considerably between rather negative and some surprisingly positive answers. When asked, "*When learning new vocabulary, do you like learning by saying or writing words several times?*", female students expressed positive attitudes with 43 percent agreeing, while male students' opinions tended to be more on the negative end of the spectrum with 48 percent (See Figure 19).

Figure 15. Do you like learning from analysing written material? (percentages).

Figure 16. When learning new vocabulary do you like learning by reading without looking up or translating words? (percentages).

Figure 17. Do you like learning from the whiteboard? (percentages).

The question "*Do you like learning by making summaries?*" showed strongly divided opinions. Forty-five percent of the males liked this activity, but females' opinions tended to be neutral at 42 percent, while the negative answers amounted to 32 percent on the males' side and to 24 percent on the females' (See Figure 20). One of the most unexpected results emerged from the answers to the question "*Do you like learning by writing homework regularly?*" Half of the male students agreed or strongly agreed on the usefulness and likeability of this task, while the other half's opinions were evenly
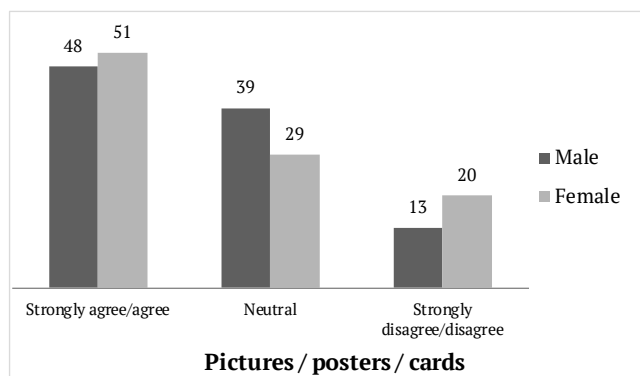
Figure 18. Do you like learning from pictures, posters, and/or cards? (percentages).
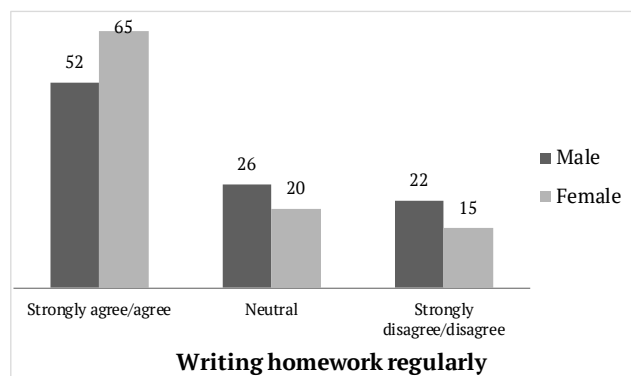
Figure 21. Do you like learning by writing homework regularly? (percentages).
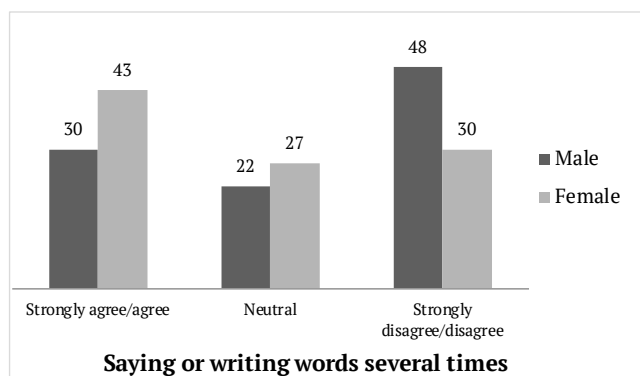
Figure 19. When learning new vocabulary, do you like learning by saying or writing words several times?
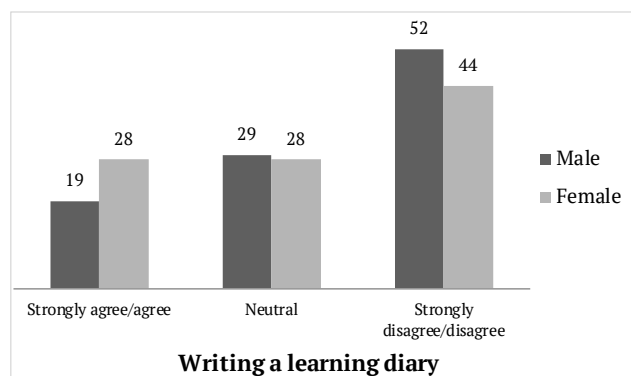
Figure 22. Do you like writing a learning diary? (percentages).
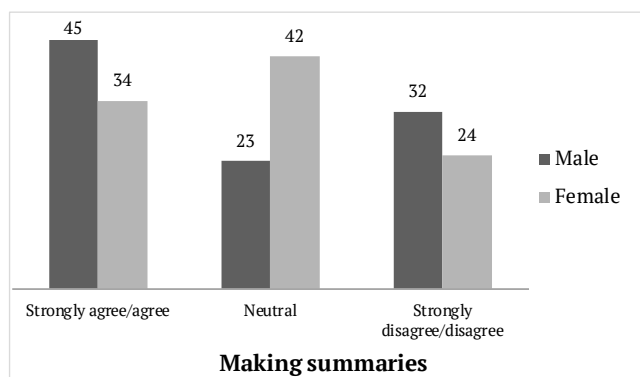
Figure 20. Do you like learning by making summaries? (percentages).
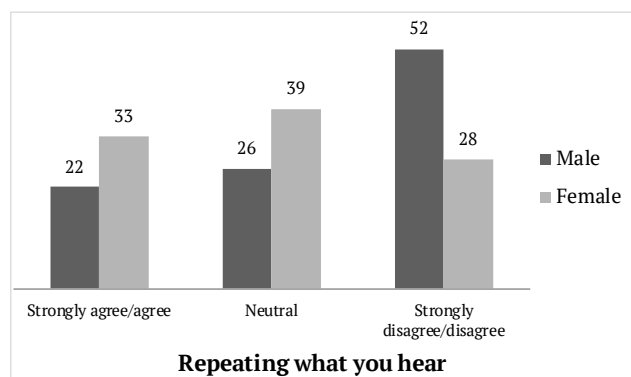
Figure 23. Do you like repeating what you hear? (percentages).

distributed between neutral and negative answers. Also, the majority of female students had high esteem for writing regularly homework, while 20 percent were neutral and only 15 percent had negative viewpoints on the attractiveness of such a task (See Figure 21). The answers to the question "*Do you like writing a learning diary?*" were moderately positive. Fifty-two percent of the males and a 44 percent of the females clearly disliked this activity, while between 28 and 29

percent were neutral. Only 19 percent of the males liked writing a learning diary, while females' responses were somewhat more positive at 28 percent (See Figure 22).

Speaking/creative skills

Bulgarian students' opinions on speaking activities reflect the above-mentioned language anxiety to a certain degree. To the question "*Do you like repeating*

Guessing the meaning of the new word
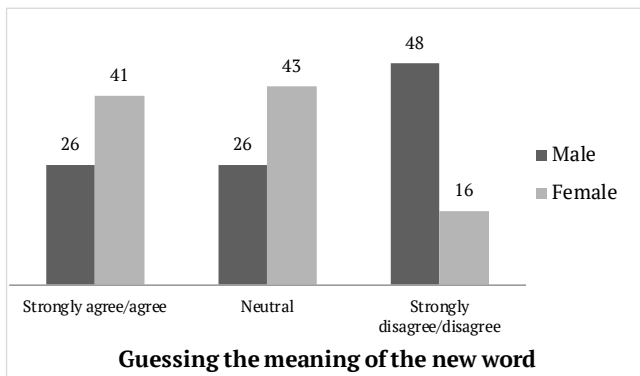
Figure 24. When learning new vocabulary, do you like guessing the meaning of the new word? (percentages).

Using new words in a sentence

Figure 25. When learning new vocabulary, do you like using new words in a sentence? (percentages).

Thinking of a relationship between old and new words

Figure 26. When learning new vocabulary, do you like thinking of a relationship between old and new words? (percentages).

Talking with and listening to other students

Figure 27. Do you like talking with and listening to other students? (percentages).

Interviewing other students

Figure 28. Do you like interviewing other students? (percentages).
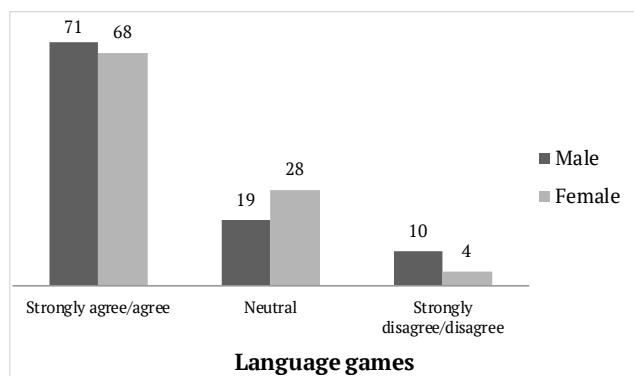
Language games

Figure 29. Do you like language games? (percentages).

what you hear?", half of the males expressed negative opinions, while females showed neutral attitudes at 40 percent (See Figure 23). Similarly, to the question "*When learning new vocabulary, do you like guessing the meaning of the new word?*", almost half of the male participants' answers reflected dislike, while female participants were mostly divided among positive and neutral opinions (See Figure 24).

Although guessing the meaning of new words was clearly not favoured by the majority, answers to the question "*When learning new vocabulary, do you like using new words in a sentence?*" reflected more positive attitudes on both parts (See Figure 25). These opinions may suggest that once the basic vocabulary and language skills are developed, students enjoy building speech strategies and increasing fluency. The question "*When learning new vocabulary, do you like thinking of a relationship between old and new words?*" divided opinions, this being the strategy more successful among males, while females' opinions were
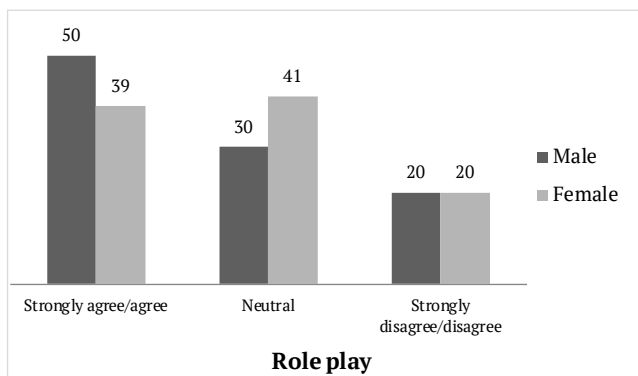
Figure 30. Do you like role playing? (percentages).

Figure 31. Do you like memorising conversations or dialogues? (percentages).

rather mixed, tending to be slightly more positive and neutral (See Figure 26). Both male and female students expressed favourable viewpoints when asked "*Do you like talking with and listening to other students?*" (See Figure 27). However, when asked "*Do you like interviewing other students?*", viewpoints pointed towards the neutral and negative end of the spectrum (See Figure 28). When asked "*Do you like language games?*", most respondents expressed very favourable opinions (See Figure 29). Similarly, to the question "*Do you like role playing?*", half of the males were positive, while most of the females' opinions were divided among positive and neutral (See Figure 30). However, in rather sharp contrast, the majority of the participants disliked or had neutral attitudes when asked "*Do you like memorising conversations or dialogues?*" (See Figure 31).

Discussion

The results, in percentages, were analysed according to the four main skills, namely listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The individuals' genders and individual versus group working preferences were also taken into account. The findings obtained from this study offer some notable insights, suggesting that learning style preferences are of vital importance to consider. According to the data, learners' most preferred ways of learning English were in small groups, and in the case of most females, individually. On the other hand, at least half of the participants clearly disliked studying in large groups. In any case, some figures showed that a noticeable number of students had no clear preference on working individually, in pairs, or in groups. If taken positively, this may indicate the adaptability of Bulgarian students for the sake of learning. However, the number of neutral answers may be due to either a lack of interest on the topic while filling out the questionnaire or a lack of motivation in attending the lessons altogether.
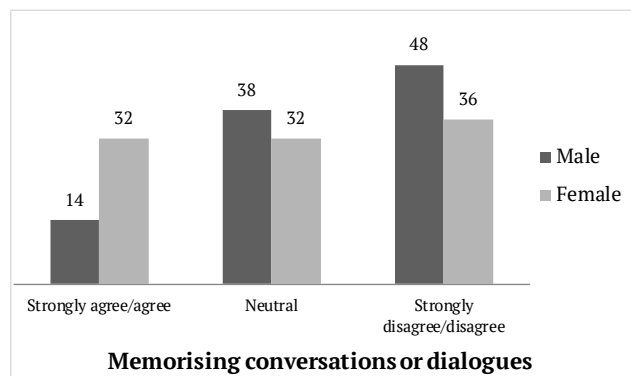
As for the listening activities, the results showed that most students preferred listening activities when accompanied by visual aids, in particular TV, videos, or films, yet, karaoke and lyrics fill-in activities were an obvious exception to this. The opinions showed that learners liked, or at least were neutral, when guest speakers (using body language and gestures) delivered information, but listening activities that required solely listening skills, such as in the case of the radio or podcasts, were viewed as mostly negative.

The case of reading in a second language is definitely a favoured activity among the participants, particularly when accompanied by visual materials that may help deciphering and constructing the meaning of the text. However, opinions were more neutral in the areas where students were supposed to use their capacity to guess the meaning of new words, or using their ability to predict the general message of the text by relying on their previous knowledge.

Writing activities were viewed with moderate success. Students disliked repetitive tasks, such as writing words several times for the sake of memorising them. However, writing homework and making summaries were among the most enjoyable tasks. It seems that writing activities that rely on students' previous knowledge or the production of short synopses of texts encourage learners to move out of their comfort zones with secure steps.

Speaking exercises caused a division of opinions as well. Students mostly disliked repeating words and expressions to be learned, memorising dialogues, guessing the meaning of a new word, and interviewing other students. More positive attitudes could be observed when the activity was related to using words in a new sentence, thinking of relationships between old and new words, talking to other students, role play, and language games. Therefore, it is safe to say that inspiring, amusing, and brainstorming activities that are placed in a relaxed atmosphere were largely favoured by both genders.

The often diverse opinions suggest that learners are not fully aware of their learning strengths and

learning style preferences. Therefore, both educators and students should consider ways to uncover and recognize the areas where learning strengths can be reinforced and learning styles can be expanded for the sake of enhancing foreign language learning strategies.

The findings were sometimes unexpected. The result that corroborates previous theories is that many learners were not aware of their learning style preferences, and had no clear learning strategies in the context of learning a foreign language. Also, language anxiety prevented some students from liking and/or readily participating in certain activities that could further enhance their achievement. However, the eagerness of writing homework and engaging in small-group talking and problem solving suggests that students had rather strong intrinsic motivation to learn English. Therefore, these results may be interpreted as a lack of proper guidance in discovering, understanding, and developing the student's individual learning style preferences. With the educators' assistance, these skills could open new horizons in foreign language learning, enabling learners to better comprehend and widen their cognitive capacities.

Conclusion

Given its strong psychological and cultural implications, learning a second/foreign language is a highly complex task to undertake. Therefore, it is important to notice that, although learners may have consolidated learning style preferences in other subjects or domains, their approach may need to be re-negotiated and expanded when learning a new language. Addressing and comprehending students' learning style preferences and competence is a dual responsibility. Educators should facilitate diverse activities, educational materials, and assessment methods in order to help students find the most appropriate learning styles to gain and strengthen knowledge. During this process, students should consolidate and internalise concepts, build new strategies on already acquired knowledge, and utilize opportunities to engage in practicing English with their peers. Also, advising students on their learning strengths may eventually empower them to overcome new challenges and persevere in remembering new structures and difficult information while maintaining focus, motivation, and grit. Teacher training institutions should place more emphasis on certain psychological aspects of teaching, such as student motivation and paralanguage. These skills may help future teachers decipher students' attitudes in order to guide learners according to their individual needs and

teach students to be more self-conscious of learning strategies. Mutual respect between students and teachers is fundamental in this area, since learning style preferences are part of students' character and identity (Mehrdad & Ahghar, 2013, p.105). Although this research provides readers with practical data, the limitations are not to be overlooked. Further research is needed to better determine how English teachers' nationality, teaching style, student motivation skills, attitude, and capability to guide learners to find and develop their learning strengths affect learning success. The second part of this research will attempt to answer to these questions.

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Appendix A.

Questionnaire

HOW DO YOU LIKE LEARNING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE?

I would like to ask for your help by answering the following questions concerning English language learning. Don't worry, this is NOT a test and you DON'T have to write your name. Moreover, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. I am very interested in your personal opinions. Please give your answers sincerely. Thank you very much for your help!

Age:_____   Are you: ☐ Male / ☐ Female?

IN CLASS DO YOU LIKE LEARNING...
    individually?
    in pairs?
    in small groups?
    in a large group?

DO YOU LIKE LEARNING BY...
    listening?
    reading?
    copying from the board?
    listening and taking notes?
    reading and making notes?
    repeating what you hear?
    making summaries?
    writing homework regularly?

WHEN LEARNING NEW VOCABULARY, DO YOU LIKE LEARNING BY...
    using new words in a sentence?
    thinking of relationships between old and new words?
    saying or writing words several times?
    guessing the meaning of a new word?
    reading without looking up or translating words?

DO YOU LIKE LEARNING FROM...
    Television / videos / films?
    Radio / podcasts?
    CDs / applications / online?
    Written material / analysis?
    The whiteboard?
    Pictures / posters / cards?

DO YOU LIKE THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES IN YOUR CLASS?
    Role play
    Language games
    Songs/Karaoke – fill in the missing words
    Talking with and listening to other students
    Interviewing other students
    Memorising conversations or dialogues
    Getting information from guest speakers
    Getting information from planned visits (Museums, galleries, etc...)

University students' preferences on English teachers' nationality and teaching style: Gender based differences

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Inspiration dynamics between students and teachers have great impact on learners' perceptions, attitudes and psychological well-being in the ESL classroom. Gender-based differences in opinions about foreign-language acquisition often shape students' approaches and learning structures. Nowadays, great emphasis is placed on the presence of native English-speaker teachers in English language teaching institutions. However, such teachers may struggle to understand local students' attitudes. Seventy-four university students were asked about their perceptions and preferences on English teachers' nationality and teaching-style in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria. The data were analysed according to gender-based differences in opinions. The findings reveal that, in general, students have no preference for native or non-native teachers, yet prefer educators who teach exclusively through the medium of English. Female students expressed less self-confidence, more need for continuous reinforcement and social interaction in the classroom, while male students displayed more self-confidence, more autonomy and the need for practical knowledge-focused learning content and strategies.

Keywords: ESL, gender differences, teaching style, learning preferences, native versus non-native teachers

1. Introduction

For foreign language education to be successful, several factors are vital to be considered. Motivation is a quintessential factor to engage, nurture and advance students' interest and developing their language skills. Learners' attitudes and motivation towards acquiring a foreign language and successful classroom performance are among decisive factors predicting positive outcome (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011, p. 994). Nowadays, foreign language learning has become a worldwide experience, attracting millions of all ages to attend foreign language classes at all levels. According to the British Council, during the last 75 years, they have educated more than 100 million people in 100 countries to start, develop and polish their English language knowledge (British Council, 2018). However, this number is only a tiny fraction of the countless university programmes, alongside traditional and online language schools of all size offering yearlong or intensive courses. The creation of diverse foreign language institutions addresses the needs of individuals expecting to use their language knowledge for obtaining better jobs, expanded educational opportunities, moving abroad and/or higher social status (Komlosi, 2017, p. 23). With a flourishing English

language teaching industry, a new wish has emerged. Both companies and individuals agree on the importance of having native English teachers ensuring the successful acquisition of native-like proficiency and accent while gaining knowledge about sociocultural and psychological features of the language. Although there are a variety of reasons students wish to learn English, the presence of a native English teacher has become almost compulsory in most institutions. Therefore, during the last decades, two very clearly segregated categories have emerged: native and non-native English language educators. Although traditionally, native-speakers are often preferred as opposed to non-native teachers, lately this view came under attack by academics devoted to this field as well as by students who experienced both teaching styles (Medgyes, 2017, p. 87-88; Braine, 2009, p. xvii; Thomas, 2009, pp. 6–7; Canagarajah, 2009, p. 80; Kamhi-Stein, 2009, p. 147; Liu, 2009, pp. 159–160).

Training effective language teaching professionals has been thoroughly studied in various countries (Doró & T. Balla, 2014, p. 52; Phillips, 2008, p. 37; Woodbury, 2017, p. 80). Already in 2005, Bell (p. 259) stated that, while there is little consensus on specific behaviours forming the most advantageous educational strategies, the following five points are generally accepted as crucial for teachers to maintain (or even to develop) motivation in the ESL classroom:

- enthusiasm
- expressiveness (verbal and non-verbal)
- clarity of explanation (proper to the learners' knowledge/level)
- rapport (according to the students' needs)
- encouraging interaction

The above-mentioned teaching qualities are supposed to be required and indispensable for all educators and practised at all teaching environments. However, students' perceptions on foreign-language teachers' teaching style and motivational strategies may be at odds, particularly if the teacher is from a different nationality and not familiar with the host country's educational practices. Unconventional behaviours from foreign teachers may be easily misunderstood, or even perceived as disrespectful and/or defying for local students. However, the growing concern about native English speaking teachers often mismatches the demands for their presence (Moores-Abdool, Yahya, & Unzueta, 2009, p. 2).

Besides culture and previous educational and social experiences, another factor that inevitably influences learners' behaviour is gender. This topic has lately gained much attention, as female students' perceptions, attitudes and motivations may significantly differ from their male peers. As insinuated, from early childhood, females are more likely to acquire soft skills via social interaction, while males' problem-solving and communication skills are more based on independent action and strategical exploration (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, in the crossroads of the

complex paths determining motivation to learn English as a foreign language, students' view on the matter is of key importance.

Komlosi-Ferdinand's (2018, pp. 44–45) previous study on Bulgarian university students' learning style preferences in the four main domains, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, shed light on the (often lack of) clear learning strategies and (lack of) self-awareness of the participants. Although the students' opinions appeared on a very wide range of spectrum, some interesting differences were found between female and male learners' attitudes. The present study expands the same participants' perceptions and preferences on the teachers' nationality, age, gender, teaching and classroom management style. The participants' viewpoints were analysed according their gender, to discover patterns that enhance and maintain motivation in Bulgarian ESL classrooms.

2. Background

2.1 English teaching in Bulgaria

The Republic of Bulgaria is a country situated in south-eastern Europe, in the Balkan peninsula. Since 2007, it has been a member of the European Union. The modern-day Bulgaria is one of the oldest inhabited places in Europe, looking back to a history full of invasions. Greeks, Persians, Slavs and Ottomans left observable cultural and linguistic traces on the present day Bulgarian society. Bulgarian is the only language with official status spoken as a first or second language by almost all Bulgarian nationals. Moreover, according to the 2011 Census, Turkish, Romani and several minor languages and dialects are spoken by the 11 officially recognised ethnic groups. According to the Independent Balkan News Agency (2017), nearly 99 percent of Bulgarian children are learning a foreign language. Amongst the foreign languages studied, the one with most learners is English with 83 percent of the students, followed by Russian, with 17 percent. Moreover, almost 17 percent of these learners are simultaneously studying two or more languages.

2.2 Gender differences in attitudes in ESL classrooms

"Gender plays no significant role in the role in the rate of language learning or acquisition among male and female students...each group is as good or bad as the other. Disparity in performance becomes discernible when an individual or a group puts extra effort which is always needed for academic excellence" (Agu, 2014, p. 77).

The above-mentioned statement offers the author's view exclusively on intellectual capability. However, regardless their ethnic and cultural background, female and male students' world-view, social behaviour, attitudes and motivation may differ in several ways. Even in the 21st century, societal and traditional views and opinions

suggest, if not force to accept, what is appropriate for male and female individuals according to their culture (Kissau, 2006, p. 85). Foreign language classrooms may present a scenario, where abilities traditionally attributed to females, such as social interaction skills, facilitate language acquisition. Additionally, research shows that females' conduct, perspectives and attitudes towards language learning situations differ from male students' (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2007, p. 3). Moreover, gender has a notable effect on the degree and frequency of strategy use. Female students use learning strategies, memory and cognitive and social strategies more often than their male counterparts (Bozinovic & Sindik, 2011, p.11). This view is reinforced by Shakouri, & Saligheh (2012), who declare that females usually score higher at tests based on the material covered during the course. Also, female learners have better developed verbal abilities, start express themselves earlier and use longer and grammatically more accurate sentences. Their spelling and articulation usually develops earlier, and they acquire a richer vocabulary in the earlier phases of foreign language learning compared to male students. However, behavioural and psychological observations on foreign language classroom interactions show that male learners tend to dominate this domain. Unfortunately, this behaviour is sometimes reinforced by educators, by giving male students additional time and attention, allowing them more protagonism than to female learners. Female students, in their turn often display more 'politeness' during class interactions, losing opportunities to sharpen their skills (Shakouri & Saligheh, 2012, p. 4).

Differences in motivation to learn a foreign language were observed among male and female learners. While male students' objectives were mostly practical, such as the prospect of a good job or higher social status, female learners' motivation often focused on intellectual curiosity. Also, attitudes towards foreign language learning showed more positive approach by female students, having greater desire to learn foreign languages, and/or to improve their already existing knowledge (Feery, 2008, p. 38). However, Oxford (1993, p. 75) argues that instead of gender differences being the decisive factor in foreign language learning, there are communication misfits between students and instructors. She argues that whenever teaching style – learning style differences arise among educators and learners of different gender, frustration levels are higher than in a same-gender student-teacher interaction. Moreover, she suggests that for an optimal foreign language learning plan and ideal psychological classroom condition four strategies are needed:

- assessing and familiarising students with their own learning style
- encouraging acceptance of gender-based dissimilarities and emphasising cross gender learning style similitudes
- developing empirical-data based personalised instructional methodologies
- creating comfortable and anxiety-free learning environment to accommodate learning style diversity independently from the students' gender

2.3 Teaching style and learning styles matches and mismatches

Teaching style may be innocently viewed as nothing more than the educator's way of transmitting the material to be learned in the style that characterises his or her personality. Although unquestionably all individuals have some more or less established communication styles, in the field of foreign language education certain teaching strategies are needed to be negotiated. Ideally, teaching styles are flexibly adapted to students' learning styles and needs (Manning, 2007, p. 13, Felder & Henriques, 1995, p. 21). Oxford (1993, pp. 66–67) states that learning styles are not sharply divided into black and white concepts, they rather operate in a continuum. According to her, students may have different personality types, such as extrovert versus introvert, intuitive-random versus sensing-sequential, thinking versus feeling, closure-oriented/judging versus open/perceiving, global/holistic or analytic. Additionally, sensory preferences play an important role in learning. She states that visual, auditory, kinaesthetic (movement-oriented), and/or tactile (touch-oriented) predisposition of learners influences their perceptions and attitudes in the classroom. However, the mix of personality traits, sensory and learning styles preferences may vary from student to student; therefore, no learner should be strictly classified in one category. Considering and respecting the endless combination of learning styles (or the absence of them) may be a tremendous effort for the teacher. This might be a particularly challenging project in the foreign language classroom. Matching all psychological, emotional and intellectual needs between the educator and the students, while teaching a foreign language and its socio-cultural aspects might be an overwhelming task for all parties. However, Shrivastava (2012, pp. 63–64) identifies fifteen teaching approaches that may increase students' motivation and emotional and psychological well-being in the classroom:

- provide positive feedback and reinforce beliefs in the learners' future success
- ensure learning and interacting opportunities according to the students' level
- guide learners to find their learning style and to discover the practical value of the teaching material
- create a positive and welcoming milieu
- promote equality, dignity and self-confidence among students while paying attention to individual needs
- be enthusiastic (a bored or arrogant educator is highly discouraging)
- teach relevant material (irrelevant topics promote boredom and loss of motivation)
- prepare teaching material that is age, culture and language-knowledge appropriate
- involve students in tasks as much as it is culturally acceptable
- build a good rapport with students

- use clear, suitable and concrete examples
- have high, yet reasonable expectations from the learners
- be clear about learning strategies and expectations
- promote learning-autonomy and metacognition
- avoid creating fierce competition that causes anxiety and comparisons among students' capability

2.4 Native vs non-native English teachers

"Our capacity for reflexive thought means that we are able to think about how others see us and who we are... This consciousness of our own identity - our self - is possibly our most important possession" (Maclellan, 2013, p. 2).

In the dawn of the 21st century, an increased international mobility, and thus, contact with people of different background is taking place. Globalisation has an enormous effect on many aspects of social life, educational environments, inter-ethnic attitudes and communication styles. Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh (2006, pp. 17–18) argue that intercultural contact may alter individual or group attitudes toward each other and those changes have further impact on perceptions. Moreover, intercultural contact in itself does not ensure positive attitudes. For the development of positive disposition, three indispensable intergroup conditions must be present between the groups:

- shared common goals
- consciousness of common interests
- institutional encouragement and support for the contact

Chang (2004, p. 1) states that intercultural communication skills and cultural consciousness are vital in foreign language education. These skills enable learners to express themselves appropriately in intercultural settings to observe and internalise adequate communication patterns and to interpret others verbal and non-verbal message. Therefore, socio-linguistic competence is as important as the correct use of grammar and syntax. Also, intercultural awareness enables students to embrace their self-identity, while having a balanced comparison between their and the target language and culture.

In the case of teaching English as a foreign language in non-English-speaking countries, two groups and dilemmas are present. On the one hand, English language teaching institutions heavily rely on the expertise, perfect knowledge of English and naturally acquired socio-cultural competence of native English language teachers. However, there are some emerging concerns about the cultural sensibility, locally suitable teaching style and intercultural communication proficiency of such educators. On the other hand, while native speakers appear to have invincible advantage over their non-native English colleagues, it is acknowledged that non-native English teachers are believed to teach with more efficacy in certain situations and circumstances. This

phenomenon might be due to the accurate knowledge of students' socio-cultural-psychological needs, the correct assessment of the teacher-student power structure in the classroom and the ability to use learners' native language (Medgyes, 2001 pp. 429–430). Furthermore, Kahraman (2012, p. 2) states that native-speakers often display rather strong adherence to their speaking norm, their specific culture and even dialect, while this attitude may have no validity among students who wish to speak the target language as an international communication tool in cross-cultural settings. Also, this behaviour may appear particularly uninviting if students have native-English speakers from a variety of countries (even continents) all expecting their socio-cultural norms to be accepted.

In Xiao's (2006, pp. 2–5) study, Chinese students experienced distress while attending language courses in Ireland. Some of the students reported low motivation and loss of enjoyment during their study because they could not identify the educational value in the local teachers' teaching methods. Learners perceived that teachers spent too much time on games and brainstorming, leaving very little time for 'authentic knowledge acquisition'. Therefore, their methodology seemed ineffective and time consuming. Educators, in their turn, facing the negative feedback, declared that the class was only for very good learners. Native teachers often fail to assume that what is a natural form of communication for them, may not be that obvious to students with different cultural and educational background. Xiao explains that this mismatch may occur because Chinese students are not accustomed to communicative approach, which heavily contrasts with the 'transmission style' widely accepted in China. Chinese students are mostly passive recipients of knowledge, expected to display 'total obedience or submission to their teachers'. Although native teachers are not expected to be educational chameleons, taking into account certain groups' specific needs would considerably enhance successful language learning. As Al Darwish (2018 p. 2) points out, attitudes towards the English language and English-speaking cultures may often cause some friction and anxiety, a mindful and intelligent teacher will be able to reduce tensions and handling this issue with patience, humour and respect. Moreover, native teachers displaying positive attitudes towards the students' own culture are usually better received, accepted and successful in their efforts. This might be of critical importance in establishing the types of strategies to be used in the foreign-language classrooms. It is essential not to underestimate the importance of native teachers' positive attitudes and cultural sensibilities in cases when the country's cultural, religious and/or political view differ from the educator's. Therefore, a wisely chosen language instruction methodology may impact students' attitudes and motivation to develop successful learning strategies, without resentment towards the culture and values represented by the teacher.

3. The study

3.1 Hypotheses

According to the researcher's experience as a teacher and language researcher in several European and Asian countries, students often have preferences about teachers' nationality, age, gender, teaching, and assessment style. In most institutions, the 'unofficial stigma' labelled local teachers as the strict providers of solid grammar knowledge and learning structures in lower levels, while native or foreign teachers were regarded as synonyms of more relaxed teaching styles, more fun and outgoing personality for higher levels. However, observing students' attitudes towards teachers, these suggestions seemed not always to be accurate. The researcher's perception was that students' gender and teachers' personality (regardless nationality) were factors that enhanced or deterred motivation significantly. Therefore, decoding students' preferences and opinions about English language teachers' nationality and teaching style became the key goal. The main hypotheses are:

(1) Most students have no clear preferences about the teachers' nationality

(2) Students' gender plays a crucial role in their perceptions about teaching styles

(3) Students are seriously conditioned by the educators' teaching style

3.2 Methodology

This study surveyed the crucial factors in ESL classrooms on perceptions and motivation. Quantitative research methodology was used. In order to collect data, students participated in a survey by completing a questionnaire. The data were analysed by taking percentages on the students' answers marked on a Likert scale.

3.3 Participating institutions

The study was conducted in two universities in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria. Students from the American University in Bulgaria and South-West University Neofit Rilski volunteered to share their opinions within this survey. Both institutions offer degrees related to English linguistics, have some foreign teachers and lecturers, and organise intensive or year-long English language courses.

3.4 Participating students

In total, 74 students' filled questionnaires were considered valid. Among the subjects, there were 23 male and 51 female students aged between 16 and 57 years old. By nationality, most participants were Bulgarians, but there were also Serbians, Turkish, Albanians, Russians and Macedonians. Convenience sampling method was used to gather the appropriate subjects. Learners attending English-content university courses, and/or intensive or preparatory language courses were the most convenient to select. At least hypothetically, all of them attended lessons voluntarily, motivated to succeed in their respective fields. By the time the research was carried out, most of the participating students were pursuing bachelor or master's degrees related to linguistics. Moreover, some were (additionally) attending English language courses studying in varied language levels (intermediate and advanced), while others were enrolled in specific EAP (English for Academic Purposes) courses or programmes of English for general purposes. The wide age gap among the students was not considered a complication, since some scholars suggest that attitudes start to appear at the age of 10 and are clarified and consolidated during adolescence (Huguet & Llurda, 2001, p. 271). Therefore, the age of the subjects suggested that hypothetically they should have somewhat established opinions on the teachers' attitudes, teaching styles and whether the educators' nationality was a determining factor in the success of foreign language acquisition. Moreover, as Grimm (2004, p. 1) suggests '*generalizations about the whole population can be expanded when more people at different grade levels are studied'*. Before the questionnaires were distributed in the classroom, all participants learned the purpose of this study and the research objectives were made clear. The opportunity to participate or withdraw at any moment was guaranteed to all students.
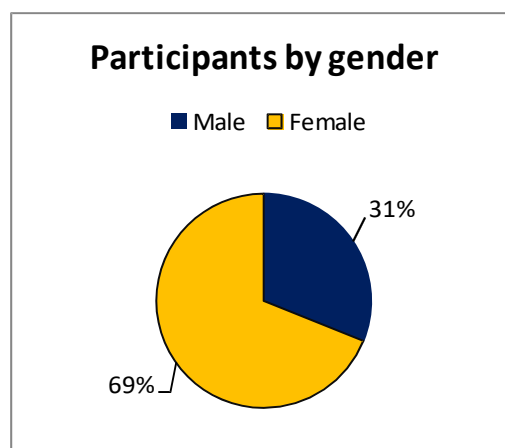
Figure 1. Participants by gender

The proportion of the genders in this study reflects in general the average percentage of male and female students attending university courses and specific English language courses in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria (see Figure 1).

3.5 The data collection instrument

The data were collected by a self-completed questionnaire developed by the researcher especially for this study. The selected quantitative research method aimed to obtain self-report data from the participants with the purpose of describing existing conditions or identifying points of reference to be used for comparing conditions or establishing the connection between specific events (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012, p. 74). The design of the questionnaire included some closed-ended questions and, in some other questions the answers had to be marked on a five-point Likert-scale (from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree).

Although the survey was carried out in Bulgaria, the questionnaire was created, written and completed by the participants in English. This is due to two main reasons: 1) all participants were fluent English speakers, and 2) as specified above, not all participants understood Bulgarian. However, before administering the instrument, the students' comprehension on the wording and on the meaning of the questions was verified. Moreover, at any time, participants could ask, clarify and have translated the meaning of some particular words, expressions or questions within the questionnaire.

3.6 Procedure

A pilot study was conducted to assure the scientific validity and clarity of the questionnaire. Two Bulgarian and two foreign researchers on education and linguistics cooperated in the assessment of the final version of the questionnaire. They were asked to provide advice on the clarity, wording and content of all items. Moreover, a group of six students contributed with their opinion on the questionnaire. Having included some suggestions in the final version, paper-based questionnaires were administered to the participants by the teachers working in the respective institutions. All students were promptly informed by their English teachers about the nature and goal of the research. Moreover, all participants were instructed that no monetary compensation or better grades were offered as a recompense for participating. Students were also notified about the anonymous nature of the questionnaire and that their names would not appear in any article, study or statistics. Moreover, a short paragraph in the beginning of the questionnaire informed students about their rights to withdraw at any moment.

The filling of the questionnaire took place in the classroom at the universities. Upon request, no questions were discussed aloud, and a respectful attitude could be observed. The distribution of the questionnaire took place in May 2016, considering this date ideal, since students were not over-stressed or too busy with their final exams.

The answers to the questions were marked on five-point Likert scale, from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Two main categories according to gender were separated, and percentages were taken for each group/question.

4. Results

The data collected via the questionnaire was analysed with the intention to shed light on students' perceptions, prejudice, and attitudes towards English language teachers in a non-English speaking country. The study emphasised possible variations in opinions according to the gender of the participants, the teachers' assessment and teaching style and whether the nationality of the teacher influenced learners' motivation to learn English.

4.1 Preferences on native versus local teachers

The students' answers suggest that they strongly prefer teachers who use English only in the classroom regardless whether the teacher is local or an English-native speaker (Q.1 & 2). However, male students expressed that local teachers who use only the students' native language such as Bulgarian, in the classroom were not welcome, while female students had more neutral views on this regard (Q.3). Finally, both genders agreed against local teachers using the local language during English class (Q.4), see Table 1.

Table 1. English teachers' nationality and language use in the classroom (percentages)

Native versus non-native teachers	MALE			FEMALE		
I PREFER TEACHERS WHO ARE…	[Strongly] Agree	Neutral	[Strongly] Disagree	[Strongly] Agree	Neutral	[Strongly] Disagree
1) foreigners who use English only in the classroom	70	22	8	77	19	4
2) Bulgarians who use English only in the classroom	70	26	4	71	23	6
3) Bulgarians who use English and some Bulgarian in the classroom	30	39	31	50	19	31
4) Bulgarians who use Bulgarian only in the classroom	4	17	79	8	21	71

4.2 Teachers' age and gender

Between 42 and 48 percent of both, male and female students agreed they prefer younger teachers, although many expressed neutral view about the teachers' age as well (Q. 5). However, 37 percent of the female students were less pleased learning from older educators (Q. 6). The teachers' gender apparently provoked similar perceptions among both male and female students, both groups wanting the opposite sex teaching them English (Q. 7), see Table 2.

Table 2. Preferences for English teachers' age and gender (percentages)

Teachers' age and gender	MALE			FEMALE		
I PREFER TEACHERS WHO ARE…	**[Strongly] Agree**	**Neutral**	**[Strongly] Disagree**	**[Strongly] Agree**	**Neutral**	**[Strongly] Disagree**
5) younger	48	43	9	42	31	27
6) older	22	52	26	23	40	37
7) of my own gender (male/female)	9	35	56	19	23	58

4.3 Teaching style and feedback preferences

Perceptions on strict teachers varied. Male students declared to dislike them by 66 percent, while female students showed rather divided opinions (Q. 8). However, both genders highly preferred teachers teaching in a relaxed, communicative way (Q. 9). More than the half of the male students favoured teachers giving much time to complete tasks, while female learners' opinions were divided among positive and neutral on this matter (Q. 10). However, 58 percent of the female students found beneficial the material to be repeated several times by the teacher, while this aspect was not so much important for male learners (Q.11). Both, male and female students strongly favoured teachers who would consider their opinion during class, although female students showed slightly less interest on this topic (Q.12). Almost half of the female learners favoured teachers allowing them to display their work in front of others, while male students' opinions were moving mostly on the neutral and positive end of the spectrum (Q.13). Unanimously, both genders preferred teachers who would allow them to make interesting presentations for English class (Q.14), see Table 3.

Table 3. English teachers' teaching style and attitudes (percentages)

Teaching style	MALE			FEMALE		
I PREFER TEACHERS WHO …	[Strongly] Agree	Neutral	[Strongly] Disagree	[Strongly] Agree	Neutral	[Strongly] Disagree
8) teach in a strict atmosphere	17	17	66	29	33	38
9) teach in a relaxed, communicative way	74	13	13	65	25	10
10) give much time to complete my tasks	56	26	18	43	40	17
11) repeat the material several times	43	30	27	58	33	9
12) consider my opinion during the lessons	70	30	0	63	26	11
13) allow me to share or display my work for others in class	39	43	18	46	40	14
14) let students make interesting presentations	61	30	9	60	25	15

Upon difficulty to understand the material taught, only half of the male learners declared that would ask the teacher during the lesson and 63 percent of the female students would use the same approach (Q.15). However, asking the teacher in private was not a favoured method by either of the gender groups (Q.16). About asking for clarification from other students, male students expressed neutral to negative opinions, while female learners were much more positive about it (Q.17). Viewpoints on asking a private teacher who will explain the difficult material in private were highly unpopular among both genders (Q.18). Finding answers on the Internet divided male students' opinions, but female learners viewed this approach as mostly positive and neutral (Q.19). Very diverse opinions were expressed on memorising rules as a tool to learn the language. Male students' attitudes moved mostly from neutral to negative, while females' from neutral to positive (Q.20), see Table 4

Table 4. Students' attitudes towards language acquisition and language-related problem solving (percentages)

Learning feedback	MALE			FEMALE		
IF I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE MATERIAL I PREFER…	**[Strongly] Agree**	**Neutral**	**[Strongly] Disagree**	**[Strongly] Agree**	**Neutral**	**[Strongly] Disagree**
15) to ask from the teacher during the lesson	52	38	10	63	27	10
16) to ask from the teacher in private	23	48	29	25	46	29
17) to ask from another student	19	57	24	43	34	23
18) to ask from a private teacher who will explain it in Bulgarian	0	17	83	8	20	72
19) to find the answers on the Internet	38	24	38	48	46	6
20) to memorise the rules	19	43	38	42	42	16

Being corrected immediately, during the activity was viewed as a positive approach by a little bit less than the half of the male students, while female learners expressed much more favourable opinions on this regard by 75 percent (Q.21). Male students agreed slightly more on being corrected at the end of the task, while female learners' viewpoints very divided (Q.22). Being corrected at the end of the lesson, was a subject of division among male learners, while female students were not so favourable about this procedure (Q.23). Finally, half of both gender groups rather disliked being corrected by other students, yet some positive and neutral viewpoints were expressed as well (Q.24), see Table 5.

Table 5. Students' preferences towards how to be corrected (percentages)

Learning feedback	MALE			FEMALE		
WHEN YOU SPEAK, DO YOU WANT TO BE CORRECTED/ HELPED…	[Strongly] Agree	Neutral	[Strongly] Disagree	[Strongly] Agree	Neutral	[Strongly] Disagree
21) immediately during the activity?	48	26	26	75	18	7
22) later, at the end of the activity?	52	35	13	39	20	41
23) at the end of the lesson, in private?	43	13	44	27	12	61
24) by other students?	22	22	56	25	29	46

4.4 Assessment preferences

Considerable differences could be observed among male and female students regarding satisfaction of being their work graded by the teachers. Male students expressed mostly neutral views, while female learners favoured by 65 percent the idea of grades representing the value of their work (Q.25). However, opinions were unanimously more positive on encouraging and supportive oral feedback (Q.26). Positive viewpoints skyrocketed (particularly among male students) when increased self-confidence and more refined language knowledge improved their communication skills in situations that were perceived as challenging before (Q.27), see Table 6.

Table 6. Students' perception on improvement evaluation tools (percentages)

Learners' assessment preferences	MALE			FEMALE		
DO YOU GET A SENSE OF SATISFACTION FROM…	[Strongly] Agree	Neutral	[Strongly] Disagree	[Strongly] Agree	Neutral	[Strongly] Disagree
25) having your work graded?	26	48	26	65	31	4
26) being told that you have made progress?	70	30	0	73	18	9
27) feeling more confident in situations that you found difficult before?	87	13	0	73	24	3

When inquired about how students like to find out whether their English is improving, half of the male students and 64 percent of the female learners favoured the traditional test-based methodology (Q.28). However, both gender groups highly agreed that using the language in real life scenarios was the best feedback system to prove real language development (Q.29). Yet, half of both male and female students stated that the marks they get mirrors accurately their advancement in learning English as well (Q.30), see Table 7.

Table 7. Students' assessment preferences (percentages)

Learners' assessment preferences	MALE			FEMALE		
HOW DO YOU LIKE TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOUR ENGLISH IS IMPROVING? BY...	**[Strongly] Agree**	**Neutral**	**[Strongly] Disagree**	**[Strongly] Agree**	**Neutral**	**[Strongly] Disagree**
28) written tasks set by the teacher	50	38	12	64	24	12
29) seeing if you can use the language you have learnt in real-life situations	87	13	0	84	10	6
30) the marks you get	48	26	26	53	37	10

5. Discussion

The data, in percentages, were analysed according to preferences on native versus local teachers, teachers' age and gender, teaching style and feedback and assessment preferences. Students' differences in perception according to their gender were a key factor in the examination of the results. The findings obtained from this research indicate that perceptions and attitudes among male and female students varied in certain educational aspects. It would be impossible – and discriminatory to describe or almost to 'design' a perfect teacher based on these results. Viewpoints among the representatives of each gender-group showed divergence in opinions in many questions. However, some conclusions can be drawn.

In students' opinions having a local or a native English-speaking teacher was not the most determining factor in the success of English language acquisition. Educators' preparedness and ability to clearly and understandably transmit the educational material in English was considerably more important than his/her nationality. These results mostly confirm the first hypothesis presented in this paper. Also, the age of the teacher was not perceived as a particular nuance, yet younger teachers were slightly preferred. The fact that half of both male and female students favoured teachers of the opposite

sex may suggest two very different facts. On the one hand, it may be perceived that students attribute the same teaching quality to younger educators that to older ones with the additional benefit of younger teachers having more 'modern' teaching and classroom management style. On the other hand, reasons may include simply aesthetic convenience and more flexibility in attitudes.

The second hypothesis drew attention to the possible gender differences in perceptions and attitudes. Female students' answers generally suggested some insecurity and need for reassurance in different areas. Although they preferred teachers with a relaxed teaching-style, educators with strict teaching styles were not noticeably unfavoured. Also, female students showed considerable wish for opportunities to exhibit their work, to have enough time to complete their tasks, to have continuous oral and written feedback and encouragement from the teacher. Moreover, perfectionism, detail-orientedness, willingness to do research and to discuss and ask advice from fellow students demonstrate female learners' consciousness and eagerness to succeed in learning English well and to use it not only in classroom-settings. These findings fit very well with previous data, suggesting that females' socially-mindedness has great impact on their classroom attitude and behaviour.

Male students' attitudes and preferences in this study give credit to earlier research results as well. Their responses portray an intriguing picture. According to the data, most male students preferred not to ask for clarification and not to engage in research about concepts that were difficult to understand during the lesson. Also, male learners displayed much more self-confidence and faith in their abilities to comprehend concepts later as part of the bigger picture. Their preference for empirical evidence of being able to use English in real-life settings suggests mostly a practical approach towards language acquisition. Therefore, not too strict teachers and mostly oral feedback seems a highly favoured combination for them.

The third hypothesis suggested that students are seriously conditioned by the educators' teaching style. This was only partly confirmed based on the findings. The amount of neutral answers formulated in the questionnaire may insinuate that students rather conform and try to adapt to the options given by the institutions. However, these behaviours do not suggest that taking students' preferences into account, much higher amount of motivation and positive classroom attitudes could be achieved. Generally, students attend English lessons with the goal of acquiring it well for a specific purpose, either being it for social, integrative, academic or for intellectual curiosity. Therefore, in most cases, the initial wish and impetus exists, and it depends much on the educators' (cultural) sensitivity, consciousness about gender differences in attitudes and a proper social-psychological approach to achieve the maximum success in the classroom.

6. Conclusion

Conclusions based on the results are mostly unambiguous. The findings suggest that gender-related variations in perceptions and attitudes are relevant in some aspects among university students in Eastern Europe. These findings' impact and relatedness may be transferable to other students' experiences in other regions and cultures as well, since gender-based behavioural differences exist worldwide. As results reveal, male students display more self-confidence, less dependence on the educator and preference for a relaxed style teacher-student rapport. However, female learners need continuous reassurance, positive feedback and language-learning strategies embedded in a social-communicative context. Moreover, as both gender groups declared, the nationality of the teachers is not seen as a determining success-factor for learning English as a second/foreign language. It would be nearly impossible to design new language-teaching policies to accommodate the needs of every student in the classroom. Ethnic, cultural, psychological-behavioural and gender differences make every student a unique mixture of traits and teachers have no super-powers to accommodate all emerging needs in the classroom. However, implications of the current study for language-pedagogy are that in language-teacher training institutions much emphasis should be given to gender-differences in motivating students. Language instructors should aim to be flexible, yet challenging and thought-provoking in structuring the lesson while considering the teaching strategies that have more effect on a specific gender-group. Also, a careful balance is needed when using gender-specific encouragement, in order to not to promote competition among the groups that may be particularly harmful for female learners' self-confidence. Moreover, institutions should not promote the idea of native English-speaking teachers being necessarily superior in all ways, but to instruct such teachers how to succeed in their teaching according to locally acceptable perspectives. Healthy, respectful and positive attitudes and reciprocal motivation in the classroom are contagious and much needed. Every teacher desires to see enthusiastic and devoted students in the classrooms. Therefore, to promote and nurture a stimulating and encouraging language learning environment, teachers should understand and acknowledge students' specific needs and beliefs about language learning and preferred teaching strategies. Although this study offers readers with practical data, the limitations are not to be overlooked. It would be beneficial to investigate teachers' viewpoints on possible strategies that students favour, yet their execution is not successful. Student-teacher motivation dynamics and gender-based bias towards students are to be studied as well.

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PAPER IV

NEW LANGUAGE-NEW EMOTIONS? THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE WHILE LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN MONGOLIA

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Abstract

English language learning in culturally isolated monolingual regions has very specific challenges. As foreign language learning does not necessarily happen with integrative motivation, thus not having a target culture to be taken as an example for cultural elements and thought-processing role model may challenge learners of the language. Nevertheless, a non-culture specific foreign language related emotional intelligence is needed in order to convey thoughts and attitudes properly. Twenty-three Mongolian university level English language learners were asked about their motivation to learn English and its relatedness to emotional intelligence. The results indicate that Mongolian students learn mostly grammar and have very limited access to foreigners to practice their skills. Although most Mongolian learners never heard of emotional intelligence, they displayed substantial adaptability and extreme flexibility about the nature of their motivation in order to communicate successfully and/or to adapt to varying circumstances. Moderate body-language mirroring was suggested as a first step to create a natural and relaxed atmosphere while interacting with individuals with different cultures, detecting the most convenient paths to display emotional intelligence.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, motivation, ESL, Mongolia, body-language mirroring*

Introduction

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift." Albert Einstein, quoted in Sparrow and Knight (2006, 199).

The present paper attempts to investigate the relevance of teaching foreign-language specific emotional intelligence among Mongolian learners of English language at the university level. There is an existing concern in most foreign language learning institutions regarding the amount of cultural and psychological content of the curricula. Nowadays, motivation to learn English is not necessarily of integrative nature. Individuals all around the world learn the English language not exclusively to immigrate to English-speaking countries, but to attend business meetings, using English for further studies and research, or simply as a communication tool while travelling or socializing on the Internet. English has become a language of communication among different communities worldwide. Therefore, cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication skills are ever harder to adapt given the immense cultural variety of its speakers (Mahboob, 2018). Moreover, the peril of teaching English from integrative perspective may seriously bias learning success. Individuals may perceive a direct threat to their socio-cultural identity if presented with unnecessary and forced integrative elements during language acquisition or the selected culture taught does not coincide with the one targeted by the learners (Wimolmas, 2012). Nevertheless, a specific form of intercultural intelligence is required in order to avoid misunderstandings based on the individuals' culture-shaped communication style (Sparrow & Knight, 2006). As emotional intelligence has a very

strong cultural component, learners often experience difficulty while trying to communicate in the foreign language yet using culture-specific elements of emotional intelligence of their own culture backgrounds (Brown 2007; Huynh, Oakes & Grossman, 2018; Dewaele, Petrides & Furnham, 2008).

Language teaching in Mongolia

Mongolia can be considered one of the most physically and culturally isolated countries in the world. While Mongolia is located between two giants, Russia and China, the capital Ulaanbaatar is a rather isolated capital surrounded by the Gobi Desert. The two closest big cities are Ulan-Ude (600 km from Ulaanbaatar) in Russia and Beijing (1170 km from Ulaanbaatar) in China. These distances are significant, meaning that Mongolian people have rather limited contact with foreign cultures and languages. Moreover, there are very few foreigners in Mongolia, most of them being executives, workers of the mining industry (isolated in the smaller villages or mining camps) and international teachers working and living near the international schools, mostly located on the richest part of the city. English language learners in Mongolia very rarely have the opportunity to talk to these individuals in order to observe foreign (language related) behaviours and communication styles. In Mongolia, language teaching and learning mostly focuses on grammar acquisition, writing exercises and memorizing rules. Nevertheless, once a certain level of fluency is obtained, students heavily rely on the emotional and cultural structure of their own language, causing a myriad of misunderstandings in real life conversations. As politeness, courtesy words and intercultural awareness and sensitivity has culture-specific definitions in Mongolian language and culture, learners of English often face difficulties while trying to express their wishes, needs and emotions in the target language.

In fact, a key component in learning a new language should be related to develop the ability to correctly transmit thoughts and to understand the other party's intended message correctly as well (Zarezadeh, 2013; Spirovska-Tevdovska, 2017). This practice, however, may cause considerable distress among people from different cultures if a language-specific emotional intelligence is not developed along the language acquisition process. To deal with this phenomenon might require a tremendous effort in certain civilizations, as behaviours and emotions attached to them may be considered of a completely different nature in other languages (Ghanadi & Ketabi, 2014). Therefore, the advantages of teaching new components of emotional intelligence alongside the usual foreign language learning strategies may enhance students' motivation, psychological well-being and self confidence in the learning process, as well as to become increasingly competent in a variety of multicultural-social setting (Montgomery, McCrimmon, Climie, & Ward, 2018; Brackett, Mayer & Warner, 2004).

Review of emotional intelligence in education

Emotional intelligence was first defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), yet widely popularized by Daniel Goleman in several books and articles (2001 & 2006). Brackett *et al.* (2004) define emotional intelligence as the capability to recognize, comprehend and conscientiously express emotions, to employ emotions as a thought-facilitating tool and to use it for emotional development a maturation. Gershon and Pellitteri (2018) link the proper development of emotional intelligence and educational success from very early ages, as emotional comprehension and emotional control and mastery are indispensable for the individual's growth, educational accommodation and productivity. Similarly, Cefai and Cooper (2009) point out that, besides acquiring the necessary academic competences at school, young people need proper emotional education in order to be able to function as self-

determining, socially wise and responsible individuals. According to them, the parallel development of academic and socio-emotional competence is strongly symbiotic nurturing and completing the learners' full intellectual and emotional development. Moreover, this educational perspective has benefits in the wider societal scale, such as derived by individuals with broadened and enhanced tolerance, cooperation, cohesion and resilience. Allowing learners to reveal and analyse their own thoughts and opinions empowers them to comprehend their own thinking and learning processes and to gain insight on how to regulate and improve them. Thus, a critical examination of the emotional conditions, behaviours and their influence on the individual's environment promotes the development of positive coping and fostering strategies in learning environments (Cefai & Cooper, 2009; Cefai, 2008).

Devis-Rozental (2018) reinforces this idea by stating that investigating paths to assist learners in developing and nurturing socio-emotional intelligence increases success in educational domains. In fact, Lucas and Claxton (2010) argues that intelligences of any type can be acquired. They isolate eight intelligence-related factors:

- Compositeness: heterogeneity among the components required to be intelligent
- Expandability: intelligence can be increased
- Practicality: individuals may apply for different purposes in different situations)
- Intuitiveness: recognizing, analysing and applying concepts previously (voluntarily or involuntarily) learned in new situations
- Distribution: intelligences may be used to serve different purposes
- Social: empowering individuals to learn from a variety of social events, behaviours and circumstances
- Strategic: deliberately applying conscious actions in order to arrive to the desired results
- Ethical: using the ability to consider the moral implications and possible of certain actions

Therefore, if intelligence can be cultivated and enriched, there is an urging responsibility for educators to teach concepts, strategies and autonomy to acquire and maintain such skills. Teachers should understand, validate and guide learners' emotional development throughout the learning process, while helping them to analyse the correlations between metacognition and emotions and to develop intrinsic motivation and emotional resilience (Cefai, 2008; Baklashova, Galishnikova & Khafizova, 2016; Hast, 2014). Moreover, educational programmes and professionals need to consider the correct adaptation of their methodology and material to the linguistic and socio-cultural background of the learners (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014), while displaying empathy and emotional self-awareness themselves (Boyatzis, 2006; Vesely-Maillefer & Saklofske, 2018; Philipsen, Tondeur, Pynoo, Vanslambrouck & Zhu, 2019). Nevertheless, as foreign-language learning rarely occurs in a vacuum, and the ultimate goal is developing proper communication skills, the application of emotional intelligence in group dynamics or social settings needs to be considered (Parker, Taylor, Keefer & Summerfeld, 2018).

In order to direct and organize successful and productive group interaction, the role of emotions in each group needs to be comprehended. Individuals may display and act on different emotions while being alone as opposed to function in group settings. While emotional intelligence is an individual resource and interactions produce immense variety of emotional reactions in emerging situations, the ability of the individual and the group to master emotions may have direct effect on the outcome's success. Thus, group emotional intelligence may be described as the capacity of developing appropriate strategies to direct

emotional processes as to stimulate and promote confidence, while maintaining identity, value and effectiveness (Jordan & Askhanasy, 2006; Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Elfenbein, 2006). Emotional intelligence also encompasses social responsibility, which is in increasing demand nowadays as illustrated by the comments of a rabbi following a presentation on emotional intelligence: *"Cognitive intelligence is amoral. Anyone can have a high IQ; it's a matter of luck. Murderers, criminals and Nazis could have all had high IQs. But by their deeds, they could not have had high EQs. Thus, EQ involves morality. I like that"* (Stein & Book, 2006).

Intercultural communication competence

Increasing migration and the expanding global mindset that individuals are encouraged to accommodate both in their working and private life requires very specific communications skills. The concept of intercultural communication competence is offered to resolve this complex phenomenon. Sándorová (2016) defines intercultural communicative competence as the capability to interconnect with individuals from different countries in a foreign language, this competence hypothetically includes the explicit knowledge of cultural elements and the consciousness of established values of that culture and language. However, this statement lacks to consider an important factor, namely, that individuals learning English as a foreign language with no integrative purposes may be reluctant to amass culture related information while their communication-target may be originated from a variety of backgrounds. Moreover, comprehension of complex intercultural factors and the skills to intelligently and successfully navigate between their domains is not a natural skill but has to be acquired via conscious and effortful instruction (Liu, Volčič & Gallois, 2015).

Motivation

Brown (2007) states, that from a behaviouristic perspective, motivation is the prediction and expectation of a reward and that individuals acts consistently to achieve further compensation based on previous experiences of reward for behaviour. Accurately applying the dynamics of the individual's learning stages is a key characteristic in nurturing to success the individual's motivation. However, as individuals vary in personality, cultural background, goals and attitudes, motivation may differ in definition, nature and beliefs (Parker, Taylor, Keefer & Summerfeldt, 2018; Oz, Demirezen & Pourfeiz, 2015). Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh (2006) collect two dimensions of motivation:

- *Integrative motivation*: The learner's goal to learn a foreign language is ultimately to become part of a foreign culture via acquiring the target language spoken by the individuals constituting that group
- *Instrumental motivation*: Engaging in language learning urged by external forces, such as a reward offered, parental request/pressure or as a specific requirement from the employer
- Deci and Ryan (1985) approach motivation from a different perspective:
- *Intrinsic motivation*: The individual's internal inspiration, stimulus and impetus that act as a driving force to achieve a goal
- *Extrinsic motivation*: As opposed to intrinsic factors, the individual's incentive is driven by external forces, like compulsory demands from various domains

McClelland (1987) adds a motivational dimension that seems to decode the attitudes of top-achiever individuals:

- *Achievement motivation:* Learners do not have integrative motives nor are required to learn a foreign language. The apparent reason behind their endurance and grit is to be

'better' than the rest, securing the first place for themselves in a real or self-challenge competition

In fact, it is not necessary to isolate and focus on only one type of motivation in foreign language learning. Motivations may coincide, overlap or even fluctuate in intensity over time (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). Brown (2007) draws attention to the importance of *ambiguity tolerance*, stating that the more an individual displays cognitive flexibility to accept and tolerate believes, social and language structures differing from his/her own, the easier becomes to develop and use appropriate behavioural and communication skills in a foreign language (Stein & Book, 2006). Therefore, identifying learners' motivation will enable educators (or the learners themselves) to develop relevant foreign language related emotional intelligence strategies, while giving a direction in incorporating emotions to facilitate thought (Fiori & Vesely-Maillefer 2018; McKee, 2018).

The present study attempts to investigate four questions based on Mongolian learners' perceptions and practices on English language acquisition, the nature of their motivation and the implementation of emotional-intelligence related elements in communicating in a foreign language.

The first one, '*Do English L2 learners perceive English to be a simple communication facilitating code or are they conscious about the psychological-emotional complexity of interacting in a foreign language?*', attempts to decipher learners' viewpoints on whether the English language can be used as a simple tool detached from its cultural and international context and diversity in expressing politeness and emotions. The determination of this factor may help to develop better communication strategies where both parties' needs are met without abandoning their cultural identities yet transmitting the intended message.

The second item directs attention on whether '*Students receive training on the socio-cultural-behavioural aspects of foreign language use*'. Analysing the current English language teaching scenario in Mongolia may unveil strategies (or the lack of them) which place foreign language learning and use in a proper context. This may emphasise the importance of learners not to rely exclusively on grammar acquisition, but on the comprehension of unwritten behavioural codes and appropriate ways to express concepts proper to every language.

The third research question, '*Are English learners conscious about the concept of emotional intelligence and its language and culture related variances?*', may allow picturing factors that enhance and/or prevent learners to develop communication skills and appropriate behaviours. In fact, this is of key importance in order to avoid misunderstandings in verbal, emotional and body-language expressions that may lead to failure in a variety of areas such as business, studies or interpersonal relationships.

Finally, analysing the question '*Does learning English have necessarily integrative components?*' may impact on educational policies forcing English learners to become familiar with a specific English-speaking country's culture. Considering individuals' varying needs in this field may allow designing a variety of goal/profession-oriented teaching strategies, while not overwhelming learners with details irrelevant for their purposes.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews prepared by the researcher were selected as a tool in order to conduct a survey among 23 adult Mongolian English language learners, three male and 21 female students. This proportion reflects the rate of local students enrolled foreign language

learning in the National University of Mongolia. All participants were Mongolian nationals, actively studying English at university level aged between 20 and 45 years. Moreover, some individuals were multilingual, speaking three or more languages, which was considered particularly beneficial for the research in order to perceive how emotional intelligence may be used in multicultural settings. All participants were informed about the nature of this study, their anonymity and their right to withdraw anytime as their involvement happened on a voluntary basis. Although the interviews were conducted in English, the participants had an interpreter as well in case of having difficulties. The ultimate design of the interview comprised ten questions, to which narrative analysis was applied.

Non-probability purpose sampling was used to select the participants meeting the criteria of having been studying English at university level at least three years with the intention to use it extensively on a daily basis. The interviews occurred in diverse locations during February 2019 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Results

Mongolian English language students expressed their views without hesitation. Seventy-eight percent of the learners were absolutely convinced of the hypothesis that people of all nations display similar behaviours and act very similarly in social and cultural situations, while the rest strongly believed the opposite (Question 1). In concordance with these views, 61 percent of them believed that there was no reason to change their Mongolian-culture based communication style while talking to foreigners in English (Question 2). This behaviour contrasted the statements of 52 percent of the participants who acknowledged that speakers of other languages may display considerably different comportment from that of the Mongolians (Question 3). Moreover, 62 percent perceived that foreigners often display unexpected behaviours (Question 4). However, according to only nine percent of the learners, it was realistic to move and settle in another country speaking only English (they did not mean English speaking countries), while the great majority dismissed this behaviour on the long term (Question 5). Fifty-seven percent of the learners declared to be learning English only as a tool for further studies, work or international communication (Question 6), while 30 percent had clearly integrative motivation, eventually hoping to move to English speaking countries. However, about 30 percent of the participants stated, that the aim of their learning included both instrumental and integrative motivation, according to the opportunities which may be available (Question 7). Finally, all except one student (with a background at an international university) declared that they had received instruction exclusively on English grammar, but never about the psychological and cultural aspects of language learning (Question 8). See Table I.

Discussion

The answers gathered during the interviews show considerable disagreement among the learners. Apparently, well-established opinions were expressed without displaying neutral attitudes in general, while a great amount of tolerance towards culture-related aspects of learning English was exhibited.

English language – a culturally and psychologically complex phenomenon

This section aims to answer the first research question, namely '*Do English L2 learners perceive English to be a simple communication facilitating code, or they are conscious about the psychological-emotional complexity of interacting in a foreign language?*'. Mongolian

learners expressed beliefs in having considerable and observable differences between speakers of different languages. Moreover, they also noticed that culture greatly defined individuals' forms of expressions and behaviours. They confessed not understanding foreign people's behaviour completely and all the time. As one student expressed, '*I think different culture and language let people experience different emotions and behaviour in the same situation. Since the special features of each language influence the way of thinking and feelings of the language-using group (or cultural group), people with different cultural backgrounds possibly feel and behave in a different way*'. However, it is important to mention that much of the information they had access to was available from the Internet, particularly following famous people on social media. Therefore, interaction with foreign people was mostly one sided and executed online, while real communication was very rarely (if ever) experienced, which somewhat biases their perception on this matter. This was also supported by the fact, that only two out of 23 students had travelled to any English-speaking country. They confessed that this supposed an intensive cultural shock and that, although already knowing English, they had had immense difficulties to decipher foreign individuals' thinking process and communicational-behavioural strategies. Yet, unanimously all students declared that '*foreigners have the right to behave as they want to, and we Mongolians do not get offended because we understand their circumstances*'. Although this statement is very generous, it somewhat lacks reality, since most students confessed to have met foreigners only '*very few times in their lives and they did not engage in conversation with them*'. Therefore, most learners had never experienced the possibility to practice their knowledge and to explore foreign language related emotional intelligence in action. Nevertheless, many of the participants sensed the importance of modifying their communication style with speakers of different languages. As a matter of fact, most of them stated that they would be prone to change their behaviour and communication approach in order to be more easily understood. As a multilingual student stated, '*I feel I have to say more straightforward things when I speak with English speakers. Besides, I try more to keep my eye contact with the speaker than when I speak with Koreans or Mongolians*'. Finally, the overall responses to the first research question reflected a very practical approach, most of them declaring that while learning English, the language was simply a dry code (beyond their ability to change this situation), yet they were open and eager to experience and learn the psychological and emotional depths of English, since a language was considered a 'living organism'.

Learning the social, cultural and thought-processing aspects of English language in Mongolia

The second research question aimed to investigate whether '*Students receive training on the socio-cultural-behavioural aspects of foreign language use*'. Unfortunately, only one student has received a '*very minimal training*' on the social and cultural aspects of the English language. The rest of the learners, being in their third year of BA or second year of MA apparently had never received such instruction at all. As explained by them, the Mongolian education system prefers to emphasize the correct use of grammar with the overabundance of written exercises and a limited number of oral assignments such as presentations. The rationality behind this is not wasting valuable time, since allegedly once learners acquire a perfect command of English grammar, they will have time to learn additional cultural elements, and language-related values and forms of expressions.

English learners' consciousness on of emotional intelligence and its language and culture related implications

The third research question sought to unveil whether '*English learners are conscious about the concept of emotional intelligence and its language and culture related variances*'. Emotional intelligence, as a term was completely unknown to the learners. Upon explanation offered, they acknowledged the importance of foreigners understanding Mongolian cultural values expressed through language and behaviour. In addition, they declared planning to do the same if moving abroad. At least half of the participants stated, that displaying inappropriate behaviours with speakers of other languages is sign of lack of intelligence. Thus, the concept emotional intelligence emerged as not completely unknown, at least in the subconscious level. However, as mentioned by them, most '*Mongolians rarely meet foreigners and inter-cultural communication is often stigmatised either by fear or contempt towards the surrounding cultures*'. Therefore, a conscious effort is needed to understand and to learn about the depth of how emotional intelligence may conquer such obstacles. Nevertheless, a thought-provoking dilemma was pointed out by the participants. Their concern was logical and practical, enquiring about further possibilities on how to develop foreign language related emotional intelligence without formal instruction while being culturally isolated to a great extent. This disquietude seemed well founded. Nowadays, English is learned in a considerable number of mono-cultural countries facing similar obstacles. Often speakers from other countries assume that a reasonably good knowledge of English grammar is automatically accompanied by foreign language related emotional intelligence, polished communication skills and accurate thoughts processing. However, this not always being the case, communication success may, at times, be seriously biased.

Learning English for integration?

The fourth research question intended to reveal whether '*learning English has necessarily integrative components*'. Most learners did not proclaim to learn English with the purpose of moving to and settling down in an English-speaking country. Nevertheless, although much of Mongolia's population already resides in the capital or in larger towns, the nomadic mentality has still a very strong prevalence among locals. Many declared that '*I am learning English because I like it, because I may/will need it for my work, but if I decide to move to another country, I will just learn its culture*'. Another participant stated, '*I do not really care about whether I am taught cultural elements, or behavioural content of English, the important thing is to learn it*'. Also, many learners stated that it was very much possible not to learn a specific culture attached to the English language in case you were not exposed to that culture continually but using English in a variety of settings with different individuals (e.g. businessman). However, they consider unimaginable for an individual to behave the same way after spending a considerable amount of time in a host country (e.g. students). Finally, most learners perceived English as a simple tool of communication, without much importance on polishing their communication skills at this moment of their lives. Nevertheless, learners again and again expressed their serious intentions to get adapted to new situations as soon as they may be exposed to them, either in the form of adjust to a new society or to modify their communication strategies in multicultural or multilingual circles (Zarafshan & Ardeshiri, 2012).

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence emerged as a completely new concept for Mongolian learners of English. The participants however, acknowledged its importance and exhibited wish to learn more about it and practice it. In fact, based on the opinions expressed, it seems that Mongolian students' natural tolerance and intention to adapt to their surroundings in a variety of circumstances presents an excellent fundament to construct solid foreign language related

emotional intelligence. Thus, the results suggest that their natural inclinations may be easily activated by the appropriate strategies and high levels of emotional intelligence may be achieved. Opinions on the nature of their motivation to learn languages were very flexible, most of the learners admitting that their initial motivation may easily evolve into another or multiple number of diverse motivations. This adapting motivation operation, in turn, apparently stimulated them to develop the necessary communication skills and emotional intelligence related to English language (Di Fabio & Kenny 2011). Therefore, it seems that in the case of Mongolian learners, the accumulative effects of motivation were positively related to developing and/or nurturing emotional intelligence (Abraham, 2004; Di Fabio & Blustein, 2010).

Learners displayed concern that, due to the lack of opportunities to interact with foreigners in order to practice communication strategies and to develop emotional intelligence related to English, their lack of practice may hinder them from growing in their knowledge. One possible solution may be *body language mirroring*. A similar strategy was described as *intuitive social awareness* by Tipper, Signorini and Grafton (2015). A study conducted by them on how the body language constructs meaning from expressive movements in the brain revealed a very important link between action representation and language (Tipper, Signorini & Grafton, 2015). Barkai (1990) argues that '*non-verbal behavior is extremely important in determining the nature of communication and the relationship between the communicators*'. Nevertheless, he warns that attempting to read someone's body language may be a very imprecise science (Barkai, 1990). This may be a particularly unsafe practice when the communication partner's cultural and/or ethnic background is not fully known, as different cultures express emotions, politeness and wishes in non-identical fashion. However, mirroring body language to a certain extent may provoke a feeling of familiarity and naturalness, which, in turn may create a relaxed atmosphere and a common scenario for establishing meaningful communication. Moreover, mirroring body language may enable individuals to receive the other person's emotional state and may build a mind to mind connection between them (Goleman, 2006; Pavlova & Kornilova, 2013). Nevertheless, it is important to display respectful body language mirroring in all situations, avoiding to exhibit behaviours that would suggest being impolite of directly making fun of the communication partners (Goleman, 2006).

Moreover, the Mongolian universities should enable the learners to interact with foreigners in the form or lectures, clubs and workshops (Mihic & Novak, 2018; Pishghadam, 2009). This would provide an excellent opportunity to witness real-life scenarios, communication strategies and the occasion to observe a variety of expressions of emotions that may be culture and language related. Moreover, courses on emotional intelligence may enhance learners' positive attitudes towards other cultures and their speakers, and reduce significantly negative perceptions and bias (Márquez, Martin & Brackett, 2006; Carmeli, 2003).

The limitations of this study

The limitations of this study are not to be overlooked. The low number of participants inhibits to generalize the findings, although Mongolia being a rather isolated community may not confirm a diversity of opinions on foreign language learning and emotional intelligence. Further investigation in other remote parts of the country may serve to establish similarities or differences with the data obtained in the capital city. Therefore, the findings of this study are not generalizable to other monolingual communities or countries. It would be beneficial to conduct similar studies in equally isolated monolingual communities in order to compare the outcome. Finally, the theory of body language mirroring in multi-cultural scenarios where

speakers are from different backgrounds, is another point in which further exploration is needed.

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Appendix

1) Do you think people from different cultures feel and behave the same, separated only by the language?

2) While speaking English to foreigners, do you feel you have to change your behaviour or the way you express yourself?

3) Do you think speakers of other languages behave different from Mongolians?

4) Do foreigners in Mongolia display unexpected behaviours? In your opinion, is this related to intelligence?

5) Can someone live in a foreign county speaking in English without getting adapted to its culture?

6) I need English only for my studies/work/leisure.

7) I am learning English with integrative purposes.

8) Besides learning English grammar, have you been taught about the different cultural and thought processes of English speakers?

Table I. *Attitudes towards the social-psychological-emotional content of English language learning*

		Yes	Depends on the situation	No
1	Do you think people from different cultures feel and behave the same, separated only by the language?	78	-	22
2	While speaking English to foreigners, do you feel you have to change your behaviour or the way you express yourself?	39	-	61
3	Do you think speakers of other languages behave different from Mongolians?	52	-	48
4	Do foreigners in Mongolia display unexpected behaviours? In your opinion, is this related to intelligence?	62	-	39
5	Can someone live in a foreign county speaking in English without getting adapted to its culture?	9	91	
6	I need English only for my studies and/or work.	57		43
7	I am learning English with integrative purposes.	30	30	40
8	Besides learning English grammar, have you been taught about the different cultural and thought processes of English speakers?	4		96

PAPER V

EMOTIONS, LEARNING-AUTONOMY AND GENDER-SPECIFIC ATTITUDES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

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Abstract: In the ESL classroom, students' attitudes and learning success are largely influenced by a variety of emotions experienced. The present research aims to investigate how emotions and perceptions on learning-autonomy shape Hungarian high school students' and educators' attitudes in the ESL classrooms. Results indicate that female students, as opposed to their male peers, have considerably lower confidence in their own capability of learning and using English, yet they are less dependent on the teachers' perceived likeability and more autonomous in their learning processes. Teachers reveal that they are aware of the differences in emotions between male and female students; however, they do not encourage students sufficiently to develop learner-autonomy. Implications from this study indicate that teachers should explore and implement more psychological content-based strategies to meet students' gender specific emotional needs and to avoid learning-dependence on the educator's person.

Key words: Learning-autonomy, emotions, ESL, gender-differences in perception, English teaching

1 Introduction

The present article attempts to investigate Hungarian high-school students' emotions and perspectives on learning-autonomy, or the ability to take charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981), while considering possible differences in attitudes among gender groups. Although most Hungarian students are learning English (along with other foreign languages), the experience of foreign language learning is still considered a unique challenge for learners in general. Even individuals with already well-established learning styles and strategies in other subjects may display difficulties upon realising that learning a foreign language can be a profoundly unsettling psychological phenomenon. This experience may forcibly widen and alter students' already established learning practices, world-view and cultural identity (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Boekaerts, 2007; Elliot & Pekrun, 2007; Weiner, 2007; Linnenbrink, 2007; Guiora, 1983). Learning in general, and academic achievement may heavily condition the view of success in our society today, as they provide access to highly valued professional careers and social relations (Ratner, 2007; Turner & Waugh, 2007). Several studies(Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002; Shutz & Pekrun, 2007; Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2020; Ainley, 2007; Zeidner, 2007) point out that emotions experienced in the foreign language classroom are of crucial importance, as they may have a significant impact on cognition, which in turn affects academic motivation, academic self-concept and ultimately success. Tran (2010) states that there are observable emotional, social, communication-style and problem-solving differences among genders in the foreign language classroom. According to her, while the structure of the lessons and required communicative and role-playing approach favours female students more, teachers usually give more positive attention to male students. However, Howe (1997) states that such gender differentiation/bias towards students has no measurable relevance to students' academic

success. While gender and emotions shape students' attitudes and motivation in the classroom, a strongly emerging positive educational trend may empower students to enhance their potential regardless of the teachers' attitudes, namely developing learning-autonomy. Students, becoming autonomous and responsible for their own learning, will further foster their ability to make positive choices in educational settings, they will act on those choices and contribute and construct their own knowledge and life circumstances (Martin, 2004).

2 Theoretical background

2.1 English-teaching in Hungary

Hungary is a landlocked country situated in central Europe forming part of the European Union since 2004. Hungarian language is currently accepted as part of the Finno-Ugric language family. However, it is not mutually understandable with any other language in the world. Hungarian is a language mostly spoken in Hungary and in the territories populated by Hungarians that were detached from the Budapest government after the Treaty of Trianon (1920). These territories are currently found in Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Romania, Austria and Croatia. Foreign language teaching and learning, more or less forcibly, has always played a key role in Hungary's history. Latin was used as a lingua franca among all nationalities living in Hungarian territories until the 19th century (Almási&Šubarić, 2015). Afterwards, a strong German language education was imposed. During the post-war communist era, all Hungarian citizens were compelled to learn Russian. Nowadays, most Hungarian primary and secondary schools offer English, German and to a lesser extent French, Italian, Spanish and other languages as a compulsory part of the national curriculum. Moreover, according to the Law 100/1997. VI 13. 6/5, students who sit *érettségi* (high-school leaving exam) cannot receive their diplomas unless they have successfully attained a minimum B2 level in a foreign language exam, although this law is under revision at the moment. The need for learning foreign languages is growing in Hungary, both among younger and older generations, especially due to the multinational companies established in the country which usually require foreign language skills from current and prospective employees.

2.2 Emotion and cognition

Pekrunet et al.(2002) state that emotions have deep impact on motivational and cognitive mechanisms, and different emotions impact these mechanisms in a variety of ways. In contrast with the traditional approach in research towards emotions and performance, which consider mostly positive versus negative emotions, their cognitive-motivational model adds 'activation' as a conditional dimension. With the combination of the two main dimensions, positive versus negative emotions and activation, they divide academic-related emotion-performance factors into four main groups:

- positive activating emotions: enjoyment of learning, expectation of success and prediction in personal achievement
- positive deactivating emotions: de-stressing after successful assessment, acknowledgement of the effort and grit displayed and relief
- negative activating emotions: anxiety, embarrassment and annoyance
- negative deactivating emotions: (academic) boredom, hopelessness and learned helplessness

Based on the re-arranged mediating systems above, Pekrunet al. (2002) consider that

academic achievement is impacted by the following contexts:
- motivation
- strategies for learning
- cognitive resources
- self-regulation versus external regulation of learning

As students encounter and confront a wide range of emotions in the classroom, their emotions in academic settings are conditioned by many factors relating to achievement motivation (Op'tEynde, De Corte & Verschaffel, 2007). Besides this, depending on the educational activity, a variety of discreet emotions, differing in recurrence and distribution, may be observed. In Pekrunetet al.'s (2002) study, the most reported emotion was anxiety relating to situations such as sitting exams, home study or the simple fact of attending the class. Less regularly, envy, hopelessness and, on very few occasions, even suicidal thoughts were expressed in relation to failing certain exams. However, they reported that positive emotions were at least equally present in students' feedback, alongside less frequently reported social emotions such as admiration and gratitude. Moreover, besides the usual experienced emotions, Pekrunet et al. (2002) found a rather unexpected phenomenon. Learners unconsciously reported meta-emotions, that is, reflections and feelings about their own emotions. Many students experienced anger in relation to being anxious before assessment. Also, several students reported this anger as a motivational tool to cope with anxiety. This allowed Pekrunet et al. (2002)to see academic boredom from a new perspective. So far, academic boredom was believed to pertain to high-ability students who met too low academic demands, or to students' unrealistic self-evaluation's rendezvous with the mainstream classroom's reality. Nevertheless, many students reported boredom because of the inability to keep up with requirements. This indicates that academic boredom may be related to learned helplessness and serves as a behavioural or mental escape from situations that offer insufficient stimulus, are too stressful, or are beyond learners' competence (Schutz, Cross, Hong & Osbon, 2007). In their study on Japanese students, Saito, Dewaele, Abe & In'nami (2018) pointed out that the frequency of the use of the target language resulted in more positive emotions. Also, they confirmed that positive emotions were less stable and constant, while negative emotions developed and accumulated in a more moderate fashion but remained more permanent throughout time.

2.3 Gender-specific attitudes and differences in the classroom

There has always been much controversy about cognitive differences between genders. Scientific studies and observations such as the ones conducted by Upadhayay & Guragain (2014) and Gibbs (2009) concluded that male and female brains displayed anatomical, biochemical and functional dissimilarities throughout different stages in life. Moreover, cultural and sociological norms as well as physiological factors may influence the individual's cognitive development according to his/her gender (Bussey & Bandura,1999). Also, some theories suggest that males, in general, perform better in mathematical tests, reasoning and visual-spatial ability, while females excel in reading tests, memory, verbal skill and language use during adolescence (Richardson, 1997). In their study on gender differences in school achievement conducted with 53 German fifth graders, Weis et al. (2013) compared female and male students' motivation, behaviour regulation and achievement in language (German), and mathematics. The findings revealed that, while in mathematics there was little difference perceived in favour of male students, in the language class, girls significantly outperformed their male peers. Kiziltepe's (2003) study on the influence of gender on Turkish learners' attitudes and motivation towards foreign language learning reported that female students had higher motivation, more

motivational intensity, and better attitudes towards learning English. Female students also exhibited superior attitudes regarding the English teacher's persona and teaching skills. Similarly, in a study conducted by Dewaele, Macintyre and Dewaele (2016), female students displayed considerably more pride, positive attitudes, enjoyment and satisfaction towards learning a foreign language than male students did. Moreover, female students reported that they perceived to have learned interesting things, which in turn motivated them to be more creative during the lesson. Thus, such increased positive emotions produced an overall impression of participating in something worthy and fashionable. However, female students' predominantly positive emotions were coupled with some classroom-related anxiety which, instead of hindering the learning process, served as a motor and grit to develop better language learning strategies.

In Główka's (2014) study, female learners not only achieved better foreign language proficiency, but they did it considerably faster and with more accuracy than their male peers. This was due to the fact that female students internalised new linguistic forms and input more readily, and that the design of the education system, at least in some countries, favours females' cognitive and behavioural approach more than males'. Moreover, in foreign language classrooms, activities often involve imitations of real-life scenarios, brainstorming sessions and tasks developing communication skills which, in some culture-specific ideologies, may seem less attractive for male students. This is particularly true in societies where men attach very little value to self-expression and find 'acting' in the classroom embarrassing, often hindering their own language learning success by not allowing their linguistic and conversational skills to be fully developed. On the other hand, the general approach displayed by female students seems to be more co-operative, self-expressing, communication-oriented and accepting of guidance from the educator.

According to Terrier (2016), teacher bias against a specific gender group impacts greatly on students' attitudes, motivation and even their cognitive development. In her study, she found that teachers were usually biased against male students, which reflected on their grades, progress and schooling trajectories. Also, it was found that the teachers assigned to underprivileged areas were usually younger and were considerably more biased, as opposed to older teachers with more experience working in less deprived areas. This was a very relevant result in her study and a key factor which played an important role in understanding teacher-bias and its effect on students' behaviour, attitudes and learning outcome. A completely different approach was offered by McCaughan (2009), suggesting that students' age, teacher-bias against a gender-group, and discriminatory gender roles assigned by the socio-cultural background of the student are factors significantly more important than gender differences *per se*.

2.4 Reinders' model for developing learning-autonomy

Reinders (2010) argues that *constructivism* is a central success factor, providing learners with a broader scale of language learning strategies. This approach, instead of emphasising the traditional knowledge-transmission based learning, places a greater priority on constructing, (re)organising and knowledge-sharing methodologies. However, he acknowledges that some difficulties may arise if learners are not fully aware of their own learning styles, strengths, and/or the concepts of proactivity and self-motivation have not the same (if any) meaning for the educators and their students. According to him, research on students' individual differences and learning styles may help to identify specific cognitive and behavioural features of every student which, in turn, act as crucial factors in developing learner-autonomy (Reinders, 2010).

Reinders' Framework of Independent Learning Skills: Stages in the development of learner autonomy (2010, p.46) summarises well the main concepts to be considered:

Learning stages	Teacher-directed	Learner-directed
Identifying needs	Placement tests, teacher feedback	Learner experiences difficulties in using the language
Setting goals	Determined by the course, relatively fixed	Contextually determined, relatively flexible
Planning learning	Determined by the teacher. Somewhat flexible	Contextually determined. Very flexible
Selecting resources	Provided by teacher	Self-selection by learners
Selecting learning-strategies	Teacher models and instructions	Self-selection by learners
Practice	Exercises and activities provided by teacher	Implementation (language use) and experimentation
Monitoring progress	Regular classroom feedback and comments on assignments and tasks	Self-monitoring, peer feedback
Assessment and revision	Tests, curriculum changes	Self-assessment, reflection

Table 1. Reinders' Framework of Independent Learning Skills

3 Hypotheses

According to the author's experience as a teacher and researcher in various European and Asian countries, learners often rely too much on their emotions in the EFL classroom. Although in most cases the initial wish and impetus to learn English is present, the teacher's persona and attitudes, and/or bias towards the individual (or a specific gender-group) impact considerably on the learners' success. Nevertheless, very few students realise (and act upon) the urgentneed to take responsibility for their own learning. Additionally, some students are not even conscious about the possibility and their own capability to develop their own learning structures and methodologies, but they solely rely on the educators' talent and good disposition. Therefore, a common scenario can be observed: *If I like the teacher, (or he/she likes me), I will do well in the subject.* Under such circumstances, emotions may not be the best motivational agents. The researcher's perception was that learners are not always capable to correctly identify and manage their academic emotions, and they develop an imaginary learning-autonomy that may lead to too much dependence on the educator's personality and teaching style. Therefore, three hypotheses were investigated:

1 Most students' learning success heavily depends on the educator's personality and encouragement
2 Learners have no clear understanding of the concept of learning-autonomy

3   Depending on the students' gender, academic emotions and attitudes towards English language learning vary significantly

4 Methodology

This study surveyed the key factors in ESL classrooms on emotions in the classroom, motivation and perceptions and attitudes towards existing or imagined learning-autonomy. Quantitative research methodology was used to unveil the students' attitudes. In order to collect data, students participated in a survey by completing a questionnaire (see Appendix). The data were analysed by taking percentages on the students' answers marked on a Likert-scale. As for the analysis, two major categories were differentiated. The differences in attitudes and perceptions among male and female students were the crucial factor in determining the contrasts in viewpoints between the two groups.

In the case of the participating teachers, qualitative research methodology was employed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and all answers were received in written form, to which narrative analysis was applied.

4.1 Participating school

The research was conducted at Bethlen Gábor Grammar School in Hódmezővásárhely, Hungary. This institution, founded in 1723 as a school teaching through the medium of Latin, offers a higher number of foreign-language lessons in its curriculum and it is regarded as one of the most successful schools in the area, with numerous writers and academics amongst its alumni.

4.2 Participating teachers

The school employs 17 English teachers in total, all of them being female. Although all teachers were asked to participate in the study, only four of them (including the head of the English department) were available at the time when the research was conducted. The participating educators' teaching experience varied from 8-21 years.

4.3 Participating students

In total 48 students answered the questionnaires and all were considered valid. Among the subjects there were 17 male and 31 female students aged between 18 and 20 years old. A convenience sampling method was used to gather the appropriate subjects. By the time the present study was carried out, the majority of the participating students were about to sit the final examinations before receiving their Certificate of Secondary Education. Within the Hungarian education system, the scores achieved in this exam will enable learners to apply for university programs and degrees. Also, as previously mentioned, learners will not receive their diplomas without having passed a foreign-language exam. Therefore, hypothetically, at this period in time most participants were very focused on foreign-language acquisition/perfection. At this point, students must have already developed some clear attitudes and observations about teaching methodologies, academic emotions regarding the English language and the (lack of)

learning-autonomy they acquired during their schooling. The age of the students was considered appropriate, since some scholars suggest that attitudes start to appear at the age of 10 and are clarified and consolidated during adolescence (Huguet & Llurda, 2001).

4.4 The instruments

In the case of the students, the data were collected by a self-completed questionnaire created by the researcher principally for this investigation. The adopted quantitative research method intended to acquire self-report data from the participants with the aim of reporting existing conditions, determine points of reference to be used for comparisons, and/or demonstrate the connection between specific events (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012). The structure of the questionnaire included a few closed-ended questions and, in some other questions, the answers had to be marked on a five-point Likert-scale (from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree). The questionnaires were translated into Hungarian. This was seen necessary in order to make sure students fully understand of all items.

The teachers preferred to receive the interview questions online. Becausea semi-structured interview was used, all the questions asked could be answered succinctly or with much detail.

4.5 Procedure

A pilot study was conducted to guarantee the scientific reliability, intelligibility and coherence of the questionnaire. Several Hungarian teachers and a foreign researcher on education and linguistics collaborated in the assessment of the final edition of the questionnaire. They provided counsel on the clarity, precision, terminology and content of all items. Some of the suggestions were incorporated in the final version.

The distribution of the questionnaire occurred in April 2018 at the school's library, where all students participated at the same time. Before the distribution of the questionnaire, all participants were instructed about the purpose of this research. Moreover, they were informed of the anonymous nature of the questionnaire. It was also specified that no monetary compensation or better grades were offered as an honorarium for participating. Likewise, a short paragraph at the beginning of the questionnaire informed students about their rights to withdraw at any moment. The students received the paper-based questionnaires from the researcher and had the chance to clarify any doubts.

In the case of the teachers, the interview questions were sent in English and full information about the study's nature and the participants' rights was made clear. The answers were sent back almost immediately by them.

5 Results

The present investigation was conducted with the intention of revealing students' perceptions towards English language teachers, their teaching methodology and the degree of learning autonomy perceived. The research strongly emphasised possible viewpoint discordances according to the gender of the participants and the teachers' influence on the

students' motivation to learn English.

5.1 Attitudes towards learning English

The process itself of learning English was enjoyable for around 60 percent of both gender groups. However, considerably more female than male students declared to like this activity *(Q.1)*. Rather big differences were observed on self-perceptions about being talented in learning English. While half of the male students believed to have a natural talent for learning English, only 30 percent of the female students had the same perception about themselves. In addition, nearly the half of the female students proclaimed not having talent at all *(Q.2)*. Nevertheless, both genders agreed on the importance of studying English as a second/foreign language *(Q.3)*, and about 70 percent of both male and female students confessed to needing English for further studies *(Q.4)*. See Table 2.

Age: 18-20	Male students			Female students		
Total: 48 (17 Male + 31 Female)	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**
1 **Do you like learning English?**	65	29	6	58	19	23
2 **Do you think you have a natural talent to learn English?**	52	24	24	29	23	48
3 **Nowadays it is important learning English.**	100	0	0	97	3	0
4 **Will you need English for your future studies?**	70	6	24	72	8	20

Table 2. Attitudes towards learning English in percentages

5.2 Attitudes towards language acquisition

There was a considerable difference in opinions about homework as a useful tool for developing independent learning habits. Half of the male students disagreed, while half of the female students agreed on this topic *(Q.5)*. The preparation of presentations was perceived by only 30 percent of both groups as practical in the process of learning English *(Q.6)*. However, 58 percent of both groups found the detailed and lengthy explanations of grammar points offered by the teachers beneficial *(Q.7)*. The collective discussion of grammar points was also highly favoured by both groups, female students being moderately more convinced about its efficacy *(Q.8)*. By contrast, only 55 percent of female students found working/brainstorming in small groups advantageous, while 70 percent of the male students agreed on the usefulness of this practice *(Q.9)*. However, female students showed more positive attitudes with 70 percent in favour of learning from the classmates, while male students were more sceptical, 58 percent agreeing and 24 percent discarding this possibility *(Q.10)*. Finally, 58 percent of the female students would usually offer to help their peers, while only 23 percent of male students expressed willingness to display such proactive behaviour *(Q.11)*. See Table 3.

Age: 18-20	Male students			Female students		
Total: 48 (17 Male + 31 Female)	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**
5 **Homework helps me to develop independent learning habits**	24	29	47	54	26	20

6	**Preparing presentations help me to learn English better**	24	34	42	29	29	42
7	**Do you find helpful the teacher explaining grammar/words for long time?**	58	18	24	58	16	26
8	**Do you find helpful the collective discussion of certain grammar points/themes in the class?**	76	12	12	91	6	3
9	**Is it beneficial working in small groups where everybody's opinion matters?**	70	6	24	55	19	26
10	**I believe I can learn from my classmates**	58	18	24	70	20	10
11	**I usually offer my help with English to my peers**	23	47	30	58	10	32

Table3. Attitudes towards language acquisition in percentages

5.3 Perceived encouragement to develop learning-autonomy

Viewpoints varied on perceptions about having opportunities to talk about subject-related themes in the classroom. A quarter of the male students declared to have such occasions, while only 12 percent of the female students agreed to this statement *(Q.12)*. However, half of the female students proclaimed that they were encouraged to be creative during the lessons by the teacher, while males had slightly more modest opinions on this regard *(Q.13)*. Finally, between 60 and 70 percent of both gender groups declared that continuous encouragement to prepare independent project work at home was not a regular tool to encourage students in developing learning-autonomy *(Q.14)*. See Table 4.

Age: 18-20 **Total:** 48 (17 Male + 31 Female)		Male students			Female students		
		Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
12	**I usually have the opportunity to talk about an interesting (subject-related theme) in the classroom**	24	52	24	12	39	49
13	**I am encouraged to be creative during the lessons**	40	18	42	52	13	35
14	**I am continually encouraged to prepare independent projects at home**	12	18	70	13	26	61

Table 4. Perceived encouragement to develop learning-autonomy in percentages

5.4 Teachers' influence on learning skills and self-determination

Some dissimilarities were found between the two gender groups about dependence on the teachers' skills and personality. A very high percentage of both groups declared that success

in learning English is possible only if the teacher is a skilful educator *(Q.15)*. Moreover, 59 percent of the male students declared that the outcome of their language-acquisition depends on whether they like the teacher, while 48 percent of the female students agreed on the importance such factor *(Q.16)*. However, when reflecting on learning-autonomy, only 35 percent of the male students stated that in the case they would not understand something during the lesson, they would take action and look for solutions by themselves. In contrast, more than half of the female students proved to be more autonomous learners *(Q.17)*. Surprisingly, around 80 percent of both groups stated they were responsible for their own learning processes *(Q.18)*. See Table 5.

Age: 18-20 **Total:** 48 (17 Male + 31 Female)	Male students			Female students		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
15 **I will only learn English well if the teacher is skilful**	64	6	30	70	13	1
16 **My English language knowledge depends on whether I like the teacher or not**	59	0	41	48	10	42
17 **If I don't understand something during the lesson, I like to find the answers at home by myself**	35	41	24	52	23	25
18 **I am responsible for my own learning**	82	12	6	78	6	16

Table 5. Teachers' influence on learning skills and self-determination in percentage

5.5 The interviews

The three female English teachers agreed that they enjoyed teaching English in general. Yet all of them declared to have received very little (if any) training at university on how to motivate their students. Two teachers admitted that students' achievement depended mostly on their teaching skills and hard work, while one teacher remained neutral in this regard. There was no consensus about the usefulness of homework as a tool to learn English better. Opinions varied from *very strongly agree* to *very vague neutral*. In any case, all of them acknowledged that students' presentations would be an excellent tool to develop independent learning and research skills. Also, all three educators confessed that they usually needed to explain grammar points and vocabulary on repeated occasions for their students, as they were unable/unwilling to catch up by themselves whenever they missed or did not understand a lesson.

Working in small groups, brainstorming and polishing problem-solving skills were regularly implemented and regarded as beneficial by all teachers. However, as they revealed, students were not much encouraged to create independent research projects for their English lessons. Yet, they had the opportunity to display their work in case they prepared a topic-related project. Also, students were regularly encouraged to be creative during the class, to respect their peers' viewpoints, and to share their own opinions. According to all three teachers, students' constructive opinions and good ideas were implemented in the lessons and, by observing students' difficulties and comments, the lessons were regularly tailored to meet the learners' needs. However, allowing students to display leadership skills was not perceived as something that made them more responsible. Finally, there was a very strong agreement on the theory that students' motivation could be enhanced if the educator had encouraging attitudes in the class.

6 Discussion

Learners' variances in attitudes, emotions and perceptions on learning-autonomy in the classroom were investigated according to their gender. The results obtained from this study reveal that perceptions and attitudes between the participating gender groups differ in several aspects. Although it would be extremely laborious and demanding for each English teacher to meet the psychological and emotional needs of each student, there are indications that it was (at least) attempted in the case of this research. The often-coinciding opinions of the students and the teachers give insight that both students and educators work towards the goal of learning English better.

According to the first hypothesis, most students' learning success heavily depended on the educator's personality and encouragement. This theory was partly confirmed, since most participants in both gender groups stated that much depended on the teacher's *skill* and *ability* in the process of their learning. Moreover, they recognised that successful language learning often depended on whether they *liked* the teacher or not. Nevertheless, it may be unsafe to declare that students [wanted to] recognize and accept the difference between *likable* and *skilful*. It may happen that a teacher who is not liked from the beginning because of his/her physical appearance, strict teaching methods or bias against specific students suddenly transforms from being not *liked* to not *skilled*. Furthermore, all three teachers proclaimed that much of the learners' success depended on their hard work, positive attitude and encouragement during the lessons. This phenomenon was already confirmed in Komlosi-Ferdinand's (2020) study, where EFL learners stated that they expected unconditional emotional validation from the teachers, and in most cases their emotions and learning outcomes heavily relied on the educators' skills and enthusiasm. The findings also confirm Pekrunet al.'s (2002) ideas, namely that emotions deeply impact on motivation and cognition.

The second hypothesis put forward was that learners have no clear understanding on the concept of learning-autonomy. The often-contradictory statements of the students suggest that most of them were aware of their own responsibility and duties required to learn English, yet they relied excessively on their emotions towards the teacher. Also, they acknowledged that learning English is important, since they would need it in the future, including in their future studies, yet most of them made little (if any) steps to prepare projects at home or to look for information, in case the lesson was too difficult or missed. Therefore, much pressure was placed on the educators, since learners expected them to be encouraging, skilful and to have 'magical' powers in order to pour knowledge into their heads. In sight of this, some students' viewpoints about learning-autonomy could be described as being passive actors in the classroom, who, in the best case, do not offer resistance against the teachers' effort (if they are skilful and likeable). In line with Reinders' (2010) theory of constructivism, the basic understanding and definitions about the concepts of learning-autonomy and motivation should be established *before* the actual teaching. It is now impossible to verify whether this action was continuously performed, or at least intended to be explained in the beginning of the year. In any case, the outcome shows a rather wide gap between learners and educators.

The third hypothesis suggested that academic emotions and attitudes towards English language learning vary significantly according to the students' gender. Both the students' answers and the teachers' declarations indicate that differences between male and female students were obvious in some specific domains. In the case of the male students, the majority of them believed to have a natural talent, or at least not lacking talent for learning English. Their

attitudes show that homework was not perceived as a very useful tool in developing independent learning habits. Male students were rather sceptical about being able to learn from their peers and/or helping them with understanding difficult topics. Nevertheless, they found brainstorming in small groups highly beneficial, where they felt their opinions were accepted. Also, male students perceived to have more opportunities than females to talk about interesting topics during the lesson (Saito et al. 2018), yet, most of them did not find to be encouraged by the teachers to be creative. Most male students were very conscious about their own role and responsibility in the learning process. However, more than a half agreed that a skilled teacher could condition their success Also, they were less dependent on the teachers' likeability than female students did

Female students displayed some contrary behaviours in a variety of contexts. Unfortunately, half of them perceived not to have any natural talent for learning English, while only the 30 percent believed the opposite. In part, this phenomenon may have provoked female students to be more conscious in their language learning process. For example, they attributed much more importance to do homework, were more willing to help and be helped by their peers and were more proactive in finding information related to their studies at home than male students did. Interestingly, most female students were conscious that they were responsible for their own learning, yet half of them agreed that their learning success depended on the teachers' likeability and even more of them considered the teachers' perceived skill to be a key factor in language learning. These findings can only partly corroborate previously existing studies where female students exhibited faster learning, more motivation or much better attitudes towards the teachers (Weis et al. 2013; Kiziltepe, 2003; Dewaele, Macintyre & Dewaele, 2016; Główka, 2014). In this case female students' attitudes towards the teachers, their self-confidence and faster learning abilities were not necessarily superior to their male peers'.

The head of the English department, after discussing the topic with the rest of English teachers, offered some valuable insight. Her account portrayed the students' attitudes in a very similar fashion as expressed by them. According to her, female students generally displayed a combination of lower self-confidence and more maximalist attitudes, as opposed to male students who, at this age, had significant self-confidence and '*in general take things very easy*' attitude. Additionally, male students used more video games and surfed more on the Internet. This behaviour may have brought them in contact with practical English more often, a fact not to be confused with doing educational research for the specific goal of learning English better. Interestingly, the marks received did not necessarily reflect students' perceptions. Although there were many male students with outstanding talent for spoken English, apparently many of them were '*too lazy*' to acquire correct grammar and to learn new vocabulary which fell outside their areas of interest. Therefore, in general, female students wrote better tests, while male students used spoken English better and with more self-confidence, which generated more positive feelings in the EFL classroom and more intrinsic motivation. According to the teachers, these results cannot be taken as a rigid rule. Depending on the class' composition, the chemistry among the students, and specific (charismatic) personality traits of certain teachers, the outcome may vary moderately. The teachers also hypothesised that all English teachers, being female, may be less appealing for female students, and having young male teachers would probably enhance their interest in English as a subject.

7 Conclusion

Conclusions based on the findings are mostly comprehensible and explicit. The results indicated that gender-related variations in emotions and perceptions about learning-autonomy are relevant in the Hungarian ESL classrooms. These findings' impact and relatedness may be transferable to other students' experiences in other countries and cultures as well, since gender-based behavioural differences exist worldwide. As results unveil, male students are more dependent on the educator's preparedness and likeability, are less willing to engage in autonomous research, they perceive to have more opportunity to talk in the class and have increased self-confidence in their abilities to learn English well. On the other hand, female students display lower confidence in their natural talent to learn English yet place more emphasis on doing education-related research and place less importance on the teacher's skill or personal charm. Furthermore, both gender-groups are highly conscious of their learning-related responsibilities, although some show reluctance to accept learning activities set by the teacher as a useful tool in the learning process.

In the educators' view, female students often work harder, which usually bears superior test results, while male students start speaking earlier, with more confidence, yet far from perfect grammar. According to the teachers, most male students' initially superior verbal performance is due to the fact that they are more exposed to English on the Internet and playing video games. Nevertheless, this practice does not necessarily help them to internalise the correct grammatical forms as well. Finally, contrary to previous theories, in this case female students' attitudes towards the teachers, their self-confidence and faster learning abilities were not necessarily superior to their male peers'.

As for the educators, the two main implications are that 1) they declare to be not properly trained at the university on how to motivate students, therefore, they execute all the cognitive work in the classroom, as if the learning process were their sole responsibility. 2) Although encouraging students to be creative during the lessons is a usual practice, it seems that teachers' attitude does not suggest (or explicitly request) the creation of autonomous projects and/or placed importance on allowing leadership skills to emerge. These findings raise awareness on the need of teaching more psychological content as part of the teacher-training programmes. Future educators should learn more about how students' emotions, gender-related differences in attitudes and perceptions shape their learning processes and specific needs in the classroom. Learning about motivation itself would help to maintain a healthy balance between the teachers' and the students' exact responsibilities. Moreover, teachers should be able to educate and motivate students to learn about and to develop learning-autonomy, a skill that is transferable to several other areas of life as well.

Although this research offers some practical data, the limitations are not to be overlooked. Further research is needed to investigate whether female students have a tendency to develop learned helplessness in the classroom due to their general lack of confidence, and whether this phenomenon will accompany them in their future careers as well. Also, the relationship among individuals' perception about the 'future self', cumulative intrinsic motivation and grit in the classroom needs to be investigated in more depth.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

1   Do you like learning English?
2   Do you think you have a natural talent to learn English?
3   Nowadays it is important to learn English
4   Will you need English for your future studies?
5   Homework helps me to develop independent learning habits
6   Preparing presentations help me to learn English better
7   Do you find helpful the teacher explaining grammar/words for long time?
8   Do you find helpful the collective discussion of certain grammar points/themes in the class?
9   Is it beneficial working in small groups where everybody's opinion matters?
10   I believe I can learn from my classmates
11   I usually offer my help with English to my peers
12   I usually have the opportunity to talk about interesting (subject-related) topics in the classroom
13   I am encouraged to be creative during the lessons
14   I am continually encouraged to prepare independent projects at home
15   I will only learn English well if the teacher is good
16   My English language knowledge depends on whether I like the teacher or not
17   If I don't understand something during the lesson, I like to find the answers at home by myself
18   I am responsible for my own learning

<Research article>

PAPER VI

- 1 -

Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study

Flora Komlosi-Ferdinand[1] iD

//Abstract

INTRODUCTION. Emotions experienced in the classroom significantly affect learners' and educators' motivation. In foreign language learning, emotions are of critical importance, since learners are acquiring not only a language but new structures of thinking and new cultural elements.

METHOD. In this study, 70 Mongolian students and eleven teachers responded to questionnaires or interviews. The data from students were analysed by taking percentages of their responses by gender group, while narrative analysis was applied to the teachers' responses.

RESULTS. The data suggest that male and female students display different emotions during foreign language acquisition. Both groups perceived educators' feelings similarly to their own emotions. They stated that a good or bad teacher could alter their learning success. Teachers experienced a variety of positive emotions, but their enthusiasm readily decreased if students did not reciprocate. Teachers perceived and understood learners' emotions, but were not always able or willing to take them into consideration.

DISCUSSION. The present study finds that both students and teachers consider emotions in the classroom and towards one another to be crucial. Positive emotions are always conditioned by the other party's behaviour. Validation of (sometimes negative) emotions is regarded as a great motivational tool that can transform negative attitudes into positive ones.

//Keywords

Motivation; Emotions; Bilingual learners; Teacher validation; ESL; Gender differences.

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F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

- 2 -

//Títol

Emocions acadèmiques i validació emocional com a factors motivadors i desmotivadors en l'ensenyament d'anglès

//Resum

INTRODUCCIÓ. Les emocions tenen un paper fonamental en l'aprenentatge de llengües estrangeres, ja que els aprenents estan en procés d'adquirir no només una llengua, sinó també noves estructures de pensament i nous elements culturals.

MÈTODE. En aquest estudi, setanta estudiants de Mongòlia i onze professors van respondre entrevistes semiestructurades. Les dades es van analitzar calculant els percentatges en les respostes segons el gènere dels estudiants. Per analitzar les respostes del professorat, es va aplicar una anàlisi narrativa.

RESULTATS. Les dades suggereixen que els i les estudiants mostren emocions diferents durant l'adquisició d'un idioma estranger, segons si són nois o noies. Es va constatar que tots dos grups percebien els sentiments dels educadors similars a les seves pròpies emocions, i creien que un bon o mal professor podia alterar el seu èxit en l'aprenentatge. L'estudi mostra com els professors experimentaven diverses emocions positives, però el seu entusiasme disminuïa fàcilment quan els estudiants no els corresponien. Els professors percebien i entenien les emocions dels estudiants, però no sempre eren capaços de tenir-les en compte, o no hi estaven predisposats.

DISCUSSIÓ. Aquesta investigació revela que tant estudiants com professorat consideren que les emocions són fonamentals a l'aula. Les emocions positives sempre semblen estar condicionades pel comportament de l'altra part. No obstant això, la validació de les possibles emocions negatives es considera una gran eina motivadora capaç de transformar les actituds negatives en positives.

//Paraules clau

Motivació; Emocions; Estudiants bilingües; Validació del professorat; Anglès com a segona llengua; Diferències de gènere.

//Título

Emociones académicas y validación emocional como factores motivadores y desmotivadores en la enseñanza de inglés

//Resumen

INTRODUCCIÓN. Las emociones tienen un papel fundamental en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras, ya que los estudiantes no solo están adquiriendo un idioma, sino también nuevas estructuras de pensamiento y nuevos elementos culturales.

MÉTODO. En este estudio 70 estudiantes mongoles y once profesores respondieron a entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los datos se analizaron considerando porcentajes sobre las respuestas según el género de los estudiantes. Se aplicó un análisis narrativo para analizar las respuestas de los profesores.

RESULTADOS. Los datos sugieren que el estudiantado muestra emociones diferentes durante el proceso de adquisición de un idioma extranjero. Ambos géneros percibían los sentimientos de los educadores similares a sus propias emociones y declaraban que un profesor bueno o malo podría alterar su éxito en el aprendizaje. Los docentes experimentaban diversas emociones positivas, pero su entusiasmo disminuía fácilmente cuando los estudiantes no las correspondían. También percibían y entendían las emociones de los alumnos, pero no siempre eran capaces o estaban dispuestos a tenerlas en cuenta.

DISCUSIÓN. Esta investigación revela que tanto los estudiantes como el profesorado consideran que las emociones son fundamentales en el aula y hacia las otras personas. Las emociones positivas siempre parecen estar condicionadas por el comportamiento de la otra parte. Sin embargo, la validación de las posibles emociones negativas se considera una gran herramienta motivadora capaz de transformar las actitudes negativas en positivas.

//Palabras clave

Motivación; Emociones; Estudiantes bilingües; Validación del profesorado; Inglés como segunda lengua; Diferencias de género.

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F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

1. Introduction

The present paper aims to investigate learners' academic emotions and their role as motivating or hindering factors in the learning process of English as a foreign and second language. As foreign and second language knowledge is highly valued and encouraged worldwide, the identification of the most suitable and psychologically safe strategies for acquiring this knowledge is in high demand. The present research focuses on the emotions, motivation, interdependence and validation processes for a group of bilingual Mongolian students and their teachers. Motivation is widely acknowledged as a fundamental impetus for individuals to accomplish their goals and continue nurturing their talents throughout life. Thus, motivation may be perceived as a crucial factor in foreign language acquisition, since students' engagement and subsequent accomplishments in this domain require extraordinary grit (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Vallerand *et al.*, 1992). In addition, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) point out that human motivation is not completely stable over time, but is rather a dynamic entity that changes as a result of an individual's expended effort, and undergoes systematic ups and downs throughout the process. As Safdari (2018) notes, however, researchers have been concerned more with deciphering motivation as a phenomenon than with developing motivational techniques for educators or self-motivational techniques for individuals seeking to learn a language. According to Safdari, it should be considered that students may possess no motivation at all and attend English language classes only because of external pressure. Kirkağaç and Öz (2017) draw attention to the importance of proper, situation-specific extrinsic motivation as a critical factor in establishing a scenario for the development of intrinsic motivation in students. Therefore, emotions towards a particular situation, language learning in this case, are key predictors of the development and manipulation of learner motivation (Dewaele, 2018). Emotions in the classroom, particularly academic emotions, are crucial in successful learning and classroom management. However, most research on academic emotions focuses on negative emotions, such as anxiety related to test performance, grades and course completion. Although anxiety in the classroom may be a powerful force in learning success, other emotions may lead to a better understanding of motivation (or the lack of it). Positive emotions, such as joy, pride in achievement and hope, are intuitively thought to enhance academic success. However, these should be stable and continuous instead of rare peaks arising from a specific positive event within a negative sequence (Valiente, Swanson & Eisenberg 2012). Therefore, this paper seeks to analyse the correlation between the main emotions (not only the academic ones) displayed in the ESL classroom and their direct effects on the motivation or hindrance of students in their learning of English.

English teaching and learning in Mongolia

Mongolia is a landlocked country in East Asia. Its language, [Khalkha] Mongolian, is official and spoken in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, an autonomous region of the People's Republic of China. The Mongolian language is part of the Mongolic language family and Khalkha is the main dialect spoken in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city. The official language of education countrywide is Khalkha Mongolian, yet there is a swiftly growing number of international schools offering bilingual education in Mongolian and English or providing instruction in English, Russian, German, French and Chinese. Many national and foreign universities also offer courses and degrees in English, while the number of language schools multiplies every year. Knowing English has become an important asset for Mongolians working with foreign investors or seeking to pursue education abroad. Although Mongolians are very adaptable people with generally good language skills, culture-specific

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behaviours and world-views may trigger academic-related emotions in the foreign-language classroom. Moreover, like any other human beings, students in Mongolia have their own individual personalities, talents, limitations and life circumstances, which may affect their learning processes, attitudes and success. It is, therefore, the aim of this research to identify the relationship between academic emotions, understood as factors of motivation and demotivation, and language learning outcomes in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar.

Academic emotions

Students experience a variety of emotions in the foreign language classroom. Test-related and performance anxieties are among the academic emotions most frequently studied by researchers. However, as Pekrun, Frenzel, Goetz and Perry (2007) argue, joy and pride upon successful completion of academic goals, frustration, shame and anger when attempts fail, and excitement or boredom because of unusually high or low demands from a teacher are emotions that have a major impact on learners' emotional, psychological and even physical well-being. Furthermore, in the particular case of teaching English as a foreign language, emotional distress may be common among students when their learning-style preferences are ignored or the activities set by a teacher are culturally challenging in nature (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2018). Linnenbrink (2007) concludes that when learners experience positive emotions in the classroom their behaviour is favourably affected, while negative emotions have an impact as well. In their research on students' emotion words associated with learning, Bernardo, Ouano, and Salanga (2009) found that Filipino learners' concept of academic emotions was far more complex and variously entangled. Therefore, they could not be measured properly with Pekrun's control-value theory framework. Moreover, the relationship between emotions and events may vary by culture and individuals may consequently have disparate perceptions of emotions. Dirven (1997) points out that the only safe way to understand how emotions are perceived and work in different languages is to have a clear understanding of that specific language community's conceptualisations of causes and effects in relation to emotions. In the classroom, academic emotions are not limited to students, their perceptions towards the subject or their perceived achievement motivation, but are also displayed by teachers. Teachers are continually under pressure to develop the best teaching strategies, prepare adequate teaching material, motivate their students, cope with parents' specific requests and manage administrative duties. To perform and to balance these complex and psychologically demanding tasks, teachers also need motivation. Additionally, teachers need to be able to handle situations that may fall outside their knowledge, such as children who have special needs or are emotionally or physically unwell. Therefore, when complicated circumstances arise, and neither a sense of satisfaction nor of achievement is present, educators may be deeply affected and negative emotions such as anxiety and fear may appear (Fu, 2015). Ultimately, both teachers and students have an expectation of being successful in daily school activities. This situation may result in a very emotionally-charged experience regardless of the complexity of a task's cognitive demand. These emotions may have an impact on behaviours and on the variety of learning and coping strategies that are employed. Therefore, the academic emotions of learners and teachers may intensely affect motivational engagement with educational activities such as teaching and learning (Ketonen, 2017). Although it is a complex matter to understand student–teacher emotion-motivation dynamics, their importance

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is not to be underestimated when the ultimate goal is to make education in general a positive experience for both groups.

Self-determination theory and emotions

Deci and Ryan (2000, pp. 68–69) state that "human beings can be proactive and engaged or, alternatively, passive and alienated, largely as a function of the social conditions in which they develop and function". According to their observation, basic human nature is curious, inspired, eager to learn and master new skills, and self-motivated. However, different environmental, socio-cultural and psychological factors may hold back or even crush the human spirit, resulting in a rejection of proper mental development and age-related responsibilities. The nature of motivation includes direction, energy and perseverance, according to a variety of fields such as psychology, cognitive science and social and biological regulation. For this reason, Vandercammen, Hofmans and Theuns (2014), in their self-determination theory, establish and investigate factors that may diminish or enhance self-motivation in individuals in a variety of contexts. The three basic needs to be met for self- or intrinsic motivation are:

1. The need for competence: when individuals identify themselves as capable and effective in a specific context.

2. Relatedness: feelings of acceptedness by peers and connectedness to the material/common goal and outcomes of the project.

3. Autonomy: learners' clear perceptions that their values and decisions are to be considered and respected.

According to self-determination theory, the two major categories of motivation are 'controlled motivation' and 'intrinsic (autonomous) motivation'. Intrinsically motivated individuals experience more satisfaction because the tasks presented (by the authority figure) coincide with their personal goals, value system and interests. On the other hand, under 'controlled motivation', tasks are carried out because of pressure, avoidance of punishment or shame, or guilt. Thus, intrinsic motivation is claimed to be superior to other kinds of motivation, since it relates to desirable consequences, such as enhanced work performance, knowledge acquisition and sharing, physical, psychological and emotional well-being, and cognitive development and engagement. Emotions and intrinsic motivation are, therefore, inseparably connected. Emotions often activate an evaluation process to determine whether the situation encountered is safe, worthy and relevant to the individual's interest and well-being.

Motivational factors

Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh (2006, p. 9) state that motivation is an exceptionally complex phenomenon involving (and entangling) several areas of an individual's life. According to them, the concept of motivation itself is "nothing less than the reasons for human behaviour", it is generally considered to offer "direction and magnitude to human behaviour", meaning that it offers "the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it and the effort expanded [sic] on it". Therefore,

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F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

the nature of motivation connects and combines various educational, psychological, behavioural and social aspects of everyday life. Motivation is considered to play an even more influential role than social pressures do in the acquisition of a foreign language. Thus, motivation may raise students' self-confidence and reinforce their determination by encouraging and enhancing their positive attitudes and opportunities (Brown, 2007). Research has shown that students with limited talent and skills but a very high degree of motivation were able to become the most successful language learners (Nuri Gömleksi, 2010).

Motivation, particularly in foreign-language acquisition, has been classified in a variety of ways. For example, Gardner (1985, pp. 10–11) states that:

> Effort alone does not signify motivation. The motivated individual expends effort towards the goal, but the individual expending effort is not necessarily motivated [...] When the desire to achieve the goal and favourable attitudes toward the goal are linked with the effort or the drive, then we have a motivated organism.

Furthermore, he categorises attitudes towards motivation according to four aspects, namely 1) to have a goal, 2) to display effortful behaviour, 3) to have a desire and eagerness to achieve the goal and 4) to develop and maintain favourable attitudes toward the language learning process itself. Elaborating Gardner's above-mentioned theory, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) offer a model for understanding the transformation of initial wishes and desires into clear goals, then into operationalised intentions, and finally into the accomplishment of the objective. The three distinct phases of this process are:

1. Preactional stage: determining preferences and selecting objectives.

2. Actional stage: clarifying attitudes towards the teacher(s), the learning group and the language course itself.

3. Postactional stage: a retrospective evaluation of the language learning experience as a whole.

Demotivating factors

Learners are often expected to understand the positive implications of their actions and to display motivation and grit naturally during the foreign language learning process. However, several factors may interrupt even the best initial attitudes. Wimolmas' study (2012) of 30 Thai undergraduate students and their motivations for learning English addresses attitudes to language acquisition from the perspective of the ultimate goal. According to his research, the learner's motivation was more instrumental than integrative. These findings also shed a different light on teaching strategies. Given that English is an international language that is often used for cross-cultural communication, in business and in the pursuit of further studies and international careers, it should not necessarily be taught with material that focuses on integrative purposes. Students may be disappointed or even lose interest and motivation to learn English if the language learning process is forced on them from a perspective that is misguided or useless. Therefore, although motivation is highly personal to all individuals, newly emerging needs should be taken into account during the creation and

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F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

development of teaching material, syllabi and teaching strategies. As far as possible, teachers' attitudes should reflect students' needs and motivation and be culturally acceptable.

2. Hypotheses

Emotions and motivation often interact and condition one another in the ESL classroom. Students' opinions of the teacher, the activities and tests or the foreign language itself may trigger very strong emotions. These emotions, in turn, usually affect the educator's attitude. Although teachers, in general, are psychologically well prepared, pressure to succeed with the curriculum and demonstrate effective teaching and motivational skills may become overwhelming. Understanding students' emotional states (and their own) is a crucial factor in accepting the phenomenon and learning how to act upon it. Often, the simple act of grasping learners' emotions and validating them can prevent students from developing anxiety, boredom or learned helplessness and may enable teachers to harness euphoria and overexcitement. Furthermore, these skills may be mirrored by students, leading to an emotionally balanced environment in the classroom. The researcher's perception is that educators are mostly able to identify students' emotions, but they lack knowledge of how to guide and alter them when needed. Therefore, when emotions exceed their natural boundaries, the consequences are predominantly negative and motivation readily vanishes. Unfortunately, correcting such situations may prove exasperating and even unmanageable. As a consequence, three research questions have been investigated:

1. What are the motivating and demotivating emotions from the students' perspectives?

2. Are teachers conscious of their own and their students' emotions in the classroom?

3. Do the teachers' understanding and validation of students' emotions have any effect on motivation towards the learning of English?

3. Methodology

This study surveyed key factors in the emotion-motivation dynamics between students and teachers in the ESL classroom. A quantitative research methodology was used to determine students' perceptions and understanding. For the purposes of data collection, learners participated in a survey that consisted of a questionnaire with open-ended questions.

In the case of participating teachers, a qualitative research methodology was employed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, both face-to-face and online. Online respondents completed a written document, while face-to-face respondents were recorded on tape. Narrative analysis was applied to all of the teachers' responses.

The participating school

The current research was conducted at Hobby School, one of the 20 bilingual institutions in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. This school offers Mongolian/English bilingual education, and is currently implementing IPC (International Primary Curriculum), IMYC (International Middle Years Curriculum)

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F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

and AP (Advanced Placement). The institution was particularly suitable for participation in the study because of the homogeneity of the student population, with 99.4% speaking Mongolian as their mother tongue.

Participating students and teachers

In total, 70 ethnic Mongolian students completed the questionnaires and all were considered valid. Among the subjects, there were 32 male and 38 female students aged between 15 and 17 years old. None of the participants had English as their mother tongue, but all of them had spent at least two years, and a few of them up to 11 years, studying in dual language programmes. The convenience sampling method was employed to identify appropriate subjects. At the time of the study, all participants were students in the 10th or 11th grade. They were also attending advanced English-language classes and preparing for international English-language examinations in order to enter university. Therefore, it was reasonable to assume that most learners were very motivated and focused on polishing their English-language skills. Given that the final years of high school are decisive for students' future success, emotions were expected to be particularly intense, making the environment ideal for research.

Eleven English teachers with varied teaching experience and different nationalities, namely five Mongolians, three Americans, two Europeans and one Australian, were asked to give their opinions. All participating teachers were multilingual, which was considered an asset, since this ability suggested that they had a very personal understanding of language acquisition. Hypothetically, all of them also understood at a personal level the psychological complexity and emotions related to learning/immersion in a new language.

The instruments

The data on students' opinions were collected through a self-completed questionnaire created especially for the study. The aim of the selected quantitative research method was to collect self-report data from participants in order to identify the existing conditions, determine the critical points of reference to be used for comparisons, and indicate the connection between specific circumstances (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012). The questionnaire contained a few closed-ended questions, but most of the items were open-ended questions asking students to express their views freely. The questionnaires were distributed in English.

In the case of participating teachers, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Because of lack of time, however, it was more convenient for some teachers to respond to questions online in written form.

Procedure

Prior to the full survey, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the scientific reliability, intelligibility and coherence of the questionnaire and interview items. Several Mongolian teachers and two foreign scholars offered their advice on the final drafting of the questionnaire. They provided insights

Universitat de Barcelona. Institut de Desenvolupament Professional. ICE

F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

into the clarity, intelligibility, content and translation accuracy of all items. Some of their recommendations were included in the final version.

The student questionnaire was distributed in September 2018 in the participants' classrooms. Before distributing the questionnaire, all learners were instructed about the purpose of the study. Participants were informed that no financial compensation or better grades would be offered as compensation for participating. In addition, a brief paragraph at the top of the questionnaire informed students of their right to withdraw at any moment and of the anonymous character of their involvement. The students received the paper-based questionnaires from the researcher and were given an opportunity to ask questions, clarify doubts and engage in conversation to explain their emotions more fully.

4. Results

The present study focused on possible differences of opinion according to the gender of participants. The results were evaluated by comparing the percentages of responses given by the two gender groups.

The questionnaire – the students' opinions

Students of both gender groups reported rather similar opinions when asked about emotions perceived in the classroom. As seen in Table 1, the biggest differences could be observed where male students believed that English lessons provided *fun,* while female students experienced considerably more annoyance/boredom during lessons. The level of *pride* and *interest* among female students was slightly higher than among their male counterparts. Negative emotions were also more represented among female students: they felt more *anxiety*, *shame* and *disappointment* while practising English than male students did.

Table 1. Emotions felt while practising English in the classroom (percentages)

	Females	Males
Happiness	5%	6%
Excitement	10%	12%
Pride	18%	12%
Fun	29%	41%
Interest (in the subject)	37%	31%
Inspiration	6%	6%
Empathy	3%	3%
Anxiety	8%	3%
Shame	10%	-
Impatience	10%	6%
Annoyance/boredom	47%	25%
Disappointment	5%	-
Jealousy	-	-

Female students stated that the main emotions motivating them to study harder were *excitement* to learn new and interesting things and *inspiration. Pride* and *interest* were also among the factors that motivated them. However, in some cases, male students strongly emphasized different

Universitat de Barcelona. Institut de Desenvolupament Professional. ICE

F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

emotions as motivational elements, namely *fun*, *anger*, *interest* in the subject and fear of *disappointment* (possibly from parents and peers). See Table 2.

Table 2. Emotions which motivate students to study harder (percentages)

	Females	Males
Happiness	5%	6%
Excitement	23%	6%
Pride	29%	21%
Fun	1%	21%
Interest (in the subject)	40%	60%
Inspiration	66%	21%
Empathy	16%	12%
Anxiety	8%	3%
Shame	13%	12%
Impatience	3%	3%
Annoyance/boredom	10%	9%
Disappointment	8%	16%
Jealousy	3%	3%

Students' opinions diverged on some of the emotions that teachers display in lessons. Male students perceived educators as slightly *happier*, *more excited*, *prouder, less understanding* and *less annoyed* than female students did. However, female students identified *interest* in the subject, *annoyance/boredom*, *disappointment* and *understanding* students' needs and circumstances as the main emotions exhibited by educators. Nevertheless, male students' perceptions must be viewed with caution, as the very low numbers indicate a degree of apathy from which it is hard to generalize clear attitudes. See Table 3.

Table 3. Teachers' emotions as perceived by students (percentages)

	Females	Males
Happiness	11%	18%
Excitement	11%	18%
Pride	5%	12%
Fun	13%	16%
Interest (in the subject)	39%	12%
Inspiration	11%	12%
Empathy	29%	16%
Anxiety	-	3%
Shame	5%	3%
Impatience	8%	12%
Annoyance/boredom	34%	22%
Disappointment	31%	9%
Jealousy	-	-

Male students mostly reported feeling *happy*, *proud* and *being understood* as the result of the teacher caring for their emotions. Female students also reported feelings of *happiness* and *inspiration* to study and behave better. Moreover, *motivation* and the feelings of *being understood*, *loved* and *cared for* were additional emotions activated by the teachers' display of concern.

Nevertheless, 20% of each group's viewpoints concurred on feeling nothing or not caring at all whether the teacher considered their emotions or not. See Table 4.

Table 4. The effects of understanding teachers on students (percentages)

	Females	Males
Happy	47%	44%
Excited	-	3%
Proud	-	6%
Renewed interest	3%	3%
Inspired	10%	3%
Understood	15%	12%
Motivated	10%	6%
Loved/cared for	7%	3%
Confident	3%	-
Safe	3%	3%
Anxious/annoyed	3%	3%
I don't care	18%	19%

The overwhelming majority of both gender groups agreed that learning English was more difficult than learning other subjects, but female students were slightly more positive in this regard (Q. 6.). In addition, most students from both groups agreed that educators' emotions and mood can considerably change their attitudes towards learning (Q.8.). A sharp contrast of opinions emerged about whether teachers were actually concerned about students' emotions. Half of the male students perceived care and empathy from their teachers, while female students were considerably more pessimistic about this hypothesis (Q. 9.). Nevertheless, the majority of both groups agreed that teachers should consider students' negative emotions towards learning English (Q.11.). Moreover, as reported, a good or bad teacher could significantly alter both groups' emotions towards learning, with female students being more sensitive to this phenomenon (Q. 12.). See Table 5.

Table 5. Teachers' effect on students' learning (percentages)

	Yes		Neutral		No	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
6 Is it easier to learn English than other subjects?	34%	28%	11%	13%	55%	59%
8 Can the teacher's emotions change your mood during the lesson?	87%	84%	-	-	13%	16%
9 Do teachers care about your emotions during the lesson?	30%	56%	27%	19%	43%	25%
11 Should the teacher understand students' negative emotions towards practising/learning English?	88%	88%	-	-	12%	12%
12 Can a good or bad teacher change your emotions toward learning English?	92%	81%	-	-	8%	19%

Universitat de Barcelona. Institut de Desenvolupament Professional. ICE

F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

Female students were moderately more in favour of very challenging teachers than male students were (Q. 13.), while male students were considerably more tolerant of non-challenging educators (Q.14.). Female students showed more approval of teachers who provided negative, yet constructive feedback (Q.15), while male students preferred educators to provide only positive feedback (Q. 16.). The use of difficult teaching material was found to be 'neutral' by two thirds of the female students, while only half of the male students shared the same opinion (Q.17.). Almost half of the male students reported that easy teaching material was motivating, while female students remained more on the neutral or demotivating end of the spectrum (Q.18.). Both gender groups agreed that being told they had improved was an excellent tool to motivate them and to give them the desired feedback (Q. 19.). However, when they had to self-evaluate their improvement, males displayed less trust in their own assessment (Q.20.). Finally, students of both genders expressed similar opinions on preferring, or at least being neutral about, teachers who use only English to teach (Q.21.), while there was a similar consensus on having a lower preference for teachers who used the students' native tongue to teach English (Q. 22.). See Table 6.

Table 6. Perceptions of teaching styles (percentages)

	Motivating		Neutral		Demotivating	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
13 Very challenging teachers	58%	47%	32%	34%	10%	19%
14 Non-challenging teachers	5%	16%	47%	59%	47%	25%
15 Negative, yet constructive feedback from the teacher when it is needed	47%	37%	34%	41%	18%	22%
16 Teachers who only give positive feedback	34%	47%	53%	41%	13%	12%
17 Difficult material	16%	22%	63%	50%	21%	28%
18 Easy material	24%	47%	42%	37%	34%	16%
19 To be told that you have improved	92%	78%	8%	19%	0%	3%
20 To feel more secure using English	79%	63%	21%	37%	0%	0%
21 Teachers who use only English to teach	50%	50%	42%	47%	8%	3%
22 Teachers who use your native language to help you understand rules or words	39%	37%	50%	56%	10%	6%

Universitat de Barcelona. Institut de Desenvolupament Professional. ICE

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F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

The interviews – the teachers' view

Teachers in general reported feelings of joy, interest, excitement, pride in students' achievements and enthusiasm as their main positive emotions in the classroom. However, one teacher clearly stated that these emotions occurred only if reciprocated by students. Most teachers agreed that the surfacing of positive emotions was heavily affected by the reaction and behaviour of students. Teachers also experienced negative emotions, mostly anxiety related to not being able to teach effectively, but also exasperation when students were openly defiant, did not do homework or refused to participate during the lesson. Male teachers also reported shame for losing their temper and disappointment when the same misbehaviour or careless errors happened repeatedly. One female English teacher (whose native language is not English) reported experiencing shyness because of her lack of proficiency. Another female teacher reported a very specific classroom-related emotion, namely when students' behaviour went beyond an acceptable level, she said, "*I just don't want to be here*".

As for factors that may trigger negative emotions among students, teachers identified bullying, fighting and racism. However, the biggest trigger of negative emotions was linked to the varied level of English proficiency within the classroom. According to all teachers, "*the same classes have students with native-like proficiency, an almost complete lack of proficiency and everything in between, making it nearly impossible to care for students' individual needs and specific circumstances*". This situation lowered the self-esteem of struggling students and activated learned helplessness, which eventually led to a complete lack of interest.

The majority of teachers believed that positive emotions among students were mostly activated by a sense of achievement, good grades, positive reinforcement from teachers, clarity about what was expected of them, and achievable goals. Moreover, some teachers reported factors such as affection from the teacher, avoidance of intimidating power dynamics, and fairness from educators as triggers of positive emotions among students.

Without exception, every teacher agreed that considering students' emotions during the lesson is of primary importance. All of the interviewed teachers recalled their own time as students and the importance of being treated with dignity in adolescence. As a result, they reported trying to treat their students as they had wanted to be treated at school. One teacher stated that "*if students are in a bad mood, it is impossible to teach them, so emotions are an important factor to consider*". Another teacher observed that "*whenever students are stressed and nervous, their body goes basically into a survival mode and, in turn, they lose their ability to address the more complex tasks needed in the classroom setting*". One male teacher summarized it as follows: "*if students are not engaged they are not learning, so it is pointless. Their emotions, thoughts, the feeling of trust, equanimity and a benevolent ethos provide grounding and cultivate a freedom for them to share their analyses, thoughts, opinions with me and with the whole class. Students treated as students will practice a grotesque gothic regurgitation of knowledge that isn't really knowledge or wisdom. It's plagiarism masked as independent thought. So I try and treat my students as peers*".

The last question presented to the teachers proved to be delicate. Some teachers had achieved good results from validating their students' negative emotions towards learning English. These teachers

Universitat de Barcelona. Institut de Desenvolupament Professional. ICE

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F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

recognized that not everybody had a natural talent for learning languages. Moreover, some lessons may prove boring because not every aspect of learning a language can be taught in an enjoyable way and test-anxiety may overwhelm students in certain cases. A female teacher commented that she usually took time to explain to students that even unpleasant or boring activities may be very important, so that it was an effort worth making. The teachers clearly stated that acknowledging and validating students' negative emotions resulted in better behaviour among students, created a safer and more caring environment and made students feel understood. Another male teacher commented that validating students' emotions helped him to "*understand little clues that will lead to developing appropriate strategies to cope with students' stress and negative feelings better*". However, some teachers commented very little or not at all in this section. When asked the reason for their lack of comments, they explained that in the local (Mongolian) culture, emotions have no place in the classroom and children are regularly encouraged to "*leave their emotions at home*" because "*we come to school to learn*". They also stated that local teachers are taught and trained to "*push children to achieve, without considering emotions*".

5. Discussion

The study examined the positive and negative academic emotions of learners and the role of these emotions as motivating and demotivating factors in English-language learning. The findings identify significant differences in the perceptions of male and female students towards the emotions that motivate and demotivate them, and in how they perceive the attitudes of teachers. The study also explored teachers' perspectives and, in general, identified a rather similar viewpoint. The first research question sought to discover the students' perceptions of motivating and demotivating emotions.

Emotions felt while practising English in the classroom. Female students reported mostly pride and interest in learning English as their main positive emotions, while anxiety, annoyance, shame and fear of disappointment were identified as the negative ones. Apparently, female students encountered more negative emotions in the *process* of learning English, but they displayed higher motivation to learn the language because they were interested in the subject itself and they took pride in their knowledge. Male students exhibited some different attitudes, prioritizing fun as their main emotion. Also, interest in learning English was identified as a major positive emotion, though not to the extent reported by female students. Some male students also described excitement as an emotion they experienced during ESL class. Some students identified annoyance and boredom as their most prevalent negative emotions in the classroom. Finally, the results suggest that female students enjoyed learning English to a lesser extent than male students did. However, female students were more motivated and took greater pride in their results. These findings are supported by a study conducted by Balkis and Duru (2018) on gender differences in academic performance.

Emotions which motivate students to study harder. Academic emotions as motivational factors to study harder were perceived differently by gender group. Female students reported excitement to learn new things, pride and interest in the subject, while male students said that fun, interest in the subject, fear of disappointment and anger were their main motivational factors. Also, shame of underperforming was a common motivator for both groups. A high degree of consistency was observed between emotions experienced in the classroom and emotions that motivate students to study harder. This may be considered

Universitat de Barcelona. Institut de Desenvolupament Professional. ICE

F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

a positive correlation, given that students' perception of their present situation and of their (academic) future self and motivation shows almost identical elements.

Teachers' emotions as perceived by students. According to male students, the ESL classroom was often a happy place. They believed that teachers mostly displayed happiness, excitement, fun and pride (taken in their students). However, they also identified anger as a rather frequently displayed emotion. Female students perceived teachers mostly exhibiting emotions such as an interest in both the subject and students and an empathy for students' needs and circumstances. Nevertheless, negative emotions such as anger, annoyance and disappointment were perceived by female students in rather high percentages. The immense similarity between each gender group's perceptions of its own academic emotions and how it interpreted the teachers' emotions suggests two possible scenarios. On the one hand, students may interpret teachers' emotions through their own emotional filter. On the other hand, it may reflect a clearly established power dynamic applied differently to male and female students. This theory has been discussed by Lawell (2010) in her research on teaching middle school students in a gender-responsive way.

Effects of understanding teachers on students. Very similar emotional responses could be observed by both gender groups regarding teachers who hypothetically understood and cared about students' feelings. Almost half of both groups reported feeling happy and understood when teachers considered their feelings. Additionally, some female students reported emotions such as increased motivation and inspiration to study and behave better. However, a surprising 20% of students stated that they did not care whether educators considered their feelings or not. Nevertheless, it is important to note that most responses were expressed in a conditional mood. Most students used sentences such as "*I guess I would be happy if I had such a teacher*". The high frequency of such conditional sentences reveals an uncomfortable scenario, which suggests that teachers were usually not able, or had no opportunity, to display such attitudes. However, students' viewpoints may easily be affected by brief negative experiences, such as their teacher yelling at them for not doing their homework or asking them to stop chatting with their peers. These 'micro-incidents' may easily overwhelm students' rational judgements towards educators and their attitudes.

Teachers' effect on students' learning. Interestingly, half of both gender groups stated that English was harder to learn than other subjects. This was an important discovery that suggests that students may need more guidance and a stronger psychological-emotional bond with their educators in order to succeed. Establishing this proposition as a psychological threshold helps to more effectively interpret the educators' effect on students' academic emotions and attitudes towards foreign-language learning. A sharp divergence appeared in relation to whether educators actually cared about students' emotions. Twice as many male students as female students reported their positive perceptions on this matter. This may be strongly correlated with the greater extent to which male students perceived the ESL classroom as a fun place and attributed more positive emotions to their teachers. Nevertheless, a balanced consensus among the majority of students stated that teachers should understand and care for learners' negative emotions towards learning English. Moreover, there was a modest deviation in viewpoints on whether educators' emotions or teaching and emotional intelligence skills affected learners' emotions towards learning English. While most students agreed that this factor was extremely important, male student expressed a lower tendency to be overwhelmed or affected by such circumstances.

Perceptions of teaching styles. The greatest divergence in viewpoints could be discerned in learners' approaches towards different teaching styles. Male students found very demanding teachers less

Universitat de Barcelona. Institut de Desenvolupament Professional. ICE

F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

motivating than female learners did, they perceived negative, yet constructive feedback less motivating and they preferred easy learning material. On the other hand, female students were more motivated by being told by the teacher that they had improved and by feeling more secure with the knowledge they had gained. Moreover, both gender groups found educators who taught exclusively through the medium of English as moderately more motivating than teachers who employed the students' native language as a teaching aid. Here, it is crucial to note that the survey did not target native vs non-native English teachers. Apparently, however, students made no significant distinction according to teacher nationality as long as teachers continued to teach mostly in English.

The answers to the second research question revealed that teachers are conscious of their own and their students' emotions in the classroom. Educators said that they experienced a variety of positive classroom-related emotions, including joy, interest and pride in students and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, these feelings were mostly conditional on, and determined by, students' behaviour. Apparently, a very fragile equilibrium was established between students' and educators' emotions towards one another, a situation previously described by Brown (2007). Moreover, teachers also experienced negative emotions, including anxiety related to the quality of their teaching and exasperation when students refused to cooperate or were defiant. In particular, male teachers were concerned about losing their temper and feeling ashamed about their behaviour. They were also very aware that losing their temper would affect not only the students' emotions but also the whole class and their learning outcomes. Emotional stability should be one of the most desirable features in any classroom. Nevertheless, to maintain an environment of trust, common sense and mutual respect, it is necessary to establish an unambiguous, clear and unbiased power structure between students and teachers. By doing so, teachers' negative feelings, such as teaching anxiety, exasperation and shame, could be minimized and they would be empowered to transmit and activate more positive emotions in the classroom.

As all teachers indicated, the emotions of students were well perceived, understood and very important to them. Most of the educators said that they had clear strategies on how to identify and handle the variety of emotions expressed by students. However, they also admitted that, on occasion, they were not able to consider and control all emotional factors, particularly when students did not respond well to the teachers' efforts. On the other hand, educators acknowledged their lack of in-depth knowledge regarding the expression and perception of emotional differences by gender. They confessed that when such differences arose in the classroom, they most likely relied on their natural instincts to succeed.

The third research question examined whether teachers' understanding and validation of students' emotions had any effect on motivation towards the learning of English. The data show very positive and reaffirming conclusions. Most learners and educators agreed that validating students' emotions had an enormous impact on the self-esteem, dignity and self-confidence of students and on their positive relationship to the teacher. Another discovery also proved beneficial and constructive, namely that validating students' (negative) emotions towards learning English and classroom practices greatly enhanced students' positive attitudes and their willingness to learn more. This may be because being understood and validated partly eliminated students' anxiety about failing or being seen as incompetent by their peers or teachers and it created a reassuring and more relaxing atmosphere in the classroom. The impact of this finding is not to be overlooked, since some educators tend to use positive psychology in a rather inaccurate (and sometimes even toxic) way by simply pretending that everything is always great and easy, leaving students with even more emotional confusion when those standards are not met (Pluskota, 2014). At times,

Universitat de Barcelona. Institut de Desenvolupament Professional. ICE

F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

however, students may experience a degree of emotional uncertainty and even turmoil between a compulsorily imposed positive viewpoint and their real emotions. As a result, validating students' real emotions may be an inexpensive and highly effective tool in foreign language teaching, which may produce very positive results.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the present study suggest that emotions and emotional validation by teachers in the academic context may play a critical role in enhancing learning success. The results reveal that gender-related variations in perceptions of academic emotions may have an impact on what students consider as motivational or hindering factors in foreign language learning. The rather 'easy-going' attitude of male students made the classroom a more enjoyable place, while female students seemed to have a more negative experience, but took greater pride in positive learning outcomes. The most highly motivating emotion for females was inspiration, while interest in the subject was valued most highly by male students. Annoyance and boredom emerged as the most common demotivating emotions mentioned by both groups, while female learners also added fear of disappointment. Interestingly, both groups attributed the same emotional state to their own experience and their teachers' experience, but complained that teachers did not really show a caring attitude. Students of both genders and teachers agreed to a great extent on the importance of emotional-behavioural-psychological interdependence and of validating possible negative emotions during the process of learning a foreign language. These analyses suggest that educators should consider gender-related differences in emotional needs and not suppress potentially negative emerging emotions towards language learning. Acknowledging and considering students' emotions may lead to a healthy power structure and a balanced environment in the classroom, where most academic emotions may be turned into, and used as, motivational agents, a situation previously described by Brown (2007). While this research provides some constructive observations on the perceptions of Mongolian students and their international teachers towards academic emotions and motivations, there are some limitations to consider. Emotions in general and emotions displayed specifically in the classroom may be expressed and perceived in radically different ways based on the culture of the learners and teachers (Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2019). Therefore, further research is needed to investigate the cultural sensitivity exhibited by foreign teachers in foreign classrooms and examine their empathy and responsiveness when considering gender-related differences in academic emotions and when validating students' emotions.

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F. Komlosi-Ferdinand. *Academic Emotions and Emotional Validation as Motivating and Demotivating Factors in the ESL Classroom: A Mongolian Case Study*

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Appendix

Student questionnaire

4) What emotions motivate you to study harder?

5) What emotions do you feel when practising English in the classroom?

6) Is it easier or harder to learn a foreign language than other subjects (e.g. math, biology, history, geography)?

7) In your opinion, what emotions do teachers show during the lesson?

8) Can the teacher's emotions change your mood during the lesson? (e.g. if the teacher is happy, I feel happy too)?

9) Do teachers care about your emotions (anxiety, fear, interest, happiness) during the lesson?

10) How does it make you feel if the teacher understands and cares about your emotions?

11) Should the teacher understand or ignore students' negative emotions towards practising/learning English?

12) Can a good or bad teacher change your emotions towards learning English?

How do you feel about the following concepts? Motivating/Neutral/Demotivating

13) Very challenging teachers

14) Non-challenging teachers

15) Negative, yet constructive feedback from the teacher when it is needed

16) Teachers who give only positive feedback

17) Difficult material

18) Easy material

19) To be told that you have improved

20) To feel more secure using English

21) Teachers who use only English to teach

22) Teachers who use your native language to help understanding of rules or words

Teacher questionnaire

1) As a teacher, what classroom-related emotions do you experience and why? Please give both positive and negative examples, if applicable.

2) What factors may trigger *negative* emotions among students? (Examples could include not a class-appropriate age, [learning] disabilities, test anxiety, too much to study, and language-related difficulties.)

3) What factors may trigger *positive* emotions among students? (Examples could include good grades, positive feedback from the teachers, interesting learning material, specific learning strategies, an understanding teacher, and acceptance of student limits.)

4) In your opinion, are students' emotions important to consider or they are unrelated to successful learning?

5) Do you generally understand and validate students' negative emotions towards learning English? If you do, what is the effect on students?

The Students, the Local and the Foreign: Drama of Identity and Language in Mongolian-English Bilingual Schools

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Education in bilingual schools aims to equip learners with balanced bilingualism, increased (bi)cultural capital and a global mindset. Nevertheless, in a growing number of countries only local children attend such institutions, where foreign teachers are the almost exclusive manifestations of 'globalness'. Dynamics among foreign and local teachers and students shape learners' attitudes, their learning outcome and identity formation to an unexpected degree. This often produces unhealthy perceptions and behaviour in the classroom, eventually resulting in students not benefiting from bilingual education to the expected extent. One of the oldest and one of the newest bilingual schools in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, were observed for this study. Local and foreign teachers of these schools contributed with their experiences in the form of unstructured interviews, while classroom observations shed light on students' attitudes. The findings reveal that students respect local educators more and display more respect and discipline with them. However, pupils are usually more emotionally attached to foreign teachers, confiding in them and seeking their company on a daily basis, yet refusing to be disciplined and to study for their classes. Students' unbalanced attitudes towards the two groups of teachers generated unease between the educators as well. This paradox created an unhealthy milieu in the schools and discouraged the development of a healthy perspective on (foreign) languages and identity. Teachers' attitudes further compromised learners' behaviour, as local educators stressed nationalism, while foreigners pressed towards the development of a more global mentality. Unfortunately, as none of the institutions had any policies to address this dilemma, eventually students developed behaviours contrary to the intended by the schools.

Keywords: bilingual schools, language and identity, foreign teachers, student attitudes, Mongolia

Introduction

The present investigation aims to decipher how Mongolian students' identity is shaped or further conditions their attitudes and social-emotional responses towards foreign and local teachers in English-Mongolian bilingual schools. The rapidly growing Mongolian economy nurtures the opening of new bilingual schools on a yearly basis (May, 2009). Parents with increasing wealth prefer to secure a more global education for their children, placing substantial importance on foreign language education, foreign curricula and cultural capital, defined as giving priority to life's cultural and intellectual assets as opposed to material ones (Bourdieu 1990, Weininger, 2003; Weenink, 2008). Among the objectives of bilingual education, there is the formation of both linguistically and culturally fluent students in Mongolian and in the foreign language, in the case of this study, English. While this idyllic scenario may be a challenge in itself, parents often enrol their offspring at a later age (sometimes at fifth grade or later) and envision their children to catch up with the rest of their peers only in a school term. Often, this proves to be an emotionally and foreign-language wise overwhelming situation (Milosevic, 2019). Standard international schools in Ulaanbaatar with full English curricula have monolingual teaching, that is, regardless of the nationality of the teachers, all subjects are taught through the medium of English (Bunnell, 2019). A few bilingual schools, however, offer a balanced number of teaching hours both in English and in Mongolian (Hill, 2015). The cultural landscape of these schools varies, most of the educators being local with some additional foreign teachers and (sometimes) administrators from different countries.

The number of foreign staff strongly varies among schools (Meneghella, Walsh & Sawagvudcharee, 2019), and a great number of cultural differences and attitudes towards teaching can be observed between the local and the foreign educators (Dos Santos, 2019). This considerably asymmetrical panorama activates observably different social-emotional responses from the mostly Mongolian students towards both groups.

Mongolian Society

Mongolia is a vast landlocked country situated in Central Asia, bordered by China and Russia. Although Mongolia's territory counts among the biggest in the world, its population is tiny, barely exceeding three million inhabitants, half of them being concentrated in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar (also spelled Ulan Bator). While Khalkha Mongol, the Mongolian dialect spoken around Ulaanbaatar, is the only official language of the country, Kazakh and other minor languages are spoken in different regions of the country. Mongolian is a rapidly changing society. Although the traditional social structure constituted of nomadic, herding families, is still revered and practiced in the countryside, the inhabitants of the capital and the two bigger cities, Darkhan and Erdenet, have undergone unprecedented economic growth and modernisation in the past decades (May, 2009; Hanson, 2004; Sarlagtay 2002). Between 1941 and the end of the communist era in the 1990's, the mostly illiterate Mongolian society became 93% literate and educated. The Mongolian communist government emphasised and provided education not only for children but for adults as well, this paving the way for a healthy wish and routine of education for the following decades (Hanson, 2004; May, 2009).

Nowadays, middle class and rich Mongolians travel abroad and believe that international education for their children is a basic requirement for a successful life. Nevertheless, many of the ancient elements of their culture are still practiced in everyday life, such as obedience towards the elders, the daily use of *deel*, the Mongolian traditional clothes, and rituals such as throwing milk in front of their houses in the morning for having luck. (Hanson, 2004). This creates a particularly interesting scenario in the country's bilingual school system, where both tradition and global mindsets coexist in a non-linear fashion. Although Mongolia during its history of invasions and being invaded has experienced many foreign cultures, it can be said that the Mongolian society has remained fairly isolated in its mentality and educational practices (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2019; Hanson, 2004). Despite the fact that Mongolians continually try to globalise themselves, change does not come at a speed expected (Hanson, 2004). This is well reflected in the Mongolian educational scenery as well. Although schools and universities try to implement new and modern strategies, the already existing teaching and administrative structures still flourish. This can be observed at schools where the often low-morale of some teachers frustrated by the working conditions adds to the tense educational panorama (Rossabi, 2005). Additionally, in the educational context, corruption has become a serious problem, as students (or their parents) can forcefully demand better grades or special treatments from the educators (Hanson, 2004). This practice is extremely dangerous for Mongolia's new developing intellectual capital and international outlook. The question remains to what degree this ideology affects education in bilingual schools and learning attitudes and outcomes among students aiming for a more global lifestyle.

Literature review

Identity and Emotions

As bilingual education is becoming more widespread, there is an existing concern at school and parental level about its outcome regarding learners' developing identities, world-view and their ability to maintain their cultural heritage (Heyworth, 2004). Fearon (1999) describes the term *identity* as the two strongly intertwined concepts of personal and social interpretation of ourselves that clarify an individual's concept about himself/herself and how he/she wants to be perceived by others. According to Sarlagtay (2002), the sense of identity in Mongolia has developed a troubled issue over the last decades. This became very apparent from the early 1990s, when Mongolian people started to reclaim their national identity and traditions, stating that '*excessive liberal cosmopolitanism is the current face of Mongolia. It has had negative results in Mongolian society today, which diminish national feeling and ignore patriotism among the population. If rising liberalism might be example of the opportunistic and adaptive ability of Mongolians, but it is harmful for Mongolia's existence as a nation*' (Sarlagtay, 2002, p, 103). As a result, Cohen (2004) points out that in the educational setting Mongolians often have doubts whether the foreign teachers' backgrounds, culture, ideologies and teaching styles will not interfere with

students' developing patriotic spirit. He further states that in order to prevent the foreign influence, in the early 2000s there was a clear intent to create a 'Mongolian English', which would only focus on using English language as a communication tool without the immersion in its cultural elements and language-related social features. Although this proposal has never become official, yet its message has deeply infiltrated into the Mongolian education system. Furthermore, Khongorzul, a professor interviewed in Cohen's study declared: *'If the popularity of English grows any more, it will become a virtual second language among our younger generation'* (Cohen, 2004, p. 21). As seen, the duality between preserving the national identity and globalising their mentality is an ongoing discussion among Mongolians. This article further discusses how the younger generations' emotions and self-definition can subsist in such context.

Komlosi-Ferdinand's (2020) recent study on academic emotions in the Mongolian classrooms draws attention on how Mongolian students' emotional state and learning outcome is heavily conditioned by the teachers' attitudes, emotional validation, and the classroom environment created the educator. Moreover, she states that *'Acknowledging and considering students' emotions may lead to a healthy power structure and balanced milieu in the classroom where most of the academic emotions may be turned and used as motivational agents'* (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2020, p. 16). Similarly, Butler (2019) points out, that emotions and cognition are now inseparable entities in successful learning. Swain (2013, p. 195) reinforces this thought by stating that 'emotions are an integral part of cognition'. Therefore, as learners associate a different degree of discipline and distinct emotional states and communication models with both groups of teachers, in consequence, contrasting classroom scenarios, student-teacher power structures and learning dynamics can be observed in the classrooms. This differentiation may have a profound effect on the learning success and the emotional-behavioural landscape of the whole school. Furthermore, once these patterns of attitudes become fossilized, they mould learners' perspectives on cultural sensitivity and on the social-emotional-intelligence rooted in both languages (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2020). Moreover, Hill (2018) highlights that students' actions, behaviour and social reality is built upon the perception and interpretation of past events. Thus, negative experiences may considerably harm students' future prospects, as the intended goal in attending bilingual schools is often to secure a place in foreign higher education institutions. Wang's (2012) study draws attention on how 'new rich' Chinese students from high cultural capital families prioritise knowledge acquiring, eventually becoming globally educated and socio-culturally intelligent individuals, while learners from medium cultural capital upbringing mostly wish to ensure a good diploma from foreign universities in order to build a career and economic status. However, low cultural capital families' intellectual journey ends with the child being accepted to a university and eventually acquiring the diploma, which will be of no further use except taking pride in it as a decorative element. Hence, comparing students' attitudes and social-emotional responses towards both groups of teachers may help to develop some new strategies and policies that would benefit in educating real 'internationally minded' and 'global citizens' at these institutions (Tanu, 2016).

Symbolic Violence and Habitus

Pierre Bourdieu's several works may have great impact on bilingual schools' organizational practices, as in such institutions, languages (mother tongue and foreign language) are not simple communication tools or school subjects but they correspond to identities, social space and status. Bourdieu (1996, p. 22) claims: '*the social space is indeed the first and last reality, since it still commands the representations that the social agents can have of it*'. Moreover, Bourdieu's (1990b) 'habitus theory' highlights how a value system established by the individual's social background will condition and operate further thoughts, perceptions, responses and activities in the everyday life. In the case of students attending bilingual schools, the particular significance of this lies in the two clearly differentiated groups of local versus foreign teachers and the social spaces and status attributed to them. The two groups of teachers may be differentiated in multiple levels, such as local and foreign, higher and lower social space, or high and low intellectual capital, defined as the individuals' knowledge, skills and experiences that can be used as a currency in a variety of interpersonal and workplace related contexts (Tamer, Dereli & Sağlam, 2014). Students' attitudes towards these groups, therefore, will shape not only their education, but the development of their own social spaces, sensibility, intellect and identity (Sweeney, 2017). Moreover, Bourdieu's (1998) symbolic violence theory draws attention to the fact that in most domains, two coexisting social spaces necessarily experience power-plays, the establishment of hierarchy, and in some cases (symbolic) violence. Symbolic violence is described as a psychological and non-physical force executed by the higher social classes, whose norms are often unquestionably and automatically accepted. Furthermore, throughout his life Bourdieu maintained the notion that intellectuals will necessarily constitute part of the

'ruling class', or dominant social space, because of their cultural capital (Bourdieu 1990; Weininger, 2003). As the two social spaces are necessarily given at bilingual schools, it is vital to unveil the specific factors on which the hierarchy is established and whether it is linear and stable throughout all domains and contexts.

Language and Power

'*Language is used to demonstrate power in numerous contexts and power too is used to give language a particular meaning in a particular context*' (Pătraşcu & Allam, 2017, p.168). This statement is reinforced by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989), who state that language can and does metamorphose into an instrument via perceptions and consciousness of 'truth', 'power' and 'reality' become confirmed and accepted. Moreover, according to Arazzi (2014), language is an ability distinctive to humans, which creates and moulds our perception about 'reality'. Nevertheless, she also points out that this 'reality' is constantly affected and impacted by the individual's circumstances and environment. Similarly, Jørgensen (2006) states that instead of perceiving language as the final organisational system of reality, it is, in fact the tool to create this desired state. Furthermore, Fairclough (1989, p.3) declares that '*language has become perhaps the primary medium of social control and power*'. These definitions reveal well the depth of how a language may be used to converge, diverge or manipulate ideas and events in contexts where multiple languages and identities coexist. Moreover, how a language is spoken, read, written and interpreted impacts the individual's self-perception and social standing (Fairclough, 1989). This is particularly true in multilingual schools. Fairclough (1989) points out how school's 'hidden agendas' use discourse and power to shape perceptions on social structures and social classes. Ultimately, Lewin's (1951) force-field theory discusses how two major factors, driving and restraining forces affect either positively or negatively events moving toward the desirable direction or goal. This phenomenon represents well the delicate equilibrium among languages and identities in bilingual schools, while the identity of the driving forces and restraining forces is yet to be determined when applied to students.

Research Questions

It is safe to say that in Ulaanbaatar, most bilingual schools strive for balanced outcomes in their education. Furthermore, they offer a new, global perspective on foreign language learning and use for personal development, as well as try to promote a more open society. These new perspectives often take shape in foreign teachers, as they are viewed as 'ambassadors' of foreign lands, allowing insight into a variety of cultures and customs often perceived as relevant in order to understand better the socio-cultural context of the foreign language taught. However, these educators' socio-cultural background and sometimes unfamiliar behaviours and teaching styles from the viewpoint of the local students may provoke unexpected attitudes and teaching-learning dynamics between students and teachers (Heyworth, 2004). The researcher's perception was that Mongolian pupils become confused by the [often drastically] different teaching styles of foreign educators, which, in turn, undermines their attitudes towards both the local and foreign teachers. Moreover, pupils associate language and identity with very specific behavioural styles, creating an unhealthy emotional milieu at the schools. In the light of this, two research questions were investigated:
1. Does identity play a role in Mongolian students' perception on different levels of power and respect towards foreign teachers as opposed to locals?
2. What linguistic and cultural factors shape students' identity in bilingual schools?

Methodology

Research context

As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) point out, understanding and researching a situation often requires long-term immersion in the system. Moreover, as all factors, rather than a limited number of variables, have to be taken into account in understanding a phenomenon, the methodology chosen for this study was qualitative research through observation, both in class and outside the class, to analyse the key factors that may influence learners' behaviour from societal and linguistic viewpoints. In addition, in order to have a more in-depth view, the researcher collected data on a weekly basis in the form of unstructured interviews with English-speaking and non-English speaking teachers (some of them acting as administrators as well), and students. Content

analysis was applied to all the data. The observation and interviews happened between the 1st of September 2018 and the 1st of December 2019.

The Participating Schools

The investigation took place in one of the first English-Mongolian bilingual schools of Ulaanbaatar, with 25 years of history of bilingual teaching, and in a newly opened bilingual school with the same curricula. The number of pupils in the first school was around 800, while the second school had around 300 students at the time of the research. The ratio of local teachers to foreign teachers was 90:10 in both schools. Both institutions' educational policy can be classified as a strong form of bilingual education for bilingualism and biliteracy according to Baker (2011). These schools were particularly suitable for the investigation, since, although being bilingual schools, approximately 95% of the students in both of them were Mongolian native speakers whose socio-economic backgrounds were very similar. Therefore, the attitudes displayed were not biased by different cultural influences.

Participating Teachers and Students

A total of 27 English speaking teachers (foreign and local) in both schools were involved in the investigation. In addition, some of the participating bilingual teachers regularly helped with data collection from the non-English speaking teachers by translating or interpreting their contributions. There was no restriction on the teachers' subject, since the attitudes towards teachers' nationalities were investigated. The foreign teachers were from North America (9), Russia (2), Western Europe (4), India (1) and Australia (1). Of them 11 held at least an MA. The rest also had BAs and teaching diplomas. None of the teachers were volunteers. Of the English-speaking Mongolian teachers, 7 held at least an MA while the other three had BA in different fields. Amongst the 9 non-English speaking educators, all of them were qualified teachers, attending duties as both classroom and subject teachers.

In total, 11 groups and approximately 320 students were observed. As some students left throughout the year and some new came, the number of students observed was not exact. The older students (from fifth to eleventh grade) were particularly happy to collaborate, 28 of them sharing their thoughts in a very open fashion during the class observation and informal interviews.

Procedure

All data were recorded by taking notes during the weekly meetings with the teachers, unless they had some particular stories during the week (which happened very often both on the local and foreign sides). The class observations and the out-of-class (often informal) interactions with the students were recorded by taking notes on a daily basis (Wragg, 1978, 1999). All teachers and the older students were conscious of the aim of research. All information was shared on a voluntary basis and clear consent was given to observe their classes. In the case of the younger students, who were not able to understand the concept of the present research, the local teacher explained it in Mongolian and with simplified terms. When observing the younger students, the classroom teachers' permission was obtained, as they are fully authorised by the parents to make any decision regarding the pupils during school hours. The data were coded by selective coding, as described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) and analysed by clustering units by relevant content and meanings (Hycner, 1985).

The data, being qualitative, required an inductive analysis. This encompassed reading, reflecting on, inferring from and interpreting the raw transcripts. From this process, the researcher developed interpretations of the data and derived explanations and understandings which fairly and comprehensively explained the phenomenon (Thomas, 2006; Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

Results and Discussion

The present study investigates Mongolian students' perceptions and behaviour towards foreign and local teachers and the educators' attitude, while aiming to unveil how students' language and identity formation is

affected by both groups. The findings based on the interviews and observation identify significant contrasts in learners' attitudes towards local and foreign teachers. The study also identifies some interesting points in teachers' attitudes which may incite counterproductive behaviour in students, leading to confusion about how their national identity and their new global perspective should be balanced. The first research question shed light on how students' perceived identity is shaped by the level of power and respect they attributed to the local and foreign teachers.

Observations

During the classroom observations, it was impossible to precisely and adequately measure teacher-power exercised, yet comparing the lessons of both local and foreign teachers, the results show that pupils are considerably more respectful and obedient towards the local educators. It became obvious that learners of all ages have the utmost fear of Mongolian teachers, displaying flawless obedience and submission towards them. During the local teachers' lessons, homework and projects were delivered properly and on time, without ever questioning the amount, aim or 'compulsoriness' of it. On the other hand, students would constantly find more or less subtle ways to express their general dislike for local teachers as often and openly possible. Among these, the usage of negative body language (that would suggest resistance), specific noises (sighing loudly) and sometimes insulting them in English whenever they perceived not to be understood were regularly observed. This scenario caused much distress for the teachers, which, in turn, provoked their anger and they exercised even more pressure on the students. Nevertheless, this form of classroom management resulted in optimal attitudes towards learning and intense eagerness to succeed during the lessons and exams.

The general approach towards foreign teachers was manifested mostly in the opposite fashion. Learners often and openly displayed affection both physically (hugs) and verbally by shouting in the classrooms and corridors the degree of love they feel for most of them. The company and coaching of foreign teachers were often preferred, and pupils made extra efforts to connect with them on the social media as well. However, during the teaching and learning part, an extreme paradox could be observed. The foreign teachers may have already started the class, yet many of the students perceived no reason to stop interacting loudly, walking in the class, or even leaving the premises during the lessons. In general, discipline was completely inexistent in the classes, regardless of how much the foreign teachers tried to achieve it. Homework and projects were very seldom done, and the notebooks were regularly left at home (if they ever existed or used for the intended purposes). Additionally, two other interesting facts surfaced during the foreign teachers' lessons. The first one being that, although the foreign teacher explicitly asked silence in the classroom, students limited this request only to speaking English, yet they freely continued their discussion in Mongolian. When the teachers expressed anger and explained that silence meant the total avoidance of emitting sounds in any language, students regularly, week after week acted surprised declaring that they were not actually speaking. When the foreign teachers requested an explanation about this behaviour, students seemed perplexed, and some of them insulted the foreign teachers in Mongolian, thinking that they wouldn't be understood. This proved to be quite unfortunate, since some foreign teachers were fluent in Mongolian. At that point, teachers would reply to them in Mongolian, making it clear that they understood the insult and it was inappropriate to say such things. Following a short silent moment caused by the surprise, students would switch language and would mostly try to speak Mongolian to the teacher or finding new ways to mimic the teachers' accent and tease them about it. Nevertheless, as both schools' policy forbade foreigners to speak any Mongolian in the classroom, learners were simply asked to switch back to English. The fact that students realised that some foreigners could speak their language, caused no change in their attitude towards them. Apparently, if foreigners had some power in the classroom, this happened exclusively regarding the English language.

Students' Opinions

The learners' viewpoints were very uniform. As voiced by a ninth-grade student during the interviews, pupils' attitudes towards Mongolian teachers are shaped this way mostly due to wanting to gain their 'mercy' and to '*navigate easier between the unrealistic expectations of the teachers*'. A fifth-grade student commented laughing: '*Well, it's all about survival… Mongolian teachers are very scary*'. This declaration was passionately confirmed by his peers, and can be linked to their regularity in doing and submitting projects and homework, since according to them, this is a *must*, otherwise the local educators will be '*very, very angry*'. Some of them even stated that '*Mongolian teachers can hurt us*'. This is not intended to understand literally. Learners explained that because of local teachers being knowledgeable about locally acceptable forms of verbal and psychological discipline, the menace seemed imminent and real to them. As a student expressed: '*My teacher will 'kill' me if I don't behave*

well and finish my homework. Later she will call my mother about it, and she and my father will punish me very hard'. The most often voiced idea by the students referring to their local teachers is the most descriptive of all: '*S/he is Mongolian...S/he is strong... We Mongolians*-switching automatically to plural-*are strong.*' The continuous mantra of this idea has strongly suggested students' perception about Mongolian teachers and Mongolians in general to have a '*strong identity and strong will*' as a nation and individually as well. When students were enquired about their behaviour with foreign teachers, the overwhelming majority agreed that as opposed to Mongolian teachers who cause emotional stress and treat students in a too '*strict*' and '*humiliating*' way, foreigners were '*weaker*', '*kinder*' and '*funnier*'. Moreover, the vast majority of students felt that lessons with foreigners were '*less disciplined*', '*more outgoing*' and 'emotionally '*more accommodating*'. According to them, they never realized that this might be disrespectful. They perceived foreigners being '*cooler*', therefore, they believed it was appropriate to behave '*cooler*' too. Thus, according to many of them, there was no need to prepare or submit the foreign teacher's homework on time, in fact the overwhelming majority in all grades saw no need to do any homework assigned by the foreign teacher at all. In the view of a sixth grader '*Foreign teachers are nice, because we don't have to do anything in their lessons.*' Another sixth grader added: '*We do what we want, there will be no consequences, but they will give as good grades anyway.*'

In the Mongolian teachers' opinion, students disciplined behaviour was the basic norm in their classes, being this the expected teacher-student power structure, which gives the foundation of Mongolian society's behavioural hierarchy. As echoing the voice of the majority, a local teacher commented: '*The reasons for this student behaviour in the classroom lays in our [Mongolian] culture. Here in Mongolia, it is a country-wide accepted belief to push children further than their capacity, to overload them with endless pages of homework, to openly humiliate them in front of each other and to completely disregard students' emotions and their specific circumstances. When students want to talk about emotions, problems with their families or learning difficulties, we just tell them to stop complaining*'. Other local teachers stated that at the expense of sounding too harsh, their love for children has nothing to do with the strong discipline they applied in the classroom: '*It is just how it have to be'.* Nonetheless, local teachers were still unhappy about the degree of discipline and respect displayed by the students towards them. Their most often voiced complaints were 1) children being completely spoiled by their parents and, 2) foreign teachers' often less formal teaching style corrupting the students' proper attitudes (Rossabi, 2005; Sarlagtay, 2002). A local English teacher voiced her frustration and fear by stating that '*children in bilingual schools become trapped between two potentially good worlds. Neither they are perfectly proficient in Mongolian language and culture nor they learn English properly. Their sense of identity...well, they haven't got a proper identity*'. Another general understanding and very strong pushing force among the local teachers was that of acting in harmony with the parents' wish, as they wanted their children to '*become good Mongolians'.* A teacher said: '*Parents expect us to raise children according to the traditions...to be good Mongolians before everything else.* As commented*, 'in Mongolia, patriotism and a strong and unambiguous identity is a basic pillar of their culture'.*

In sharp contrast with the students' declaring '*cool*' the lessons with the foreigners, they did not perceive such classroom scenarios as a positive experience, and they felt '*anxiety for being unable to teach anything because of the noise and chaos*'. One of the foreign teacher stated that '*during the first half of the lesson, I just try to silence everybody, however, as soon as I give any order (to open their notebook, or else...) the whole class starts shouting again, walk around and some even get out of the classroom. This is never ending... it feels like they will never understand... I cannot, really just cannot teach anything*!' Foreign teachers regularly expressed their wish to change this situation, to learn how to handle students and to develop better teaching and disciplinary strategies. Yet, this positive attitude usually tired out after only a few hours in the beginning of the day. After the lessons, their perspective changed quickly. A teacher declared: '*When I get into the class, I am positive...after a few minutes, I just focus on surviving the lesson, the day, the semester and the school year'.* A teacher added: '*Every time I think they respect me a little bit, it takes just a few minutes to see the reality again'.* Notably, as it was part of the foreign curricula, foreigners had to teach concepts that would promote students' understanding of global matters. This, according to most of the teachers went '*very unsuccessful*'. One teacher stated: *They (the students) refuse to understand and learn anything about the world. Any attempt to widen their horizon results in their contra-attack stating how Mongolians are more powerful, have better ideas and are stronger'.* The occurrence of such declarations were confirmed by all foreign teacher and were referred as not an isolated incidence.

The Big Picture
Based on the accounts and observation, most students attributed considerably more power and respect to the local educators regardless of the subject used in the classroom in both schools. On the societal level, the

Mongolian teachers, being very much aware of the general expectations, learned to fulfil the parents' every wish regarding their child's specific needs, and the ways students are expected to be educated according the Mongolian system (Fairclough, 1989; Poole, 2019). Therefore, if parents' expectations were met, all parties perceived it as '*social balance*' that is proper part of 'Mongolness' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989). Part of this balance was synonymous of speaking the local language (Arazzi, 2014). Their mother tongue, the same language spoken by the parents, the language of the students' heart, in which they interact, dream and express their desires and sorrows, has a deeper emotional impact on them (Kaplonski, 2004). This was clear in most cases, as students assigned more value to their native language and to the local teachers capable of speaking it perfectly, but not to the foreign teachers who were fluent in Mongolian. Clearly, at this point, language, ethnicity and identity were unbreakably associated (Pătraşcu & Allam, 2017), and language and power became synonymous, even in circumstances that altered this bond for brief instances, such as lessons with foreign teachers (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin,1989; Fairclough, 1989; Jørgensen, 2006).

Paradoxically, foreign teachers enjoyed more emotional trust and confidence regarding learners' everyday lives, struggles, future plans and their frustration towards the Mongolian education system and local educators (Hanson, 2004). This phenomenon was particularly interesting, since due to many pupils' being deficient in the English language, often the whole meaning and particularly the depth of the communication with the foreigners was entirely lost, or just partly conveyed. This utmost capability of emotional adaptation was previously confirmed by a study on Mongolian students' emotions towards the teachers, which unveils that learners often mirror their teachers' conduct, manners and mood (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2020). Nevertheless, this skill did not alter their sense of belonging and duty, when their identity, native language and social space had to be prioritised (Bourdieu,1996; Fairclough,1989; Feng Teng & Lixun, 2020).

The second research question explores the ways linguistic and cultural factors may shape students' identity in bilingual schools. The results unveil how manifestations of teacher-power condition students' national identity, attitudes and understanding towards foreign cultures and their values. Emotions, as a factor of possible divergence or convergence in the bilingual educational panorama is considered, while similarities, contrasts and strategic manoeuvres in teachers' behaviours are explored with the aim of identifying elements for possible future policies for bilingual schools.

Observations
A very conflicting and tense educational scenario unfolded in both schools. Mongolian teachers, ignoring the bilingual nature of the institutions, strongly reinforced their identity and linguistic power and tried to exercise control over the foreigners' teaching strategies, while foreigners strongly pushed students to think and behave in a 'global' way that placed little importance on their cultural and social values. As a result, learners were entrapped in an environment that, to the contrary of the intended goal by the school, caused divisions and power-games. Students, driven by their national identity, as propelled by local educators, attributed less value to the education by foreign teachers. This was further conditioned by the fact that learners were often disapproved and disheartened by foreign teachers, particularly if their English language skills were not high enough, attributing this to the students' perceived intellectual deficiency. Nevertheless, as foreign teachers' availability out of the classes and less formal attitudes contrasted strongly with local teachers' strict conduct, this attracted students towards developing a more foreign-style behaviour, even having limited comprehension about the foreign language. This duality produced a very interesting outcome, not necessarily in a positive fashion. As there was no existing policy by neither of the schools regarding the psychological features of bilingual education, and learners could observe the tension between the local and foreign teachers, this caused an emotionally negative and chaotic environment.

Students' opinion
Learners associated Mongolia and Mongolian teachers with their own identity, yet the foreign teachers' influence and the fact that they had a sense of relax and carelessness with them, promoted their wish to modify their views to a certain degree. A ninth grade student stated: '*I am Mongolian and Mongolia is the best country… but I want to get out of here to study abroad and to live abroad*'. When asked, whether they will respect more foreign teachers in a foreign country, the same student replied: '*I do respect foreign teachers…they are cool…we don't have to do much with them, but at least they listen to us.*' As the conversation unfolded with several students of the same class, it became clear that they believe that education in countries other than Mongolia were thought to be much easier and undemanding. To illustrate this, a seventh grade student with the utmost

seriousness asked a foreign teacher: *'Well, actually, I haven't decided yet...what do you think should I pick Oxford or Cambridge?'* When asked, most students strongly declined the idea of attending a local university, as it was thought to provide '*worthless and corrupt education'*.

Teachers' opinion

The current teaching panorama in bilingual schools presents a challenge for teachers. As reported by the local teachers, in traditional Mongolian culture parents allow children (particularly in early childhood) to behave in a very unconfined fashion, regardless of the consequences, expecting these 'sweet' childhood memories to move their offspring in the future to care for them. This behavioural pattern is usually magnified in wealthy families who have more means to support their children's every wish. This attitude is naturally transferred to school, where parents and children expect teachers to display understanding, supportive and even submissive attitudes. Local teachers are well-aware of these expectations and know how to handle specific socio-cultural issues, which at times may seem to be contradictory with the teachers' strictness. However, as having different cultural background and different educational practices, foreign teachers may react unexpectedly and even emotionally to these paradoxical expectations (Heyworth, 2004). In the light of this, Mongolian teachers often rather aggressively reminded both learners and foreign teachers that they were in Mongolia, and education should be embedded in the local culture, according to local values (Rossabi, 2005) and any other instruction can be ignored without consequences. A local teacher stated: '*Yes, I know that this is a bilingual school, and it is okay that kids learn English, but they are Mongolian!'* Another local teacher added: '*I always encourage children to respect every teacher...but, you know, they are Mongolians and really have to learn the Mongolian ways first, as this is the society they live in'*. Moreover, as many Mongolian teachers declare, lack of strategies and even anarchy are part of their culture (Baabar, 1990), and this can be perceived at the schools as well. The most immediate manifestation of this phenomenon reflects in the lack of consequences of any sort in any domains. A local teacher explained it this way: '*We Mongolians are strong and adapt to everything, this is our culture...and here (in the country and at the schools), believe me, there are many unexpected things happening'*. Interestingly, however, this seemed to be addressed mostly towards the foreign teachers, as locals had very low tolerance for '*unexpected'* events in their classrooms and daily working routine.

Most foreign teachers were uncomfortable with their Mongolian colleagues' ideas. A foreign teacher stated: '*They invite us here, because they (the school admin) want children to learn from us...but later we are just ignored by everyone.'* Foreign educators believed that bilingual education should be seen 'democratically' and that parents would opt for this type of expensive bilingual education because of the foreign presence, and the values attributed to them. Therefore, they often emphasized the importance of 'global-mindedness', which would often manifest itself in creating 'expat' style students, ignoring their cultural background and the fact that their first language, Mongolian, is strongly linked to their traditions and their societal standing (Heyworth, 2004). Additionally, foreigners often complained at an official level about being treated disrespectfully by their Mongolian colleagues in front of the students, which caused anger, frustration and tension in visible ways. A foreign teacher angrily stated: '*Day after day, I arrive to the classroom, but the local teacher refuses to get out...she continues to speak to the kids, collects notebooks...and when I remind her that my lesson has started, she visibly 'suffers' and behaves angrily. This sends a very, very wrong message to the kids'*. Another teacher declared: '*The students can see that we are just clowns here...then they treat us as such...they will think that all foreigners are just stupid'*.

The Big Picture

The question of how linguistic and cultural factors in bilingual schools can influence and mould their learners' identity is of particular importance. The aim of bilingual education should not cause divisions and create two restraining forces, but two driving or positive forces towards a healthy language and identity equilibrium as explained by Lewin (1951). The reports from the participants and the observations expose nationalistic behaviour from both groups of teachers (Cohen, 2004; Tamer, Dereli & Sağlam, 2014), which, in turn, shapes learners' perceptions and attitudes. In fact, children internalising contradictory social and emotional behaviours at school create a foundation for an unhealthy social disposition and a negative emotional milieu, which may affect successful learning (Swain, 2013; Butler 2019; Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2020). Although students reside in their own country, the observed and [sometimes] inspired negative attitudes in bilingual schools may discourage acceptance of diversity. This intolerance for heterogeneity, in turn, may manifest eventually not only in the classroom, but in personal relationships, at future workplaces and in attitudes with people perceived as socially, racially, economically or intellectually different (Hill, 2018). From the foreign perspective, teachers

are too often helpless when facing such events and have difficulties to design and implement teaching strategies that create balance between cultural needs and global attitudes (Sarlagtay, 2002; Jørgensen, 2006). At the same time, local teachers demonstrate being considerably more knowledgeable on how to manoeuvre in the mentioned educational-cultural maze and its widely accepted and long-standing cultural elements (Hanson, 2004).

The implications of such management involve more than a simple (dis)identification and biased behavioural patterns in Mongolian schoolchildren. As opposed to fostering international mindedness and flexibility of thought, it may endanger students' understanding of societal appropriateness, realistic world-view and may draw biased conclusion on the nature of acceptable emotional and communicational skills, while may nurture classist opinions (Tanu, 2016; Schippling, 2018). Currently, the bilingual education system in Mongolia shows traces of these fossilised behaviours and practice (Cravens, 2018). Moreover, if bilingual education and 'global mindset' are perceived only as a symbol of status for the parents, yet, within the schools 'Mongolian ways' are encouraged [and not in the sense of intellectual capital, but nationalism], the real purpose, value and potentially positive outcomes are easily lost. This loss can be considered even greater, if the result and consequence of such practices, instead of encouraging, discourages the learners' curiosity, love for diversity and cultural tolerance (Koh, 2014).

It is of key importance to state that most of the learners graduating from these institutions intend to study abroad, which makes it difficult to comprehend the lack of strategies offered by the schools to overcome the confusion, and to aim for more balance in developing appropriate perceptions about languages and identity (Fearon, 1999; Heyworth, 2004). On the other hand, a particularly thought-provoking contrast can be observed in Mongolian learners' attitudes and perceptions towards foreign languages and cultures in bilingual versus national educational systems. A previous study amongst Mongolian learners from the mainstream education system reported very positive attitudes, open-mindedness and flexibility towards foreign languages, cultures and their speakers (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2019). Therefore, it becomes clear that the problem may not lie in the Mongolian society itself but the erroneous power practices allowed in bilingual schools attended by homogeneous, local children.

Such identity struggles are not unique to Mongolian schools, as bilingual education is always embedded in a sociolinguistic, political, cultural and philosophical context and it rarely reflects only educational preferences or curriculum choices (Baker, 2011; Appel & Muysken, 1987). This occurrence is well confirmed by an identical scenario reported by Fader (2007, p. 12) in a Hasidic school in New York. According to his report, children took more seriously and respected more the educators conducting their lessons in Yiddish, as opposed to teachers teaching subjects through the medium of English. In fact, during an interview an eleven-year-old student declared about his English teacher: '*S'iz nisht kan teacher. S'iz a babysitter*' ['That's not a teacher. That's a babysitter']. Somewhat similarly, in the Mongolian bilingual educational context, three coexisting social and cultural spaces were found, such as the local teachers, foreign teachers and the students, who already belonged to a peculiarly and unevenly mixed social space. It was, in fact, expected to have some minor misunderstandings based on cultural and linguistic differences, which could be seen as natural and not necessarily negative in any similar scenario. However, the behaviour of the local teachers confirmed well Bourdieu's (1998) symbolic violence theory, as Mongolian teachers vigorously exercised it, or at least attempted to do it, in the general teaching panorama against both students and foreigners. The Mongolian teachers were undoubtedly perceived as the higher social class and the bearers of the stronger cultural capital because of their knowledge of the students' culture, language and the strong collaboration with the parents. However, the cultural and educational differences displayed by the foreign teachers and the unconventional behaviour and attitudes of the students triggered (consciously or not) strong symbolic violence from them, possibly trying to nurture the social space considered proper by them and the parents. Here, by no means the foreign teachers are 'victimised', but rather the students, who would, or already have become confused regarding their own social spaces and status, and did not embrace the new, flexible and wider perceptions which the schools should have fostered. Furthermore, the Mongolian teachers' dominance in their field has strongly reinforced Bourdieu's (1990) habitus theory confirming Mongolian educators' role in shaping and strengthening early concepts of identity and their role in future behaviours and opinions. This became clear, as students' value system and responses often reflected the local teachers' attitude and thought processes, in perceiving foreign educators as deserving less respect and requiring less seriousness and effort in their classes. While the habitus theory describes perfectly the ways proper cultural and ethical standards can be instilled in students, in this particular case it manifested in a

'resistance-habitus' against the foreign teachers and the global values intended to be promoted by the schools. Therefore, the Mongolian teachers' attitude would have been understandable in the national educational system, but by no means in a bilingual educational context aiming to promote globalness. On the other hand, the foreign teachers' lack of knowledge and training of the local culture may have involuntarily triggered a stronger response in their Mongolian colleagues. Here, the responsibility of the schools clearly surfaces, as such complications must be identified, addressed and proper training and policies must be developed.

Conclusion

The present study identified some critical factors that determine, modify and/or bias learners' identity and attitudes towards local and foreign educators in Mongolian bilingual schools. Nowadays in Mongolia, bilingual schools' ethnic composition shows an almost completely homogeneous student population, and bilingual education is mostly manifested by the presence of foreign teachers, who embody the 'the other side' or the expected source of global education. The findings reveal that students' national identity is a crucial factor that differentiates their attitudes towards local and foreign teachers. On a daily basis, learners manifested noticeably more fear from, and respect towards local teachers, and the discipline and more positive learning outcome in their classes were obvious. The Mongolian teachers, being knowledgeable about the social expectations and the parents' wishes, educated learners according the Mongolian system (Fairclough, 1989; Poole, 2019). This was perceived very positively by them and the parents, as it was viewed as the manifestation of social 'balance' that is proper part of 'Mongolness' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989). The pillar of this balance was speaking the local language, synonymous to identity according to them (Kaplonski, 2004; Arazzi 2014). The inseparableness of language and identity was also manifested in the fact, that foreign teachers, even those who were capable to understand and speak Mongolian, were not taken seriously and were often ridiculed. Therefore, race and identity were unshakably associated, and power and language became commensurate (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin,1989; Fairclough, 1989; Jørgensen, 2006). On the other hand, foreign teachers were perceived positively, but not seriously. As they were considered more outgoing and less strict, respect towards them was shown mostly in an emotional, friendly fashion, while their educational requirements were completely ignored, as often they were considered 'weaker' in comparison with the local teachers. Students' perception about the two groups of educators in their professional quality was heavily influenced by their national identity and by the social space and status (Bourdieu, 1996) reinforced and promoted by the local educators. Moreover, while their positive emotional attitude towards foreigners seemed not to alter their mindset and identity considerably (Fairclough,1989; Feng Teng & Lixun, 2020), it created a special social space not fully coinciding with the one intended by the Mongolian teachers. As seen, emotions, identity, language and power were heavily intertwined and proved to be the decisive factor that conditioned many of the decisions and attitudes in the schools (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989; Jørgensen, 2006; Swain, 2013; Arazzi, 2014; Butler, 2019).

Very specific elements were identified that shape learners' identity and further cognitive and behavioural development in bilingual schools. Most importantly, local teachers could interact with pupils in their native language, the language of their hearts, which played essential part in their identity formation and is considered as an essential part of their culture. This confirmed Bourdieu's (1990) habitus theory, with particular emphasis on how learners' developing value system was conditioned by their ethnic, cultural and social background. In both schools, students received considerable pressure from local teachers to strengthen and further develop this habitus. Nevertheless, for learners manoeuvring between the local societal and cultural expectations and the foreign influence often led to confusion and inappropriate behaviour. This, as opposed to an ideal state described in Lewin's force-field theory, showed two pushing forces. Here, instead of moving towards a balanced state, students are pushed into two completely different directions, thus alienating any possible point of convergence between the two languages, cultures and the opportunity of developing a new global aspect of the pupils' identity. The presence of these two pushing forces created distress among the teachers as well. In line with Bourdieu's (1998) symbolic violence theory, locals exercised considerable symbolic violence on both learners and foreign teachers. In reality, local and foreign educators intended to provide the best educational strategies known by them, yet they proceeded according to their culturally acceptable approach, without proper understanding, tools and policies to stabilize the impending linguistic and cultural shock faced by the students. This phenomenon led to an academically and emotionally imbalanced environment in the schools. Therefore,

the initial objective of educating bilingually and bi-culturally competent and balanced global-minded individuals has failed.

The present research has identified some key areas for improvement in bilingual schools. Since in a growing number of countries bilingual education has no real bilingual context and culture, and learners are from the same ethnic/linguistic background, the creation of new educational strategies is urgently needed. Both local and foreign teachers should attend specific inter-cultural courses especially designed for the educational panorama of the target country. Learners should have readily available resources and discussions with teachers and school psychologist, where foreign language and culture-related emotional intelligence and appropriate behaviours are taught. Moreover, school administration should design and display clear policies on the nature and aims of bilingual education, which is respectful towards the local culture, yet highlights the benefits of bilingualism and its cognitive and cultural advantages. While this study offers some insight into the drama of language and identity in bilingual schools in Ulaanbaatar, it is limited by its geographical location and by the specific culture where it was investigated. Further research is much needed on educational leadership in bilingual schools and the development of intercultural literacy courses. Finally, in Rhydwen's (1998, p.101) words: '*Language...is intimately connected with people and it cannot be treated simply as an intellectual puzzle to be solved*.'

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