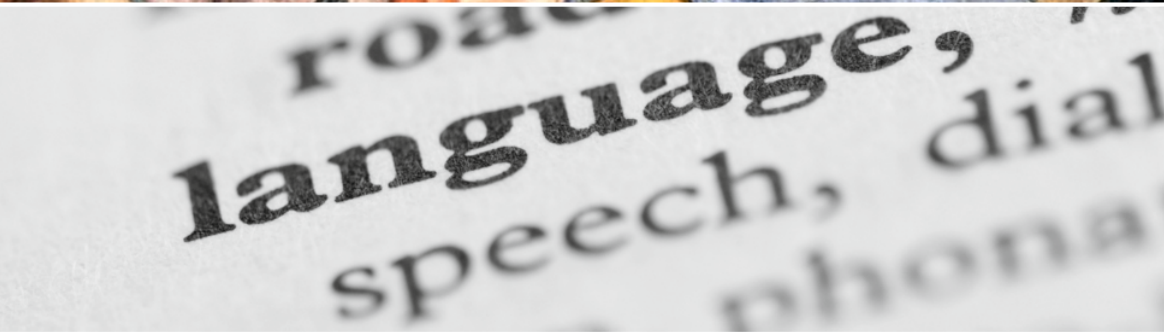


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Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége
Association of Hungarian Phd and DLA Students

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SPRING WIND**

**2014.
Debrecen**

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MOTIVATION IN THE LEARNING OF THE FINNISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to see what motivates students to learn Finnish as a foreign language. Previous research and materials on L2 motivation mainly focus on the learning of the English language. To learn more about L2 motivations from another perspective, this study focuses on a language, which is not obligatorily taught in public school systems. The investigation was done by questionnaires in three different cities: in Kuopio and Vaasa, Finland and Vienna, Austria. The results show that the main reasons to learn Finnish are the sound of the language and the culture as a whole.

Keywords: L2 motivation, Finnish, attitude, questionnaire.

Introduction

Research into motivation in language learning is a field of second language acquisition (SLA) and third or second language acquisition (TLA). As we know and might experience ourselves motivation is one of the most important factors that determine success or failure in any learning process. As Zoltán Dörnyei (2001: 2) states: “Motivation is related to one of the most basic aspects of the human mind, and most teacher and researchers would agree that it has a very important role in determining success or failure in any learning situation. [...] language learners who really want to learn a foreign language (i.e. who are really motivated) will be able to master a reasonable working knowledge of it as a minimum, regardless of their language aptitude.” Usually motivation can be divided into two elements. In SLA the source of motivation and the strength of motivation can be measured. The reason for which both strength and source can be measured is that the target group is usually elementary- and high-school students, who have to learn a second language obligatorily. In other words, it is not a matter of choice if they learn an L2, so it is possible, that there is no motivation at all. From this aspect the levels of motivation according to Noels et al. (2000) are amotivation, external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and intrinsic motivation, which has three different sublevels (knowledge, accomplishment, and stimulation) [cited in Dörnyei 2005: 78].

In the case of the learning of the Finnish language, the source of the motivation can be researched, but the strength of the motivation is less relevant, because learners are able to decide whether they want to learn the language or not, so if they have no desire to learn it, they can stop learning it at any time, without any consequences. Altogether, this means that almost all learners of the Finnish language have intrinsic motivation. However this does not mean that there are no exceptions, or there is no diversity amongst the learners of the Finnish language, but it is mostly irrelevant, especially for this current study.

Methodology¹

Data collection was carried out among two groups of subjects. The first round of data collection took place in July 2013 in Finland. The participants were the students of CIMO's summer course in Finnish language and culture. The main features of the group are the following: almost all of the 50 subjects are university or college students, but from different fields of study, whose average age is 22.4, and who are from different countries from all over the world.

The second round of data collection took place in November 2013 among the students of the University of Vienna. There were 33 participants from different levels of classes (Finnish 1, 3 and 5). Almost all of the participants were linguistics students, with the average age of 25.3.

The main differences of the groups are their nationalities and their fields of study. There may be differences in the L2 motivation related to the subjects' different cultural backgrounds. Also the fact that the Vienna group consisted of linguistics students might result in different motivations, for example linguistics students might choose to learn the Finnish language out of professional curiosity.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is based on the instructions and advices of Dörnyei & Csizér's article. [Dörnyei & Csizér 2012] The filling out of the questionnaire was fully voluntary and anonymous. The questionnaire consisted of several questions on the social background of the participant, and 21 questions about their motivation.

The first two questions are about the source of motivation. In the first question participants were asked to choose a main reason why they started to learn Finnish, while in the second question, they were asked to evaluate on a five-point scale how much role the given reasons played in their language learning choice. Further questions asked the participants of their future plans with their Finnish skills, as well as previous experiences in relation with the Finnish language, Finnish people, Finnish culture and Finland.

¹ This research was supported by the **European Union** and the **State of Hungary, co-financed by the European Social Fund** in the framework of TÁMOP-4.2.4.A/ 2-11/1-2012-0001 'National Excellence Program'.

Results

The questionnaires were digitized and analyzed with Microsoft Excel. The result shows that there are mostly individual reasons the participants had in starting to learn the Finnish language, which range from the sound of the language through heavy metal music, to having a Finnish girlfriend or boyfriend. However the evaluation of the roles of different reasons shows a very clear tendency that culture as a whole and the sound of the language play a very important role in choosing a language to learn.

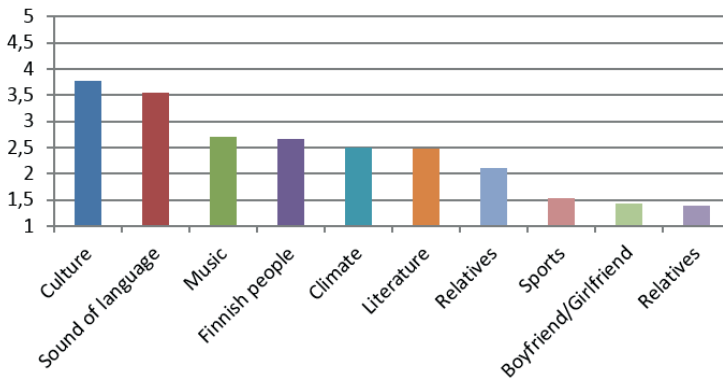


Figure 1. The average values for different factors in motivation

The results of the questionnaires also highlight some interesting facts about the groups' further plans with their Finnish skills. A great number of the participants (89%) want to work or live in Finland in the future temporarily or even permanently. But the most surprising result is that more than half of the participants (60%) want to teach the Finnish language to their (future) children in some point of their lives. In other words this means that those who chose to learn a language, there is a great chance that he or she will teach (or at least have the willingness to teach) this language to his or her children at some point of their lives, according to these results.

Summary

The results mainly show that there is a tendency that culture and the sound of the language are the most important reasons in the learning of Finnish as a foreign language. Music and previous experiences with the Finnish people can also be a good motivation to learn it.

These results correspond to the features of what has been called the “Korean Wave”, which states that a language can become a co-product of various cultural export items, like TV-series, music, movies, etc. So the export of cultural products in the long run can result in not only direct economic increase (income for the exporters), but under certain circumstances it can also lead to indirect benefits like an increase of tourism, possible immigrants and foreign workforce, and besides these financially evident benefits, the positive increase of the country’s prestige. (see Figure 2 below)

Stages of hallyu	Explanation	Countries or region
1. Popularity of Korean popular culture	Korean dramas, movies and k-pop become popular outside of Korea. Other countries start broadcasting Korean dramas.	Philippines, Malaysia, Russia, Uzbekistan, United States, South America, Europe and Africa
2. Purchase of Korean popular culture products	Besides broadcasting Korean dramas also movie ticket sales and DVD sales start rising. Also foreigners start buying k-pop records and attend concerts.	Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Brazil, Iran
3. Purchase of other Korean products	Hallyu inspires countries to buy Korean products related to the Korean popular culture such as food, Korean language, plastic surgery and tourism	China, Hong Kong, Japan,
4. Favorable impression of Korea	Other countries get a new positive impression of South Korean lifestyle and culture	Taiwan

Figure 2. The stages of hallyu (=Korean Wave) table by Tuk [Tuk 2012] who adopted the concept from Kim [Kim 2011]

In the future, the results of this research can be used for motivating students to choose a certain language to learn, thus, for example making a language more attractive to students through popular music in that language. This is especially important for language revitalization programs that lack

the optimal number of motivated language learners. One so far un-researched example of popular culture motivating minorities to learn their minority language is the case of the Udmurt language, where it is clear that after the performance of the Buranovskiye Babushki in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2012, the demand to learn the Udmurt language grew rapidly.

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