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Are Language Learning Strategies Motivation – specific?

Language Learning Strategies and Motivation

Motivation is one of the factors that may exert a strong influence on the way language learners use learning strategies. Although in strategy literature this learner factor is often mentioned as relevant, the relationship between strategies and motivation has been the main focus of very few studies (e. g. Kaylani 1996, Levine, Reves & Leaver 1996). The need to study the link between the learner's predisposition to use certain strategies and his motivational pattern has been reiterated in literature (e.g. Skehan 1989, Cohen 1998). One of the main conclusions of the good language learner project in Canada (Naiman, Frölich, Stern & Todesco 1978) concerns the need to relate strategies to motivational (and personality) factors in the learner. Nunan (1996) found that strategies training had a significant effect on learner motivation.

Since language learning motivation is a socio-psychological category and, thus, influenced by the socio-cultural context in which a language is being learned (Gardner 1985), it is essential that the instruments used to assess motivation of particular language learners take into account the characteristics of the learning context, that is the validity of the measure is a key consideration.

In this study we aimed at investigating the relationship of foreign language learning strategies and learner motivation of Croatian EFL learners.

In order to capture the full scope of the motivation of Croatian learners of EFL, the phenomenon was measured by an instrument developed specifically for Croatian learners (Mihaljević Djigunović 1998) (See Appendix 1). It consisted of 38 Likert-type five-point scales of agreement measuring three types of motivation and two demotivators isolated by the factor analysis procedure. The types of motivation were: pragmatic-communicative, implying the learner's wish to use English for practical purposes coupled with the wish to be able to communicate with foreigners; integrative motivation, referring to the learner's wish to become a member of the cultural-linguistic group that speaks English as L1; and affective motivation, indicating that the learner wishes to know English because he likes the English language as such. The first demotivator was termed the teaching-setting demotivator and referred to being demotivated for learning English because the learner disliked the methods of teaching used in the course, the teaching materials were not stimulating, or because of some quality attached to the teacher (e.g. the teacher's English was not good enough, the teacher was partial in assigning grades and the like). The second demotivator, the learning difficulties demotivator, implied that the learner

did not like learning English because he found it too difficult and complicated to learn or that he lost ground and could not cope with the learning material because of deficient knowledge base (frequent among non-beginners).

The motivation questionnaire was administered to three samples of subjects in three studies.

In each study the subjects also filled in the 5.1 Version of Oxford's SILL (1990) that had first been translated into Croatian, the subjects' L1. A factor analysis procedure was performed on the SILL results and six strategy groups were isolated: memory, communicative, metacognitive, cognitive, comprehension and socio-affective strategies.

The first study

The sample consisted of 137 primary school EFL learners in grade eight (13-14 years of age). 96 had been learning English for eight years, while 41 had been learning EFL for five years. They came from five different schools in Croatia.

Results and discussion

The overall motivation mean for the sample and the separate means for the three types of motivation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means for motivation

	Mean	SD
Overall motivation	3.93	.49
Affective motivation	3.58	.76
Integrative motivation	3.11	1.09
Pragmatic-communicative motivation	4.09	.56

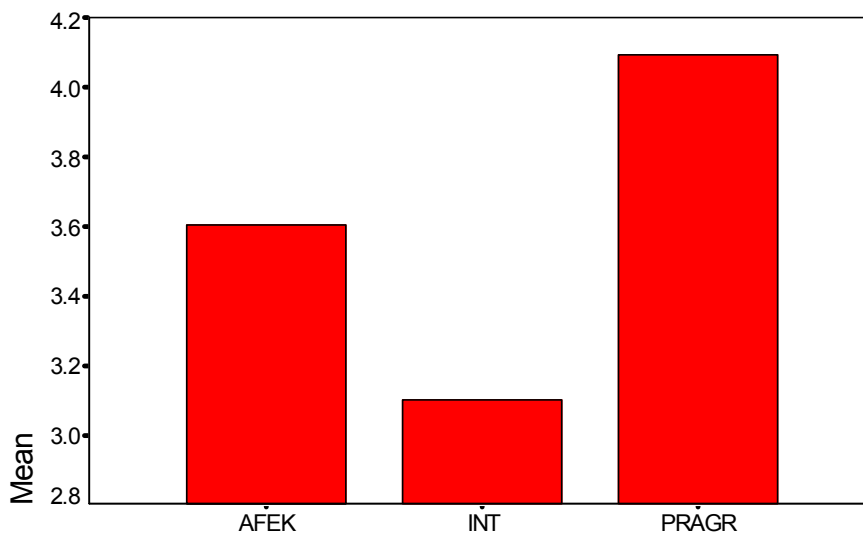


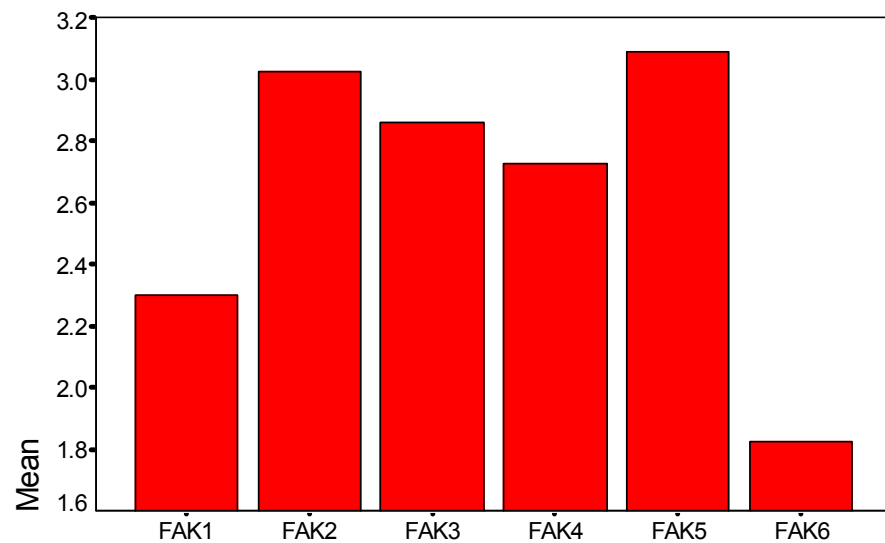
Figure 1: Means for the three types of motivation

As can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 1, the subjects reported above average overall motivation. The strongest type was pragmatic-communicative motivation, while integrative motivation was the least intensive type. The same pattern was found in an earlier study with Croatian primary school learners (Mihaljeviæ Djigunoviæ 1998) as well as with a sample that comprised a wide age range (12 - 24 years) (Mihaljeviæ 1991).

Table 2 presents the overall SILL mean and means for the six groups of strategies used by Croatian EFL learners.

Table 2: Means for whole SILL and strategy groups

Strategy group	Mean	SD
SILL	2.65	.60
Memory	2.31	.71
Communicative	3.04	.77
Metacognitive	2.89	.87
Cognitive	2.73	.74
Comprehension	3.09	.78
Socioaffective	1.86	.66



(FAK 1 - memory strategies, FAK 2 - communicative strategies, FAK 3 - metacognitive strategies, FAK 4 - cognitive strategies, FAK 5 - comprehension strategies, FAK 6 - socioaffective strategies)

Figure 2: Means for the six strategy groups

The results indicate that the subjects' overall use of strategies was in the medium range. The same is true for most of the individual types of strategies. Comprehension and communicative strategies were used most frequently and memory and socioaffective strategies were used least frequently.

To get an insight into the relationship between language learning strategies and learner motivation correlation coefficients were computed between the variables (Tables 3 & 4).

Table 3: Correlation coefficients between overall motivation and learning strategies

	Motivation
SILL	.47**
Memory	.27**
Communicative	.57**
Metacognitive	.46**
Cognitive	.38**
Comprehension	.26**
Socioaffective	.17

**p<.01

Strategies were found to correlate significantly with motivation. The more motivated the learners were to learn English the more frequently they reported using strategies.

When motivation was correlated with each of the six strategy groups, all except the correlations with socioaffective strategies were found statistically significant. Thus, the more motivated the learners were the more memory, communicative, metacognitive, cognitive and comprehension strategies they used. The lack of significant correlation with socioaffective strategies may be due to the fact that the use of this group of strategies among Croatian EFL learners is generally reported as very low (Mihaljeviæ Djigunoviæ, in press).

SILL meanss were also correlated separately with each type of motivation. All the correlations were statistically significant.

Table 4: Correlation coefficients between overall SILL and motivation types

	SILL
Afecctive	.41**
Integrative	.33**
Pragmatic-communicative	.36**

**p<.01; *p<.05

To get a deeper understanding of the connections of learnings strategies and motivation, correlation coefficients were also computed between each strategy group and each of the motivation types (Table 5).

Table 5: Correlation coefficients between motivation types and learning strategies

	Memory	Communi- cative	Meta- cognitive	Cognitive	Compre- hension	Socio- affective
Afecctive	.22*	.47**	.37**	.26**	.24**	.17*
Integrative	.18*	.42**	.25**	.28**	.21*	.14
Pragmatic- communi- cative	.14	.53**	.32**	.29**	.23*	.13
Teaching setting	.20*	.20*	.28**	.02	.13	.04
Learning difficulties	.11	.34**	.27**	.25**	.01	-.12

**p<.01; *p<.05

Only affective motivation correlated significantly with all strategy types. Apparently, the more the learners liked English as a language, the more they were willing to use different ways of learning it.

Integrative motivation correlated significantly with all but socioaffective strategies. As already mentioned, socioaffective strategies were generally used least often.

Pragmatic-communicative motivation correlated significantly with communicative, metacognitive, cognitive and comprehension strategies, but not with memory or socioaffective strategies. One explanation may be that learners with this type of motivation embraced the communicative approach to learning EFL and relied less on memorization of words and mechanical repetition of linguistic material and more on top-down ways of dealing with language.

The second study

The 169-person sample of secondary school age EFL learners, aged between 14 and 17, came from two first grade, two second grade and two third classes of a typical Croatian grammar school. They had been learning English in school for six (first graders), seven (second graders) or eight (third graders) years at the time of the SILL and motivation questionnaires administration.

Results and discussion

The overall mean on the motivation questionnaire was 3.77. The highest mean was found for pragmatic-communicative motivation, and the lowest for integrative motivation. (Table 6, Figure 3)

Table 6: Means for motivation

	Mean	SD
Overall motivation	3.77	.44
Affective motivation	3.44	.68
Integrative motivation	2.83	1.03
Pragmatic-communicative motivation	3.94	.55

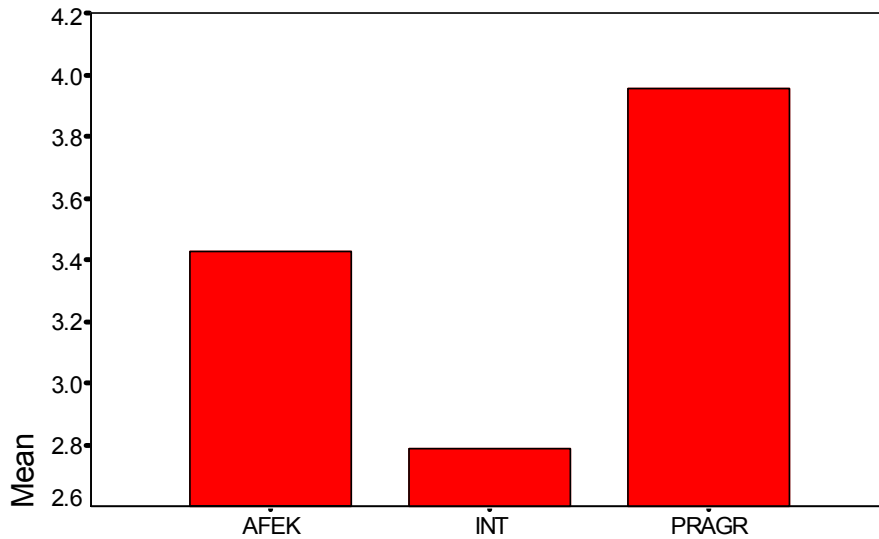
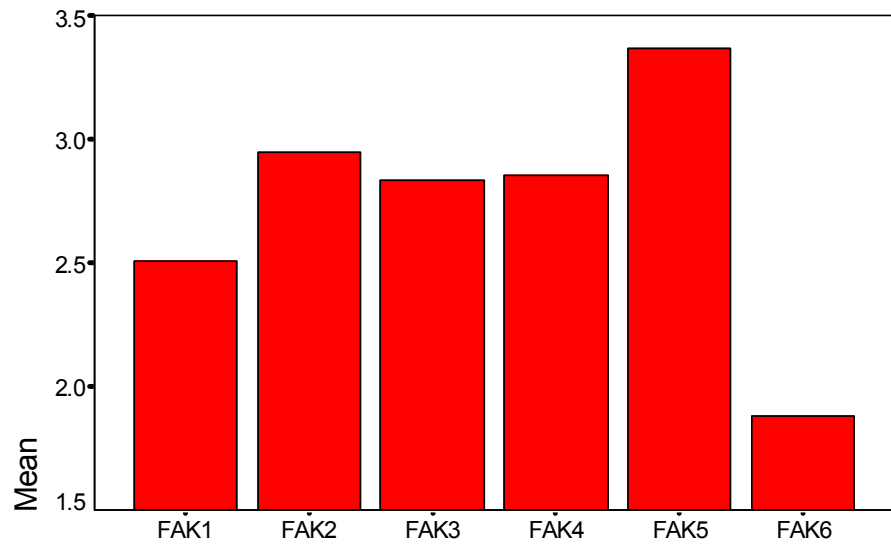


Figure 3: Means for types of motivation

The overall SILL mean was 2.74, thus placing the subjects' strategy use in the medium range. The most frequently used strategies were comprehension strategies. They were followed by communicative, cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The least frequently used strategies were, again, memory and socioaffective strategies. (Table 7, Figure 4)

Table 7: Means for whole SILL and strategy groups

Strategy group	Mean	SD
SILL	2.74	.52
Memory	2.52	.57
Communicative	2.94	.73
Metacognitive	2.84	.76
Cognitive	2.85	.67
Comprehension	3.37	.70
Socioaffective	1.89	.65



(FAK 1 - memory strategies, FAK 2 - communicative strategies, FAK 3 - metacognitive strategies, FAK 4 - cognitive strategies, FAK 5 - comprehension strategies, FAK 6 - socioaffective strategies)

Figure 4: Means for the six strategy groups

Correlations were computed for the cumulative results as well as for individual groups of strategies and types of motivation.

Table 7: Correlation coefficients between overall motivation and learning strategies

	Motivation
SILL	.44**
Memory	.22*
Communicative	.51**
Metacognitive	.47**
Cognitive	.31**
Comprehension	.27**
Socioaffective	-.03

**p<.01; *p<.05

A significant association was established between motivation and strategy use. The more motivated the learners were, the more frequently they used learning strategies.

Motivation correlated significantly with all but socioaffective strategies. Highly-motivated secondary school learners, thus, tended to report a higher use of memory, communicative, metacognitive, cognitive and comprehension strategies than less-motivated learners.

Table 8: Correlation coefficients between motivation types and SILL

	SILL
Affective	.44**
Integrative	.21**
Pragmatic-communicative	.31**

**p<.01; *p<.05

The SILL mean correlated significantly with all the three types of motivation.

Table 9: Correlation coefficients between motivation types and learning strategies

	Memory	Communicative	Meta-cognitive	Cognitive	Comprehension	Socioaffective
Affective	.24**	.52**	.41	.28**	.28**	.067
Integrative	.02	.28**	.21**	.15	.17*	.14
Pragmatic-communicative	.07	.43**	.30**	.20*	.26**	-.12

**p<.01; *p<.05

Affective motivation correlated significantly with memory, communicative, cognitive and comprehension strategies, but not with metacognitive and socioaffective strategies. Integratively motivated learners tended to use communicative, metacognitive and comprehension strategies, while learners with high pragmatic-communicative motivation frequently used all but memory and socioaffective strategies.

The third study

This sample included 56 university undergraduates. Most had been learning EFL for ten, some for eleven years. The age range of the subjects was between 18 and 21.

Results and discussion

The means for motivation are presented in Table 10 and Figure 5. The overall motivation mean was 3.70. Again, the same pattern was repeated: the highest mean

was found for pragmatic-communicative motivation and the lowest for integrative motivation.

Table 10: Means for motivation

	Mean	SD
Overall motivation	3.70	.41
Affective motivation	3.55	.64
Integrative motivation	2.43	.94
Pragmatic-communicative motivation	4.12	.49

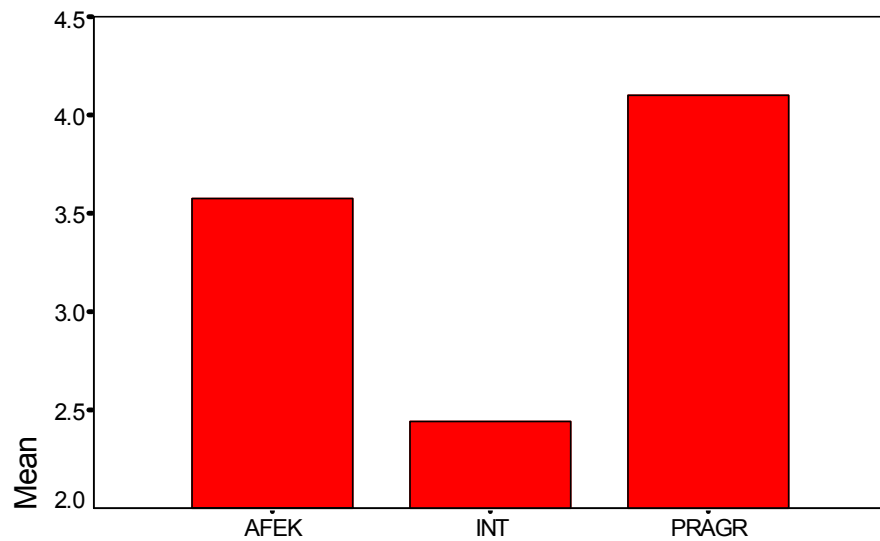


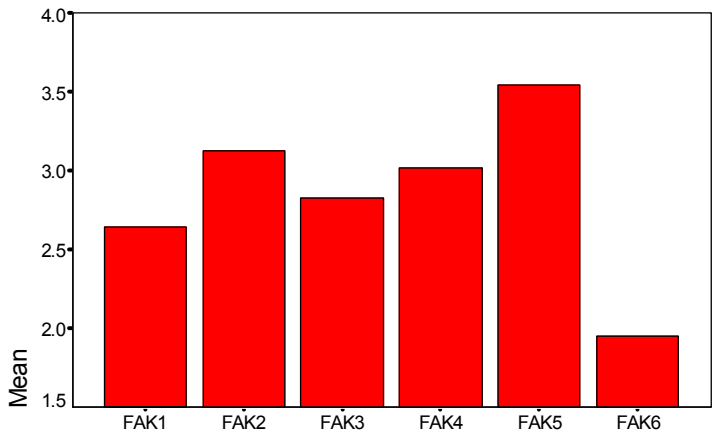
Figure 5: Means for types of motivation

The overall SILL mean (Table 10) was 2.86, again in the medium range. From Table 10 and Figure 5 we can also see almost the same pattern that emerged with the primary school and secondary school samples: the highest frequency was found with comprehension strategies, followed by communication, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, while memory and socioaffective strategies were the least frequently used strategies.

Table 11: Means for whole SILL and strategy groups

Strategy group	Mean	SD
SILL	2.86	.44

Memory	2.65	.45
Communicative	3.13	.64
Metacognitive	2.83	.69
Cognitive	3.02	.69
Comprehension	3.55	.56
Socioaffective	1.96	.56



(FAK 1 - memory strategies, FAK 2 - communicative strategies, FAK 3 - metacognitive strategies, FAK 4 - cognitive strategies, FAK 5 - comprehension strategies, FAK 6 - socioaffective strategies)

Figure 6: Means for the six strategy groups

Correlations between motivation and strategy measures were also looked into (Tables 11 & 12).

Table 11: Correlation between overall motivation and learning strategies

	Motivation
SILL	.4643**
Memory	.19
Communicative	.49**
Metacognitive	.49**
Cognitive	.31*
Comprehension	.32*
Socioaffective	.05

**p<.01; *p<.05

SILL correlated significantly with motivation. Adult learners with high motivation tended to report a higher use of strategies than less-motivated learners. Four types of strategies correlated significantly with overall motivation: communicative,

metacognitive, cognitive and comprehension. No connection was established between memory and socioaffective strategies and motivation. Again, it seems that motivated learners relied less on memorizing words and more on ways of approaching the learning tasks with more global as well as more complex strategies. Also, they either did not need to use self-encouragement and cooperation or were not accustomed to these strategies, as may be indicated by the generally low reported uses of socioaffective strategies.

Table 12: Correlation coefficients between motivation types and SILL

	SILL
Affective	.30*
Integrative	.14
Pragmatic-communicative	.37*

**p<.01; *p<.05

The coefficients in Table 12 indicate significant correlations between SILL and affective and pragmatic-communicative types of motivation. Learners who liked English or were interested in using it for practical and communication purposes made extensive use of different ways of mastering the language.

Table 12: Correlation coefficients between motivation types and learning strategies

	Memory	Communicative	Metacognitive	Cognitive	Comprehension	Socio-affective
Affective	.29*	.25	.28*	.21	.24	-.21
Integrative	.12	.13	.09	.09	.26	-.05
Pragmatic-communicative	.10	.37*	.40**	.26	.42**	.02

**p<.01; *p<.05

Affective motivation correlated with memory and metacognitive strategies. Adult learners who learned English because they liked it made an effort to organize their learning and, in contrast to common practice, were willing to work on memorizing English words.

Integrative motivation did not correlate significantly with any of the strategy groups.

Pragmatic-communicative motivation correlated with communicative, metacognitive and comprehension strategies. Adult learners with such an orientation, thus,

looked for out-of-class opportunities to use English, organized and monitored their learning and made an effort to understand what was being communicated as well as what they were trying to express.

Conclusion

The results of the three studies described above, if considered together, present interesting findings. Since many of the correlations established between overall motivation and strategy scores or their components are statistically significant but not very high, they can be taken as indications of relationships that may possibly exist between language learning strategies and motivation.

Inspection of the significant correlations in the three studies, thus, indicates that the connection of strategies with motivation decreased with increasing age. More strategy types significantly correlated with motivation types in the primary (15 significant correlations) and secondary school (11 significant correlations) samples than in the adult sample (five significant correlations only).

Integrative motivation correlated with the lowest number of strategy types in all the three samples (8 significant correlations). In terms of established links with strategy types it showed the highest number of connections for the youngest learners.

Affective motivation showed the highest number of significant correlations in the three samples taken together (12 correlations) and was most influential with primary school learners.

Pragmatic-communicative motivation was the second most productive motivational type (11 significant correlations).

As already emphasized, these findings should perhaps be looked at only as indications of possible connections. Since in many studies to date both motivation and learning strategies have been found to contribute to achievement, the link between these two learner variables is worth pursuing. Once it is established, there will still remain the issue of interpreting the link in terms of cause and effect. Before we know more about this cause-and-effect issue, it is equally possible to assume that motivation stimulates the use of strategies as it is that strategies cause success which, in turn, increases motivation.

Though obtaining deeper insights into the relationship between language learning strategies and motivation are an overwhelming task, due to a large number of possible interactions of other relevant factors with both motivation and strategies, this relationship presents itself as a fascinating research challenge.

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Appendix 1

Motivation questionnaire

1 - totally disagree; 2 - partly disagree; 3 - neither agree nor disagree; 4 - partly agree; 5 - totally agree

1. English enables me to communicate with many people.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Knowing English, I can read foreign magazines.	1 2 3 4 5
3. English will help me in my future education.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I often use English to talk to foreigners.	1 2 3 4 5
5. English will be useful to me in my future profession.	1 2 3 4 5
6. English enables us to become part of the world.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I use English in everyday life to understand pop music, films etc.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Thanks to English I can broaden my cultural horizon.	1 2 3 4 5
9. With English I can travel all over the world.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Knowing English, I could read literary works in the original.	1 2 3 4 5

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 11. Sometimes I use my English to translate instructions on foreign-made machines (e.g. household appliances). | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. Thanks to English I can learn more about the life of the English, Americans, Australians etc. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. English is a very interesting language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. English is a very beautiful language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. I like English words. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. English sounds very nice. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. I enjoy pronouncing English words. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. English is a stupid language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. I would like to be like the English, Americans, Australians, etc. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. I would like to marry someone from USA, Britain, etc. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21. I'd like to know English in order to be able to live in the USA, Britain, etc. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. English will be useful to me when I visit my relatives/friends in the USA, Britain, Australia, etc. one day. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. Our teacher teaches English in a very interesting way. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. I don't like the teaching methods our teacher employs. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25. Our teacher assigns grades unjustly. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 26. I'd learn English if the course was more interesting. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 27. My teacher of English motivates me to learn. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 28. Our teacher is not motivated to teach. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 29. The teaching materials we use are very motivating. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 30. I don't like learning English because I have a bad teacher. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 31. Our teacher pays too much attention to good pupils. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 32. During English classes I'm always in panic because I know I will not understand the teacher when she addresses me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 33. My pre-knowledge of English is so low that I could catch up with the others only if I started from the very beginning (and that I can't do, of course). | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 34. After getting a bad mark I have no more wish to learn. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 35. English is too difficult for me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 36. My parents force me to learn English. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 37. I'd rather learn another foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 38. I prefer to learn something more useful than English. | 1 2 3 4 5 |