



MEASUREMENT OF STUDENTS' MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article measures various subjective and objective indicators of motivation for learning a foreign language among students of Trakia University. The main goal is to derive the overall and instrumental motivation that would affect the respondents, the most pressing needs for learning a foreign language, as well as the flows or the degree of involvement of the respondents. The applied methodology consists of designed surveys, and some of the identified motives would determine the practical application of adequate incentives to maintain the motivation of students for learning a foreign language. The identified factor dependences generally indicate approximately the same intensity in the motives of the respondents, as the high interest in it is explained first of all by the desire of students to gain knowledge of language, but not least of culture, behavior and traditions. The highest degree of motivation is expressed in the desire for their knowledge and skills to find practical realization in different professional environments.

Key words: overall and instrumental stimulation, degrees of involvement, realization.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation, like all mental processes, is subordinated to the two-plan relationship between the objective and subjective state of the personality. In general, it is defined as a system of subjective and objective impulsive arguments, motives, incentives that directly define the content and guidelines of a particular human activity, behavior, etc. (1) The existence of such a process is allowed to explain the causes and grounds, activation and purposefulness of human behavior (2) This assumption rests on the objectively observable fact that in his behavior the individual prefers one object, situations, stimuli and others, while avoiding others. It can be deduced that there are different personality

relationships towards the environment as the main manifestation of individual stimuli, defined as positive and negative. An important feature of human motivation is its duality, that is, a positive-negative structure, and these aspects manifest themselves in the incitement and immediate realization of individual needs, but also in one's duties and responsibilities. Another important feature of motivation is that it has various manifestations such as motivation for learning, achievement, work, motivation for development and personal improvement, etc. Motivation in human behavior and, in general, of human activity, contains subjective components in so far as it reflects the immediate conditions of the subject. At the same time, it also contains a number of objective needs, because it reflects different situations relevant to the particular individual. The subjective side of motivation is represented in psychology by necessity, tension, experience of incitement, aspiration, inclusivity or desire, will, etc., while the objective side –

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through concepts such as valence, inviting character, cognitive or affective value, functional value, etc. (3) Furthermore, the fact that the motivation of a particular behavior as a whole, as well as the individual. (4)

The Concepts ‘Motivation for Learning’ and ‘Motivation for Learning a Language’

The comprehension apparatus, which is applied in this scientific report, includes the psychological concept of "motivation" as the main determinant of any psychophysiological process. Researchers study motivation thoroughly because it is involved in every human activity, as well as in the information processing processes governing an individual's behavior. In turn, motivation in general has a strong impact on learning motivation and in particular on motivation to learn a language, becoming a major driver in the overall improvement of personality. Motivation for learning is a complex of the most diverse motives that arise in the process of social attitude to behavioral forms of personality, as well as in the processes of building and forming the mental activity of the person, reflected in the practical subject matter. This is a structural relationship of diverse, heterogeneous elements that emphasize the mutual conditioning and structural dependence of individual motives (5). The formation of motives for learning is the result of overall education and education in the course of the vital development of personality, and as we age, along with the thirst for knowledge, the societal importance of motivation for learning increases (6). According to Leontiev, three main stages are brought to the development of motivation for school-age learning. In the first stage, the motives are sought in the learning itself; the second stage includes the school life, as well as in relations in class and in a school environment; the third regards the surrounding world, i.e. in the future profession and in life prospects (6). These stages complement each other and thus arise diverse individual pathways of development of the types of motivations for learning.

Learning also improves learning motivation, which is an accurate manifestation of learning, (7) and it is an integral part of the pedagogical conditions for effective management of the quality of education, both of learners in a school

environment and of those who are developing in a university environment. (8) In order to increase the results of the learning process, they must be closely related to the motivation of each learner with the application of a personal-individual approach, the promotion of research training, the improvement of meta cognitive skills and the use of information and communication technologies. (9) Furthermore, the teacher's instructions for triggering the current motivation for learning depend on the existing general attitudes towards learning in the learner, (10), which has a very strong impact on a later stage of personality development. Motivation for learning can affect achievement motivation because the latter is an important psychological prerequisite for success in professional activity and learning in general. Learning content must be experienced as personally significant, as related to a particular purpose or as a personal obligation. (11) Therefore, nowadays Bulgarian Universities must develop and create new practical education towards lifelong learning and training. In order to achieve these goal Economics faculties at the Bulgarian Universities offer training in the following disciplines: business communications, public relations, mass media, information technology, language training and others, but this does not lead to the perfect preparation of their students. (12)

Based on empirical research on children and young people, Rosenfeld (5) classifies content-oriented learning motives from three perspectives: value, time, and guidance. The value aspect encompasses activity directed at something, or activity because of the activity itself. Therefore, according to Rosenfeld, motivation for learning may be aimless or have a certain purpose. This distinction seems too problematic, as it is difficult to claim that there is an "aimless" motivation to learn. This is why other researchers such as Levi (10), formulated the concept of target motivation for learning, which should be understood as learning for personal advantage, learning on the basis of social identification, learning as an anticipation of success or avoiding failure, learning as a result of coercion and pressure, learning due to a conscientious effort, in view of practical life goals or as a consequence of societal requirements. The time aspect characterizes the

range of the motive experience and refers either to up-to-date processes, such as anticipation of success, or to future events, such as a practical life goal. The guideline aspect reveals a specific dominance of the motivation of learning oriented either towards the Self or society, or for personal gain or for a social requirement. Research by Levin and other specialists in the field shows that the psychophysiological effort in negative motivation for learning, for example, in difficulty, under pressure and others, is significantly greater than with positive motivation. Many psychological studies on learning problems show that the success of learning does not depend solely on the intellectual functions of the person, such as endurance, readiness, conscientiousness, etc. These and similar conclusions are drawn in studies with lagging students. (13) (30) Therefore, the authors believe that motivation for learning is only a prompting and the beginning of learning in general, but also the result of a complex and protracted process that needs to be managed pedagogically in such a way that motivation to learn becomes an important prerequisite for intensive learning. Among other things, there is a positive result of a deliberately planned process of training and education.

Motivation for achievement. Overall and instrumental motivation

In a more detailed analysis in the motivational process, the researchers look for a link between motivation for learning and motivation for achievement, pointing to two aspects of motivation: overall and instrumental. (14) The overall motivation is characterized by the positive attitude of language learners towards the respective language community and the desire to integrate into this group. The term attitude is present in different fields of science, such as psychology, sociology, communications, publicity, etc. because it is related to the analysis of human behavior. (15) Instrumental motivation refers to the goal of achieving social or economic improvement through the learning of the foreign language that is associated - but with more functional reasons for learning the language. Weiner presents the theory of motivation by combining the concept of motivation for achievement and ideas about the level of claims. (16) Hypothetically, the concept of motivation

for achievement explains all persistent individual differences in direction and level of achievement. It has been found to have a very strong influence on the purposes and content of human activity, as well as on the effort exerted in it, and has a decisive importance for behavior in highly intense situations. Motivation for achievement is an important psychological prerequisite for success in professional activity and learning. Often, the situations in which the person falls are characterized by the existence of two conditions: the specificity of the tasks to be performed and the standard of performance of these tasks. (17)

These situations are called situations of achievement, the main approach being the pursuit of achievement and avoidance of failure. (18) The representatives of this concept are more sensitive to their concept of the Self and therefore have more need for social approval. By carrying out an activity to achieve one goal or another, they strive for success, even if they reach the desired result at the cost of great efforts. (19) This points to the social root of the motivation for achievement, which is highlighted by Hibsich and Forberg, which are based on the views of Russian psychologists Uznadze and Miyasishchev. (20) These researchers define the motivation for achievement as an established stereotype and understand under this concept a reaction readiness dependent on the object and group norms.

The quality of motivation depends on the proportion of those motives that determine the public importance of human activity. It can be formed by supporting the rational understanding of the personal and societal significance of an action, as well as through activities that create positive emotions in successfully overcoming the difficulties experienced in them. Alagin suggests that differences in levels of achievement needs can be explained by the opposite need to avoid failures. (21) Some people, he says, are success-oriented, while others have a high level of anxiety about failures and are motivated to avoid failure. This theory of motivation can address the following questions:

- Why would some students have a higher level of aspiration than others?
- Why do some students seem to always avoid success?

- Why do low-claim students fail in their attempts at success because they set unrealistic goals?
- Why can high-level students try to find a solution again, even after failure?
- Why wouldn't low-achieving students be encouraged even after success?

Behavioral theory, according to Weiner, emphasizes that individuals are motivated when their behavior is reinforced. Social learning theorists, he says, emphasize the impact of maintaining self-esteem and reinforcement, emphasizing that observing someone's encouragement of someone's behavior can motivate the observer to do the same. Theorists encourage teachers to reward students in different ways when they give correct answers. (22) Weiner believes that encouraging practices can be effective, but they are still an external form of motivation, predisposing students to perceive learning as a means of achieving reward. He suggests that overuse of rewards can lead to resentment, dependence on teachers, and a shake-up of internal motivation. Cognitive theory of motivation, according to Weiner, emphasizes that individuals are motivated when experiencing cognitive dissonance or are willing to find a solution to a problem. (22) The problem is that it is often difficult to create cognitive dissonance that applies to all students. In addition, the ability to express specific information is a way to influence people. It is a whole magnetic package of abilities, strategies and patterns, which is like the ability to communicate successfully. (23)

When students experience success or failure, they automatically search for reasons. The motivational importance of such perceived causal control over one's success and failure has been a focus of Bernard Weiner's Attribution theory (24). The theory rests on three basic assumptions. First, it assumes that people attempt to determine the causes of their own behavior and that of others. Second, it assumes that the reasons people give to explain their behavior govern their behavior in predictable ways from one situation to the next. And third, it assumes that causes attributed to a particular behavior will influence subsequent emotional and cognitive behavior. Thus, the core of the Attribution theory is that individuals seek to explain and interpret, or

"attribute", their successes and failures in activities in terms of causes. In other words, individuals ask questions such as, "Why did I fail the exam?" or "Why did I achieve so well?". It is, however, more likely that these types of questions are asked.

Research Design

The respondents included students from the Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, Veterinary Medical Faculty and the Language and Specialized Education Centre for International Students (LSECIS), aged 18 to 50 years – full-time and part-time, studying at Trakia University. Their specialties were Veterinary medicine, Agronomy, Agricultural engineering, Zooengineering, ecology and Environmental protection, fish farming and aquaculture, agricultural economy and trade, regional economy and management, business economy. The population of the target group was 350 students, of whom 92 students were surveyed by criterion of typical groups judged by the teachers who conducted classes with them.

The survey cards consisted of open and closed questions divided into separate modules that explore different language competences of learners when learning a foreign language. Before completing the student questionnaires, students were explained that the purpose of the survey is mostly research and the aggregated data would support the process of their learning. Each group was instructed how to fill out the questionnaires, and in case of ambiguities they were shown individually. Students were confident in the anonymity of the survey and that all responses would only be used for the specific study by foreign language tutors. As an essential element in the overall methodology of the empirical study, a specially designed questionnaire is used to examine the motivation for learning a foreign language. The survey cards contained 21 statements concerning the reasons for learning a foreign language, and respondents are required to determine the degree of credibility of each statement for themselves and to reflect the response on a 3-step response scale that contains the following options: "yes, true", "somewhat true", "not true". The questionnaire also included two main subareas: internal (comprehensive /

meaningful) and external (instrumental motivation).

RESULTS

The demographic characteristics of the study population are as follows. By demographic "gender" population of foreign language learners in the VMF, FA, FE is in the ratio of 64.29% male and 30.36% women. Demographically, "age" is the most numerous is the group of 20-year-olds

with a 50% share, 30-year-olds are 23%, 18-year-olds are 11%, 31-40 year olds are 9% and 41-50 year olds are 2%. The age distribution is an extremely important element of current research because many of the early studies on achievement motivation, according to Acharya, found a link between the ways parents raise and educate their children and children's motivation for achievement. [25]

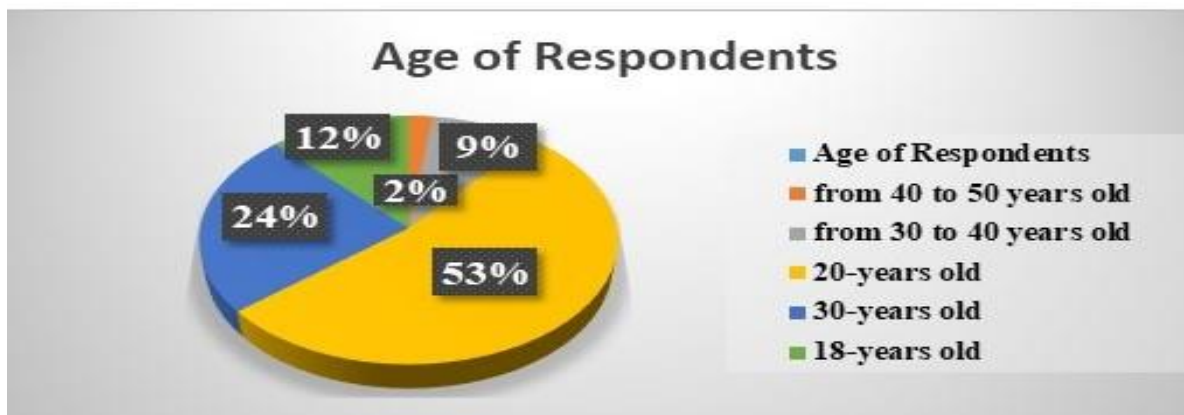


Figure 1. Age of respondents.

Why children succeed or fail in school is the most enduring question for educational research. The findings of present study and earlier researches supported the notion that parents' education is one of the most important factors influencing child's achievement motivation. Highly educated parents have greater success in providing their children with the cognitive and language skills that contribute to early success in school. Accepting the assertion that motivation for achievement is an integral result of early childhood education means that teachers have little hope of changing the child's aspiration to learn.

This is the reason to seek feedback from the surveyed persons about their training in a foreign

language before applying to Trakia University, and to find some of the respondents' attitudes about early foreign language learning. According to the results of the survey, it was found that the persons surveyed had studied foreign languages prior to their admission to university, with the percentages being highest for school education as the duration and commitment of the learners. However, the results presented in the diagram do not state the reasons for conducting this training, and the preferences of the respondents regarding the form of training, the specifics of teaching, the desire to learn one language or another are not established.

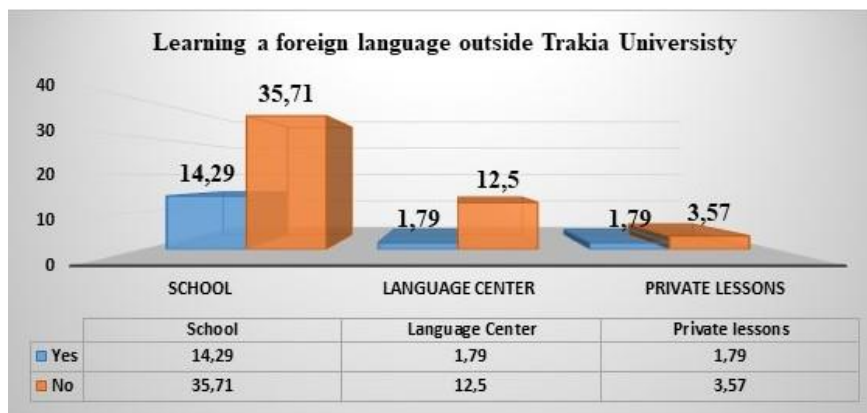


Figure 2. Learning foreign language

Research on early education and formation of learners focuses on methods that can be applied in language learning as well as in training in general. This prompted Bernard Weiner (26) and several of his colleagues in the 1970s to create the Attribution Theory as an alternative explanation of the Theory of Achievement. According to the author, it is based on the assertion that the way a person understands and interprets causes of achievement and their failures are the main and determining factors of their motivation for success. According to other researchers, "the study of language functions and their improvement as part of nonverbal, verbal and linguistic development of learners is at the heart of foreign language learning and determinants the construction of a number of strategies related to the successful acquisition of a particular language". (27) Certain explicit and implicit methods that can be introduced in training, both foreign and Bulgarian citizens, contribute to the perception, reflection and correct reproduction of language models related to similar or foreign aspects of the learners' native language. According to the opinions submitted on the components defining the stages of language

improvement of students studying at Trakia University, there is an expressed need to establish the different motives of the persons studied with respect to the mother tongue/s. We have found the presence of certain dependencies among learners in different foreign languages about the links between the native and the foreign language. Moreover, it should be taken into account that some of the respondents – mostly foreign citizens – are speakers of two languages, which makes them a more specific research group, i.e. the so-called bilinguals. The study must therefore establish whether this facilitates or further hinders the group of foreigners examined. The division of respondents by demographic "mother tongue" is presented in the following diagram, finding that the most numerous is the group of Bulgarian speakers – 76% and 20% speak another mother tongue. Additional distribution has been made according to the studied languages with respect to the personal choice of respondents and preferences regarding the acquisition of a foreign language at Trakia University. For the overall student population studied, the percentage distribution by languages is presented in **Table 1**:

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents by studied foreign language.

Language	Percentches
Bulgarian language	15.09 %
French language	13.21 %
German language	30.19 %
English language	41.51 %

The highest number of English learners – 41.51% or 38 students, and those studying German are 30.19% or 28 students. As for the number of French and Bulgarian learners, the participation rate is close, with 13.21% or 12 students surveyed for French and for Bulgarian as a foreign language - 15.09% or 14 people. Regardless of the preferences of the respondents to one or another foreign language, they are given the opportunity to self-evaluate the preliminary knowledge as well as their successes in the learning process carried out in the past. On a summary scale of three levels of proficiency in

the foreign language studied - "low", "medium" and "high" the most numerous is the middle-level group, twice the group with a low level of language proficiency and negligible is the group with a high level of language proficiency. It is assumed that the self-assessment of the respondents would be accurate because among the teachers the results of the received scales are discussed and it is found that learners with an extremely high level in a foreign language are a very small percentage – in this case 0.3%, as opposed to the average level, where a score of 6.7% of respondents is reported.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Students studying Bulgarian, French, German and English as a second language were surveyed in the empirical study of motivation for learning a foreign language among students from the FE, VMF, FA and LSECIS. On the basis of the survey conducted, the following dependencies shall be taken into account. In general, approximately equal intensity is observed in the motives of students for learning Bulgarian, French, German and English. The high interest in the foreign language is explained in the first place by the desire of students to gain knowledge of something new such as language, culture, behavior, traditions, as well as their desire to find practical realization in the professional sphere. A higher intensity of the following motives was reported for the items: *Because French is interesting to me*-1,3, *Because learning French pleases me*-1,7, *Because I like to accumulate all sorts of new knowledge*-2,4 and *Because I will have better chances of finding a job* -2,7. A three-step score scale was applied, with respondents giving answers: yes, "somewhat" and "no", measured from 1 to 3. Students also indicated learning a foreign language as the main motive for their desire to seek realization abroad, as evidenced by the results in the indicators: *Because I want to live abroad in the future* from the motivation module, which is differentiated from the language module, the conversion module, as well as the module for personal reasons. Regarding the motivation to learn English as a foreign language by Bulgarian students is supported by certain arguments among the learners, which are found in studies of Bulgarian authors. A higher level of English proficiency has a statistically significant impact on the following components of motivation for learning a foreign language: more frequent use of English loanwords by young people ($F = 3.50$, $p < 0.05$), their lower environmental impact ($F = 5.11$, $p < 0.05$), their self-assessment of a richer vocabulary ($F = 7.69$, $p < 0.05$). The opinion of the persons surveyed is that in many cases there are no appropriate Bulgarian words ($F = 5.36$, $p < 0.05$), that using English is a better way of expressing ($F = 4.97$, $p < 0.05$) and that they serve more frequent business contacts with foreigners ($F = 20.11$, $p < 0.05$), and that they are used to

download English programs on devices ($F = 7.96$, $p < 0.05$).

Therefore, the high degree in motivation of Bulgarian students regarding the perception of English as a foreign language is expressed in an increase in the degrees of self-assessment, good performance in society, a sense of success and chances of good realization. Another interesting point in the research part is the identification of significant differences in the intensity of students' motives varying between languages, as the highest values are evident in these possible choices: *Because I have a predilection for learning a foreign language*, *Because it allows me to apply for scholarships abroad*, *Because I will be able to study abroad*, *Because it is useful for my work with computers*, *Because I want to get along with my foreign friends*, and *Because it is in the curriculum of the language module*.

The item: *Because I have a predilection for learning a foreign language*, reports a higher intensity of motive among foreign students in Bulgaria who study Bulgarian as a second language compared to Bulgarians taught in foreign languages. This is due to the fact that the majority of foreign students at Trakia University are of Greek, Turkish, Ukrainian, North Macedonian or Russian origin. Bulgarian and Russian belong to the Slavic languages, which is why there are many similarities between the two language systems. According to L. Spasova, the role of the teacher as a communicator, or a teacher-psychologist who is shaped as an exceptional orator, can influence – verbally and nonverbally – on the "spontaneous or natural" thinking of the perceiver. It must be an effective communicator and offer models of mutually enriching communication. (28)

It is good to skillfully demonstrate tolerance for the differences that arise in the so-called "mixed group of students from different backgrounds or with varying degrees of language preparation". Another essential element in the training, which would greatly support the learning of international students, is the strong influence of Bulgarian folklore present in the training. The main reason is that "Bulgarian folklore connects the spiritual development of Bulgarians with the

cultural traditions of the other Balkan peoples, regardless of their religious identity and their own ethnic history". Bulgarian folklore connects the spiritual development of Bulgarians with the cultural traditions of the other Balkan peoples, regardless of their religious identity and their own ethnic history. (29)

Some dependencies were found between the group work of the students, as well as their motivation for achievement in a foreign language, as 41% of respondents identified the following components for stimulating learning – translation, meeting foreigners, grammar exercises, speaking, watching movies. The role of the foreign language teacher is in finding an individual approach involving verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as using a meta language among foreign students, for psycholinguistic approaches in training. The process of forming personal and group motivation is determined by circumstances that do not have a linguistic basis.

This is why researchers also seek to discover some personal and group motivations when learning a foreign language, because the way a person understands and interprets the causes of their achievements and failures are the main and determining factors of their motivation for success.

With the help of additional statistical procedures, non-linguistic motives for learning a foreign language were established, such as: Because it enables me to apply for scholarships abroad. When adding the item: Because I will be able to train abroad there is a decrease in the intensity of motivation among students studying German. Their reluctance to study abroad is associated with their language knowledge being at initial level - A1/A2 under the Common European Framework of Languages. They have concerns about the fluent use of the foreign language in a real situation.

In contrast to the indicator *Because it is useful for my computer skills*, the intensity of the motive is highest among students who learn English, which is explained by the fact that all computer programs are supported in the target language.

In the indicator *Because I want to get along with my foreign friends* from the "motivation" area of the survey in comparative terms, the highest intensity of motive is reported among students studying Bulgarian as a foreign language. The explanation is that they want to adapt to the Bulgarian environment and be trained in this direction at the university. In this group of students, the intensity of the motive in indicator *Because it is in the curriculum* and *I am obliged to study a foreign language* is also higher. For them, the foreign language, respectively Bulgarian, is mandatory.

There is no significant difference between the three Western languages studied - English, German and French in the degree of expression of the indicators in the student responses.

Some recent studies found that "The Bulgarian language, due to the nature of its structure, system and language code, has a radically different status and purpose from other national languages (English, French, German) (29) The Bulgarian language, due to the nature of its structuring, its system and its language code, has a fundamentally different status and purpose than other national languages (English, French, German).

In comparison with their almost identical descriptive structural profile, there is a derived, but not significant, mismatch with the descriptive (indicator) structural profile of foreign students studying Bulgarian as foreign to Bulgarian students studying other languages.

CONCLUSION

The bringing out of the main linguistic and non-linguistic motives in the practical application of adequate incentives to maintain students' motivation for language learning requires a number of studies to be conducted in each of these modules. The uniform intensity found in the students' reasoning for learning Bulgarian, French, German and English is explained by the similarity in the difficulties encountered by the persons surveyed. Overcoming difficulties is found in the desire of learners to gain knowledge of the language, culture, behavior and traditions of the peoples who use the relevant foreign languages. The high degree of intensity of

motives such as: interest, learning pleasure, opportunities for realization and convergence with representatives of other nationalities can lead to personal improvement and experience of learning a foreign language as stimulation for the best practical realization. Some behavioral changes have also been found among the students of Trakia University, whose motives are to find a job abroad, obtain scholarships, improve their computer skills, as well as the must to study a foreign language because it is in the curriculum. The study also found a strong link between the origin of students – Bulgarian and non-Bulgarian and some separate motives in learning a foreign language, because only foreign students believe that the language studied is attributed to them unlike Bulgarian students, who identify themselves as more difficult in learning. The strongest opposition is found among the following statements: receiving scholarships among Bulgarian learners, which has the highest values and training abroad, found among German learners, which, however, is not very stimulating for them. A decrease in motivation for learning a foreign language is found in foreign students, who see their future studies at the university through the proficiency of this language. There is no significant difference between the three Western languages studied - English, German and French in the degree of expression of the indicators in the student responses regarding the obligatory status of the foreign language.

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