The dynamic nature of motivation in language learning: A classroom perspective

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Abstract

When we examine the empirical investigations of motivation in second and foreign language learning, even those drawing upon the latest theoretical paradigms, such as the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2009), it becomes clear that many of them still fail to take account of its dynamic character and temporal variation. This may be surprising in view of the fact that the need to adopt such a process-oriented approach has been emphasized by a number of theorists and researchers (e.g., Dörnyei, 2000, 2001, 2009; Ushioda, 1996; Williams & Burden, 1997), and it lies at the heart of the model of second language motivation proposed by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998). It is also unfortunate that few research projects have addressed the question of how motivation changes during a language lesson as well as a series of lessons, and what factors might be responsible for fluctuations of this kind. The present paper is aimed to rectify this problem by reporting the findings of a classroom-based study which investigated the changes in the motivation of 28 senior high school students, both in terms of their goals and intentions, and their interest and engagement in classroom activities and tasks over the period of four weeks. The analysis of the data collected by means of questionnaires, observations and interviews showed that although the reasons for learning remain relatively stable, the intensity of motivation is indeed subject to variation on a minute-to-minute basis and this fact has to be recognized even in large-scale, cross-sectional research in this area.

Keywords: L2 motivational self system, motivational changes, process-oriented view of motivation, interest and engagement

As Dörnyei and Skehan (2003, p. 614) explain, "motivation is responsible for *why* people decide to do something, *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity, and *how hard* they are going to pursue it." It is clear that all of these factors are of pivotal significance in the case of learning second and foreign languages, with the effect that, to quote Dörnyei (2005), "motivation is of great importance in SLA: It provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process; indeed all other factors involved in SLA presuppose motivation to some extent" (p. 65). It is thus not surprising that different theoretical positions have been advanced over the years with a view to elucidating the role of motivation in this domain and numerous studies have been conducted in order to identify learners' reasons for language learning, gauge the intensity of their effort, or identify the most efficacious ways in which the nature and magnitude of their motivation could be boosted (see e.g., Dörnyei, 2001, 2005; Ellis, 2008; Ortega, 2009; Pawlak, 2011). It is unfortunate, however, that most of the theoretical models and the research projects they have spurred have failed to take into consideration the dynamic character of motivation, as reflected in its temporal variation, both over extended periods of time, and within single lessons as well as sequences of such lessons. The present paper is an attempt to partly rectify this problem by reporting the findings of a classroom-based study which sought to investigate changes in the motivation of Polish senior high schools students, not only with respect to their overall goals and intentions, but also their interest and engagement in English lessons taught over the period of four weeks.[1]

Literature Review

According to Dörnyei (2005), it is possible to distinguish the main phases in research into motivation in second language learning, namely: (a) *the social psychological period*, the hallmarks of which are Gardner's (1985) motivation theory and Clément's (1980) theory of linguistic self-confidence, (b) *the cognitive situated period*, characterized by the influence of cognitive theories deriving from the field of educational psychology, such as Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory or Weiner's (1992) attribution theory, and (c) *the process-oriented period*, emphasizing the importance of motivational changes and represented by the work of Ushioda (1996), Williams and Burden (1997), Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), or Dörnyei (2000), among others. There are also oth-

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er important developments in this area, such as, for example, relating motivation to the performance of communicative tasks (e.g., Dörnyei, 2002; Kormos & Dörnyei, 2004), exploring the link between motivation and group dynamics (e.g., Dörnyei, 2001; Ushioda, 2003), identifying the causes and symptoms of demotivation (e.g., Nikolov, 2001), examining motivational self-regulation (e.g., Ushioda, 2003), or adopting a neurobiological perspective on motivation (Schumann, 1998, 2001). While all of these issues have shed new light on the role of motivation in SLA, due to space limitations, the present review will only focus on the theoretical positions and research findings that are directly relevant to the study reported below. For this reason, the discussion will be confined to a brief overview of the theory of the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002), the theoretical models underpinning the conceptualization of motivation as a process, and the studies that have attempted to provide insights into temporal aspects of this attribute.

The theory of the L2 motivational self system has its roots in two crucial theoretical developments in the field of second language acquisition and mainstream psychology, namely the concept of *integrativeness* or *integrative motivation* introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1959) and the results of psychological research on the *self* (e.g., Markus & Nurius, 1986). As Dörnyei (2005) explains, such a reconceptualization of the construct of motivation stems from a number of observations such as the fact that learning a foreign language does not only involve acquiring a new communicative code, but also affects the personality of an individual, difficulties involved in applying Gardner's (1985) concept of integrativeness to contexts in which learners have little contact with native speakers, as well as the empirical evidence (e.g., Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002) that the key components of motivation, such as integrativeness, instrumentality, attitudes towards L2 speakers or manifestations of motivated learning behavior are intricately interrelated. In light of these considerations, he reinterprets the notion of integrativeness as the L2-specific aspect of an individual's ideal self, because, he argues, "if one's ideal self is associated with the mastery of an L2, that is, if the person that we would like to become is proficient in the L2, we can be described as having an integrative disposition" (2005, p. 102). Drawing on the motivational paradigms proposed by Noels (2003) and Ushioda (2003), he identifies the following dimensions of the L2 motivational self system: (a) *ideal L2 self*, which is related to the abilities and skills that learners imagine they could possess, with the effect that they are intent on reducing the distance between their actual and ideal selves, (b) *ought-to L2 self*, which is connected with the attributes that the learner thinks should be possessed in order to avoid adverse consequences, and (c) *L2 learning experiences*, which is a situation-specific factor, related to the immediate learning environment and experience. The theory

is intended to be compatible with the process-oriented understanding of motivation, as the three components are believed to evolve all the time in response to a host of variables.

Attempts to account for the dynamic dimension of motivation have been made, among others, by Williams and Burden (1997), Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), and Ushioda (1998), but the existence of temporal variation in this respect can also be explained in terms of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and dynamic systems theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). Williams and Burden (1997) differentiate three stages of the motivation process in language learning: (a) *reasons for doing something*, (b) *deciding to do something*, and (c) *sustaining the effort, or persisting*, with the first two of these being related to undertaking the effort and the last to persevering in pursuing the goals set. In a somewhat similar vein, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) propose a model of motivational evolution that distinguishes three stages, each of which can be associated with different motives: (a) *the preactional stage*, where motivation to accomplish a goal is generated and thus it is possible to talk about *choice motivation*, (b) the *actional stage*, during which the initial motivation has to be maintained and protected, and which thus involves *executive motivation*, and (c) *the postactional stage*, which entails some kind of evaluation of the learning process and can be referred to as *motivational retrospection*. Ushioda (1998) argues that in institutionalized learning motivation is characterized by flux rather than stability, which is related to the fact that learners' goals evolve over time under the influence of positive and negative experiences related to the second language and the process of learning it. As she comments, "the notion of a temporal frame of reference shaping motivational thinking integrates the phenomenon of evolution over time, which seems central to the learner's experience of and thus conception of language learning motivation" (1998, pp. 82-83). The explanation of the temporal aspect of motivation in terms of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory is based on the assumption that motivation is socially constructed in the process of interaction with more proficient language users, as such social participation enables learners to develop culturally valued goals and intentions, which translates into their greater effort to acquire a foreign language (e.g., Bronson, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Rueda & Moll, 1994; Ushioda, 2008). Finally, the process-oriented view of motivation sits well with the tenets of dynamic systems theories (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), since they help us account for the fact that learners' motives, effort and engagement are subject to constant changes in response to a whole gamut of internal and external influences, which are intricately interrelated and are themselves in a constant state of flux.

Research into the temporal variation of motivation in language learning is still in its infancy, with the effect that the relevant studies are few and far be-

tween, particularly when it comes to fluctuations in motivational intensity during a lesson or several lessons. Kozumi and Matsuo (1993), for example, detected a decrease in the motivation of Japanese seventh-grade learners of English over the period of seven months, after which time it began to stabilize and more realistic goals started to be pursued. A decline in the level of motivation over time has also been reported by other researchers. Tachibana, Matskukawa and Zhong (1996), for example, found that their Chinese and Japanese participants became less interested in learning English from junior to senior high school, and Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant and Mihic (2004) observed a drop in the scores on the measure of attitudes and motivation from the fall to the spring in the case of Canadian learners of French at the university level. Similar trends have been identified in the research projects undertaken by Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt and Shohamy (2001) in Israel, and Chambers (1999) and Williams, Burden and Lanvers (2002), both of which involved language learners in Great Britain. Of relevance are also studies that have managed to identify changes in the nature of learners' motivation over time, such as those carried out by Ushioda (2001) or Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005). The first demonstrated that Irish adult learners of French were able to develop more specific L2-related personal goals over the period of 16 months, whereas the second investigated factors affecting the motivation of language learners over two decades and pinpointed a number of temporal patterns and motivational transformation episodes. An attempt to identify factors responsible for motivational evolution has also been undertaken in two recent studies by Hsieh (2009) and Nitta and Asano (2010). The former, which involved two Taiwanese learners interviewed before and after a 1-year long study abroad program, found changes in the participants' goals, attitudes and self-concepts, as well as pinpointing a number of internal and external factors responsible for these changes. The latter focused on the transformations in the choice and executive motivation of Japanese students over a 1-year course and provided evidence for fluctuations in these two areas and the impact of social and interpersonal factors, such as teaching style, intergroup relations and group cohesiveness. Finally, it is interesting to mention the research project by Egbert (2003), who investigated the role of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) in second language learning, and managed to identify task conditions under which such a state can take place. These included the perceived balance between task challenge and participant skills, the existence of opportunities for concentration and attention on task goals, the perception of intrinsic interest and authenticity, and a sense of control over process and product. This study is particularly germane to the present paper as, in a sense, it touches on changes in motivational intensity over the course of a lesson, the main thrust of the research project reported below.

The Study

Research Questions

As mentioned above, the research project reported in this paper sought to investigate the dynamic nature of motivation by tracing its fluctuations over time, both more generally, and in the course of single lessons and sequences of such lessons, as well as accounting for the changes in this respect in terms of the tasks performed, the aims and stages of a particular class, and the overall motives driving the participants' efforts to learn English. To refer to the process model of motivation introduced by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) and briefly characterized above, the study can thus be said to have addressed issues involved in both choice motivation and executive motivation. This is because, on the one hand, it set out to capture the learners' reasons for learning English, adopting as a point of reference the theory of L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002), to explore the modifications these motives undergo over time, and to gauge the extent to which they can be related to changes in the participants' motivated learning behavior in the language classroom. On the other hand, it also focused on motivational intensity, manifesting itself in "maintaining assigned goals, elaborating on subgoals, and exercising control over other thoughts and behaviors that are often more desirable than concentrating on academic work" (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p. 45), looking into how this intensity fluctuates within a particular language lesson as well as how it varies from one class to another. Specifically, the study was designed to address the following research questions:

- What factors underlie the participants' motivated learning behaviors and in what ways do such behaviors manifest themselves?
- How do these factors and behaviors change over time?
- How do levels of motivation change in the course of a lesson and a sequence of lessons?
- What factors are responsible for these changes?

Such a focus dictated that motivation was defined not only in terms of the antecedents of motivated learning behaviors, or "what moves a person to make certain choices" (Ushioda, 2008, p. 19), but also, and more importantly perhaps, as the manifestations of their willingness to "engage in action, and to persist in action" (2008, p. 19). With an eye to investigating the latter aspect, following Crookes and Schmidt (1991) and Peacock (1997), motivation was operationalized in practical terms as interest and enthusiasm for the learning task, persistence, and levels of concentration and enjoyment. The validity of such an approach is supported by Ushioda (1993), who calls it "practitioner validated,"

arguing that increased learner participation and enthusiasm are invaluable in and of themselves, and, more recently, by Cowie and Sakui (2011), who found in their research that, in the view of teachers, "motivated students demonstrate a set of specific behaviors in the classroom, such as showing enthusiasm and effort, working on task and working independently" (p. 124).

Participants

The participants were 28 Polish senior high schools learners, 18 females and 10 males, who attended the first year of a 3-year program and were divided into two separate groups for the purpose of their English classes, one of which consisted of 15 (Group 1) students and the other comprised 13 learners (Group 2). Although, as is typically the case in educational institutions in foreign language settings, the participants' command of English varied quite considerably and the two groups could be viewed as mixed-proficiency, the overall level of advancement could be characterized as falling somewhere in between pre-intermediate or intermediate, or roughly A2 in terms of the *Common European Framework of reference for languages.* The average semester grade in English for all the students was 3.13 on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest), with the standard deviation equaling 0.99, which shows that the learners' performance was middling and there was much individual variation. It is interesting to note that the groups differed to some extent in these respects, as the mean grade of 2.8 in Group 1 was lower than average and the standard deviation value of 1.32 was higher, whereas the reverse was the case in Group 2, with the mean grade amounting to 3.46 and the standard deviation value standing at 0.66. Despite these differences, which mainly testify to greater disparities in the level of the students in Group 1, the teacher of the two groups described the two classes as equivalent in terms of their overall motivation. The participants in both groups had four English classes a week and, although scant information is available in this respect, it can be assumed, based on what the participants said in the interviews and the present author's experience, that at least some of them had the benefit of additional classes outside the school, with the caveat that it cannot always be interpreted as indicating superior levels of motivation.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted over the period of 4 weeks and it involved four naturally occurring English classes during which the participants in the two groups were taught by their regular teacher and covered the same material

based on successive units from the coursebook. The choice of instruments used to collect data on the participants' motivation was dictated by the inherent features of this notion and the research questions that the study aimed to address. According to Dörnyei (2001), motivation is abstract and therefore it is not directly observable, it is multidimensional with the effect that "the specific motivation measure or concept . . . is likely to represent only a segment of a more intricate psychological construct" (pp. 185-186), and it is inconsistent and thus subject to temporal variation. For these reasons, methodological triangulation was employed and multiple data collection tools were used for the purpose of the study with a view to obtaining a more multifaceted picture of the participants' motives, effort and engagement, and changes in these areas over time. These were as follows:

- *a motivation questionnaire* containing 42 6-point Likert-scale items, where 1 indicated complete disagreement and 6 complete agreement; the tool was intended to supply data about the participants' motives for learning English; it was based on surveys designed by Ryan (2005), Taguchi, Magid and Papi (2009), and Csizér and Kormos (2009), who fell back upon the theory of L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2009); the items included in the instrument measured such factors as *motivated learning behavior* (i.e., effort and persistence in learning English), *ideal L2 self* (i.e., learners' perceptions of themselves as successful speakers of English), *ought-to L2 self* (i.e., opinions about the need to learn English in the eyes of significant others), *family influence* (i.e., parents' roles in motivating learners), *L2 learning experience* (i.e., the extent to which learners enjoy learning English in a specific context), *instrumentality* (i.e., regulation of goals for pragmatic gains or in order to avoid adverse consequences), *knowledge orientation* (i.e., learners' opinions about the impact of English on extending their world knowledge), and international posture (i.e., students' views about English as a tool for communication with foreigners); the internal consistency reliability of the instrument was established for all the participants by calculating Cronbach's alpha, which amounted to 0.82, a value that is highly satisfactory;[2]
- *interviews* with 11 students, 5 from Group 1 and 4 from Group 2, at two points in time with a view to tracing changes in the nature and intensity of motivation as well as the factors responsible for these changes; the focus of the interviews were the reasons for learning English, involvement in this process (e.g., as indicated by attending addi-

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[2] The interpretations of the values of Cronbach alpha are based on Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010).

tional classes), opinions about the classes included in the study, the most and least motivating tasks during these lessons, the changes observed in reasons for learning English and the level of engagement as well as the causes of such changes; the interviews were carried out by the regular classroom teacher of the participants, the interactions were digitally audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed;

- *a motivational grid*, where the participants were requested to mark the levels of their interest and engagement at 5-min intervals during a particular lesson on a scale of 1 (*minimum*) to 7 (*maximum*); the responses were provided nine times on cue in the form of a prerecorded beep; additional space for comments was provided at the end of the grid; the value of Cronbach's alpha for the first lesson in both groups was 0.80, which shows that the instrument has adequate internal consistency reliability;

- *an evaluation sheet*, a slightly adapted version of a survey used by Peacock (1997), in which the participants were instructed to indicate their interest in a particular class by responding to seven items based on a semantic differential scale (e.g., interesting vs. boring; pleasant vs. unpleasant; attractive vs. unattractive); the positive adjective came first in some items and second in others; the tool in fact involved 7-point Likert scale items, with the extreme spaces being accorded the values of 1 (e.g., *uninteresting*) and 7 (e.g., *interesting*); also in this case the reliability of the instrument was acceptable, as Cronbach's alpha calculated for the first lesson in both groups stood at 0.77;

- *a questionnaire for the teacher*, also partly adapted from Peacock (1997), in which she was requested to indicate her responses to eight Likert-scale items on a 1-7 scale (1 – *lowest*, 7 – *highest*) after each of the investigated lessons; the questions concerned such areas as learners' interest, effort, engagement, enjoyment, concentration, attention, the learning challenge a particular class posed, and the extent to which it was appropriate to a given group;

- detailed plans of the three lessons which were provided by the teacher; they were the same for the two groups and made it possible to relate changes in the level of motivation to particular stages of the lesson and the tasks performed.

Prior to the study, the tools were piloted with a comparable group of senior high school learners and some modifications were introduced. It should also be emphasized that Polish was used to supply instructions and word the items in all the surveys, and the interviews were also conducted in the learners' mother tongue. This decision was dictated by the participants' relatively

low level of proficiency and the danger that they could misunderstand or completely fail to understand questions in the target language, let alone be able to adequately express their ideas concerning their motives or changes in their interest and engagement.

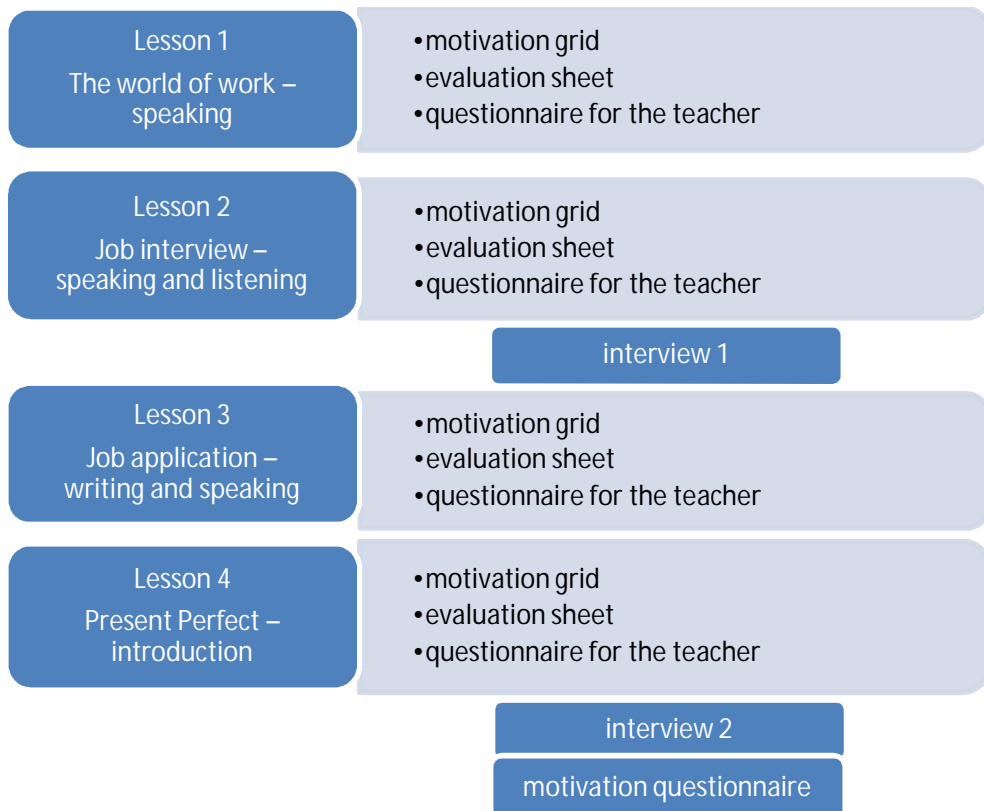| Lesson 1 The world of work – speaking	• motivation grid • evaluation sheet • questionnaire for the teacher
Lesson 2 Job interview – speaking and listening	• motivation grid • evaluation sheet • questionnaire for the teacher
	interview 1
Lesson 3 Job application – writing and speaking	• motivation grid • evaluation sheet • questionnaire for the teacher
Lesson 4 Present Perfect – introduction	• motivation grid • evaluation sheet • questionnaire for the teacher
	interview 2
	motivation questionnaire

Figure 1 Schedule for the administration of the data collection tools

As illustrated in Figure 1, which provides a graphical representation of the schedule for the administration of the data collection tools, the motivation grid, the evaluation sheet and the teacher questionnaire were filled out during each of the four lessons, with the effect that four sets of data were available for each of them. The interviews with the 9 students, 5 from Group 1 and 4 from Group 2, were carried out after the first and fourth lesson, with the interval of approximately 4 weeks between them. Finally, the learners were requested to fill out the motivation questionnaire several days after the last lesson analyzed for the purpose of the present study.[3]

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[3] Although it could be argued that the administration of this questionnaire both at the beginning (i.e., before the first lesson) and the end (after the fourth lesson) of the study

The data collected in these ways were subjected to a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses depending on their nature. The former involved: (a) calculating the means and standard deviations for all the items in the motivation questionnaire for each of the two groups as well as all the participants, (b) tabulating the means for motivational intensity for each of the nine times in a lesson the students in the two groups were requested to indicate the level of interest, enjoyment and engagement, (c) determining the means for each of the items included in the evaluation sheet as well as the means and standard deviations for each of the four lessons in the two groups, (d) comparing the overall means in the evaluation sheets with the assessments made by the teacher in the teacher questionnaire. In cases where there was a need to establish the statistical significance of the differences, paired and independent samples t tests were used, with the desired significance level being set at $p < .05$. Qualitative analysis consisted in: (a) identifying the recurring themes in the interview data with particular emphasis on the changes in the reasons for learning English and involvement in the four lessons, as well as factors underlying such changes, and (b) relating fluctuations in motivational intensity to the foci of the four lessons, the stages they comprised, and the tasks and activities performed.

Results

When it comes to the combined results of the questionnaire in both groups, the highest means were determined for such statements as: (a) "I believe that I will be able to read and understand most texts in English if I continue to learn this language" ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 0.50$), (b) "Studying English is important because I think that one day it will help me find a job" ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 0.66$), (c) "If I study hard, I will be able to learn English" ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 0.74$), (d) "I like the atmosphere of my English classes" ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 0.85$), (e) "Studying English is important to me because English proficiency is necessary for promotion in the future" ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 0.88$), (f) "I respect the values and ways of life of other cultures and nationalities" ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 0.92$), (g) "I think that learning English is interesting" ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 0.86$), (h) "I am sure that I will be able to write in English if I continue to learn this language" ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 0.75$), (i) "I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English" ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 0.86$), (j) "I like the sound of English" ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.32$), and (k) "Learning English is important for me because I would like to travel" ($M =$

could have shed light on the changes in the subjects' choice motivation over time, it was decided that the period of 4 weeks was too short for the occurrence of any noticeable differences in the responses provided.

4.83, *SD* = 0.87). Items with the lowest means were as follows: (a) "Learning English has a negative influence on Polish national values" (*M* = 1.88, *SD* = 1.03), (b) "I think that Polish is changing for the worse under the influence of English" (*M* = 2.79, *SD* = 1.32), (c) "I have to learn English so as not to disappoint my parents" (*M* = 2.92, *SD* = 1.14), (d) "There is a danger that Poles will forget about the importance of their own culture as a result of globalization" (*M* = 3.00, *SD* = 1.32), (e) "I would like it if other cultures were similar to Polish culture" (*M* = 3.13, *SD* = 1.42), (f) "I have to learn English because if I fail, I will not be promoted to the next class" (*M* = 3.17, *SD* = 1.43), (g) "I would be nervous if I met an English or American native speaker" (*M* = 3.21, *SD* = 1.56), and (h) "I am learning English because my parents and family expect me to do so" (*M* = 3.29, *SD* = 1.04). Such results testify to the impact of such motivational variables as the ideal L2 self, instrumentality, international posture and L2 learning experience. They also indicate that intrinsic motives play a more important role than extrinsic ones, particularly in view of the fact that the participants appear to attach little importance to the opinions of significant others, or what could be described as ought-to self, and externally-imposed requirements. It should be noted however that the values of standard deviation were quite high in some cases, which may indicate that the responses are subject to considerable individual variation.

When it comes to the differences between the responses of the two groups, they never reached statistical significance but were the highest in the case of the following items: (a) "I would be nervous if I met an English or American native speaker" (3.77 in Group 1 and 2.55 in group 2, a difference of 1.22), (b) "Parents encourage me to learn English in my free time" (3.08 in Group 1 and 4.00 in Group 2, a difference of 0.92), (c) "I am anxious and make mistakes when I speak English during a lesson" (4.23 in Group 1 and 3.36 in Group 2, a difference of 0.87), (d) "Parents encourage me to attend additional English classes" (3.23 in Group 1 and 4.09 in Group 2, a difference of 0.86), (e) "I think that Polish is changing for the worse under the influence of English" (3.15 in Group 1 and 2.36 in Group 2, a difference of 0.79), and (f) "I would like it if other cultures were similar to Polish culture" (3.46 in Group 1 and 2.73 in Group 2, a difference of 0.73). On the whole then it could be argued that the participants in Group 2 were characterized by greater international posture and received more parental encouragement than students in Group 1, although these conclusions can only be tentative given the small numbers of respondents in both groups and the potential impact of mediating variables.

These findings were to a large extent corroborated by the qualitative analysis of the audio-recordings and transcripts of the interviews, with the important caveat that, due to the small number of the interviewees (a total of nine), it was not possible to pinpoint differences between the two groups in the reasons for learning English and motivational intensity. In the first place, it is clear that the

main factors underlying the participants' motivation to learn English were instrumentality, understood both in terms of a promotion (i.e., concerned with hopes, aspirations and accomplishments) and prevention (i.e., related to avoidance of negative outcomes) regulatory focus (Higgins, 1998), and international posture. To be more specific, all the participants mentioned the need to learn English in order to enhance their prospects of getting a better job in the future, perhaps even abroad, and some of them, particularly less proficient ones, stated that it is a mandatory subject and they have to study it in order to be promoted to the next class or successfully pass their school-leaving examinations. Moreover, the majority of the interviewees emphasized the fact that a good command of English as an international language will make it possible for them to communicate with foreigners in a variety of situations related to traveling, work, education or entertainment. Other motivational factors were the ought-to self, L2 learning experience, and knowledge orientation, but these were much less common and hinted at by one or two learners. A more general observation is that most of the motives mentioned by the participants were intrinsic rather than extrinsic in nature, which bodes well for their efforts, and although there was little direct evidence of the impact of the ideal L2 self, some of the statements are indicative of the learners' conviction that they will be able to use English successfully for different purposes. Some of these points are illustrated in the following excerpts taken from the interviews, which are accompanied by comments in parentheses:[4]

> *I am learning English mostly because I have future plans connected with this language, either going abroad or just some future career. I will need English for sure in international contacts and so on* (instrumentality – promotion, international posture).

> *I need English to do well on my final exams and then get into a good university and it is clear that I will need it in a future job* (instrumentality – prevention and promotion).

> *The first reason is that it is a mandatory school subject, but I am also motivated to learn it because some time in the future I would like to travel, because I do not have such opportunities at present. I am aware that English is a language used all over the world and I am sure I will need it* (instrumentality – prevention, international posture).

> *I am learning English because it will come in handy in my further education, at the university but also in getting a job, because the knowledge of English is required, it is basic in many jobs . . . if I want to go abroad, English will be indispensable* (instrumentality – promotion, knowledge orientation, international posture).

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[4] All the excerpts were originally in Polish and they were later translated into English by the present author.

In the future I am going to go abroad on holidays. I would like to be able to communicate with people without problems. Besides, it is a prestigious language and everybody is learning it (instrumentality, ought-to self).

I have always liked the language and I have enjoyed learning it. I like it and studying it is fun (L2 learning experience).

There were considerable differences in the level of the participants' engagement in the learning process, or the intensity of their motivated learning behavior, which can be primarily attributed to their dominant reasons for learning English (e.g., compulsion, obligation, self-perceived importance of this language), the level of proficiency and their previous attainment, although there were obviously exceptions. Some participants, for example, particularly those who viewed English as any other school subject, had difficulty learning it and received lower grades, often confined their efforts to school work, completing the homework assignments set by the teacher or reviewing for tests. Even if they attended additional tutoring sessions or private schools, it was so, it can be surmised, under the influence of their parents, and their main motivation was improving their grades and, in some cases, passing the course. On the other hand, some of the interviewees, mainly those who were more cognizant of the role of English, had specific future goals and manifested high international posture, were much more likely to work on English in their own time, not only by attending additional classes, but also by seeking out additional resources, using the Internet, reading books, listening to music or falling back on sometimes rather ingenious learning strategies that they found effective and enjoyable. The following excerpts illustrate some of these trends:

In general, I am not very involved in learning English. Only what I do in school and the homework. But I do don't learn English too much in my free time. Maybe when I play some games (a student with barely a passing grade for the previous semester).

I mean... I am attending some private lessons and I do things for school. I study for tests. That's all. Private lessons and schoolwork (a student who failed the previous semester in English).

I am attending additional classes, but we are doing things unrelated to the material covered in school. I also watch movies in English. Right now there is a fair in the US and there were press conferences and everything was in English, and I understood about 90 percent of what I heard (an average student who appears to be quite motivated).

I do not have any additional classes, but I write down interesting vocabulary, which is important in my opinion. I use word cards. I use a lot of interesting techniques. We do grammar in school but I use additional books or computer software. I translate song lyrics into Polish . . . or I stick cards with what I have to learn on a board or

the computer and whenever I do something on a computer I read those things (a very successful student talking about favorite learning strategies).

The analysis also yielded evidence for transformations of the nature and intensity of the motivation of most of the participants, with the caveat that such changes were frequently described in rather general terms and the rationale for them differed in rather fundamental ways. For some of the students, they signaled greater awareness of the importance of English in everyday life, with the effect that the emphasis was shifted from extrinsic motives, such as good grades or parents' aspirations, to intrinsic ones, such as learning for oneself in order to find a good job, facilitate one's education, travel and communicate with foreigners. Such a transition from a prevention focus to a promotion focus as well as from the ought-to self to international posture and the potential importance of the ideal L2 self resulted in greater involvement in the learning process and the willingness to make more effort to accomplish the goals set. An alternative scenario was that extrinsic motives, as reflected in the desire to get a promotion to the next class, receive good grades or pass final exams, remained at the fore in the course of time but they seemed to grow in strength, with the effect that they also resulted in enhanced engagement, albeit perhaps somewhat less permanent and more susceptible to external influences. It is also interesting to point out that in many instances such changes were closely connected with the move from junior to senior high school, a trend that could perhaps be ascribed to higher requirements in the latter, the prospect of school-leaving examinations and aspirations regarding future education. Some responses also highlighted the key role of the teacher in shaping students' motives and determining their engagement, and demonstrated that success may be a vital factor in and of itself, thereby testifying to the importance of what Hermann (1980) referred to as resultative motivation. The following examples illustrate some of these points:

> *At the beginning I did not see the reason why I was learning English. I was learning because I had to, and now, as I said before, I have plans for the future connected with English and I can see that an increase in my engagement from the moment I started learning and the present* (visible changes in the reasons for learning and motivational intensity).

> *It seems to me that with time, I don't know why, I have been learning more for myself. Not for grades, because when I was younger, it was mainly to get a five* (i.e., the highest grade) *on my diploma and be happy with it. Now I am trying to learn in such a way that I may not get a five, but at least I get the most for myself from the experience. I don't know. I think it is natural. I am getting more and more mature and my way of thinking is changing* (a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motives evident).

I think I became more engaged from the second year of junior high school. I don't know why. Maybe because we had a teacher who only paid attention to more advanced students with good knowledge of English, and we hardly ever got to speak. It changed in the second year because we had a new teacher and it remained like this in the third year as well (the role of the teacher in determining the level of learners' engagement is visible).

It has been the same all the time. My engagement has been the same over time and I think about the same things all the time. That's why I am learning (no modification of motives or intensity visible).

The more I learn, the more I can see, I don't know, the progress I am making. For example, when I am listening to a song and I know what it is all about, it motivates me tremendously to learn even more and it is really cool (resultative motivation visible).

Table 1 Means for motivational intensity in Group 1 and Group 2 during the four lessons

Minute/group and lesson	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45
G1 L1	4.86	5.43	5.86	5.50	5.93	5.93	6.00	5.79	6.07
G2 L1	4.75	4.92	5.33	5.50	5.50	5.33	5.25	5.33	5.58
G1 L2	5.50	5.86	5.64	5.86	6.00	5.93	5.57	5.43	5.79
G2 L2	5.09	5.09	5.36	5.00	5.18	5.27	5.46	6.00	5.82
G1 L3	5.00	5.75	5.50	5.83	5.92	5.67	5.33	5.25	5.33
G2 L3	4.64	5.36	5.55	5.73	5.82	5.73	6.00	5.91	6.00
G1 L4	5.08	5.54	5.54	5.15	5.31	5.31	5.62	5.69	5.23
G2 L4	4.73	5.18	5.18	5.36	5.64	5.73	5.45	5.64	5.27

Table 1 and Figures 2-5 represent fluctuations in the intensity of learners' motivation in Groups 1 and 2, as defined earlier in this paper and measured by means of the motivation grid during the four lessons analyzed for the purpose of the study. Since, due to limitations of space, it is not possible to discuss the changes in the two groups on a minute-by-minute basis, taking into account the lesson plans provided to the teacher, the analysis will only be confined to the most conspicuous patterns as well as selected events during particular classes, and it will be augmented by insights obtained from the interviews. What immediately catches the eye is the fact that the reported levels of motivation in both groups were very high and only in four cases did they fail to reach the value of 5, always in the first 10 min of the lesson. Leaving aside for the moment the question whether these high scores are a reflection of the students' interest, effort or engagement or their attempts to please their teacher, it is clear that they make the analysis exceedingly difficult as in the vast majority of cases the differences are minute and, given the small number of students in both groups, they could be

the outcome of a lower or higher assessment by one students at a particular point in time. Nevertheless, some fluctuations in motivational intensity could be detected and differences in this respect between the two groups were also evident.
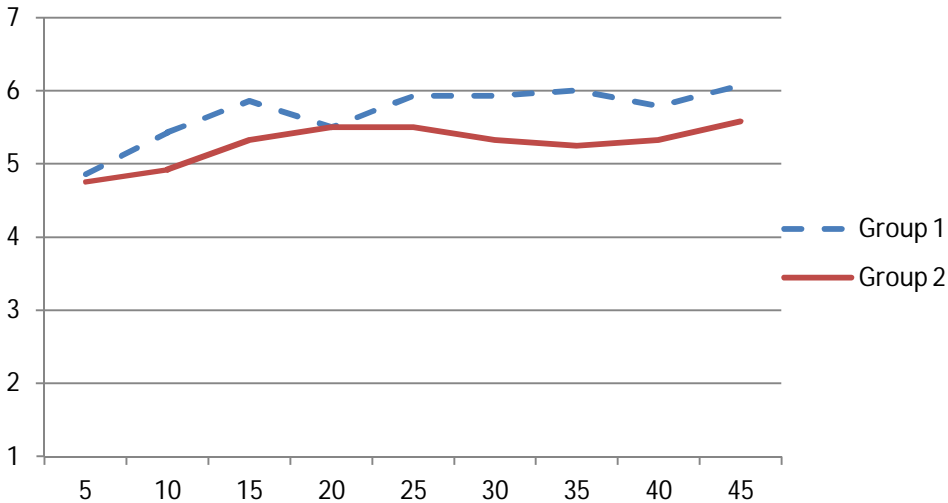

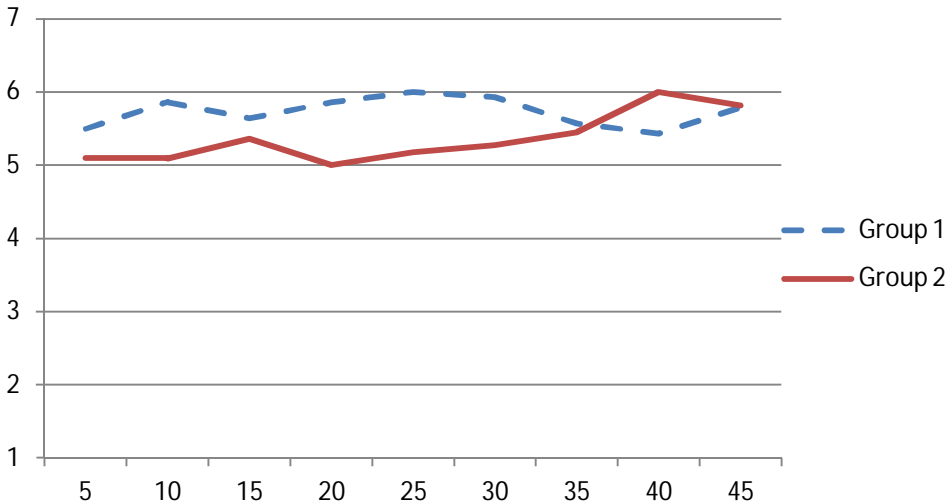Figure 2 Changes in motivational intensity in Group 1 and Group 2 during Lesson 1

Figure 3 Changes in motivational intensity in Group 1 and Group 2 during Lesson 2

When we look at the first two lessons, which were devoted to discussing the world of work and focused mainly on the skills of speaking, listening and as well as grammar practice involving verbs followed by the gerund and the infinitive, we can see that the motivation of students in Group 1 was generally

higher than that of learners in Group 2, the only exception being the last 10 min of Lesson 2, dedicated to a game in which the students worked in pairs and had to guess the name of a job on the basis of a sentence provided by a partner. This pattern is difficult to explain, since, on the one hand, the students in Group 2 represented a higher level of proficiency, as represented by the mean semester grade, but, on the other, the class could have focused on things that they were already familiar with. Another interesting pattern was that interest and engagement of the students in the two groups was generally higher in the second part of the lesson than in the first, which may indicate that, irrespective of changes in the intensity of motivation which may be reflective of the tasks performed, some time is needed before students are drawn into a language lesson, in which, it should be emphasized, language is not only the medium but also the goal of instruction and it is thus necessary to make the switch from the mother tongue to the target language. As to specific changes in motivational intensity during the two lessons, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the slight dip of 0.46 in Group 1 between minutes 15 and 20 in Lesson 1, and the increase in Group 2 between minutes 35 an 40 in Lesson 2. One way to account for the former is that it coincided with the completion of a pair work activity in which the students were supposed to characterize a number of jobs in terms of how interesting, easy, stressful, good or bad they are, and then say what job they would like to perform in the future. While such speaking tasks can be viewed as inherently motivating, the activity was planned for 10 min and it is clear that boredom could have begun to set in, not to mention the fact that the composition of pairs could have also played a part. As for the latter, it would be tempting to speculate that the growth in motivational intensity in Group 2 at the end of Lesson 2 was due to the fact that, as the analysis of the responses to the motivation questionnaire showed, these students were characterized by greater international posture. However, since the differences between the groups were small, they did not reach statistical significance, and other segments of the lesson were also devoted to discussing jobs, an equally plausible explanation is that they were the outcome of the beginning of a new activity (i.e., a game) that was more interesting than the preceding one (i.e., sentence construction).
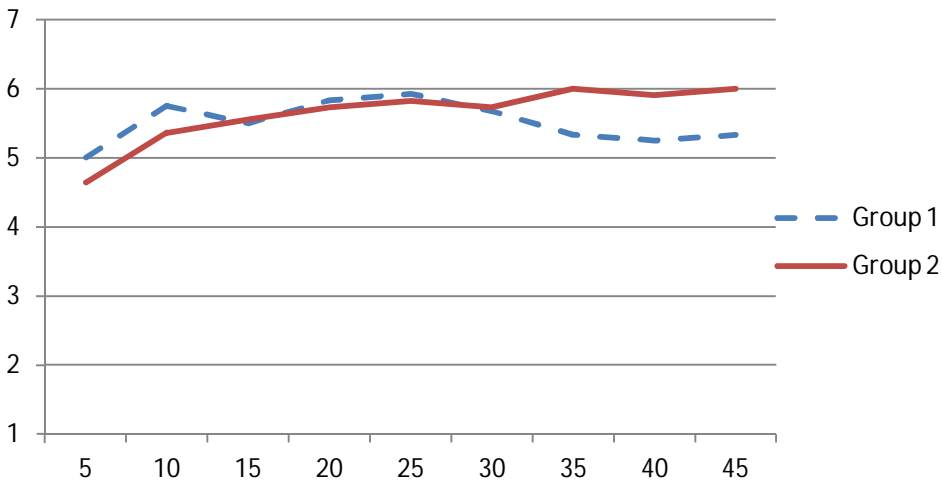
Figure 4 Changes in motivational intensity in Group 1 and Group 2 during Lesson 3
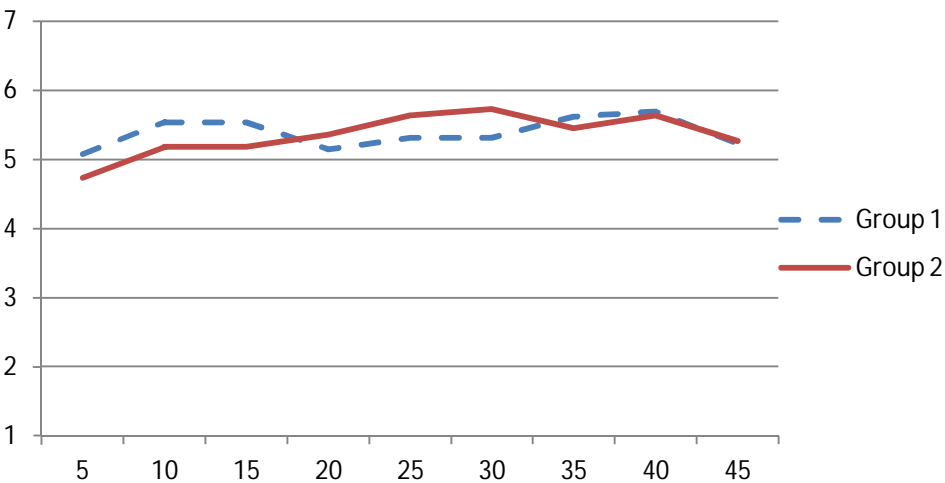

Figure 5 Changes in motivational intensity in Group 1 and Group 2 during Lesson 3

The patterns of motivational intensity are more complex in the case of Lessons 3 and 4 since there is much more equivalence in motivational intensity in the two groups, with one or the other manifesting slightly greater interest and engagement at different points in time, and, particularly in Lesson 3, the changes in both groups are somewhat more dynamic. In Lesson 3 the reported motivation in Group 1 first increased by 0.75 from minute 5 to minute 10, then decreased somewhat in minute 15, only to increase again in minutes 20 and 25, and then kept decreasing until the end of the lesson, with the difference between minute

25 and minute 45 equaling 0.59. When such fluctuations are juxtaposed with the lesson plan, it turns out that the first increase was related to a transition from collaborative picture description to reading a text for general comprehension, the subsequent slight decrease coincided with matching questions with paragraphs, and the following increase overlapped with a pair work activity in which the students were requested to answer questions to the text. The drop at the end of the lesson took place when learners began working on vocabulary exercises and motivational intensity never returned to the previous after that, even when a speaking activity was performed in the last ten minutes of the class. Although the levels of interest and engagement in Group 2 were similar in the first half of the lesson, they were much higher than in Group 2 in the last 20 min and the differences were statistically significant. These patterns do not yield themselves to easy interpretations and, although it would seem that speaking activities were more involving than controlled exercises, apparently much also depended on the degree of their novelty, the learning challenge posed, the appearance of symptoms of boredom, the preceding tasks, group dynamics, or the relevance of the activities to the class as a whole and individual students. Lesson 4 turned out to be the least revealing with respect to intra- and inter-group changes in motivation, which can perhaps be explained by the fact that it was in its entirety dedicated to grammar, specifically, the introduction of the Present Perfect.

Table 2 Means for the overall evaluation of the four lessons in Group 1 and Group 2

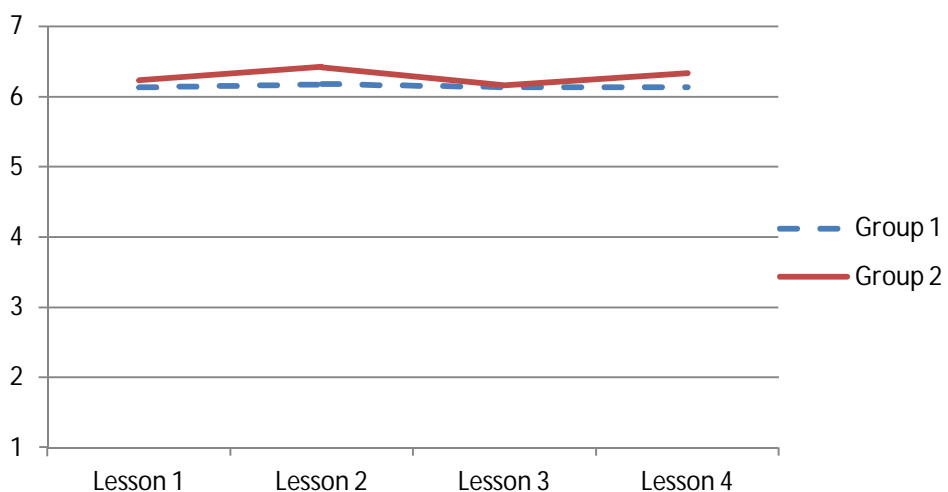| Group/lesson	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
G1	6.13	6.18	6.14	6.14
G2	6.23	6.42	6.16	6.34

Figure 6 Learners' overall evaluation of the four lessons

As can be seen from Table 2 and Figure 6, learners' overall evaluations of the lessons with the help of the semantic differential scale (interesting/boring, pleasant/unpleasant, etc.) proved to be highly positive in both groups, with all the mean scores exceeding 6.00 on a 1-7 scale. In fact, the minute differences in the assessments of the four lessons appear to indicate that all of them were equally interesting, engaging and enjoyable, a finding that is surprising in view of the fact that they sometimes had a very different focus. Although the means were a little higher in Group 2, these differences were also small (the highest amounting to 0.20 in Lesson 2 and Lesson 4) and failed to reach significance, with the outcome that it would be unwarranted to jump to conclusions on this basis. Somewhat more revealing perhaps are the teacher's evaluations of the motivation of the learners over the course of the four lessons, the means for which are presented in Table 3 and Figure 7. While the assessments did not differ much in Group 2, the only exceptions being those for Lesson 1 and Lesson 2 (a difference of 0.38), more variation was visible in Group 1, where the participants were regarded as the most engaged in Lesson 2, much more so than in Lessons 1 and 3 (a difference of 0.63 and 0.50, respectively). It is also interesting to note that, on the whole, the teacher perceived students in Group 1 as more involved than learners in Group 2, which is evidenced by the fact that the means were considerably and statistically significantly higher for all the four lessons. This may come as a surprise in the light of the fact that the students in Group 2 viewed all the four lessons as slightly more engaging than those in Group 1 and one might wonder to what extent the teacher's judgments might have been colored by the rapport she had been able to establish with the two groups.

Table 3 Means for the teacher's evaluation of the four lessons in Group 1 and Group 2

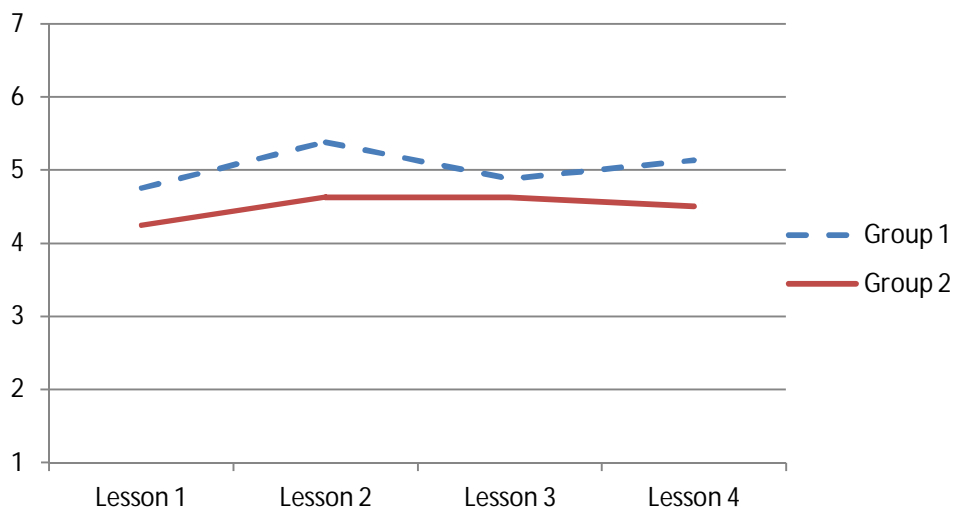| Group/lesson	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
G1	4.75	5.38	4.88	5.13
G2	4.25	4.63	4.63	4.50

Figure 7 The teacher's evaluation of students' interest and engagement over the four lessons

An attempt was also made to interpret changes in motivational intensity and overall evaluations of the lessons using insights obtained by means of the interviews but it was only partly successful since the responses of the participants were mostly general, they contained few references to specific activities performed in class, and they did not include comparisons between the four lessons. The main finding was that the majority of the interviewees were of the opinion that speaking tasks were the most involving activities and considered controlled vocabulary or grammar practice to be less engaging. On the other hand, some of them were aware of the fact that the success of such communication tasks hinges upon the way in which they are organized and the quality of participation of all the students involved, which might account for the fact that decreases in motivational intensity sometimes coincided with the presence of collaborative work in pairs or groups. Such generalizations have to be regarded with circumspection, however, since there was much variation in the responses supplied and it was clear that the learners had their own agendas, dictated, for example, by what they perceived as their strong and weak points, or what was important from the perspective of their reasons for learning English. Overall evaluation of the four lessons was unanimously positive and the learners were convinced of high levels of their engagement, which is consistent with the findings dealt with earlier in this section. The following excerpts are illustrative of some of the points raised:

I am mostly interested in activities connected with speaking and describing different things. I think the most important thing is to speak. I enjoy the least vocabulary exercises. I know that it is important but I do not find it attractive (a preference for communication tasks and a dislike of vocabulary work).

The most interesting and motivating were conversations and the least sentence completion, and all the traditional grammar exercises (a preference for speaking activities and a dislike of grammar practice).

The least interesting for me was conversation in groups, because it was not very successful. Much depends on the people who are in the group and their involvement (a cautionary comment about the value of pair and group work).

The most interesting was writing a CV because it is useful not only in Poland but also abroad . . . the exercises on the Present Perfect were also very useful because we can say what we have been doing (a preference for writing a specific type of text and for a newly introduced grammar structure).

In my opinion the lessons were interesting and if a lesson is interesting I am more involved it in (a positive evaluation of the lessons related to the level of engagement).

Discussion

Although the data collected for the purpose of the study did not always yield the kind of insights into the issues under investigation the present author would have hoped for, they were still sufficient to provide responses to the research questions posed, some of which were more definitive than others. When it comes to the participants' reasons for learning English and the level of engagement in this process, the analysis of the data obtained by means of the motivation questionnaires and the interviews demonstrated the importance of instrumentality, international posture, and, to a lesser degree, the ideal language self, the ought-to self, the L2 learning experience and knowledge orientation. Although, in general, the prevalence of more intrinsic motives could be observed, which should translate into greater perseverance in the learning task over time, extrinsic ones also played an important part, particularly in the case of weaker learners for whom being promoted to the next class or passing final examinations was often a top priority. The same could be said about the students' involvement, the level and nature of which seemed to be a function of the main reasons for learning, proficiency and attainment. On the whole, participants with more far-reaching goals, irrespective of whether they were reflective of a promotion or prevention focus of instrumentality,

high international posture or the influence of the ideal language self, were more likely to go beyond mere school requirements, do additional things in their own time and look for more effective and enjoyable strategies for learning English. It was also observed that both factors underlying motivated learning behavior and the magnitude of such behavior are subject to change over time, with the fluctuations in the latter often being closely intertwined with the transformation of the former. Apart from greater maturity, the transition to high school, growing awareness of one's goals and more acute concerns for the future, such modifications were sometimes also related to the teacher or success in learning English.

The analysis of the motivation grids provided some evidence for the dynamic nature of motivation in the course of single classes, with the caveat that the changes detected were not as considerable as could have been expected. On the one hand, it is obvious that motivational intensity fluctuated over time, typically being higher in the later stages of a given lesson, and a number of increases and decreases could be observed in some cases. On the other hand, though, the assessments made by the participants at 5-min intervals were overall quite high, which translated into high mean values, and made the interpretation of the dynamics of interest, engagement and effort much more difficult. A similar problem came up with respect to tracing changes in motivational intensity over the time the four lessons were conducted, since the participants' evaluation were extremely positive, always exceeding a 6 on a 7-point scale, thus making it virtually impossible to reveal any fluctuations in this respect. This also held for the interviews, in which the students expressed a highly positive opinion about the four lessons, often praising the teacher for her ability to focus exactly on their needs and involve them in classroom activities. Even though a possibility that the lessons were indeed so interesting and engaging cannot be ruled out, a more plausible explanation of such results is that at least some of the students were trying to please the teacher with their answers rather than provide an accurate assessment of classroom realities. Such an interpretation is warranted in view of the fact that the teacher's assessment of the learners' engagement in the lessons was a little less enthusiastic, with the important qualification that it could have been subjective and reflective of her experiences with and attitudes towards the students in the two groups. The juxtaposition of the results of the motivation grids with the lesson plans and the analysis of the interview data also provided some insights into the factors that can account for fluctuations in the level of motivation within a lesson, but, due to a lack of consistent patterns and the presence of contradictory responses, conclusions in this respect can only be very tentative and somewhat speculative. More precisely, it would seem that what matters

here is not only the overall topic, the stage of the lesson or the task being performed, but also the place of this task in the overall lesson plan, the amount of novelty it involves, the phase of its execution, group dynamics, learner characteristics, as well as the priorities pursued by a group as a whole or individual students, with all of these internal and external variables constantly interacting in unpredictable ways and exerting an influence on motivational intensity at a particular point in time. In line with the tenets of dynamic systems theory, then, the study of the dynamic nature of motivation must, in the words of DeBot, Lowie and Verspoor (2007), "recognize the crucial role of interaction of a multitude of variables at different levels" (p. 7).

Some of the problems mentioned above are without doubt related to the weaknesses of the study which should be addressed in future research endeavors of this kind. For one thing, the period of four weeks is simply too short to detect changes in the nature and magnitude of motivation, and studies spanning much longer periods of time are necessary to capture the evolution of reasons for learning foreign languages and engagement in this task. Second, the tools used to collect data on fluctuations in motivational intensity could have been lacking in some ways (e.g., items included in the evaluation sheets, questions posed in the interviews, the frequency of indicating the level of motivation), or simply insufficient to tap changes in this respect as a function of the instructional activities employed, their timing, learners' goals, beliefs and characteristics. Finally, and most importantly perhaps, the fact that it was the regular classroom teacher who collected the data might have unduly affected the results, as, under such circumstances, the participants might have been unwilling to express more critical comments about the classes they were attending. While it is not clear how this problem could be overcome without compromising ecological validity, it is indeed a crucial issue that should be tackled in future research.

Conclusion

The study reported in the present paper contributes to the still scant body of research into the dynamic nature of motivation in second and foreign language learning, and it is one of the first to investigate changes in motivational intensity within single lessons and series of lessons. The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected by means of multiple data collection tools provided evidence that both the nature and magnitude of motivation are not stable and they are subject to change over time. Such fluctuations were detected both over a longer period of time, as demonstrated by the learners' comments in the interviews, and, at least to some extent, in the course of single

lessons, as shown by the participants' assessment of their interest and engagement at 5-min intervals. At the same time, the study failed to identify meaningful changes in motivational intensity from one lesson to the next, and the conclusions regarding the factors which may impinge upon fluctuations in these respects can only be tentative given the complex, sometimes contradictory patterns that emerged from the data. Such limited success in revealing temporal variation in the students' motivation can be attributed to the design of the study, which did not include interviews or written reports after each class, potential flaws in the instruments used, as well as the fact that all the data were gathered by the regular teacher of the learners involved, which may have prevented them from voicing critical opinions. Despite these limitations and weaknesses, which should no doubt be taken into consideration when planning future empirical investigations, the research project constitutes a valuable contribution to the study of the dynamics of motivation in language learning. It also demonstrates the importance of combining the macro- and micro-perspective, as represented by the use of general motivational questionnaires and instruments better suited to capture the complexity of learners' interest and engagement at a particular point in time, respectively, and the need to rely on methodological triangulation in order to obtain a multi-faceted picture of the changes taking place. Although research into temporal aspects of motivation is an arduous task in view of the fact that it has to be longitudinal, it requires the use of sophisticated tools which are sensitive enough to uncover fluctuations in learners' motives and engagement in different contexts, lessons, and tasks, and it entails meticulous analysis of copious amounts of quantitative data, it is clearly a worthwhile undertaking. This is because shedding more light on these issues is likely to aid teachers in attuning the motivational strategies used to specific learner groups in specific situations, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of instructed second language acquisition.

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