

An investigation of the self-related concepts and foreign language motivation of young Deaf¹ and hard-of-hearing learners in Hungary

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Abstract

In recent years increased attention has been given in applied linguistics to the learning processes of various groups of special needs (SN) students, especially to those whose achievement is impeded by dyslexia or other learning difficulties. However, students with sensory impairment, particularly those who are Deaf or severely hard of hearing (HOH), seem to have remained on the periphery of second language acquisition (SLA) research although they constitute a highly interesting group both from a linguistic as well as a cultural point of view. Since the best approach to understanding how this special minority handles foreign language learning is by first exploring their so-called individual

¹ *Deaf*, spelled with a capital *D*, is used in the literature to denote people who share a sign language as well as distinct cultural values and consider themselves a linguistic and cultural minority, as opposed to *deaf*, spelled with a lowercase *d*, which refers to the audiological condition, that is, a disability.

differences, a nationwide research project was launched in Hungary to investigate students' language learning beliefs, motivation, strategy use and motivated learning behavior. As part of that project, the present paper intends to detail how self-related concepts of hearing impaired students at eight different SN schools can be described. In order to gain an in-depth understanding, a mixed-method research design was employed. First, a barrier-free instrument was used to measure learner variables among 105 14-19-year-old Deaf and HOH learners. Then 31 individual interviews were conducted with selected students using maximum variety sampling. The quantitative data indicate that Deaf and HOH (D/HH) learners lack pronounced, well-developed and detailed future ideal L2 selves and corresponding visions to guide their learning. Another important finding is the paramount importance of language learning experience for our D/HH participants. Based on the analysis of the qualitative data, we can conclude that students' language learning experiences are largely shaped by the choice of language used as the medium of education, the intensity and content of the English classes as well as how far students internalize extrinsic motives.

Keywords: Deaf and hard-of-hearing students, second language learning, second language learning motivation

1. Introduction

It has long been acknowledged that learning a second language (L2) is not just another school subject but an inherent part of one's identity formation (Gardner, 1985); still, it is relatively recent that identity- and self-related investigations have become truly mainstream in L2 motivational research (Csizér & Magid, 2014; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Mercer & Williams, 2014). The relationship between selves and L2 learning is of particular interest in the case of special needs learners for whom the acquisition of a first language (L1) might already be impeded by a variety of obstacles. One such group of students in Hungary are Deaf and severely hard-of-hearing learners, who are the center of our investigation and whose L1 and identity is a frequent topic of debate among linguists, educationalists and Deaf activists (Dotter, 2011; Grosjean, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008). There are two fundamentally different ways of looking at deafness (Bartha, 2005; Jokinen, 2000): From a medical-pathological point of view, the term denotes a deficit, deficiency or impairment which has severe consequences regarding the general cognitive development and the language acquisition of the concerned individuals (Dotter, 2008; Grosjean, 2001). Those who adopt this view may see a patient in the hearing impaired student suffering not only from a severe or profound hearing loss but, among others, also from dysphasia, as a result of

which they cannot be expected to achieve much in foreign language (FL) learning and should perhaps be “steered away” from learning it (Mole, McColl, & Vale, 2008, p. 5). According to the anthropological-cultural view, also shared by the international and local Deaf communities, the lack of hearing should merely be considered a difference in perception, thinking and communication. Deaf and severely hard-of-hearing people perceive the world and process information visually, and they prefer to communicate in sign languages, which are full-fledged, natural, visual-spatial languages with complex grammatical structures and extensive vocabulary (Holcomb & Payton, 1992). In this sense, Deaf people constitute a linguistic and cultural minority with a Deaf identity. The representatives of the socio-cultural approach to deafness (sometimes labelled as Deafhood to indicate the difference in viewpoint, see for instance Ladd, 2003) maintain that Deaf people are capable of everything other than hearing and can learn to read, write and use FLs if they are taught appropriately.

If the education of Deaf children is predominantly governed by the deficit approach, which was the case internationally until quite recently and still is in Hungary, it can easily exert a negative effect on foreign language learners’ motivational self-system. Therefore, the aim of the present investigation is to explore how identity-related issues along with other factors might contribute to or thwart inclination for foreign language learning for young Deaf and severely hard-of-hearing individuals taking part in FL education in special needs schools. As no similar study has been conducted either in Hungary or internationally, we believe that mapping the foreign language learning motivation of 14-19 year old learners with a severe or profound hearing loss can be of interest to specialists working in a wide variety of contexts.

The results presented in this article form a part of a large-scale, 3-year research project sponsored by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA-K105095). The investigation was designed to be a mixed-method and multi-perspective project including questionnaire and interview data from Deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils studying in specialized schools around the country as well as interviews with their teachers and school-principals (Kontra, Csizér, & Piniel, 2015). The present article is the first publication that combines the results of the quantitative and qualitative student data. Our main aim in this study is to describe these special needs students’ L2 motivational self-system with the help of the quantitative data and to explore how qualitative data can lead to a better understanding of issues related to self and identity.

2. Background to our study

It is clear that being able to communicate in a foreign language opens new opportunities in accessing information (especially through foreign language media),

being able to communicate with foreigners, and also in having better job opportunities. These possibilities should not only be the privilege of the majority but also of those who face difficulties in learning. In light of this, research into the psychology of language learners has been expanding to include learners that also have to cope with learning difficulties (e.g., dyslexic learners: Kormos, 2013; and hearing impaired learners: Kontra & Csizér, 2013). Recently, Kormos (2014) has emphasized researchers' role in investigating the psychology of language learners (their experiences, their motivations, etc.) who do not come from mainstream social and educational backgrounds. She argues that information from such studies can assist policy makers and classroom practitioners to cater for the special needs of these students, build their motivation and lead them to more positive language learning experiences. With our study, we hope to add to this perspective by exploring the motivation of Hungarian Deaf language learners. In this part of our paper, we will provide a brief summary of definitions pertaining to Deafness as well as information on Deaf education. Next, a short introduction into self-related motivational research will be presented.

2.1. Deaf people and Deaf education

According to the estimate of the World Federation of the Deaf the number of Deaf individuals around the world is around 70 million (Jokinen, 2000). Reliable statistical figures concerning the exact number of Deaf people in Hungary do not exist, but officials of the Hungarian Association of the Deaf and Hard-of Hearing estimate that there are approximately 40-60 thousand people with a severe or profound hearing loss in Hungary, which makes the Deaf community the third largest linguistic and cultural minority in the country (Bartha, 2005).

Deaf communities are fundamentally different from any other linguistic and cultural minority as a result of the fact that approximately only 5%-10% of Deaf children are born to Deaf parents. These children can grow naturally into Deaf culture and identity. They can also acquire their national sign language naturally in stages similar to those of hearing children developing speech (Harris, 2010). The majority (90%-95%), in contrast, grow up in hearing families, which results in a number of consequences concerning the development of language and identity. Jokinen² (2000) argues that as soon as a child has been found to be Deaf, sign language should be used with them to ensure fundamental language development. This, however, is not the case:

² Jokinen was President of the World Federation of the Deaf from 2003 to 2011.

Instead, parents are advised not to use sign language, and to use speech which the Deaf child can at best make minimal use of but mostly none at all . . . Even for those Deaf children who do get access to formal education, teaching given through the medium of a sign language is also very rare. (p. 206)

Jokinen (2000) also points out that “any foreign language should be taught via the mother tongue” (p. 206), but a key question is: What can be considered the mother tongue of the majority of children who are born without hearing or lose it in infancy before the development of speech? According to Skutnabb-Kangas (1994), the mother tongue of a person can be defined, among others, by *internal identification*, that is as the language the person identifies with, or by *external identification*, meaning it is the language the person is identified to be a native speaker of by others. A mismatch between the two can lead to conflict. Educational systems that eliminate the use of national sign languages from Deaf education and build on the spoken language of the majority society promote the development of a hearing identity without acknowledging the right of the individual to choose.

Hungarian Deaf education is deeply rooted in the so-called oralist tradition (Bartha, 2005; Muzsnai, 1999; Vasák, 2005). Hungarian parents of children with a severe hearing loss are advised not to introduce sign language to the child but to use speech instead. Consequently, most of these children grow up without an adequate amount of comprehensible input in any language, either spoken Hungarian, the language of the majority society, or Hungarian Sign Language (HSL), the natural first language of the Deaf community. Most children first encounter HSL in kindergarten, and they tend to learn it from their peers. Muzsnai (1999) observes that children entering school do not have a solid language base either in HSL or in spoken Hungarian. The special schools for hearing impaired children apply the auditory-verbal approach in teaching (Csuhai, Henger, Mongyi, & Perlusz, 2009). The current curriculum introduces HSL in grade 7 only for *social-communicative* purposes. Although HSL was accepted as the official first language of Deaf people in Hungary on a legislative level (Act 125/2009), schools have until 2017 to introduce bilingual education, that is, education through not only spoken Hungarian but HSL as well. This will also apply to the teaching of foreign languages, which are currently also taught and learned via the auditory-verbal approach.

2.2. Self-related motivational research

Despite the fact that research into L2 learning motivation has been developing for decades, it is relatively recent that self-related issues have become of mainstream interest (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009), and even more recent is the inclusion of educationally disadvantaged groups in motivation studies (Kormos,

2014). L2 motivation is defined as students' choice, effort and persistence related to the learning of L2s (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). This intended effort is linked not only to the ways students' experience language learning but also to how they see themselves as present language learners and future language users, as well as how they view and to what extent they internalize the expectations of important others in their environment. One theory stands out as providing the initial motivation to research self-related issues: Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). This theory states that students' motivated learning behavior (i.e., how much effort they are willing to invest into language learning and how persistent they are) will be largely affected by three distinct variables: their ideal L2 self, that is, to what extent students can imagine themselves as highly proficient users of the given foreign language; their ought-to L2 self, which describes what outside pressures students acknowledge throughout the learning process; and, finally, language learning experience, which influences attitudes towards the classroom processes (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). The tripartite theory has received empirical support from a number of studies, for example Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009), who dedicated an edited volume to research supporting this theory. Still, the treatment of the three variables seems to be somewhat uneven. It appears that the most important driving force regarding language learning motivation is students' ideal L2 selves with notions related to their ought-to selves being internalized to varying degrees; language learning experience, however, remains somewhat in the shadows: It is not clear how experience is linked to the self-variables, and how it eventually shapes motivation.

Earlier studies on Deaf foreign language learners in Hungary have investigated a number of issues of which one of the most important is the use of sign language in teaching. A study of 331 Deaf and hard-of-hearing adults revealed that, in the opinion of the investigated participants, positive learning experience is linked to sign language use in the classroom (Kontra & Csizér, 2013) as sign language is the easiest means of communication for Deaf persons. This view is reiterated in the first phase of the present investigation for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students, as Deaf learners think that intake, process and output is easier when information is conveyed through HSL (Kontra, Csizér, & Piniel, 2015). No previous Hungarian studies have systematically researched self and identity-related issues of Deaf and hard-of-hearing foreign language learners within a single theoretical framework. Hence, for the present study, we formulated the following research question: How can the components of L2 motivational self-system be described for Deaf and severely hard-of-hearing foreign language learners in special needs schools?

3. Method

Our study was designed to be a mixed-method investigation, in which the quantitative/questionnaire study preceded the qualitative/interview phase. This was thought to be advantageous for the purpose of the present investigation because based on earlier quantitative/qualitative studies of various Deaf and hard-of-hearing participants we had enough input for designing and validating the questionnaire (Piniel, Csizér, & Kontra, 2014), while data from the questionnaire study provided selection information on participants in the qualitative phase.

3.1. Participants

The study was conducted in the seven primary schools (Year 1 to Year 8) specializing in Deaf education in different regions of Hungary and the only secondary vocational school with specialized classes for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Currently in special primary schools for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing children in Hungary, the first two years are preparatory years with a heavy focus on speech and language therapy. This means that children enter school at around age 6, and after completing the first two preparatory years, around the age of 8, students move on to the first grade (Kontráné Hegybíró, 2010). In seven out of the eight schools, our participants were taking English as foreign language, and in one they were learning German. One hundred five Deaf and severely hard-of-hearing (from here on: D/HH) students participated in the questionnaire study. They were between 14-19 years of age, and all of them were taking classes in English or German at the time of data collection. As nine questionnaires contained too much missing data they were excluded from subsequent analysis. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 96 learners. There is an equal ratio of gender in the sample: 48 girls and 48 boys. In terms of their identity, 41 regard themselves as Deaf and 54 as hard-of-hearing (there was one student whose data is missing). Another important piece of information is that there are only 6 students whose parents are Deaf; all of the other participants were born into hearing families. Hence, in terms of HSL, 6 participants had a chance to learn it at home as an L1, but the majority of our participants learnt it at school either from friends or from HSL teachers. Seventy-eight (81%) participants claimed to use HSL for communicating with friends and peers.

The 31 interview participants were selected from the questionnaire sample. There were 17 boys and 15 girls. Nineteen of them identified themselves as hard-of-hearing individuals, while 12 claimed to be Deaf. Students were selected purposefully based on their responses to the questionnaire as well as on information provided by their language teachers, as we intended to have participants whose

communicative skills were judged adequate for taking part in an interview. Participation was voluntary and permission was sought from both schools and parents.

3.2. Instruments

For this mixed-method study we used two instruments. First, we collected data with a piloted questionnaire tapping into various individual difference variables. The questionnaire was made available for the participants in print as well as in HSL. (For the pilot study see Piniel, Cszér, & Kontra, 2014.) Second, we developed an interview schedule with the help of which we taped interviews: The topics covered were similar to those included in the questionnaire and investigated students' views on issues related to individual differences in language learning.

The original questionnaire consisted of 41 5-point Likert-scale items organized into 11 constructs complemented with biographical questions (Piniel, Cszér, & Kontra, 2014). The constructs used in the present article are as follows:

1. Motivated learning behavior (MLB, 3 items): the amount effort learners intend to invest into language learning (sample item: "I prepare a lot for the English classes"), with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .76$;
2. Ideal L2 self (IL2S, 3 items): In what ways students imagine themselves as future language learners and users (sample item: "I will be able to communicate well in English in a couple of years"), with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .67$;
3. Ought-to L2 self (OL2S, 5 items): students' views on the perceived expectations of others related to L2 learning and use (e.g., "Nowadays, English is important for everyone"), with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .73$;
4. Language learning experience (LLE, 3 items): In what ways students have experienced L2 learning (sample item: "I like the English classes"), with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .71$.

The interview schedule was designed in a semi-structured format, and it included five main topics:

1. Students' views on the importance of learning a L2;
2. Students' beliefs about English/German as a foreign language and about learning it;
3. Learning modality: students' experience regarding the use of different communication channels in L2 learning (oral and written communication and/or sign language);

4. Students' motivated learning behavior (intended effort) and their use of learning strategies;
5. Students' language learning goals and their ideal L2 selves (how they see themselves in the future as L2 users).

4. Data procedures and analysis

Questionnaire data was collected in the 2012/2013 school year. Participation was anonymous. After seeking the consent of the principal and the parents at each school, we administered the questionnaire with the support and help of the local language teachers either during class time or immediately after the last lesson of the day. In each case a researcher was present. After a brief introduction, a printed questionnaire was distributed among participants and a timed video recording of the questionnaire's items in HSL was played. The students watched each item in HSL and were provided adequate time to then read the statements and record their responses. The administration of the questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes.

Procedures concerning the interviews included anonymous and voluntary participation in the 2013/2014 school year. Each interview was conducted with the help of a sign language interpreter, who translated the spoken questions of the researcher into HSL and the signed responses of the participants into spoken Hungarian. Students frequently used a mixed code, and one student chose to give the complete interview in spoken Hungarian. Each conversation was audio recorded and also videotaped in order to help transcription. The interviews typically lasted 30 minutes.

The data analysis presented here has been done in two steps. First, we analyzed quantitative data with the help of SPSS 17.0. Both descriptive and multivariate analyses were included. Second, a research assistant transcribed the interviews and checked the accuracy of the sign language interpretation. The transcripts were then submitted to analysis in MAXQDA. Data-coding in the qualitative part was done separately by two researchers, and results were compared and discussed to obtain the final coding. In the results section, each quote from the interviews is assigned a code consisting of the self identification of the student as D (Deaf) or HH (hard-of-hearing), the alphabetical code of the school, the grade level, and the location of the text in the transcript.

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Descriptive statistics of the scales

As a first step of the analysis, the descriptive statistical results concerning the components of Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system were calculated, as shown

in Table 1, second column. The results indicate that our Deaf and hard-of-hearing participants' motivated learning behavior is around medium level ($M = 3.70$), and both the self-related components as well as their experience show similar endorsements. It seems that these special needs students invest some energy into language learning, but this level cannot be characterized as particularly high. Taking into account the possible difficulties they might be facing, these results cannot be seen as really surprising. Interestingly enough, the picture becomes somewhat more complex if we contrast the mean values with data coming from other Hungarian studies with similar teenage learners (Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Galántai & Csizér, 2009; Kormos & Csizér, 2008, 2010; Piniel & Csizér, 2013). Despite the fact that these results cannot be directly compared using statistical techniques, it turns out that the mean values of the present dataset represent general trends for similar age groups concerning their tempered enthusiasm for foreign language learning: The mean values of motivated learning behavior are between 3.50 and 4.21 and the scales measuring language learning experience fail to reach 4.00 on a 5-point Likert scale. The results related to ought-to selves are even lower: between 3.30 and 3.45. There is, however, one striking difference, that is, the mean values related to students' ideal L2 selves. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students seem to score lower than any other student group without special needs but score similarly to another special needs group, namely, dyslexic language learners. As research into L2 motivation in recent years has clearly established that the role of the ideal L2 self is of central importance in successful L2 learning in the long run (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014), these results give cause for concern. It seems that many of these Deaf and severely hard-of-hearing teenagers do not have future visions of themselves as language learners and this lack of their ideal L2 selves might hinder the learning process.

Another important result that needs to be pinpointed here is the relatively high mean value of language learning experience ($M = 3.72$). It seems that students seem to like English/German classes, which reinforces the findings from other research studies that Deaf individuals have, generally speaking, positive attitudes towards foreign language learning (Kontráné Hegybíró, 2010).

In order to further analyze and contrast our results, we have run regression analysis with motivated learning behavior set as a dependent scale and the three components of L2 motivational self system as independent constructs. The results are detailed in Table 2. Again, despite the fact that the figures are not comparable statistically, there are a number of interesting results to be noted. First, we have to acknowledge that the explanatory power (R^2) of the regression equation models presented numerically in Table 2 is highest for the present study. This not only provides further validation for the importance of self-related concepts for special needs students but also underlines the fact that

these students use similar mental schemata to appraise English/German and foreign language learning. Second, although all three components contribute significantly to motivated learning behavior, that is, the amount of effort students are willing to invest into language learning, there are differences in the strengths of this contribution. As for the ideal L2 self, we cannot fail to note that the beta value is the lowest for our D/HH participants. This is in line with the descriptive finding: A low score there indicated that students do not seem to have sufficiently developed ideal L2 selves. The significant but low beta value here gives support to our argument that a more detailed and concrete ideal L2 self could and should be part of D/HH students' identity, or, in other words, the low mean value in Table 1 does not indicate lack of importance but lack of presence.

Table 1 The mean (and standard deviation) values of the components of the L2 motivational self-system measured on 5-point scales

Scale	Present study	Study 1	Study 2 non-dys	Study 2 dys	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5
MLB	3.70 (0.95)	3.50 (0.76)	3.82 (0.80)	3.50 (1.0)	4.10 (0.68)	4.21 (0.77)	3.80 (0.75)
IL2S	3.55 (0.82)	4.30 (0.69)	4.16 (0.83)	3.66 (1.14)	4.43 (0.65)	4.23 (0.76)	4.39 (0.60)
OL2S	3.36 (0.80)	n.r.	n.m.	n.m.	3.45 (0.75)	n.r.	3.38 (0.71)
LLE	3.72 (0.94)	3.39 (0.99)	3.18 (0.93)	3.26 (0.90)	3.77 (0.80)	3.29 (0.91)	3.16 (0.98)

Notes. MLB = motivated learning behavior, IL2S = ideal L2 self, OL2S = ought-to L2 self, LLE = language learning experience

n.r. = not reliable, n.m. = not measured

Study 1 = Kormos & Csizér (2008)

Study 2 = Kormos & Csizér (2010; this study contained two subsamples for learners of English with and without diagnosed dyslexia [non-dys and dys in the table])

Study 3 = Galántai & Csizér (2009)

Study 4 = Csizér & Lukács (2010)

Study 5 = Piniel & Csizér (2013)

Table 2 Regression analysis of components of L2 motivational self system with motivated learning behavior as the dependent scale with beta values and significance

Scale	Present study	Study 3	Study 5
IL2S	.16*	.26*	.48*
OL2S	.23*	.18*	.22*
LLE	.61*	.50*	.21*
R ²	.72	.54	.50

Notes. Study 3 = Galántai & Csizér (2009)

Study 5 = Piniel & Csizér (2013)

* indicates significance at .05 level

In the case of the ought-to L2 self, the picture is even and clear: There are no differences as to what extent outside expectations contribute to students' intended effort in language learning. The values related to the ought-to L2 self

in the studies are all significant but not particularly high. This can be put down to several reasons. One can argue that teenage learners might want to downplay the importance of external values or expectations. Another hypothetical explanation might be that students are not sure what outside expectations they should meet. Unfortunately, these propositions cannot be verified or falsified with our current data set. At this point they remain hypotheses and point to the need for further investigations.

Last but not least, the role of language learning experience tends to vary from context to context. Again, further research is needed to find out the reasons behind this variation, but we would like to argue that it relates to issues connected to teaching practices in the various schools. As for our D/HH language learners, language learning experiences are the most important components of the L2 motivational self system. This means that the quality of teaching carries increasing importance for special needs students in general and D/HH learners in particular.

Based on the above quantitative data analysis, we have two important conclusions. First, the role of language learning experience seems to be of utmost importance for D/HH students: Despite possible difficulties, students do not dislike learning English/German, and language learning experience is the strongest predictor of motivated learning behavior for this group of students. Second, the impact of the ideal L2 self is lower than for other, nonspecial needs students, which is in concert with a lower endorsement of the self-concept as well (i.e., we obtained lower mean values as well as a low but significant beta value in the regression analysis). Thus, in the next part of our analysis, we will present our qualitative results in connection with experience and self for Deaf students. First, we will describe and discuss how they speak about their future selves and what kind of plans they have in connection with English/German. Second, we will look into issues that can be linked to their learning experience.

5.2. Results from the interview study

5.2.1. Ideal L2 self

As the quantitative results indicated a relatively low level of students' ideal L2 self, first we will look at how students expressed their views concerning their future selves and language use. In the 31 interviews, we coded 106 segments in which students talked about how they imagine themselves and their future concerning learning and using the English or German language. Only a small number of students rejected the idea of continuing the learning of a FL in the near future, expressing direct refusal to continue with their language studies in the future either because they did not think they would need FL skills or because they had difficulties

in learning languages. The following excerpt expresses such a negative view from an 8th grade student who otherwise considers FLs important (this and all other excerpts are presented in the authors' translation; the coding indicates: I = interviewer, St = student, F25 = the ID number of the student, D = Deaf, HH = hard-of-hearing, gr. = grade, the final numerical data are line numbers from where the quote is taken):

I: *When you finish your studies at this school, do you think you will continue learning English?*

St: *Well, I don't think so. Not for sure.*

I: *Why not?*

St: *Because it's difficult. If I had to take an exam, that would cause difficulties.*

I: *Is English important to you?*

St: *Yes, it is important.*

I: *Why is it important?*

St: *If I had to go abroad for work, I would have to speak English. But English is difficult for me. (F25, D, gr. 8, 23-30)*

A few participants showed indecisiveness concerning their future plans, and they responded with a simple *I don't know* to all attempts of the interviewer at eliciting some information. Some of them also mentioned that without formal training they would surely forget everything in the future.

Those students who envisage learning English or German in the near future almost invariably consider doing it as part of their studies in secondary education, and only a few of them imagine improving their language skills via self-study with the help of books or the Internet:

I: *How long will you continue learning English?*

St: *As long as I live. I need to gain experience.*

I: *How do you think you will continue learning English?*

St: *I'm sure it will be difficult. I'll learn from books or with the help of a translator program, something like that. (A6, D, gr.11, 30-33)*

Other options, such as trying to find a language school where they might admit D/HH students or hiring a private tutor who knows how to teach D/HH learners was not mentioned by any of the participants, which might be partly due to the low or relatively low socio-economic status of the students' families, but it is also possible that students had not seriously thought about this issue and considered their possibilities before the interview. If they had discussed this issue with experienced D/HH adults, they might have lamented that the out-of-school possibilities readily available to their hearing peers are rarely offered to D/HH persons (cf. Kontra, 2013). No wonder that quite a few students said they had no idea where and how they would continue learning FLs:

St: *I'd like to continue learning English.*

I: *And where would you like to do that? How would you like to do it?*

St: *Well, that I don't know.*

I: *How do you imagine it?*

St: *I don't know. (A7, D, gr. 8, 227-231)*

One of the HH girls expressed her worries about continuing her English studies in secondary school together with hearing peers:

St: Well, I like English, I know it is important for my future studies, but as far as the matura exam [school-leaving exam] goes, I do not think I will take the matura exam in it, because it is not easy in secondary school, and I didn't attend a regular primary school, I attend a special needs school, and I do not know, in a different school, there they speak a lot and maybe I will not understand . . . (E20, HH, gr.8, 102)

It is clear from this extract that the student is not worried about her own language learning abilities. Her concern stems from the disadvantaged situation of special needs learners in integrated settings, where teaching and testing are both designed for hearing students' needs, and the special needs learner is expected to cope with the requirements or ask for an exemption.

It is reassuring to see that, on average, every participant mentioned something regarding the role of FLs in their future lives, but further analysis of these segments shows that the views they expressed about themselves are not very detailed or varied. There is, however, one strong part of students' future self-image: international travel. We have found more than 20 instances where students spoke about wanting to learn English/German because they plan to travel or work abroad. Some of the students were able to specify the kind of job they would like to do abroad and for which they would need FL skills, such as being a cook in Austria, a butcher in Germany, a painter and decorator in Italy, or working with computers in England, Sweden or just simply "abroad." One of the students even mentioned that she had heard of a "Deaf" university in the USA and was thinking of perhaps studying there in the future. There were participants who mentioned the school-leaving examination as part of their future self-image. Some mentioned being able to communicate more easily with English in the world or simply said that a person could have an easier life if they spoke English. It seems that this is the component of students' selves that could be best utilized to develop their future self-image and vision (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

As regards the importance of knowing FLs, especially English, there seems to be quite a strong awareness of this in several of the participants, especially in those in the upper grades. For instance, one of the boys in a 6th grade class hopes to become a footballer and insisted in the interview that footballers did not need to know English. On the other hand, an 11th grader emphasized that

English was a world language that everybody should want to learn: *“This (i.e., English) is a world language. They should know it. So it is important. German and English. I think everyone should know it. I just don’t get it why they do not want to learn it”* (H31, S, gr. 11, 49). For another student, the need for English is also self-evident. When asked if she would be using the English that she has learned when she becomes an adult, she replied: *“Of course. How else would I communicate with foreigners? In English!”* (A7, D, gr. 8, 216-221).

It is well known from previous studies (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) that the milieu, the immediate surroundings of the learner exert an important influence on how they see themselves in the future and how much importance they attribute to the learning of FLs. Students who have a parent either working or planning to work abroad tend to consider FL skills as a natural part of their future selves, and the same can be said about students who have friends or acquaintances abroad as, for example, the following boy: *“I first started to learn English with the help of a dictionary, and then my mother helped me, and then my mother knows someone in Canada, NN, and I usually Skype with him”* (F24, HH, gr7, 17). There are, however, boys and girls among our participants who do not get much encouragement from home for studying FLs:

St: *In my family nobody learns English because they are hearing impaired, too.*

I: *So you feel that hearing impaired people do not need English?*

St: *Well, I think I don’t.* (A4, HH, gr. 10, 183-186)

This does not mean that the family would directly discourage the child from learning FLs; they simply do not provide a positive model and cannot help in doing the homework or finding out-of-school language learning opportunities.

5.2.2. Language learning experience

Data concerning language learning experiences are detailed in Table 3. Our results indicate several issues. First, it is not very reassuring to see that learning difficulties have the highest number of coded segments. Interview data reveal that the most often mentioned difficulties relate to learning new words and expressions (15), oral communication and pronunciation (17), and the length of words, sentences and texts as well as reading comprehension (10). One participant expressed word-related difficulties really poignantly: [it is difficult] *“if they say words in English that I don’t even know in Hungarian”* (A6, D, gr. 11, 59). It seems that grammar (5) and testing (2) pose less difficulty, although one student elaborated on how tests have become increasingly difficult: *“in 9th and 10th grade we had tests suitable for Deaf learners. Now in grade 11, all the tests are for hearing students; therefore, it is more difficult, and I have to study more to reach the [appropriate] level”* (H30,

D, gr. 11, 139). We consider sign language use in class as an important part of students' language learning experiences. These results reflect the fact that sign language is not the medium of teaching for these students, but that they learn English mainly through spoken Hungarian. More than one student communicated that they use HSL because they are Deaf, but this sign language use is mostly limited to students' helping one another in class (29), predominantly when new and difficult words have to be learnt: *"If there is a strange word then we try to sign it"* (G27, HH, gr. 7, 156). This is general practice because, as one student put it, *"I will learn and memorize it much quicker if I use sign language"* (F26, HH, gr. 7, 101). One difficulty in using sign language at school is the diminishing number of Deaf students in specialized schools, as integration is prevalent. The next quote about translating from English to HSL illustrates this:

I: *Do you translate [the text] to HSL in your head?*

St: *I used to. But not anymore.*

...

I: *Why not?*

St: *Because I cannot use HSL really well.*

I: *Don't you practice HSL with anyone?*

St: *No. There are too few hearing impaired students in our school.* (C13, HH, gr 8, 242-247)

When students have to ask questions, very few of them claimed that they use HSL together with spoken Hungarian (7 coded segments). This is no surprise as there were only two teachers in our sample who were proficient users of HSL. This lack of HSL on the teachers' part was explained by one student as *"teachers help by speaking. They are not allowed to sign because our head teacher says that we shouldn't use HSL, only speaking is allowed"* (C13, HH, gr 8, 13/69).

Table 3 Emerging themes and number of coded segments linked to language learning experience

Emerging themes	Number of coded segments
Learning difficulties	68
Students' use of HSL in language learning	54
Achievement and grades	53
Teacher's sign language use	51
Learning intensity	31
Learning modality	18

Analyzing teachers' sign language use is less straightforward as more students were interviewed from each class; therefore, they individually formed an opinion on their teachers. Hence, the number of coded segments often relates only to a single teacher. To be precise, we have found 19 coded segments of teacher

sign language use, but this relates to 3 teachers in our sample. In addition, where sign language was not part of teaching, it was very difficult to make students comment on this use. Still, many students claimed that it is important and useful for the teacher to use HSL while teaching (12 coded segments). An illustrative exchange follows:

I: *Is it important [for the teacher] to be able to sign?*

St: *Yes.*

I: *Why?*

St: *Because I am Deaf and it is needed for communication. (F25, D, gr. 8, 71-74)*

Comments related to learning modality were not very frequent in the interviews (18 coded segments). One reason behind this is that audio-verbal teaching is widespread in Hungary (Csuha et al., 2009), and this cannot be challenged by students. As a result of this, the majority of these comments (14 altogether) relate to speaking as a channel of communication in general and good pronunciation in particular, which often cause problems for students as more than one of them said that speaking and pronunciation skills are difficult to master.

6. Conclusion

To conclude our paper, there are a number of interesting points to be summarized. First, the most revealing identity-related issue concerns our participants' ideal L2 selves. Despite the fact that they know that learning foreign languages is important and they have generally positive attitudes towards learning as well as some future plans, what they lack is pronounced, well-developed and detailed future ideal L2 selves and corresponding visions to guide their learning. This might be related to their difficulties in relation to language learning in general and the lack of sign language use in learning in particular. In our view, teachers' role would be crucial in intervention and helping students develop not only realistic expectations about themselves but also building and including motivating future visions into their learning. Another important finding to reiterate is the paramount importance of language learning experience for our D/HH participants. As the learning process is fraught with difficulties for this special needs learner group, again the role of the teachers cannot be overestimated. A somewhat reassuring point is that despite the fact that students encounter numerous difficulties, they do not express negative attitudes towards language learning in general; foreign language teachers can build on these positive attitudes to help experience foreign language learning in a positive way.

There is much further work to be done in connection with future research. First, the intervention studies developing D/HH ideal L2 selves could be designed. Second, we have not discussed students' ought-to L2 selves in great detail in this study as we feel that we need to collect more quantitative as well as qualitative data to investigate how and in what ways students' experiences are related to their ought-to L2 selves. Third, observation studies could complement the picture in order to find out how various selves and experiences shape classroom learning.

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