EFFECTS OF MOTIVATION ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

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Due to globalization and exponential changes of the 21st century, education has become lifelong learning, in particular, language education. Adults are often forced by their internal and external drives and life demands to start or continue learning languages. Although Critical Period hypothesis has been in the focus of researchers analyzing adult learning for over sixty years and debating over its reliability (Al-Hoorie, 2017), it still has its supporters and critics. However, lifelong learning demands and adults’ responses to them have proved that it is possible to learn a language at any age if the people are highly motivated and devote their efforts to intensive studies. The study was designed to test the effects of adult learners’ motivation on foreign language learning and a survey was conducted in several institutions of non-formal education (language courses and language clubs) in Kaunas and Panevėžys. It sought to identify the adults’ motives to resume language learning in non-formal and informal ways, find out the reasons they use foreign languages in life, determine the sources of inspiration to learn languages more effectively and identify adult learners’ self-identified factors that determine language acquisition. The learning strategies adults use for learning a new language were also investigated. The study results show that adult learners are mostly motivated intrinsically, mainly, because of the willingness to learn in general and to learn a foreign language in particular. The study revealed interesting motives the adult learners have, their sources of inspiration to study, teacher’s role and factors which, in their opinion, help them learn and acquire the language.

Keywords: adult learners; motivation; non-formal and informal language learning; inspiration; encouragement.