

Abstract

Motivation is one of the strongest predictors of success in learning a foreign language. Although it has been discussed extensively, most studies have examined large world languages. This paper brings new insight into the motivation to learn Czech as a second language in the context of study abroad at Charles University in Prague.

First, the theoretical part introduces essential theoretical frameworks of motivation in applied linguistics from a historical perspective, including the L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS) chosen for the empirical part. Secondly, study abroad as a language learning context is described, and literature on motivation to learn L2 in this context is reviewed. The methodology chapter summarizes possible approaches to research language learning motivation and assesses their suitability for the presented research.

The empirical part examines the dynamic process of motivation among students coming for one semester to study in the Erasmus+ program at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, and in the American program UPCES (Undergraduate Program in Central European Studies) Study Abroad, Charles University. The data collection tools (diaries, questionnaires, and interviews) were tested in preliminary research. It was revealed that there is a relatively significant change in motivation, particularly among the American students in the UPCES program, and that in both programs, similar motivational factors play a key role. The most prominent factors were the desire to integrate into the local culture and the L2 learning experience.

The crucial part of the research lies in the qualitative diary study. The L2MSS model was used to create motivational profiles of ten students (five in each program), and the dynamic process of their motivation to learn Czech was described. The desire to integrate into the target culture and the L2 learning experience proved to be the strongest motivational factors. The findings from the qualitative research were verified among a wider sample of students in Erasmus+ at the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Arts. The average student profile was created from the data obtained and compared to the profiles from the qualitative study. The results confirm that the individuals' motivation to learn the target language is a dynamic process, and despite individual differences, there are some similarities in the motivational profiles. The strongest sources of motivation among these students proved to be the desire to integrate into the target culture and the L2 learning experience.

The thesis contributes to the broader discussion of motivation to learn a foreign/second language by focusing on a small (and, in this area, understudied) language. At the theoretical level, it assesses the suitability of the theoretical framework of L2MSS to research the Czech

language and suggests its adaptation to the multilingual motivational self-system for future research. At the methodological level, the research helps increase the ratio of qualitative and mixed-method approaches, which are still used on a smaller scale in empirical motivational research. At the practical level, the findings brought pedagogical implications that a broader scope of language classes may utilize.