




Katarzyna Morena

University of the National Education
Commission, Krakow
Institute of English Studies

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2039-5009>

Academics' Motivation to Learn Foreign Languages: The Case of English

Abstract

Teaching and research are central aspects of university scholars' work. To provide a high quality of teaching and research, scholars are required to continually learn and develop professionally. Only recently have some empirical studies that focused on academics' motivations and emotions attempted to explain key outcomes related to their research, teaching, and professional development.

This study adopted a self-determination lens to explore academics' motivation to learn foreign languages, an area that has hardly been scrutinized due to an assumption that academics are highly motivated. The sample consisted of 593 academics (330 women) from nine public and one non-public higher education institutions in Krakow, Poland. The participants also self-rated their level of proficiency in English, French, German, Spanish, and Russian.

The results from the Polish version of the Language Learning Orientations Scale—intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amotivation (LLOS-IEA) (Noels et al., 2000) showed that these university academics were characterized by both intrinsic motivation and the most internalized form of extrinsic motivation (identified regulation). These have been considered to be optimal forms of motivation with positive outcomes. Statistically significant differences were found between scholars' motivation to learn languages and age, gender, and job seniority. The analysis performed for English indicated that scholars rated themselves as having a proficient level (C1) in reading and an independent level (B2) in writing skills.

Keywords: academics, motivation, self-determination theory, foreign languages

University scholars are the largest producers of innovative research and contributors to scientific progress (Stupnisky, BrckaLorenz, & Laird, 2019). This scientific advancement leads to university-industry knowledge transfer,

economic activity, and data-based government decision-making (Landry et al., 2003; Perkmann et al., 2013; Weinberg et al., 2014). Effective academic teaching and research are fundamental components of informed citizenship, quality of higher education, and institutional visibility (Javitz et al., 2010). Studies of academics' career goals show that most scholars enter the profession with expectations of contributing new knowledge and research to society, doing intellectually stimulating work, and delivering high-quality teaching (Watt & Richardson, 2020).

Teaching and research are central and time-intensive aspects of university scholars' work. While teaching primarily focuses on conveying existing knowledge to others, research focuses on creating and documenting new knowledge (Daumiller & Dresel, 2020b). Effective teaching is associated with the quality of student engagement, differences in student academic achievements, and persistence (BrckaLorenz et al., 2012), whereas effective research is associated with international collaboration and/or getting published in high-impact, peer-reviewed journals (Stupnisky, BrckaLorenz, & Laird, 2019; Willetts, 2019).

Tertiary education, and particularly the scientific domain, is where English dominates over other foreign languages (Björkman, 2013). English has become the lingua franca of science (Crystal, 2006). Thus, it is the primary language to access scientific information, participate in discussions, symposia, and congresses, or collaborate with other scholars in the field (Björkman, 2013). Demands on academics continue, yet little is known about their career goals, attitudes, or motivations. One examination suggests the reason for this may be that academics constitute a smaller labor force than teachers and, therefore, may not be studied very much in general (Daumiller, Stupnisky, & Janke, 2020). As scholars comprise a smaller group of professionals, a smaller sample generates less statistically significant and generalizable results. Another rationale for the lack of research is the perception that academics are highly motivated; given the efforts invested in obtaining the necessary degrees, or the low salary, people who persevere to become scholars are assumed to be highly motivated (Daumiller, Stupnisky, & Janke, 2020). The third reason is that researching academics' motivation can be socially intimidating and methodologically challenging for the researcher. For some, approaching colleagues or their teachers and asking how motivated they are to do their job, research, or develop might be uncomfortable. Besides, fellow academics may also be too busy or disengaged to participate in such empirical research. Another challenge relates to fellow scholars' scientific expertise and researcher concerns that the research method may receive criticism, or that colleagues will deduce the aims of the research and provide desirable responses (e.g., the Hawthorne effect).

Only recently, have some empirical studies that focused on the motivations and emotions of academics attempted to explain key outcomes related to research, teaching, and professional development (e.g., Stupnisky et al., 2017,

2018; Stupnisky, BrckaLorenz, & Laird, 2019; Daumiller & Dresel, 2020a, b). A conclusion drawn from recent research indicates that to achieve in research and teaching domains, scholars need optimal motivation (e.g., Daumiller & Dresel, 2020b; Stupnisky, BrckaLorenz & Laird, 2019; Stupnisky et al., 2018). Given that an exceptionally high level of fluency in English is the key to success in the academic world, scholars need to spend considerable time and effort to develop competencies in this language (Coleman, 2006; Crystal, 2006; Horn, 2017; Lopes-Navarro, 2015; Stockemer & Wigginton, 2019). Thus, it can be speculated that scholars who are optimally motivated to learn English (as a foreign language) may enjoy participation in career and knowledge advancement, increased mobility, and thus employability. In turn, successful and motivated scholars enhance institutional prestige, attract research and development funding, and demonstrate high-quality teaching abilities based on state-of-the-art scientific knowledge (Macaro, 2018).

Self-determination Theory and Language Learning Motivation

Self-determination theory (SDT) assumes that the propensity to be curious about one's environment and interested in learning and developing one's knowledge is inherent in human nature. Individuals, according to SDT, are innately curious creatures who possess a natural love of learning and who desire to internalize knowledge, customs, and values that surround them (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009, p. 133).

Self-determination theory is a theory of human motivation that takes an interest in factors that either facilitate or undermine the assimilative and growth-oriented process in people. SDT emphasizes different types and sources of motivation that impact the quality and dynamics of behavior, and the SDT model involves general motivational regulations (orientations) that are autonomous, controlled, or amotivated (Noels et al., 2000; Ryan et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). SDT has provided a framework for studying motivation in multiple contexts: education, health care, sport and physical activity, psychotherapy, virtual environments, or work and organizations (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The motivation to learn languages conceptualized through the self-determination theory lens assumes that there are different types of motivation related to how much a learner engages in (learning) activity (Noels et al., 2001). In line with SDT, Noels, Lou et al. (2019, p. 97) defined motivation as "a set of reasons for learning the language, which provides a frame of reference for the learner within which she interprets her language learning experience and directs her attention and effort." These researchers further differentiated the

reasons for learning the language into three forms: intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation orientations.

Table 1
Self-determination Theory Taxonomy of Foreign Language (FL) Learning Motivation Based on the Language Learning Orientations Scale—IEA (Noels et al., 2000)

AMOTIVATION	EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION			INTRINSIC MOTIVATION		
	EXTERNAL REGULATION	INTROJECTED REGULATION	IDENTIFIED REGULATION	KNOW	ACCOMPLISH	STIMULATE
feeling of incompetence, no value to engage in learning	external rewards: salary increase, promotion prospects, meet other people's expectancies	ego-relevant reasons, self-pressure to perform well feel proud, or avoid shame and guilt	value of learning and using the FL, FL is an important aspect of development and identity	pleasure and satisfaction from learning, exploring, and understanding something new	pleasure and satisfaction from attempts to accomplish something new	experience stimulating sensations of cognitive pleasure

According to self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation to learn is based on the experience of enjoyment and vitality that stems from an individual's "inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to explore, to learn" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). Thus, language learning could be pleasurable in and of itself, even if that activity is not tied to one's sense of self (Noels, Vargas Lascano, & Saumure, 2019). According to Vallerand et al. (1992) intrinsic motivation might be differentiated into more specific motives such as motivation to know, accomplish, and experience stimulation (see Table 1).

Learners are intrinsically motivated to know when they read a book or a paper for the sheer pleasure they experience while learning or discovering something new. Intrinsically motivated individuals approach language learning with an inherent interest (Noels, Lou et al., 2019). Intrinsic motivation to know thus refers to "the fact of performing an activity for pleasure and satisfaction that one experiences while learning, exploring, and trying to understand something new" (Vallerand et al., 1992, p. 1005). Another type of intrinsic motivation is motivation towards accomplishments. Learners who extend their work beyond requirements, achieve a goal, or surpass themselves might experience intrinsic motivation towards accomplishments (Noels et al., 2000). The third type of intrinsic motivation is intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation, that is, "the fact of engaging in an activity to experience stimulating sensations of pleasure, fun, and excitement" (Vallerand et al., 1992, p. 1005).

Learners who are characterized by this form of motivation engage in learning to experience excitement and feelings of cognitive pleasure (Vallerand et al., 1992; Noels et al., 2000).

Not all individuals feel intrinsically motivated to engage in language learning (Noels, Lou et al., 2019). Although the feelings about learning languages can be similar to feelings associated with intrinsic motivation that involve a sense of accomplishment and thriving, some people do not experience feelings of pleasure or joy. Learning a new language can be personally meaningful. It may facilitate the attainment of important goals, such as improving one's occupational performance, or ability to communicate effectively within one's professional context (Noels, Lou et al., 2019). Such individuals learn languages because of identified reasons. Identified regulation occurs when an individual integrates the value of learning and using the language. At this point, individuals invest energy in learning because of personally relevant reasons; learners feel that fluency in a foreign language is an important aspect of their development and identity (Noels et al., 2000). The person will persist in learning as long as the goal is important (Noels et al., 2001). These relatively self-determined regulations can be contrasted with more controlled forms, including introjected regulation and external regulation.

Individuals might learn a foreign language less because it is important or valuable and more because they feel they should know a language. Such motives arise because the person feels internal pressure, or social circumstances require them to engage in language learning (Noels, Lou et al., 2019). It may be the case that an individual self-imposed pressure and compelled themselves to learn (Noels et al., 2000). Such individuals learn languages because of introjected reasons. According to Noels et al. (2000), introjected regulation is controlled by ego-relevant reasons such as self-pressure to perform well, or to avoid shame or guilt for not doing so. Even if the value of learning the language is not evident to a person in their personal lives, they might feel it is expected for an educated person to know the language. Learning also occurs if individuals feel the need to reduce negative feelings (e.g., guilt or shame) (Noels et al., 2000). Yet, some people engage in learning the language, not because of self-imposed pressures or because it is meaningful or congruent with their goals and identity, but because of external factors, for example, rewards such as a salary increase or promotion prospects, or because other people expect them to do so (Noels et al., 2000). Such individuals learn languages because of external reasons. Accordingly, external regulation is the most controlled regulation by sources external to the person. However, once that pressure or reward is removed, the learner might be expected to stop putting effort into language learning (Noels et al., 2001).

These four forms (integrated, identified, introjected, external) of regulations fall under the umbrella term of extrinsic motivation. The reasons (or contingen-

cies) may be more or less internalized—motives change along the continuum from external regulation to identified regulation (Noels, Lou et al., 2019).

Some individuals might see no purpose of any kind for learning the language. This type of situation is referred to as *amotivation*. In amotivation, an individual may feel incompetent and/or see no value in engaging in the activity (Noels, Lou et al., 2019). Such learners would be expected to quit at their earliest convenience (Noels et al., 2001).

Research conducted in second and foreign language learning using the SDT framework has consistently shown that language learners who endorse a self-determined orientation are more likely to engage deeply and positively with the learning process, and they are more likely to experience a positive outcome. Compared to less self-determined learners, they exhibit greater competence, confidence, and persistence, better use of learning strategies, and greater intention to continue studying the language even after the course is completed (Busse & Walter 2013; Lou & Noels, 2018; Noels et al., 2001; Pae, 2008; Vandergrift, 2005).

Method

This study adopted a quantitative research design. The questionnaire consisted of demographic information, the LLOS-IEA scale, and language-specific questions based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2003). A self-assessment grid and detailed descriptors of the levels (A1–C2, 2017) were provided for the participants. The questionnaire was distributed in paper format and also sent out via email to the offices of the ten biggest universities in Krakow. The participation was voluntary and anonymous. A total of 616 questionnaires were returned, however, due to the incompleteness, 21 were removed from the analysis, and the final sample consisted of 593 respondents (330 females).

The participants were academics from nine public and one non-public higher education institutions in Krakow. Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 65+. The most numerous group included participants aged 35–44 ($N = 289$), and 25–34 ($N = 133$), whereas the least numerous group included participants 65+ ($N = 19$). There was a broad range of titles and degrees among participants with the most numerous group being PhDs ($N = 265$). The academics were employed as teaching staff, research staff, or both. Table 2 shows this data.

Table 2
Participants’ Titles, Degrees, and Positions

	<i>N</i>	[%]
Titles and degrees		
Master of Arts (MA)	37	6.2
Master of Science in Engineering (MSc Eng.)	17	2.8
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	265	44.6
Doctor of Engineering (Dr. Eng.)	145	24.4
Associate Professor (Assoc. Prof.)	109	18.3
Professor (Prof.)	15	2.5
Other, e.g., Medical Doctor (MD)	5	0.8
Positions		
Teaching staff	41	6.9
Research staff	35	5.9
Teaching and research staff	500	84.3
Other, e.g., research-technical	17	2.8

Note. *N* = 593.

Apart from demographic data (age, gender, job seniority, title & degree), the respondents filled out the Polish version of the Language Learning Orientations Scale—intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amotivation (LLOS-IEA) (Noels et al., 2000). The Polish adaptation of the LLOS-IEA was conducted by a group of two translators independently, who performed the translation into Polish. The translators were experienced teachers of the English language; one worked mostly with adolescents and the second with adult learners. The two translations were compared with the original instrument and evaluated (in terms of wording, discrepancies, and variations) by a licensed psychologist and an academic teacher of foreign languages. Next, the instrument’s translated version was blindly translated back into English by two other experienced English teachers and compared with the original tool. Two consecutive studies were conducted to analyze the internal consistency of the scale. Study 1 (*N* = 117) and study 2 (*N* = 81) showed good internal consistency varying between 0.57 and 0.84. Minor wording changes were introduced into the scale after study 1 and retested. After study 2, the final version of LLOS-IEA was established.

Table 3
The Cronbach Alpha Index of Internal Consistency for LLOS-IEA Studies 1 and 2

Subscales	Items	The Cronbach alpha study 2	Remarks	The Cronbach alpha study 1
Amotivation	p1, p8, p15	0.833		0.792
External regulation	p2, p6, p16	0.233	After removing p2, $\alpha = 0.837$	0.570
Introjected regulation	p3, p10, p17	0.629		0.713
Identified regulation	p4, p11, p18	0.843		0.801
Intrinsic motivation–knowledge	p5, p12, p19	0.778	After removing p19, $\alpha = 0.840$	0.827
Intrinsic motivation–accomplish	p9, p13, p20	0.79		0.842
Intrinsic motivation–stimulation	p7, p14, p21	0.667		0.796

It is of note that these results were similar to other studies that adapted LLOS-IEA (Ardasheva, Tong, & Tretter, 2012; Lou & Noels, 2018; Vandergrift, 2005).

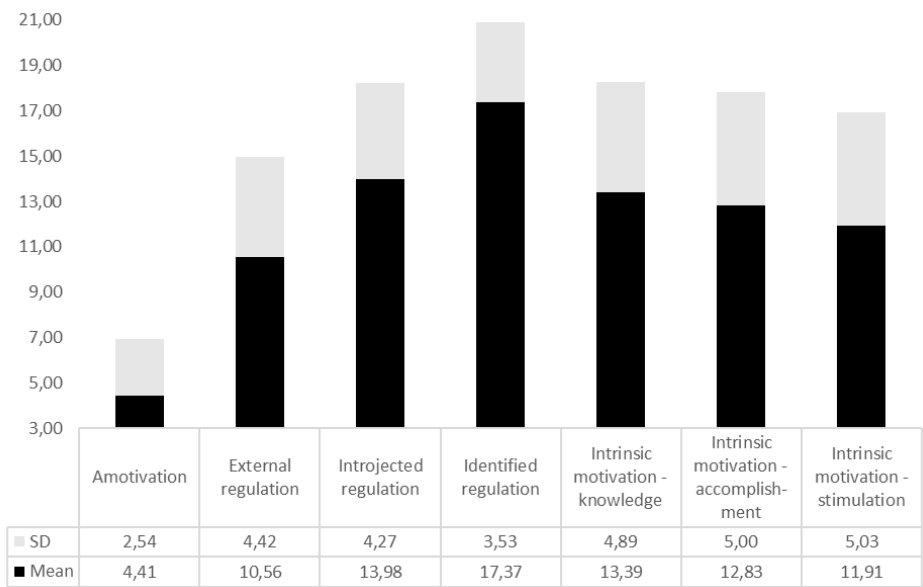
The LLOS-IEA consists of seven subscales: amotivation, external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, intrinsic motivation–knowledge, intrinsic motivation–accomplishment, and intrinsic motivation–stimulation, which are arranged on a continuum, that is, less self-determined regulation are inversely related to those more-self-determined regulations. Each subscale consists of three items rated on a 7-point scale. The maximum points on each subscale were 21.

Results

The main aim of the study was to determine what type of motivation university teachers had to learn foreign languages. The means scores obtained through statistical analysis from the LLOS-IEA (Noels et al., 2000) showed the highest means for identified regulation ($M = 17.34$; $SD = 3.52$), followed by similar levels of Introjected Regulation ($M = 13.98$; $SD = 4.27$) and intrinsic motivation–knowledge ($M = 13.38$; $SD = 4.88$). Next, intrinsic motivation–accomplishment ($M = 12.82$, $SD = 5.00$) and intrinsic motivation–stimulation ($M = 11.91$;

$SD = 5.03$) followed by external regulation ($M = 10.56$; $SD = 4.41$). The lowest mean was observed for amotivation ($M = 4.40$; $SD = 2.54$). The post hoc test for multiple comparisons using Bonferroni correction showed statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between all subscales of the LLOS-IEA, except for Introjected regulation and intrinsic motivation–knowledge. It suggests that the levels of introjected regulation and intrinsic motivation–knowledge are similar.

Figure 1
Mean Scores for Each of the Subscales of the LLOS-IEA



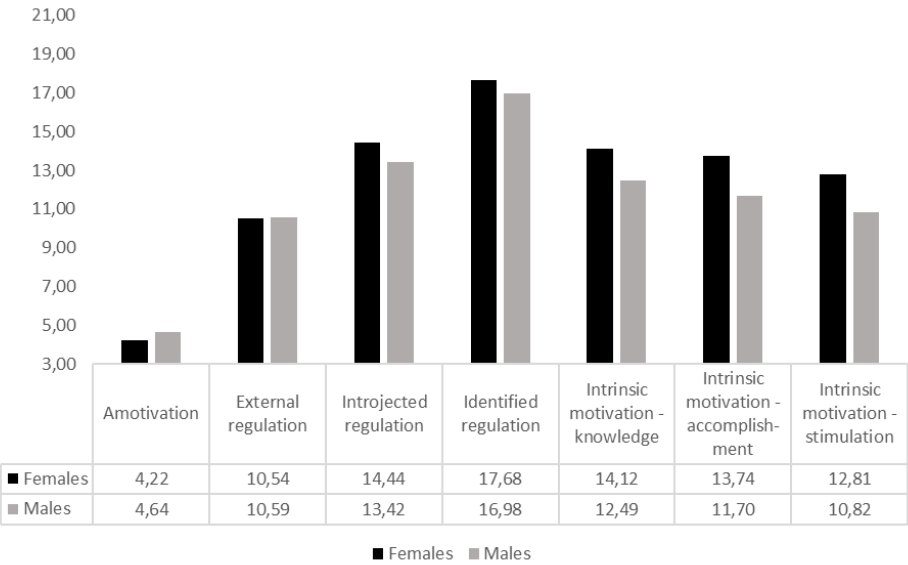
Note. $N = 534$, SD = standard deviation.

Another analysis found statistically significant correlations and differences between participants' motivation to learn foreign languages and their age, job seniority, and gender.

The analysis, using Pearson-product moment correlation found a statistically significant negative correlation between participants' age and external regulation ($r = -0.28$, $p < 0.01$) and identified regulation ($r = -0.098$, $p < 0.05$). These were weak correlations but statistically significant. There were no statistically significant correlations found between age and other types of regulations. Similarly to participants' age, a weak but statistically significant negative correlation was found between participants' job seniority and external regulation ($r = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$) and identified regulation ($r = -0.13$, $p < 0.05$). No other statistically significant correlations were observed between job seniority and other regulations ($p > 0.05$).

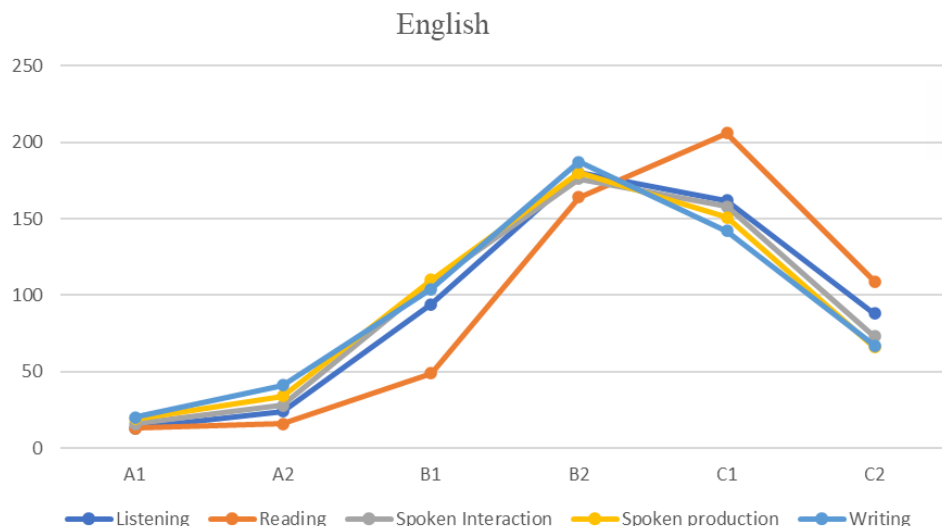
Another analysis using the t-test for differences between female and male academics and the motivation to learn foreign languages showed statistically significant higher motivation in the group of female scholars and introjected regulation ($t = 2.75$; $p < 0.01$), identified regulation ($t = 2.29$; $p < 0.05$), intrinsic motivation–knowledge ($t = 3.86$; $p < 0.001$), intrinsic motivation–accomplishment ($t = 4.77$; $p < 0.001$) and intrinsic motivation–stimulation ($t = 4.61$; $p < 0.001$) than in male academic group. The results can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Mean Values for Female and Male Academics on the LLOS-IEA Subscales



Note. $N = 534$.

Due to space limitations, only data analysis for English will be presented. Almost all participants declared they knew English (94.7%). The overall level of proficiency in the English language ranged between B2 and C1, that is, independent, or proficient users, with reading skills at the highest level of C1 as indicated by participants (Figure 3).

Figure 3*Self-rated Levels of Proficiency in Language Skills in English*

Note. $N = 562$.

Self-assessment of five language skills: writing, reading, listening, spoken interaction, and production, showed that academics' proficiency in the English language ranged between B2 and C1. Almost half of the sample was actively learning a foreign language at the time of the study. This study showed that many academics rated their skill of reading in English at the C1 level, known as effective operation proficiency. According to CEFR (2003), a learner who has attained the C1 level can understand a wide range of literary writings, journals, magazine articles, and specialized academic or professional publications. Reading in English at this level involves a detailed reading for information/argument, of lengthy, complex texts encountered in social, professional, or academic life, and the ability to identify finer points of detail, including attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions.

As far as the skill of writing in the English language is concerned, most scholars in this study rated it at the B2 level and fewer at the C1 level. In line with CEFR (2003), the B2 level in writing indicates that a learner can write specific pieces of writing (e.g., article, chapter, essay, letter) while passing on information or providing reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. Whereas the C1 level in writing suggests that a learner can form a well-structured, lengthy text about complex subjects, underlining salient issues with good expression and accuracy.

This study also showed that many scholars rated their speaking skills (production and interaction) at a B2 level, which indicates that academics can speak

about a wide range of subjects related to their field of interest, and expand and support ideas with subsidiary points and relevant examples. When delivering presentations to the audience, scholars can give a clear, systematically developed speech, highlighting significant points and relevant details and reacting to questions raised by the audience, showing fluency and ease of expression. During an interaction, at this level, a scholar can interact with the audience with a degree of fluency and spontaneity, which poses no strain for either the scholar or the audience (CEFR, 2018).

Discussion

Academics' Motivation to Learn Foreign Languages

The primary finding of this study was that scholars in this sample were both extrinsically motivated by identification (i.e., identified regulation) and introjection (i.e., introjected regulation), as well as intrinsically motivated (intrinsic motivation–knowledge). It is of note that people usually hold more than one reason (regulation) for engaging in specific behaviors at any one time (Howard, Gagne, & Morin, 2020), which means that types of regulation co-occur, and learning language can be energized by more than one type of motivation (Ryan, 2019).

Following the SDT continuum, some scholars displayed introjected orientation to learn languages, which implies that these individuals engage in behavior to earn self- and other-approval (or avoid disapproval). These scholars feel a personal obligation to learn the language because of self and/or normatively imposed expectations. These people do not feel fully volitional, and their behaviors are motivationally unstable and only weakly related to long-term commitment and performance.

Most academics in this study were, however, motivated to learn languages for identified reasons. These individuals personally endorse and truly identify with the value of learning languages. They recognize it as something personally important and worthwhile for themselves and their careers (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In other words, a person learns the language because they decided to do so and the activity has value for their chosen goals. As long as the goal is important, the learner persists in language learning (Noels et al., 2000). Research has shown that identified orientation is a relatively stable regulation and unlikely to change over time because it might be related to enduring values for a language learner (e.g., pursuing a personally important goal) (Noels et al., 2019).

The third type of motivation most frequently indicated by scholars in this study as the reason for learning foreign languages was intrinsic motivation–

knowledge. Scholars with this type of motivation engage in language learning because it has inherent appeal, interest, and satisfaction derived from learning, exploring new ideas, and developing knowledge (Noels et al., 2000; Ryan et al., 2019). Intrinsic motivation has been associated with higher quality learning and performance (Deci et al., 2017), greater intensity of effort (Busse & Walter, 2013), greater self- and linguistic confidence, and low anxiety (Lou & Noels, 2018).

The combination of extrinsic orientations (introjected and identified) and intrinsic motivation–knowledge suggests that academics learn languages for instrumental reasons on the one hand, which might be related to conducting research and publishing in foreign languages, teaching international students, or effectively communicating at conferences abroad. On the other hand, scholars' intrinsic motivation to learn languages might be related to developmental reasons such as exploring and acquiring knowledge through and about another language and deriving satisfaction from learning foreign languages. Extrinsic motivation is more common in the academic context than intrinsic motivation (Dresel & Hall, 2013). Extrinsic motivation might positively affect learning and achievement behavior, particularly when the learning activity or outcome is expected to be short-lived (Dresel & Hall, 2013). However, it is worth highlighting that intrinsic motivation is a strong determinant of learners' self-confidence and a reason for life-long learning of a second language (Pae, 2008).

Motivation, Age, Gender, Job Seniority, and English

This study found that younger academics were more externally motivated than older scholars. The finding is perhaps not surprising as a foreign language for younger scholars is a vehicle to achieve other desired outcomes, for example, obtain external funding to conduct research, increase research productivity, and publish research findings (Lechuga & Lechuga, 2012). Therefore, for younger academics learning the language might be associated with external contingencies such as recognition, that is, research success (Stupnisky, BrckaLorenz, & Laird 2019). Conversely, older academics were less externally motivated to learn foreign languages. Research has shown that older learners tend to have a greater intrinsic goal orientation, and the value and worth of what is learned are more important for them than for their younger counterparts (Włodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

As we age, our motivations to be recognized for our achievements, and to rack up more and more achievements, tend to decline, that is, older adults tend toward being more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated (Levitin, 2020, p. 174). Therefore, younger scholars tend to be more externally motivated, that is, achievement and recognition-oriented, than older scholars. In their profession, academics also progress through a series of career stages (e.g., junior, mid-

career, senior scholar), which collectively refer to the term seniority. Job seniority differentiated academics in terms of motivation to learn foreign languages.

Female scholars were found to differ from male scholars on three subscales of motivation, that is, introjected regulation, identification regulation, and all the intrinsic motivation subscales. The biggest differences between females and males were noted in intrinsic motivation–accomplishment and intrinsic motivation–stimulation. Female scholars were more intrinsically motivated than their male colleagues. These results suggest that for female academics, learning languages is associated with pleasant sensations related to the learning activity itself, satisfaction from improving performance, trying to reach new personal objectives, and accomplishing tasks (Noels et al., 2000).

Female scholars also scored higher than male academics on identified regulation—the most frequently indicated motivation for learning languages in this sample. This result implies that for females, more than for males, knowing the language may help attain important goals, such as improving their occupational performance (e.g., in research, teaching activities, or communication with other scholars) (Noels et al., 2019). In the study of the effects of motivation on the research success of professors, Stupnisky, BrecklaLorenz, and Laird (2019) found differences between female and male professors in all three types of motivation (autonomous, introjected, external). Male scholars were found to be much more externally motivated than female scholars. However, the most considerable effect was noted among males who reported more perceived success than females.

The results indicated that scholars with lower seniority were more externally motivated to learn languages than their colleagues with longer job seniority. A parallel can be drawn to an age dimension, as these findings share a degree of similarity. Scholars who are at an early stage of their career are focused on obtaining tenure, and therefore, motivation is derived from extrinsic motivation to obtain tenure (Austin et al., 2007). At this stage, a foreign language might serve as a means to achieve this goal, and thus learning the language is extrinsically motivated. Some studies suggest that conducting research and publishing have become an important criterion for promotion, tenure, and career success (Lechuga & Lechuga, 2012). In turn, this situation poses more pressure on younger scholars in the early stages of their scientific careers. These academics face other pressures that might affect their motivation for learning languages. A study conducted by Tien (2008) showed that financial rewards play an important motivational role for younger scholars. However, a lack of financial support can function as a demotivating factor. For instance, one participant in this study commented that she “found no time for learning foreign languages because she focused her attention and time on finding additional income outside her university” (open comment). Recent research conducted among PhDs employed at Polish universities showed that most of these scholars (72% of women, and 79% of men) engaged in additional work outside their

institutions (Sieminska et al., 2019). Therefore, some younger academics may view a foreign language as a valuable instrument to achieve desired goals but adopt an extrinsic orientation towards learning it.

The seniority perspective can provide valuable information about motivation to learn languages because it can be seen as a fluent construct that changes over time. In the mid- and late career, academics are less concerned about tenure and more concerned about international cooperation with other scholars or disseminating research internationally (Kwiek, 2015). Bugaj (2016, p. 31) found that academics at a peak and late in their career focused on supervising research projects, providing expertise to the organization or other scholars, supporting their own and other research and development projects, and supporting younger colleagues. Thus, other factors can contribute to motivation for learning at this stage.

Not surprisingly, English is the foreign language most known among scholars (94.7%). Reading and writing are inherent (skills) to academic activity and perhaps the most important skills to affirm scientific and career progress. Few studies confirm this claim, for example, Macaro (2018) highlights that “academics experience fewer concerns about literacy skills as they have read large quantities of materials written in English as well as written papers in English themselves” (p. 83). In a study of Spanish university teachers, the majority of respondents said they felt equipped to read literature in English in their field (88.9%) (Fortanet-Gomez, 2012). Similar findings were reported from the study of Vietnamese university teachers, who felt confident about their literacy skills, and reading and writing were considered relatively unproblematic (Vu & Burns, 2014).

While reading is a receptive skill, speaking and writing are productive skills. Both skills have an important function in many academic and professional fields (oral presentations, written studies, reports), and particular social value is attached to them. Scholars are evaluated based on what they have submitted in writing, and how fluent they are in speaking, in particular when addressing an audience. What is more, fluency in formal production (writing and speaking) is not acquired naturally; instead, it is a literacy process learned through education and experience, mainly focused on conventions of the academic genre (CEFR, 2018). According to Macaro (2018), complex, academic discourse requires advanced levels of language, and spoken interactions with audiences also require a mastery of the language.

So far, some research has focused on scholars whose first language is not English. In the study of academic staff in UK business schools, Śliwa and Johansson (2014) found that academics who considered their communication skills inferior to the first language users also considered themselves as professionally less competent lecturers. Spanish senior academics also reported a particular sense of disadvantage in relation to spoken communication at

conferences (Perez-Llantada, Plo, & Ferguson, 2011). These authors found that academics' conference presentations tended to be unfairly assessed, not based on their scientific content, but on linguistic style (e.g., pronunciation, lack of use of humor in their presentations, and not being able to field as adroitly as first language users). Horn (2017) also showed that scholars with less than excellent English expression feel disadvantaged compared to first-language users. However, they acknowledge the importance of English as a dominant language in academia, but difficulties in disseminating knowledge through English evoke stigmatization and hardship. Scholars in other research worried that their oral proficiency was so low that it could negatively affect their students' English, or their comprehension of the lecture content (Vu & Burns, 2014). Besides, students who expected their teachers to speak like the first language users were not satisfied and negatively evaluated their teachers (Macaro, 2018; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). In the Italian context, university teachers expressed particular concerns related to teaching through English, such as the inability to improvise in L2 easily and effectively as in their L1 and problems with the use of English in social and informal situations (Guarda & Helm, 2016).

Some research, however, shows that scholars have sufficient levels of English proficiency. A study of university teachers in Austria, Italy, and Poland (Dearden & Macaro, 2016) found that English was the language of articles, textbooks, and teaching materials for some scholars in Poland. One science teacher used scientific papers mostly written in English, and as a result, she found it "easier to talk in English than in Polish" (p. 467). In a comparative study of scholars in non-English-speaking European countries in the context of English-taught Programs, Lam and Maiworm (2014) reported that 97% of Polish scholars assessed their language proficiency as good or very good. Also, Danish, younger scholars declared having the necessary skills to teach in English and felt confident in delivering content in English (Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011). However, some admitted that universities should not assume that all faculty could use English effectively in lecturing.

Most scholars in this study knew English and self-rated their proficiency as B2 or C1 according to the CEFR (2003). Similarly, in Airey's (2011) study, Swedish university lecturers rated their English skills as either B2 or C1. These levels seem satisfactory for scholars' regular academic activities; however, it seems that level C1 is thought to be the limit below which language training should be necessary.

Conclusions

The motivation of academics to learn foreign languages is complex and not unitary. On the one hand, younger scholars (in terms of age and seniority) learn languages for instrumental reasons, perhaps to progress with their careers, increase research productivity, or cope with the internal or external pressures of being considered a professional and recognized locally and globally through international publications. On the other hand, older and female academics are more intrinsically motivated to learn languages, and the main reasons involve acquiring knowledge and developing through the means of that language. Scholars in their late careers might derive more pleasure from learning in general and be motivated by internal rewards such as satisfaction of curiosity, volition, and/or simply the joy of life-long learning, whereas their younger counterparts are extrinsically motivated by recognition, achievements, and successful progression through a series of career stages. Thus, English serves as a useful tool for attaining these. However, as Horn (2017) posits, scholars who wish to be internationally recognized must develop Anglophone fluency at an exceptionally high level.

In this study scholars' English proficiency ranged between B2 and C1 (only for reading skills) indicating independent or proficient users. At the time of the study, half of the sample was still actively involved in learning a foreign language. The reason for this is the use and spread of the English language as the "lingua franca" of science (Crystal, 2006) and a stronger focus on the internationalization of research, global academic exchange, and mobility. These factors have exerted on academics the need to engage in learning foreign languages as never before (Coleman, 2006).

Learning a foreign language is not an easy task, therefore, optimal motivation is a prerequisite to initiate, direct, and persevere in learning. In turn, scholars who are optimally motivated to learn foreign languages may enjoy participation in career and knowledge advancement, increased mobility, and thus higher employability. In addition, successful and motivated academics contribute to the prestige of the institution and demonstrate high-quality research and teaching skills based on the latest scientific knowledge (Macaro, 2018).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted in only one academic city. Extending research nationally perhaps would deliver a more complete and/or varied picture of scholars'

motivation. In future empirical inquiry, the inclusion of more qualitative and mixed methods in the study of university academics is recommended. Also, future studies could focus on academic mobility and foreign language development. In particular, research should attempt to determine whether there is a relationship between academic mobility and motivation to learn languages.

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