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# **The effects of parental education level and school location on language learning motivation**

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## Abstract

Socio-economic status (SES) has been consistently shown to influence students' educational achievement, but to date, few studies have investigated the role of SES in language learning motivation. This study aims to examine to what extent two indicators of SES, school location and parents' education, affect motivation of Polish 15-year-olds to study English. The questionnaire, which included scales corresponding to Ford's (1992) Motivational Systems Theory, was completed by 599 participants. The results indicate that both school location and parents' education affect language learning motivation. Students from rural schools and those whose parents have a lower level of education tended to be less motivated than their peers from cities and those whose parents have higher levels of education. The differences concerned the goals the students adopted, their personal agency beliefs, emotional arousal processes, ideal L2 selves and self-regulation. This study highlights the need to raise teachers' awareness of the issue. From the methodological perspectives, it stresses the necessity to ensure sample representativeness in terms of students' SES when conducting research on affective factors in language learning and calls for more research involving participants from lower SES backgrounds.

Keywords: SES, motivation, ideal L2 self, affective differences, rural/urban, parents' education

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motivation in foreign and second language contexts, gender role in language learning, and the role of contextual factors in language learning. She has published in *System*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, and *The European Journal of Applied Linguistics*.

## 1. Introduction

The importance of English as part of what is considered an all-round education is growing. For example, competence in English is increasingly perceived as a basic skill (Erling and Seargeant 2013), without which young people are not able to compete on the job market (Graddol 2006, 122). English is more and more frequently built into the national curricula and assessed through high stakes exams (Graddol 2006). Thus, it is essential to ensure that all English learners are provided with appropriate opportunities to develop their English proficiency. Concurrently, research suggests that educational attainment tends to differ according to students' socio-economic status (SES), with lower SES students attaining less than their peers with higher SES (OECD 2013). In spite of that, the role of SES has rarely been investigated in the field of foreign language education, even though in many contexts the teaching of English as a foreign language is heavily marketised, which leaves it particularly open to the influence of factors such as SES.

Language achievement can be affected by language learning motivation (Gardner 1985). Due to the importance of this individual difference, recently there has been a proliferation of research on motivation (Dörnyei and Ryan 2015). Nevertheless, there has been relatively little interest in the role SES plays in shaping it, even though motivation is susceptible to contextual influences (Ushioda 2011). In fact, only three recent publications focus on the role of SES-related variables in language learning motivation (Kormos and Kiddle 2013; Lamb 2012, 2013). Moreover, in other publications on motivation, there is a tendency to provide little information about the participants' SES. In rare cases where it is provided, it often points to samples likely containing a higher than average number of students from more advantaged backgrounds, such as those composed of participants from major cities (Csizér and

Kormos 2009; Kormos and Csizér 2014) or university students (Busse 2013; Hessel 2015; Yashima 2000). This illustrates that there is an urgent need to investigate how lower SES affects the motivation of students' from different SES backgrounds.

The study reported in this paper addresses this gap by investigating the influence of SES on language learning motivation by looking at its two indicators, school location and parental education. The participants of this quantitative study were Polish learners of English from both rural and urban schools. The choice of Poland as a context for the study is not accidental. First, the motivation to study English of Polish students has not been exhaustively studied (see Iwaniec 2014; Iwaniec and Ullakonoja 2016; Gardner 2012; Pawlak 2012 for exceptions). Second, previous studies focusing on SES and language learning motivation have been carried out in countries such as Indonesia (Lamb 2012, 2013), which scores substantially lower on measures of human development than Poland (UNDP 2015) and Chile (Kormos and Kiddle 2013), where students from higher SES tend to attend private or mixed-funded schools. Thus, there is a need to establish whether the role SES plays in shaping language learning motivation of Polish students is the same in a developed context, where access to free education is universal. In particular, the study addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent does school location affect Polish learners of English's scores on motivational variables?
2. To what extent does mothers' and fathers' levels of education affect Polish learners of English's scores on motivational variables?

## 2. Language learning motivation and SES

Motivation is an elusive construct and a great number of variables have been employed in motivational research. In this study, the choice of variables on which groups of students with different SES are compared is guided by Ford's (1992)

Motivational Systems Theory. Ford proposes three components with motivational power: goals, personal agency beliefs, and emotional arousal processes. Goals represent what individuals want (fear) to achieve; thus their role is to direct other components towards certain consequences. Personal agency beliefs act as filters checking goals' attainability and whether they are supported by the context, and emotional arousal processes can help sustain an activity in the short term. The theory goes to say that three components affect whether the individual will engage in an action. Below, I examine what is known about the role of SES in education and how it influences language learning motivation.

The operationalisation of SES is far from straightforward. For example, White (1982) in his review points out that SES has been measured using over 70 variables, with some studies employing a single variable and others a combination. Out of these, three appear to be more readily acceptable and thus more frequently employed in educational research; namely parental education, parental income and parental occupation (Lindo 2014). The two existing studies of SES and language learning motivation both utilise collective measures of SES. Kormos and Kiddle (2013) classified schools into five levels of SES using information about income, parents' education, possession of books, cars, computers, and internet access. Lamb (2012) used school location in either a rural area, provincial town, or metropolitan area, working on the assumption that students in these three settings are likely to differ in social class and parental employment. The current study employs both collective (school location in either

a rural or urban area) and individual measures of SES (fathers' and mothers' level of education as reported by individual students).

School location can have an impact on educational attainment. For example, the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that in most countries students from cities surpass those from rural areas on reading assessment (OECD 2013). This pattern is also detectable in the Polish Gymnasium Exam as students' scores rise with the size of settlement (CKE 2014). Moreover, the differences in language achievement are larger than in maths and sciences, or humanities.

Research exploring the effect of location on motivation rarely focuses on the rural/urban divide, even though location might specifically impact language learning motivation. For example, in China, geographical location is found not only to affect levels of motivation (You and Dörnyei 2014) but even access to quality language provision (Wang 2012). In Hungary, geographical location has an influence on language choice (Dörnyei and Csizér 2002; Dörnyei, Csizér, and Nemeth 2006). Lamb's study (2012, 2013) in Indonesia is the only one focusing on differences in motivation of learners from rural and urban areas. His findings suggest that learners from rural areas are less motivated than their peers from towns and cities.

Looking at the rural/urban divide in Poland, Wojnowski (2001) explains that the reasons for it are deeply embedded in historical differences in the role towns and the countryside played in the country's economy. This, in turn, had an impact on the differing roles education played in these two types of settlements. This divide has continued, to some extent, up until now. For example, the level of education among rural inhabitants is lower than that of inhabitants of urban areas,

and rural parents' expectations of their children's education tend to be lower than those of urban parents (Hipsz 2013). Dej and Guzik (2011) and Łysoń (2012) argue that rural learners experience a number of physical difficulties in accessing education, such as the distance between home and school, few transport connections, or transport waiting time. Thus, school location might affect Polish learners' motivation.

Previous research indicates that students' social status not only influences academic achievement (Davis-Kean 2005; Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, and Duncan 1994; Nikolov and Józsa 2006; Toutkoushian and Curtis 2010), but is also more strongly related to achievement than their economic status (Caldas and Bankston 1997). The influence of SES also extends to academic motivation, self-regulation and self-related beliefs (Fan, Williams, and Wolters 2012). This might be because parental education is linked to parents' educational expectations of their children, the amount of time spent on activities promoting achievement, such as reading or homework monitoring (Davis-Kean 2005; Eccles 1993), the creation of supportive learning environment and active coping with everyday problems (Klebanov, Brooks-Dunn, and Duncan 1994), and even teachers' expectations of children (Auwarter and Aruguete, 2010). Yet only one study so far has explicitly focused on how SES shapes language learning motivation. Kormos and Kiddle (2013) report an overall moderate effect of SES on Chilean learners' motivation to study English. Thus, there is a need for further studies to examine the effect of parental education on language learning motivation of Polish students.

SES can affect the extent to which students endorse language learning goals. Both instrumentality, which refers to utilitarian benefits connected with language learning, such as having an advantage on the job market (Gardner and

Lambert 1972), and international posture, which includes interest in other cultures and readiness to interact with other language users (Yashima 2009), fall in tandem with SES (Lamb 2012; Kormos and Kiddle 2013). This is also the case for the ideal L2 self, defined as a vision of oneself being able to use English successfully in the future (Dörnyei 2005). The construct shares some characteristics with goals, and like goals, appears more robust for learners with higher SES backgrounds than those from lower SES backgrounds both in Chile (Kormos and Kiddle 2013) and in Indonesia (Lamb 2012, 2013).

Similarly, the strength of personal agency beliefs can be mediated by SES factors. Examples of this include self-efficacy beliefs, which are perceptions about one's ability to complete specific actions (Bandura 1977) or self-concept defined as 'a person's perception of himself' (Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton 1976, 411), both of which have been found to grow in line with learners' SES (Bandura et al., 1996; Kormos and Kiddle 2013; Marsh et al. 2007; Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2004). This might be because they are derived from sources that themselves can be influenced by SES, such as verbal persuasion, master and vicarious experiences (Bandura 1997). For example, a child of educated parents is more likely to observe them communicating in another language than a child of less educated parents, which sends them a message that that they are capable of learning a foreign language. As only one study has looked at personal agency beliefs related to foreign language learning (Kormos and Kiddle 2013), there is a need for further investigations.

Previous research also provides some evidence that emotional arousal processes might be affected by SES. For example, levels of intrinsic motivation, which is characterised by holding positive attitudes and displaying high levels of

interest (Deci and Ryan 1985), tend to be higher among students from higher social strata in Chile than their peers from lower social classes (Kormos and Kiddle 2013). Likewise, in Lamb's (2012) study, the out of school L2 learning experience, which includes items looking at the enjoyment of learning and interest in English, is significantly more positive for learners from urban contexts than for their peers in the countryside. In contrast, no significant differences are reported on the scale of learning experience in school (Lamb 2012), which also taps into emotional arousal processes. As the findings are conflicting, there is a need to further investigate the influence of SES on emotional arousal processes.

Findings on the influence of SES on language learning behaviour are also contradictory. Kormos and Kiddle (2013) report no differences in effort invested in language according to SES, while in Lamb's (2012) study, students from rural areas declared that they invested less effort in English than their peers from urban areas. Kormos and Kiddle (2013) also measured students' self-regulation (Zimmerman 1989) to better capture the nature of effort invested in language learning and their findings are again contradictory. The overall measure of self-regulation was not significantly affected by SES. Nevertheless, one of its subsets, satiation control, which enables students to deal with boredom but also to make language learning tasks more attractive (Tseng, Dörnyei, and Schmitt 2006), was. Thus, there is a further need to examine the effect of SES on learning behaviour.

To sum up, the existing studies on language learning motivation rarely draw on the pool of less advantaged learners of English and only two studies so far have explicitly addressed the influence of SES on motivation. Both of them employed collective measures of SES and looked at contexts outside of Europe. Furthermore, some of their findings are contradictory. Hence, this study will

examine the influence of SES, measured using both collective (rural/urban divide) and individual (parental educational) SES, on language learning motivation in a Polish context.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 The context and the participants

In Poland, education is compulsory between the ages of six and 18. The system is divided into three stages: a six-year primary school, a three-year gymnasium and a three (or four) year senior high school (this is about to change in school year 2017/18, when an eight plus four model will be reintroduced). Additionally, all six-year-olds attend a preparatory 'zero' year. Children are admitted to primary schools and gymnasiums based on the area they live in, although some schools, especially gymnasiums, are either specialised or considered prestigious and admit a part of their cohort based on ability. Unlike most schools at a junior level, senior high schools are specialised (academic, technical and vocational schools). Adolescents are admitted to senior high schools of their choice based on the results of their gymnasium exam. Foreign languages, of which English is the most popular, are compulsory from year one through to the end of senior high school.

599 Polish learners of English aged 15-16 participated in the present study. All of them were enrolled in the last year of gymnasium, i.e. the last year of non-selective education. The participants came from ten schools, six of which were located in rural areas and four of which were located in urban areas. Further details are provided in Table 1. In total, 331 learners came from rural schools and a further 268 were enrolled in urban schools. The sample included 298 females, 295 males and six students who did

not disclose their sex. All the participants were enrolled in a compulsory course in English as a foreign language in their schools.

**Table 1: Details of schools participating in research**

| School         | NoC* | Description of school  | School         | NoC* | Description of school  |
|----------------|------|--|----------------|------|--|
| Rural school 1 | 2    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical classes sizes of below 20 students.</li> <li>• English as a main foreign language</li> <li>• German as a second foreign language</li> </ul> | Urban school 1 | 3    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical class sizes of around 25</li> <li>• German as a main foreign language</li> <li>• English as a second foreign language</li> </ul>  |
| Rural school 2 | 4    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical class sizes of around 20 students</li> <li>• English as a main foreign language</li> <li>• German as a second foreign language</li> </ul>   | Urban school 2 | 2    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical class sizes of 25</li> <li>• English as a main foreign language</li> <li>• German as a second foreign language</li> </ul>   |
| Rural school 3 | 1    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical class sizes of 20-25 students</li> <li>• English as a main foreign language</li> <li>• German as a second foreign language</li> </ul>       | Urban school 3 | 3    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical class sizes of 10-15 with a small number of Special Needs students in every class</li> <li>• English as a main foreign language</li> <li>• German as a second foreign language</li> </ul>   |
| Rural school 4 | 1    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical class sizes of 10-15 students</li> <li>• English as a main foreign language</li> <li>• German as a second foreign language</li> </ul>       | Urban school 4 | 3    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical class sizes of around 30</li> <li>• English as a main foreign language</li> <li>• German or French as a second foreign language</li> <li>• One of the three classes specialises in foreign languages (English and German/French) by offering extended language courses (five hours a week per language, as compared to three for the main language and two for the second foreign language in a regular class)</li> </ul> |
| Rural school 5 | 3    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical class sizes of around 25 students</li> <li>• English as a main foreign language</li> <li>• German as a second foreign language</li> </ul>   |                |      |  |

|              |   |   |  |  |  |
|--------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| Rural school | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical class sizes of under 20 students</li> <li>• English as a main foreign language</li> <li>• German as a second foreign language</li> </ul> |  |  |  |
|--------------|---|---|--|--|--|

\*Number of classes per year

### 3.2 The Motivational Questionnaire

The data were collected using a motivational questionnaire tailored to the population of Polish learners of English (Iwaniec 2015). The questionnaire included two parts. In the first part, the students answered randomly ordered questions related to motivational constructs using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*I strongly disagree*) to 5 (*I strongly agree*). Seven scales were used. These were: English self-concept, ideal L2 self, instrumentality, international orientation, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy beliefs, and self-regulation. The second part included questions on students' background, such as their gender, the length of their English study, modes of English study (apart from the compulsory course at school) and their parents' level of education. Regarding the latter point, the students had four choices, consistent with the Polish educational system; namely, university, A-levels (Polish *matura*), vocational education, and primary education.

### 3.3 Procedures

The data were collected by the researcher during English classes in the participants' own schools, after securing the consent of head teachers and English teachers. The class teacher was always present during data collection. Prior to questionnaire completion, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, stressed that participation was

voluntary and that all the data would be kept confidential. The researcher then provided instructions, emphasising that there were no right or wrong answers, and the students filled in the questionnaire.

### 3.4 Data analysis

The analysis of the motivational questionnaire data was conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics 22. First, factor analysis (maximum likelihood with Direct Oblimin rotation) was used to confirm whether the intended factors emerged. Second, MANOVA analyses were used to identify any potential differences on motivational scales between students from rural and urban areas, and between students whose parents had differing levels of education (separately for their father's and mother's education). The choice of MANOVA over t-tests or ANOVA in these analyses was appropriate as all the variables are inherently related because they measure motivational constructs. Thus, the use of t-tests or ANOVA would increase the risk of identifying significant differences where they are not in fact significant (Pallant 2010). Since the variable of parents' education divided the population into four subgroups (university, A-levels, vocational, primary), post-hoc ANOVA analysis was used to establish between which groups of students the differences were significant.

## 4. Results

The results of factor analysis (Direct Oblimin) presented in Table 2 show that all the factors emerged and their reliability (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ) was good, ranging from  $\alpha = .84$  for the self-regulation scale and  $\alpha = .91$  for the scale of English self-concept.

**Table 2: The results of factor analysis and the details of emerging scales**

| Variable                  | No. of final items | Reliability | Eigenvalue | % of variance explained | Mean | Std. dev. |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------|------------|-------------------------|------|-----------|
| English self-concept      | 6                  | .91         | 3.72       | 61.95                   | 3.21 | .96       |
| Ideal L2 self             | 5                  | .85         | 2.64       | 52.85                   | 2.72 | 1.00      |
| Instrumentality           | 6                  | .87         | 3.19       | 53.09                   | 3.36 | .95       |
| International orientation | 5                  | .85         | 2.42       | 48.45                   | 3.96 | .81       |
| Intrinsic motivation      | 8                  | .90         | 4.16       | 51.99                   | 3.14 | .90       |
| Self-efficacy beliefs     | 8                  | .92         | 4.73       | 59.10                   | 3.37 | .90       |
| Self-regulation           | 9                  | .84         | 3.39       | 37.62                   | 3.05 | .78       |

#### 4.1 Differences between students from rural and urban areas

MANOVA analysis showed that school location had a small overall effect on students' motivation (Pillai's trace = .053,  $F = 3.697$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial eta squared = .053).

Learners from urban areas outscored those from rural areas on motivational variables.

This is not surprising, considering that the results of a national exam in English for sixteen-year-olds point to lower attainment of students from smaller settings than their peers from cities (CKE 2014). The reasons behind this finding may be multiple, among them, lower overall level of education of rural areas residents compared to urban areas residents (Iwaniec 2015), fewer extra-curricular opportunities to study English due to physical barriers, such as transport (Dej and Guzik 2011), economic costs, or fewer opportunities for direct contact with English speakers.

In the post-hoc analysis, alpha was adjusted to 0.007, in line with the Bonferroni correction (Pallant 2010). As seen in Table 3, three individual variables differed significantly, with rural students scoring lower than their urban peers on scales of English self-concept, self-efficacy beliefs and instrumentality. The effect sizes were small.

**Table 3: MANOVA analysis of motivational variables according to school location**

| Variable                  | Location | Mean | Std. dev. | F     | Sig. | Partial eta squared |
|---------------------------|----------|------|-----------|-------|------|---------------------|
| Instrumentality           | rural    | 3.25 | .92       | 13.83 | .000 | .029                |
|                           | urban    | 3.57 | .96       |       |      |                     |
| Self-efficacy beliefs     | rural    | 3.25 | .90       | 13.97 | .000 | .029                |
|                           | urban    | 3.57 | .93       |       |      |                     |
| English self-concept      | rural    | 3.11 | .93       | 12.29 | .000 | .026                |
|                           | urban    | 3.42 | 1.01      |       |      |                     |
| Ideal L2 self             | rural    | 2.65 | .96       | 6.30  | .012 | .013                |
|                           | urban    | 2.89 | 1.10      |       |      |                     |
| International orientation | rural    | 3.95 | .80       | 3.58  | .059 | .008                |
|                           | urban    | 4.09 | .77       |       |      |                     |
| Intrinsic motivation      | rural    | 3.15 | .93       | 2.88  | .090 | .006                |
|                           | urban    | 3.29 | .96       |       |      |                     |
| Self-regulation           | rural    | 2.96 | .77       | 2.06  | .151 | .004                |
|                           | urban    | 3.07 | .90       |       |      |                     |

The results reported above suggest that students from rural areas have lower levels of personal agency beliefs than their peers from cities. This discrepancy might be attributed to less positive vicarious experiences in their immediate environment, as the reported proficiency in English is lower among parents in rural areas in Poland than those from urban areas (Iwaniec 2015). As vicarious experiences are considered a source of capability beliefs (Bandura 1997), they might lead rural learners to consider themselves less capable of learning English successfully than students from urban areas.

Students from urban areas appear to be more likely to have future professional plans involving English than their peers from rural areas. A similar result was also reported by Lamb (2012) who found that Indonesian learners from metropolitan and provincial populations outscored those from rural areas on the scale of instrumentality. The variation between learners from different locations can be accounted for by differing employment patterns in rural and urban areas of Poland that might affect students' perceptions of the usefulness of English on the job market. Currently, a third

of the rural population is employed in agriculture (Wilkin and Nurzyńska 2013). As a result, young people from the countryside might be less likely to perceive English as useful for career progression in their immediate environment.

#### 4.2 Differences in motivation according to parents' education

To find the extent to which parents' education levels affect the learners' scores on motivation, MANOVA analysis was conducted separately for fathers' and mothers' education. The analysis confirmed a small overall effect of fathers' education on motivation (Pillai's trace = .127,  $F = 2.177$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial eta squared .032). Further analysis revealed significant differences on five out of seven variables, namely self-efficacy beliefs, English self-concept, the ideal L2 self, instrumentality and self-regulation (alpha adjusted to the .007 level). The effect sizes were medium for self-efficacy beliefs and ideal L2 self and small for the other variables. As shown in Table 4, in all cases the scores rose in line with the level of fathers' education.

Mothers' educational levels were also found to be related to their offspring's motivation (Pillai's trace = .171,  $F = 2.95$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The effect size was small (partial eta squared = .43). Further analysis (Table 4) revealed that five variables (self-efficacy beliefs, the ideal L2 self, English self-concept, instrumentality and international orientation) differed significantly according to the level of mothers' education. The effect size was medium for self-efficacy beliefs and English self-concept. In other cases, the effect size was small.

Findings suggest that personal agency beliefs were most strongly affected by parents' education level. Students whose parents had higher levels of education tended to have stronger self-efficacy beliefs and the English self-concept than their peers from less educated families. These findings are consistent with Kormos and Kiddle's (2013) results, which also showed that the self-efficacy beliefs of Chilean learners were

*Table 4: MANOVA analysis of motivational variables according to fathers' and mothers' education*

| Variable                  | Level      | Fathers' education |                 |      |      |                  |                     | Mothers' education |      |       |      |      |                  |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------------|-----------------|------|------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------|-------|------|------|------------------|
|                           |            | Mean               | SD <sup>1</sup> | F    | Sig. | PES <sup>2</sup> |                     | Mean               | SD   | F     | Sig. | PES  |                  |
| Self-efficacy beliefs     | university | 3.90               | .80             | 8.23 | .000 | .066             | U>A,<br>U>V,<br>U>P | 3.87               | .78  | 11.70 | .000 | .091 | U>A, U>V, U>P    |
|                           | a-levels   | 3.46               | .90             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.36               | .89  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | vocational | 3.28               | .93             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.19               | .95  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | primary    | 3.23               | .91             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.20               | .93  |       |      |      |                  |
| Ideal L2 self             | university | 3.28               | 1.01            | 7.41 | .000 | .060             | U>V,<br>U>P         | 3.15               | 1.00 | 6.09  | .000 | .050 | U>A, U>V, U>P    |
|                           | a-levels   | 2.80               | 1.01            |      |      |                  |                     | 2.63               | 1.00 |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | vocational | 2.74               | .95             |      |      |                  |                     | 2.73               | .99  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | primary    | 2.52               | 1.01            |      |      |                  |                     | 2.55               | 1.06 |       |      |      |                  |
| Self-regulation           | university | 3.42               | .86             | 6.13 | .000 | .050             | U>A,<br>U>V,<br>U>P | 3.21               | .79  | 3.05  | .017 | .026 |                  |
|                           | a-levels   | 3.01               | .78             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.03               | .79  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | vocational | 2.96               | .76             |      |      |                  |                     | 2.92               | .84  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | primary    | 2.87               | .87             |      |      |                  |                     | 2.90               | .89  |       |      |      |                  |
| English self-concept      | university | 3.68               | .97             | 5.02 | .001 | .041             | U>V,<br>U>P         | 3.67               | .95  | 8.11  | .000 | .052 | U>A, U>V, U>P    |
|                           | a-levels   | 3.30               | 1.04            |      |      |                  |                     | 3.24               | .94  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | vocational | 3.16               | .89             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.03               | .93  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | primary    | 3.13               | .96             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.10               | .98  |       |      |      |                  |
| Instrumentality           | university | 3.75               | .98             | 3.98 | .003 | .033             | U>V,<br>U>P         | 3.76               | .91  | 6.33  | .000 | .052 | U>A, U>V,<br>U>P |
|                           | a-levels   | 3.45               | .94             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.33               | .90  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | vocational | 3.34               | .87             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.33               | .97  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | primary    | 3.23               | .97             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.20               | .94  |       |      |      |                  |
| International orientation | university | 4.25               | .78             | 3.13 | .015 | .026             |                     | 4.22               | .72  | 3.57  | .007 | .030 | U>V, U>P         |
|                           | a-levels   | 4.07               | .76             |      |      |                  |                     | 4.03               | .77  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | vocational | 4.00               | .79             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.97               | .90  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | primary    | 3.91               | .77             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.85               | .73  |       |      |      |                  |
| Intrinsic motivation      | university | 3.48               | .98             | 2.43 | .046 | .021             |                     | 3.21               | .79  | 2.47  | .044 | .021 |                  |
|                           | a-levels   | 3.29               | .86             |      |      |                  |                     | 3.03               | .79  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | vocational | 3.20               | .90             |      |      |                  |                     | 2.91               | .84  |       |      |      |                  |
|                           | primary    | 3.09               | .99             |      |      |                  |                     | 2.90               | .89  |       |      |      |                  |

<sup>1</sup> Standard Deviation

<sup>2</sup> Partial Eta Squared

influenced by their SES. Moreover, the scale of self-efficacy beliefs was one of the most strongly affected by SES in the current study. The effect size was medium for both mother's and father's education. Similarly, the effect size reported for the self-efficacy beliefs was also the highest in the Chilean study. In fact, it was the only variable on which a large effect size of SES was reported (Kormos and Kiddle 2013).

The discrepancy in the level of self-efficacy beliefs between students differing in SES might be accounted for by the examination of its sources. First, Bandura (1997) sees vicarious experience as a major source of self-efficacy beliefs. This means that children will be making judgments about their ability to learn English based on their parents' successes or failures in this area. As parents' proficiency levels in Poland tend to fall along with their level of education (Iwaniec 2015), learners from lower SES backgrounds are less likely to consider themselves capable of mastering English than their peers from more advantaged backgrounds. Second, previous research suggests that teachers' expectations of students from less advantaged SES backgrounds tend to be lower than those of students from more advantaged backgrounds (Auwarter and Aruguete 2010), thus potentially affecting the quality and amount of verbal persuasion they engage in, which is another source of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura 1997).

The scale of self-concept was found to be influenced by the SES measure to a lesser extent than the scale of self-efficacy beliefs (there were small effect sizes for school location and father's education, and medium for mother's education). This might be because self-concept is a more global and more stable measure than self-efficacy beliefs, which are considered malleable (Bong and Skaalvik 2003). The existing variance in the robustness of self-concept between students from different SES backgrounds might be due to negative social comparisons on the part of less advantaged learners. Learners from less advantaged backgrounds are likely to be aware that that

their peers from higher SES families have better access to learning resources, such as language schools, or private tutoring, which, in turn, leads to higher achievement. As such, this awareness might have a negative effect on their own self-concept.

Parental education was found to affect levels of instrumentality. These findings are in line with those reported by Kormos and Kiddle (2013), who also noticed that students with higher SES are more likely to be instrumentally oriented than those with lower SES. The observed differences on the instrumentality scale amongst Polish students could be attributed to the professional roles fulfilled by parents with higher levels of education, who are more likely to use English in their job than parents whose education level is lower.

Fathers' education and mothers' education were also found to explain variance in scores on the ideal L2 self scale. These results match Kormos and Kiddle's (2013) and Lamb's (2012) findings, who observed that students from lower SES backgrounds reported less robust ideal L2 selves than their peers from higher SES backgrounds. Lamb's (2013) follow-up investigation further revealed that the nature of the ideal L2 self differed qualitatively; namely, the ideal L2 self of rural learners took the form of a fantasy rather than a positive but attainable vision. As such, its motivational properties were restricted (Dörnyei 2009). This might be also true in the current context as only learners who had at least one parent with a university degree scored above three on the scale ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). This implies that only a small group of learners had a fully functioning ideal L2 self in the current study. The variation in the robustness of ideal L2 self according to students' SES is not surprising, when the definition of the construct is taken into account. The ideal L2 self is a vision of the future (Dörnyei 2009); yet the findings discussed above show that the language learning goals of Polish students are affected by their SES. As such, if students' future goals do not involve English, they are

unlikely to build it into their future visions of themselves. Similarly, this study has also shown that students' capability beliefs are affected by their SES. As perceived plausibility is one of the motivational conditions of the ideal L2 self (Dörnyei 2009), the motivational strength of the ideal L2 self would be diminished for individuals who do not consider their vision achievable.

The findings regarding the influence of SES on self-regulation are conflicting. No significant differences were observed when students were grouped according to mothers' education but a small significant difference was found when students were grouped according to their fathers' education. These somewhat contradictory results mirror those from previous research. Kormos and Kiddle (2013) did not report significant differences in the overall measure of self-regulation in Chile but, at the same time, found such differences when investigating satiation control, a subset of self-regulation. This lack of clarity in the results might have something to do with extent to which SES affects the behavioural measures of motivation, which can be considered to be at a threshold level. It might be also that some aspects of self-regulation are more affected by SES than others, as Kormos and Kiddle's (2013) findings suggest, which means that there is abundant room for research to explore this hypothesis.

Similarly, the findings regarding international orientation in the current study are partly at odds with the results from Kormos and Kiddle (2013) and Lamb (2012), as only groupings according to mother's education revealed significant differences, whereas groupings according to school location and father's education pointed to no significant differences. One explanation behind this lack of strongly pronounced differences could be a ceiling effect as the overall mean score was the highest of all variables examined ( $M = 3.96$ ) and the standard deviation was one of the lowest of all variables examined ( $SD = .81$ ). Moreover, the freedom of travel and work within the

European Union and ease of access to the Internet might also affect Polish students' perceptions communication with foreigners in English, in that it is reality rather than a distant future dream. This shows that, regardless of their SES, Polish learners tend to consider English a language that enables them to communicate across cultures.

The variables with significant differences on parental education were further analysed using post-hoc tests in one-way ANOVA. Four categories of education created six possible combinations. The results are presented in Table 5. For fathers' education, there were three significant differences on the variables of self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulation. In each case, students with university-educated fathers scored significantly higher than the other three groups of students. Two significant differences were found on the scales of the ideal L2 self, English self-concept and instrumentality. Students with fathers who finished university scored significantly higher than students whose fathers had only primary or vocational education. For mothers' education, three differences were found on scales of self-efficacy beliefs, English self-concept, the ideal L2 self and instrumentality. These were between students with university-educated mothers and those with mothers at the other three educational levels. Further, there were two significant differences on the scale of international orientation, namely between students with university-educated mothers and those with mothers with primary or vocational education.

These results show that motivation scores tended to rise with the level of parental education. More specifically, differences were observed between learners with university-educated parents and the other three groups, whereas no significant differences were found between the other three groups of students (those whose parents had A-levels, vocational education, or primary education). This implies that the extra years of education that parents receive might make a difference in the way they

**Table 5: Post-hoc ANOVA analysis**

| Variable                  | Education  | Education  | Fathers         |            |       | Mothers         |            |       |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-------|-----------------|------------|-------|
|                           |            |            | Mean difference | Std. error | Sig.  | Mean difference | Std. error | Sig.  |
| Self-efficacy beliefs     | university | A-levels   | .41             | .13        | .012* | .48             | .12        | .000* |
|                           | university | vocational | .59             | .11        | .000* | .66             | .11        | .000* |
|                           | university | primary    | .64             | .11        | .000* | .67             | .10        | .000* |
|                           | A-levels   | vocational | .18             | .12        | .409  | .18             | .11        | .360  |
|                           | A-levels   | primary    | .23             | .11        | .170  | .20             | .10        | .237  |
|                           | vocational | primary    | .05             | .09        | .940  | -.18            | .11        | .360  |
| Self-regulation           | university | A-levels   | .34             | .13        | .036* | .39             | .12        | .006* |
|                           | university | vocational | .36             | .11        | .004* | .64             | .11        | .000* |
|                           | university | primary    | .48             | .10        | .000* | .61             | .11        | .000* |
|                           | A-levels   | vocational | .02             | .11        | .997  | .26             | .12        | .123  |
|                           | A-levels   | primary    | .14             | .11        | .561  | .23             | .12        | .178  |
|                           | vocational | primary    | .12             | .08        | .507  | .14             | .11        | .575  |
| English self-concept      | university | A-levels   | .27             | .14        | .225  |                 |            |       |
|                           | university | vocational | .51             | .12        | .000* |                 |            |       |
|                           | university | primary    | .55             | .12        | .000* |                 |            |       |
|                           | A-levels   | vocational | .25             | .12        | .186  |                 |            |       |
|                           | A-levels   | primary    | .28             | .12        | .092  |                 |            |       |
|                           | vocational | primary    | .03             | .10        | .987  |                 |            |       |
| Ideal L2 self             | university | A-levels   | .33             | .15        | .104  | .45             | .12        | .002* |
|                           | university | vocational | .44             | .13        | .003* | .40             | .12        | .005* |
|                           | university | primary    | .64             | .12        | .000* | .55             | .11        | .000* |
|                           | A-levels   | vocational | .11             | .13        | .840  | -.044           | .12        | .984  |
|                           | A-levels   | primary    | .30             | .13        | .074  | .10             | .12        | .828  |
|                           | vocational | primary    | .20             | .10        | .212  | .14             | .11        | .575  |
| Instrumentality           | university | A-levels   | .33             | .14        | .083  | .45             | .12        | .001* |
|                           | university | vocational | .46             | .12        | .001* | .46             | .11        | .000* |
|                           | university | primary    | .56             | .12        | .000* | .58             | .11        | .000* |
|                           | A-levels   | vocational | .13             | .12        | .725  | .01             | .12        | 1.000 |
|                           | A-levels   | primary    | .23             | .12        | .234  | .13             | .11        | .639  |
|                           | vocational | primary    | .10             | .10        | .741  | .11             | .11        | .675  |
| International orientation | university | A-levels   |                 |            |       | .18             | .10        | .272  |
|                           | university | vocational |                 |            |       | .29             | .10        | .018* |
|                           | university | primary    |                 |            |       | .42             | .09        | .000* |
|                           | A-levels   | vocational |                 |            |       | .10             | .10        | .732  |
|                           | A-levels   | primary    |                 |            |       | .24             | .10        | .056  |
|                           | vocational | primary    |                 |            |       | .13             | .09        | .427  |

approach their children's foreign language education in school (in Poland education until 18 is compulsory for all, so there is no difference in years of education between individuals having vocational or A-level education). This result is in accordance with results reported by Davis-Kean (2005), who observed that years of schooling indirectly affected American children's educational attainment via their parents' educational

expectations, and Stull (2013), who also found a positive relationship between parents' education level and their educational expectations of their children.

#### 4.3 The extent and size of SES differences

The extent of SES differences observed in this study was smaller than in previous research. First, effect sizes reported in this study are smaller than the ones reported by Kormos and Kiddle (2013) and Lamb (2012). Specifically, in the current study, the effect sizes of school location and parents' education on overall motivation were small, whereas Kormos and Kiddle (2013) reported a medium overall effect of SES on the Chilean learners. Lamb (2012) did not use MANOVA; hence he could not provide the overall effect size of SES on motivation among Indonesian teenagers. Yet the examination of effect sizes reported for individual variables revealed that five out of the eight significant differences found by Lamb would be classified as medium effect size and the other three could be labelled small effect size. In my study, only the scores of three (out of seven) individual variables were found to differ significantly between students from rural and urban contexts and their effect sizes were small. Second, fewer variables were found to be affected by SES in Poland, as compared to Indonesia and Chile, for example, contrary to previous findings (Kormos and Kiddle 2013; Lamb 2012), intrinsic motivation was not affected. These findings are in line with overall indices measuring inequality, which show that levels are lower in Poland than in Chile or Indonesia (UNDP 2015). Moreover, whereas the Chilean education system is highly segregated according to SES (Kormos and Kiddle 2013), in Poland universal access to free education (only 2.31% students aged 13-16 in school year 2007/2008 attended non-state schools (EACEA 2010) might promote equality. Thus, these preliminary findings point to a possible conclusion that even students from disadvantaged backgrounds can maintain a healthy language learning motivation in Poland.

It can be noticed that school location (partial eta squared = .053) explains more variance in overall motivation than parental level of education (for mother's education partial eta squared = .043 and for father's education partial eta squared = .032). However, at the level of individual variables, the situation is reversed and the explanatory power of parents' educational level is greater than that of school location. Moreover, more significant differences were identified when comparing students according to their father's and mother's education (five significant differences in each case) than according to school location (three significant differences). This might be due to the fact that the two measures, despite both being indicators of SES, encompass a different range of values, beliefs and behaviours connected with them. Whereas parental education is positively associated with beliefs and behaviours that foster academic achievement (Eccles 1993), school location can be a proxy of SES as, in many contexts, a higher proportion of well-educated middle class parents live in cities as compared to rural areas (Iwaniec 2015; Lamb 2012). Thus, whereas the measure of parents' level of education might better explain what values, beliefs and behaviours are passed down at home, school location appears to be a more general measure that can mirror the overall values, beliefs and behaviours in a given community.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which learners' SES, measured by their parents' level of education and school location, influences scores on language learning motivation. The findings suggest that SES should not be ignored, as it affects language learning motivation, even in relatively economically well-developed contexts, such as Poland. The impact of SES is particularly pervasive when personal agency beliefs are considered, with students from less advantaged backgrounds holding less positive beliefs about their ability to learn English than students from more advantaged

backgrounds. SES can also affect the adoption of some language learning goals, such as instrumentality, and the robustness of learners' future self-visions. The effect of SES on international orientation and self-regulation is limited. At the same time, emotional arousal processes do not appear to be affected.

The findings reported in this paper indicate that students from rural schools and those whose parents do not have a university education tend to be less confident about their ability to study English. This situation could be addressed in a number of ways. First, raising teachers' awareness of the issue could help them avoid making evaluations based on students' SES, but rather focus on students' abilities and investment of effort. Second, teachers' feedback should reflect not only how well the task was completed but also how much effort was invested. Additionally, teachers could also outline what can be achieved with more effort, as this can be often neglected, especially in context such as Poland, where numerical marks are often used as feedback (Iwaniec 2015). Third, organising meetings with role models, particularly those who come from similar backgrounds as the students, might also facilitate positive self-beliefs about learners' ability to study English, especially for those students who lack such vicarious experiences. Moreover, contact with role models might also bring learners' attention to the importance of English in the job market. This is particularly important now, as Polish people enjoy much more freedom to travel and work abroad than ever before. Finally, as mastery experiences are the main source of positive self-efficacy beliefs and a basis for the creation of self-concept, it is vital that tasks and activities are carefully tailored to learners' levels so that they can successfully complete them.

Taken together, the results show that comparing students using both rural/urban divide and parental levels of education as a proxy of SES yielded significant results. However, when using a measure of parental education, more and bigger differences

were found than when employing the collectivist measure of rural/urban divide. This suggests that reports of parental education might be a more sensitive measure of SES, rather than a place of living itself. As such, future studies exploring language learning motivation should strive to use parental measure as an indication of SES and take it into account, in particular in the process of sampling participants, so that any sample is truly representative of the population of language learners.

### 5.1 Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, the current students were recruited from rural areas as well as towns and middle-size cities. No students from large cities participated in the study. It is possible that the inclusion of the latter group of learners would exacerbate the effect size of the findings on the rural/urban divide, as students from large cities might enjoy more direct contact with English, have access to a larger variety of extra English tuition (for example, specialised language classes in state schools), and proficiency in English might be more directly relevant on their immediate job market. Second, the data on the parental education level were collected by means of reports from students; thus, there might be a certain discrepancy between parents' actual education level and their children's reports. Hence, the use of a more precise measure could have yielded different results. Finally, the choice of variables could have also affected the results. As there is a scarcity of research examining the effect of SES on language learning motivation, it is difficult to hypothesise in what way the results would be affected.

### 5.2 Further research

Further work needs to be done in order to examine the role SES plays in language learning motivation. In particular, further qualitative studies exploring what language

learning goals students from various SES backgrounds adopt, the nature of their ideal L2 selves and their capability beliefs is called for. Moreover, future research should also investigate the potential role parents' and teachers' behaviour, beliefs and values play in affecting learners differing in their SES. The results of this study highlight the importance of sampling that takes into consideration students' SES. Future studies on language learning motivation should include participants from a range of SES backgrounds. As there is a tendency for students from lower SES backgrounds (for example learners from rural schools or those whose parents do not have a university education) to score significantly lower than their more advantaged peers, there is a need to re-examine the relevance of existing theories of language learning motivation to less advantaged populations.

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