INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING (ENGLISH). A GROUP STUDY.

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“Internal and external factors affecting foreign language learning (English). A group study”

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ABSTRACT

This MA Dissertation describes a study on the internal and external factors that influence students’ learning of a foreign language (specifically English) in a high school located in Andalusia. It consists of two parts. The first one deals with the Literary Review, in which the most recurrent factors studied by well-known authors are classified and described. Examples of some studies are also provided in this research. The second part aims at studying how the aforementioned factors affect a group of students and how its teachers face this situation in a high school in Algeciras (Cádiz). Two questionnaires have been used to collect the data, one for each stakeholder: students and teachers. The questionnaire for the students is made up of three blocks; namely, internal factors, external factors and their reactions to their influence. The questionnaire for the teachers has one block, in which the ways used by them to try to help their students overcome these handicaps are asked. This study concludes by showcasing the outcomes reached and its limitations and possible lines for future research.

Keywords: internal factors, external factors, qualitative study
1. INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language is a challenging task which requires a great effort on the part of both teachers and students. Because of this, many aspects should be taken into account when the learning of a second language (hereafter, L2) is being studied. Not only external factors affect this process, but also internal ones, which can become decisive for the final outcomes.

This topic has already been studied by many researchers, but as the time goes by, it seems to be an endless goal for research as social changes play an important role on students’ lives and ways of being. Sociocultural aspects influence learners’ learning process. Thus, new studies on the topic appear to be interesting and useful so as to give a more up-to-date vision of the current panorama.

The **theory of transition** and the **theory of property** are the two complementary theories proposed by Robinson (2005) in order to explain the process of learning a foreign language. The first one makes reference to the relationships between learning processes, cognitive abilities and mechanisms employed in the transference of knowledge from point A to point B whereas the second one gives an account of the features of knowledge from point A and point B. The theory of transition is affected by interindividual differences in language learning. Olivares-Cuhat (2010) points out that most researchers agree about the existence of the following categories regarding interindividual variables:

1. Cognitive factors (language aptitude and learning strategies)
2. Affective factors (attitudes, motivation and anxiety)
3. Metacognitive factors
4. Demographic factors.

This study tries to focus on the kind of factors that affect the learning process of an L2 in a group of students in the 3rd year of Compulsory Secondary Education (hereafter, CSE) in a bilingual high school.

The **Objectives** of this research are the following:

- To identify which external and internal factors are the most influential on students’ learning process.
- To gauge the ways in which students face these factors.
To investigate how teachers can help them overcome these handicaps.

The **Research Questions** derived from the intended investigation of the previous Objectives are:

- Are the factors (internal and external) that affect the learning process of a Foreign Language (hereafter, FL) delimited?
- Are students facing these factors as something natural in their learning process?
- Do students feel that teachers are helping them in their learning process?

Next follow the **Research Hypotheses**:

- Learners who live in a disruptive atmosphere seem to have more difficulties in learning.
- The motivation of students increases when they achieve good results.
- Having prospects in life help students in their learning process.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section includes previous studies on the topic such as Dissertations, journal articles, books, conferences, etc., which provide a wide view of my own Research Project, delimit the scope of the topic, give information about it, identify what others have found and so on.

Brown (1973) stated that the research on affective factors influencing the learning of an L2 up to that time was only the beginning and that much was still needed in order to be able to define an adequate theory of SLA and devise language teaching methods that were based on cognitive and affective principles. The categorization of these affective factors was a difficult one according to this author. Brown (1973) discusses a few subcategories from the affective domain (*internal factors* following the nomenclature used in this study):

- **Egocentric factors:**
  - *Imitation* is an egocentric factor whose exploration is still scarce concerning Second Language Acquisition (hereafter, SLA). Although imitative behaviour has been widely studied in books about personality development, this is not the
case when it comes to the role of imitation in the acquisition of a foreign language. Even though it has been assumed that patterns of a foreign language can be learnt mainly or exclusively by imitation, this has little to do with the issue of the affective imitative behaviour in human beings.

- **Ego:** Self-esteem, self-confidence and self-knowledge of the learner could be closely related to the success in the learning of a language. Guiora et al. (1972) suggested the notion of “language ego” to make reference to the egoistic, very personal nature of second language acquisition. Some degree of identity conflict is involved in any language acquisition process whose outcome is meaningful learning for communication. Communication implies the revelation of one’s self to another. When a person is not “honest” in revealing this self, breakdowns in communication appear. Hence, a strong language ego and success in second language learning are positively correlated. The role of motivation in language learning is an area of research within egocentric factors. Ausubel (1968) claimed that egoenancement is one of the key factors that grant motivation for any task.

- **Inhibition:** Guiora et al. (1970) made an experiment by using an experimental group to which small quantities of alcohol were given so as to induce temporary states of less than normal inhibition. After a pronunciation test in Thai in which both the experimental and control groups participated, and whose results showed a significantly better performance of the alcohol-induced subjects, Guiora concluded that inhibition (a component of language ego) and pronunciation were related. This conclusion posed some problems, since alcohol not only lowers inhibitions, but also affects muscular tension, and pronunciation can be affected more importantly by the last one. Moreover, language competence cannot be only measured by pronunciation.

✓ **Social factors:** Language is the main mechanism for keeping social bonds. Learning a second language must, therefore, imply an interaction with that society and both a linguistic and extra-linguistic understanding of the speech community in question. Psychological variables of social behaviour such as empathy, introversion/extroversion, and aggression are linked to egocentric factors, although they involve one’s individual relationship with others. Here follows a description of these social factors (*external factors* according to this study):
• **Empathy**: This is the process of trying to understand and feel what the other person understands or feels, to put yourself in someone else’s shoes. Guiora (1970, 1972) distinguishes between being able to predict success and to cause success by fostering empathy in the classroom. But up to this time, no research on this field worth of mention has been conducted.

- **Introversion and Extroversion**: It is broadly believed that extroversion is more desirable for second language learners as it is related to mental hygiene. Speaking, being the most emphasized skill in modern language teaching, seems to be a problem for introverted learners. According to Ausubel (1968: 413), educational psychologists state that a child’s introversion and extroversion can be “a grossly index of social adjustment”. Consequently, there can be misinterpretation as far as introversion and extroversion in language classes are concerned.

• **Aggression**: This is related to injuring or damaging someone. It is also linked to the concept of frustration. LaForge (1971) noticed that overt display of hostility could be seen as a facilitator for communication and provide less inhibited and freer conversation.

✓ **Cognitive Style**: This is considered a category of affective behaviour because self-consistent and enduring individual differences in cognitive organization and functioning are referred to when dealing with cognitive styles. Cognitive styles and personality types appear to be related. Selinker (1972), after researching about “interlanguage”, proposed that language acquisition could be affected by certain individualized strategies. Brown (1973) points out four possible variables that can be included in cognitive styles, namely;

- **Reflective-impulsive thinking**: Kagan (1965) found that conceptually impulsive children make more errors in reading than conceptually reflective children. Nevertheless, impulsive people can be faster readers.

- **Broad-narrow categorizing**: Learners usually divide into narrow categorizers (like impulsive learners), who are prone to take the risk of not being right in problem-solving situations and broad categorizers who are not.

- **Skeletonizing-embroidering**: Brown (1972), when referring to narrative material, defines skeletonizing as “pruning” out some particulars and retaining
general facts which include the details whereas *embroidering* makes reference to adding some material so as to maintain original details.

- **Belief congruence-contradiction.** The notions of “dogmatism” and “open” and “close” mindedness are linked to the concept of belief congruence. Highly consistent facts are accepted by those who are more dogmatic (the closed mind) and they have intolerance for ambiguity. Ausubel (1949) studied belief congruence and concluded that both belief congruence and contradiction have advantages and disadvantages regarding cognitive efficiency. Gardner and Lambert (1972) incorporated dogmatism and authoritarianism when studying motivation in SLA. Ausubel (1968) realized that open-minded individuals usually score higher on oral tests than closed-minded ones.

Brown (1973) concluded that countless variables were interacting when language acquisition processes take place, the classification of individuals is rather difficult, inconsistency is typical of individuals, thus they change constantly, and teacher-student interaction has not undergone deep research when dealing with second language teaching. Hence, the author sees the future as the possible answer for the questions regarding affective factors affecting second language acquisition.

Recently, research on **affective factors** has considerably been taken into account as a great amount of articles on the study can be found in the specialized literature.

The most analyzed variables affecting the learning of a FL have been motivation, attitudes and language anxiety. Each of them can be found below.

**Motivation** is considered by Dörnyei (1994) as the chief determinant when learning a foreign language. Gardner (1985) introduced the *socio-educational model* of language learning, which is based on five motivational and/or attitudinal variables and their relationships with the learning of an L2. These variables are: integralization, motivation, attitude towards the learning situation, instrumental orientation and integrative orientation. The results of his study, after going through Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (hereafter, AMTB), verify the relationships. They show that although integration and attitudes towards learning situation have indirect effects on the results, it is motivation that is responsible for the outcomes when learning a foreign language.
Regarding **Attitudes**, the training of these ones has been the most addressed issue in recent investigations. Since facing a new task or an unknown object makes individuals react in different ways, it must be noticed that these reactions can be charged with value, and this can be either positive or negative. Smith (1980) states that attitudes can be learnt and therefore, taught; because of their situational nature, they can be generalized, and even though an object or event do not create an attitude, this can be determined by the situation or the context. Kormos et al. (2011) proposes the use of questionnaires with Likert scales in order to measure attitudes towards the learning of a foreign language. Oroujlou & Vahedi (2011) highlight the fact that it is compulsory to consider the place of the English language in the current world so as to generate an attitude towards it. Attitude and motivation are usually measured in tandem (especially by AMTB), giving little data specified for attitude.

**Language anxiety** appears as another variable which affects the learning of a foreign language, above all, in oral communication. Psychology sees anxiety as either a *trait* (relatively stable in people’s personality) or as a *state* (a situation which is temporary). *Anxiety specific to a situation* is another type of anxiety which is recurrent in some kind of situation, and learning an L2 can be classified as a specific situation (Woodrow, 2006; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Horwitz, 2001). Krashen (1981) proposed the conceptualization of personality in Second Language Acquisition. For him, the individual who has an *analytic orientation* will process information related to the language more easily, thus developing more well-disposed attitudes towards the language learning context. Consequently, different attitudinal and motivational characteristics will be influenced by two personality constructs, that is, heightened levels of motivation will be evidenced by students who are serious about their education and learning the language, including personality attributes such as achievement motivation, responsibility, a need for organization, etc., and, on the other hand, these students with an analytical orientation will also be flexible, broadminded, open to new ideas, and so on. From the relationship between the analytical orientation with attitudinal and motivational variables derives Krashen’s (1982) *Affective Filter Hypothesis* (including anxiety, motivation and self-confidence) as an influence for the learning of a foreign language. He considered the factors making up the affective filter as mediators between the linguistic input in the classroom and the student’s ability to learn. Horwitz (2001: 126) goes a bit further and describes anxiety as “a distinct complex of proprioperception, beliefs, feelings and behaviours that occur during learning in the classroom because of the uniqueness of a [sic] learning languages”. According to this author (Horwitz, 2001), anxiety to foreign language learning is characterized by difficult concentration, fear or horror of the foreign
language class, sweating, having an avoidance behaviour (students missing classes and not doing their homework), difficult concentration, worry or palpitations. Previously, Gardner (1985: 34) stated that “a construct of anxiety which is not general but instead is specific to the language acquisition context is related to second language achievement”. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) admitted that foreign language anxiety is unique and presented the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (hereafter, FLCAS) as the resource to measure anxiety levels which are confirmed by negative performance expectancies and avoidance behaviours, psychophysiological symptoms, and social comparisons. This consists of 33 items rated on a five-point Likert scale that range from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). This theory of foreign language anxiety has been accepted by most researchers and the FLCAS is regarded as a reliable tool. Nevertheless, heated debates have arisen concerning some issues.

The challenges to Horwitz et al.’s theory can be summarized as follows:

- **The direction of the causal relationship between FLA and language learning difficulties.** Authors like Argaman & Abu-Rabia (2002) and Ganschow et al., (1994) found the detrimental effects of FLA on language learning as a consequence instead of a cause. MacIntyre (1995) supported Horwitz et al.’s position claiming that individual differences in second or foreign language learning could be due to anxiety arousal being considered as a casual agent. Consequently, the question of whether anxiety causes language difficulty or language difficulty causes anxiety remains unanswered.

- **The important role of FLA.** Sparks and Ganschow (1991, 1993a, 1993b, 2007) questioned the importance of anxiety claimed by Horwitz declaring that the study of anxiety does not provide enough information about the understanding of language achievement. Horwitz stated that:

  in addition to contributing to our understanding of second language achievement, language anxiety is fundamental to our understanding of how learners approach language learning, their expectations for success or failure, and ultimately why they continue or discontinue study. (Horwitz 2001: 122)

- **The components of FLA.** Horwitz et al. included communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation in their conceptualization of foreign language anxiety. Communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are closely related to FLA, but test anxiety appears as a general anxiety problem and not specific of foreign language learning (MacIntyre, 1989). Aida (1994) also acknowledged that
the results achieved after using factor analysis to detect the underlying structure of the FLCAS’s thirty-three statements did not support the inclusion of test anxiety as a component of FLA. Therefore, Horwitz (2010: 158) admitted that “FLA is related to communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear or negative evaluation instead of being composed of them”.

✓ The validity of the FLCAS. Sparks and Ganschow (1991, 1996, 2007) have declared that FLCAS measures language skills rather than anxiety levels and that it excludes either foreign language aptitude or native language skills. Aida (1994) pinpoints that FLCAS measures anxiety mainly related to speaking situations.

In spite of all these challenges, it seems clear that language anxiety is a unique type of anxiety. MacIntyre (1999: 33) argues that foreign or second language learning has “more potential for students to embarrass themselves, to frustrate their self-expression, and to challenge their self-esteem and sense of identity than almost any other learning activities”.

All this controversy displays the necessity for further investigation regarding foreign language anxiety.

Zafar & Meenakshi (2012: 639) wonder “Why do some people almost achieve the native speaker’s levels of competence in a foreign language while others never seem to progress much beyond a beginner’s level?”. Heterogeneity seems to be the answer to this question. Different personalities and styles are, on most occasions, shaped by biological or conditioned factors (that is, they are affected by nature) or by unconscious forces (past experiences). Thus, according to these authors, the individual differences that can be explored are the following:

✓ **Age**: It is widely thought that children are more successful SL learners than adults. Saville-Troike (2006) affirms that the term “success” must be defined as it is sometimes related to an initial rate of learning whereas some other studies consider it as ultimate achievement. According to her, it is also linked to either the closeness of the learner’s pronunciation to a native speaker’s or to grammatical of functional competence. Long (1990), moreover, claims that language learners over 15 find really difficult to acquire native-like fluency as well as an absence of an accent.

✓ **Sex**: The fact that a wider range of strategies (especially social), greater integrative motivation and more positive attitudes towards the L2 are characteristic of females
have been shown by Oxford, Nyikos & Ehrman’s (1988) studies on individual language learner differences either related to sex (biological) or gender (socially constructed). Boyle (1987) suggests that females seem to be superior to males in most aspects of language learning, but for “listening [sic] vocabulary”.

✓ **Aptitude:** Skehan (1998: 209) states that individual ability can vary not only because of aptitude, but also by factors such as language learning style, motivation and personality, and affirms that language-learning aptitude “is not completely distinct from general cognitive abilities, as represented by intelligence tests, but it is far from the same thing”.

✓ **Motivation:** Following Gardner & Lambert (1972), there are two types of motivation: *Integrative*, by means of which the learner wants to become part of the target community or culture; and *Instrumental*, whose goal is to get benefits from the second language skill (professional status, business advancement, educational goals, etc.). Saville-Troike (2006) points out that complex personal and social factors will be determining for the effect of one or the other kind of motivation. Gardner (1985) stated that Motivation = effort + desire to achieve goal + attitudes.

✓ **Learning Styles:** Cognitive variations in learning an L2 are related to learning styles. Brown (2000) remarks that there is an interaction between language learning styles and specific L2 social and learning contexts. Knowles (1972) identified the following cognitive styles: concrete learning style, analytical learning style, communicative learning style and authority-oriented learning style. Witkin (1973) adds cognitive learning styles, divided into Field Independent (left brain dominance) and Field Dependent style (right brain dominance). Lack of rigidness regarding these types of learning styles is recommended by Oxford (2003: 3), who sets forth the idea that they “are not dichotomous (black or white, present or absent). Learning styles generally operate on a continuum or on multiple, intersecting continua”.

✓ **Learning Strategies:** These refer to the selection of strategies for language acquisition made by learners. Brown (2000) acknowledges that motivation, personality, cognitive style, and specific contexts of use and opportunities for learning influence the choice of learning strategies. O’Malley and Chamot, (1990, taken from Zafar & Meenakshi, 2012: 642) classified learning strategies in: *cognitive strategies*, dealing with incoming information and its manipulation to improve learning (repetition, resourcing, direct physical response, translation, grouping, note-taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, key word, contextualization, elaboration, transfer,
inferencing and question for clarification), **metacognitive strategies**, used for evaluating, monitoring and planning the learning activity (advanced organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, advance preparation, self-monitoring, delayed production, self-evaluation and self-reinforcement), **social and affective strategies**, which consist of interacting with another person (questioning for clarification, cooperation and self-talk).

A distinction must be considered between styles and strategies. Lombaard (2006) declares that language learning styles differentiate one person from another because of different traits, preferences or tendencies whereas strategies are modes of operation for achieving a specific goal, particular methods of approaching a problem or plans for manipulating information. Hence, styles are usually constant and predictable while strategies vary broadly within an individual.

**✓ Personality:** Ehrman (1996) states that personality and SLA are closely related since personality determines what people feel comfortable with. Consequently, what makes people feel comfortable with is usually chosen and done and this makes them get better at the given skills. Because of this, different people will choose different strategies and skills depending on their personalities. Among the personality features that can affect the learning of an L2 are:

- **Extroversion vs. Introversion:** SLA theorists argue that an extroverted person is better than an introverted one for language learning. Krashen (1985) says that the more extrovert language learners are, the bigger the amount of input is. Cook (2001) prefers communicative approaches and McConough (1986) claims that extrovert learners are more likely to join group activities. Nevertheless, some other studies do not show a complete acceptance of this theory.

- **Self-esteem:** This personality feature has been widely studied. Gardner and Lambert (1972) found that self-esteem was an important factor in SLA. MacIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei & Noels (1998) investigated self confidences in their model “willingness to communicate” in a foreign language. The outcomes displayed the fact that more willingness to communicate was related to a better ability to communicate. They concluded that motivation, intergroup climate, personality and two levels of self-confidence (the first one resembling “state communicative self-confidence” and the second one, a general level “L2 self-confidence”) were among the factors which lead to willingness to
communicate. In spite of this, it is not proved that high self-esteem alone can produce language success or vice versa.

- **Inhibition:** This is characterized by individuals building defenses to protect themselves. Brown (2000) admits that in the last three decades risk-taking contexts have been created for students to feel free to take risks mainly orally. He argues that we would never communicate productively if we did not venture to say a sentence until we were completely sure about its correctness.

- **Risk-taking:** Rubin & Thompson (1994) define risk-taking as “the ability to make intelligent guesses”. Beebe (1983) classified the reasons that create risk-taking or fear: in the classroom (a fail on an exam, a smirk from a classmate, a reproach from the teacher, a bad grade in the course or punishment or embarrassment imposed by oneself) and outside the classroom (fear of the alienation of not being able to communicate, fear of looking ridiculous, fear of the frustration resulting from the blank look of a listener or fear of losing one’s identity). It must be taken into account that high risk-taking does not always produce positive results in second language learning, although it should be acknowledged that it is useful to some extent.

- **Anxiety:** Anxiety is linked to self-esteem, inhibition and risk-taking. Uneasiness, self-doubt, worry or frustration are typical of a state of anxiety. There are two types of anxiety (as it was previously noticed): trait anxiety (permanent) and state anxiety (temporary and context-specific). MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) pointed out that trait anxiety do not seem to be useful in predicting second language achievement. Brown (2000) declares that recent research on language anxiety pays more attention to the situational nature of state anxiety and that three are the components of foreign language anxiety, namely: communication apprehension, deriving from students’ inability to properly express mature ideas and thoughts; fear of negative social evaluation, as a consequence of the learner’s necessity of making a positive social impression on others; and test anxiety or apprehension over academic evaluation. However, recent research admits that not all anxiety is bad and that learning can be facilitated by a certain amount of tension. As a result, Debilitative Anxiety (harmful anxiety) and Facilitative Anxiety (helpful anxiety) have been identified. Brown (2000) indicated that Facilitative Anxiety
can keep the learner alert and only unbalanced to the point that s/he cannot relax completely.

Masgoret and Gardner (2003) carried out an investigation about the significance of the contributions motivation and attitudes make on second language learning regarding achievement and basing it on Gardner and Associates’ (1985) research on the topic. This meta-analysis investigated the relationship between second language achievement and the variables corresponding to Gardner’s socioeducational model (integrativeness, attitudes towards the learning situation, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation and motivation), and posed two questions:

1. What is the best estimate of the correlations in the population between various aspects of second language achievement and the five attitudinal/motivational characteristics in Gardner’s model?
2. Are there other variables, such as the availability of the language in the community or the age of the learners, that influence the magnitude of these associations? (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003: 169).

Gardner and Associates’ studies (1985, 2000) demonstrated, by means of the AMTB, that correlations between achievement and motivation were the highest, that the population correlations were greater than 0 (meaning that there are significant statistic differences), that neither age nor the availability of the language could be considered as clear moderating effects on these relationships, and that integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation affect achievement through motivation. On the other hand, there are authors like Ellis (1994) who raised some hypotheses about the relationship between motivation, attitudes and orientations to achievement in the second language. The different results in the measures from a great variety of authors make difficult to come to unequivocal answers for their validity. Therefore, a meta-analysis seems to be the only way to shed light on this ambiguity. This study can be summarized as follows:

✓ **Integrativeness:** This makes reference to “an openness to identify, at least in part, with another language community” (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003: 172). Learning a second language involves the adoption of pronunciation, words, word order and cognitive and behavioural characteristics of that other culture. All this facilitates individuals’ motivation to learn the material. Integrativeness was measured by means of three scales in the AMTB:
• **Attitudes towards the Target Language Group.** Favourable attitudes would facilitate openness whereas negative ones would prevent it.

• **Integrative Orientation.** Having an interest in learning a language so as to socialize, interact, meet, etc. members of the other community would show that they are more open than those who had not these reasons.

• **Interest in Foreign Languages.** Openness to all groups and not only to the target language group was also hypothesized.

✓ **Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation:** This refers to “the individual’s reaction to anything associated with the immediate context in which the language is taught” (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003: 172-173). According to the socio-educational model, these attitudes are relative to others in the classroom. The two scales that assess this kind of attitudes are: Evaluation of the Course and Evaluation of the Teacher.

✓ **Motivation:** Motivation implies the desire to do something. A motivated individual has goals, is attentive and persistent, enjoys the activity, feels disappointment when s/he fails or reinforcement when s/he succeeds and uses strategies to achieve his/her goals, among other aspects. The AMTB only focused on:

  • **Motivational Intensity**, assessing the individual’s amount of effort in learning the second language.

  • **Desire to Learn the Target Language**, which assesses the individual’s desire to get a high level of competence in the language.

  • **Attitudes toward Learning the Foreign Language**, which makes reference to the affect undergone during the language learning process.

✓ **Integrative Motivation:** Integrative Motivation comprises the three previous components, that is, integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation (Gardner, 1985, 2000). Consequently, the student who is motivated to learn the second language, shows openness to identify with the other language community and displays favourable attitudes toward the learning situation is an integratively motivated student. Both integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation support motivation, but the latter is seen as the major affective individual-difference variable that contributes to achievement in the learning of other languages. Hence, the correlation between motivation and language achievement is higher than that between the other variables.
**Orientations to Language Study:** The AMTB refers to two kinds of reasons for learning a second language:

- *The Integrative Orientation Scale*, whose main reason for learning a second language is the notion of identification with the community, and
- *The Instrumental Orientation Scale*, whose chief reasons for learning the second language are practical ones without taking into account social interest.

Noels and Clément (1989) indicated that not all orientations are associated with motivation.

The outcomes of Masgoret and Gardner’s (2003) meta-analysis are the following:

- Correlations on the consistency of the relations between measures of achievement in a SL and integrativeness, motivation and attitudes toward the learning language, and instrumental and integrative orientations are consistently positive.
- Correlations between motivation and achievement are higher than those between integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation or integrative and instrumental orientations and achievement.
- Neither language learning environment (second and foreign languages are differentiated) nor age have been found to have clear moderating effects.

Ellis stated that:

> Learners’ affective factors are obviously of crucial importance in accounting for individual differences in learning outcomes. Whereas learners’ beliefs about language learning are likely to be fairly stable, their affective states tend to be volatile, affecting not only overall progress but responses to particular learning activities on a day-by-day and even moment-by-moment basis. (Ellis 1994: 483)

More specifically, Madrid and Pérez Cañado, in their model for investigating motivational factors in the language classroom, described **motivation** in the following terms:

> Motivation is an internal state of the individual influenced by certain needs and/or beliefs which generate favourable attitudes and interests towards a goal, as well as a desire which moves him/her to attain it with dedication and continued effort because
(s)he likes it and feels satisfied each time (s)he obtains positive results. (Madrid and Pérez Cañado 2001: 333)

Three are the phases which combine according to this motivational process:

✓ **Initial or pre-action motivation.** Biological, psychological or of any other kind personal needs and previous opinions beliefs and perceptions affect the subject’s mental state creating specific attitudes towards the goal and ranging from strong to weak depending on the importance of the objectives the individual wants to reach.

✓ **Action.** This phase takes place during the teaching-learning process and the motivational stages experience changes. If these ones are positive, consistency and effort will be maintained or will even be increased. However, if they are negative, the individual may lose his/her interest as s/he has not achieved his/her goal.

✓ **Final or post-actional motivation.** The individual’s emotional reactions are reflected in this phase. Satisfaction or frustration regarding his/her initial beliefs and feelings will be expressed thus, modifying the results, that is, increasing, maintaining or diminishing motivation.

Hence, Madrid and Pérez Cañado (2001: 335) describe motivation as a “pluricomponential construct”, since motivational states result from the sequential and cyclical interaction of the following factors: needs, beliefs, opinions, capacities, aptitudes, attitudes, interests and desire in the pre-actional phase; goal (learn the L2) and effort in the action phase; and results (final emotional reaction) in the post-actional phase.

As previously stated, Gardner (1985) divided the construct orientation into instrumental orientation (social recognition, employment opportunities, etc.) and integrative orientation (integration in the foreign language community). Madrid and Pérez Cañado (2001) added five more distinctions in their classification, namely: professional motives (work progress), integrative orientation (integration in the foreign community), recreational motives (to travel abroad, watch TV, etc.), communicative orientation (to connect with foreigners, understand the L2 and so on) and formative and educational reasons (to improve and broaden individuals’ education).
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

According to its general framework, this investigation aims at being both applied and practical as the classroom is the environment which this is based on, taking into account real situations. The source of information is primary, since data have been collected first hand from students and teachers by means of questionnaires. It follows an analytic approach because it investigates a cluster of factors, that is, internal and external factors which affect the learning of the FL in a group of students and how they react to them and their teachers help them face these handicaps. This study is inductive, as regards the goal, as Group Studies are so. Qualitative methods have been employed to gather and measure the data; questionnaires make this study qualitative and the operations carried out for the measurement of the data have been descriptive statistics. The data collection method employed has been (quasi-) experimental because it is classroom-based and has been implemented in natural conditions. As for the data collection time, this study is cross-sectional as data has been collected at a single point in time. Finally, as far as the method of analysis followed is concerned, it can be considered that a mixture of both interpretative and statistical analyses has been applied to the data gathered by means of the questionnaires.

Data triangulation has also been taken into account to mediate biases. So, different sources of information with diverse roles in the language teaching-learning context such as students, pre-service teachers and in-service teachers (including English teachers and non-linguistic area teachers) have been consulted.

The methodology of this research is in line with descriptive models, taking into consideration analytic-comparative perspectives as the different internal and external factors which affect the learning of a FL are explored. This is the reason why closed-questionnaires following the Likert-like scale (which provides quantitative data) have been used. Thus, factors such as motivation, anxiety or self-esteem, among others, are explored, since contemporary literature has identified these as influences in the learning of a FL. Although questionnaires display a great amount of advantages to identify the subjects’ perceptions of their experiences regarding the learning of the FL, opinions and beliefs, the problems of validity and reliability usually arise. Oller (1981) points out that the subjects’ “desire for social approval” can question the validity and reliability of questionnaires. Hence, more objective instruments of control and more direct observation of the subjects’ behaviour in the FL classroom are advisable to complement, compete and contrast the validity of the
questionnaires. Consequently, modifications in the questionnaires as the application of these throughout the school year or the variation of number of variables should be considered.

3.2. Sample / participants

The participants in this study comprise a group of 27 students, 14 boys and 13 girls in the 3rd Year of CSE in a Bilingual High School ‘Bahía de Algeciras’ in Algeciras (Cádiz). They are between 14 and 16 years old and have been in contact with the English language since the 1st Year of Primary Education. Therefore, they have been learning English, at least, for 9 years so far.

It must be noticed that these students followed a monolingual education (Spanish) when in Primary Education, only having in English this subject itself. It has been only after their enrollment in this High School that these students have started a bilingual education. Currently, curricular instruction includes CLIL subjects (Biology, PE, Chemistry and Technology) in English one hour a week and two more hours in their L1, that is, in Spanish. English lessons are divided into four hours a week and they are mainly conducted in English, but for grammatical explanations, which are also explained in Spanish for students to fully understand the new information.

Attention must also be paid to the fact that many of them attend language schools or have English teachers for private lessons who help them in their hours outside the High School.

The second group of participants is that formed by teachers. The cohort is made up of three English teachers, and 4 CLIL teachers who teach the subjects of Biology, PE, Chemistry and Technology at this grade and to this specific group of students. These teachers also follow a bilingual teaching method with other grades, only secondary ones (1st, 2nd and 4th years of CSE), since there is no Post-Compulsory Secondary Education at this high school.

3.3. Variables

This study works with identification variables which vary depending on the group analyzed. Students and teachers.

The variables taken into account for each cohort are the following:

✓ Students:
  - School year or grade
  - Age
3.4. Instruments

The instruments chosen to explore the factors that affect the learning of the FL in this group of secondary students have been one questionnaire for this group and one for the teachers.

In this section, questionnaire design and instrument administration will be treated.

3.4.1. Questionnaire design

This study has been undertaken with two different questionnaires, which Brown (2001) regards as survey tools. Stakeholders’ views and opinions about the internal and external factors that affect the learning of a FL have been the main objective of this study.

The design of the questionnaires has been based on the main internal and external factors affecting the learning of a FL proposed by the different authors that have already carried out investigations in this field. The Likert scale (on a scale from 1 to 4) has been the psychometric scale used to gather the information provided by the cohorts. Eight items, out of the twenty-three in the students’ questionnaire and ten in the teachers’, match so as to allow for a comprehensive comparison of the participants’ answers.

Two are the sets of questionnaires that have been administered in this study, and so have also been the cohorts: students and teachers. The questionnaires have been designed by the researcher herself, in Spanish and trying to adapt them to the age of the students, which ranges from 14 to 16 years old.
Regarding the questionnaires contents, they comprise the main internal and external factors which well-known authors have considered as influencing in the learning of a FL. Hence, the students’ questionnaire is made up of three different blocks:

1. Internal factors that affect my learning of the FL (English): 7 items.
2. External factors that affect my learning of the FL (English): 6 items.
3. Reactions and ways in which I face these factors: 10 items.

The validation of the students’ questionnaire was subjected to a pilot phase in which another group of ten students in the same school year (3rd) completed it, thus allowing the reduction of confusion or redundancies and guaranteeing the reliability of the questionnaire.

3.4.2. Questionnaire administration

The administration of the questionnaires has been carried out in a public High School in Andalusia: I.E.S. Bahía de Algeciras (Algeciras, Cádiz). The Head Teacher provided the permissions needed for the development and implementation of this study and the researcher herself was in charge of the administration of the questionnaires and it was paper-based.

Students were the first cohort to be administered with the questionnaire. The administration took place during a lesson and the students were explained all the doubts and some terms were clarified while they were answering the items. Next came the teachers’ turn, who answered it at the very moment of being handed in.

3.5. Data collection

In order to administer all the questionnaires and process all the data gathered from them, a period of approximately three weeks has been necessary.

Questionnaires have been proved to be a main tool to collect all the information required for this study, providing a great variety of results from the cohorts that have participated.

Shank identifies qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning” (2002: 5) and typifies qualitative researchers as “discoverers and reconcilers of meaning where no meaning has been clearly understood before” (2002: 11).
3.6. Data analysis

This section pinpoints the operations performed on the data obtained from the questionnaires and the programmes which have been employed for their analysis. A qualitative or interpretative analysis has been carried out. According to Bueno González, 2013: 33), this kind of analysis is associated with ethnographic research.

The software Excel has been employed for the statistical analysis of the data. The meta-concern of this research has been carried out by means of the following operations:

✓ The Meta-concern has been accomplished by means of descriptive statistics using several percentages.

- Central tendency measures:
  - Mean
  - Median
  - Mode

- Dispersion measures:
  - Standard deviation
  - Range

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the presentation and discussion of the results collected (cf. Appendix 1 for the questionnaires). The aforementioned analysis and the literary review presented in section 2 will be alluded to. Results will be relayed in two sections: the first one will be related to each of the cohorts (students and teachers) and the second one will consist of the comparison between these ones.

4.1. Students’ viewpoints

The global results obtained from the students’ cohort will be examined according to the three different blocks into which the questionnaire is divided.

**Block 1** is about the degree students consider Internal Factors affect their learning of a foreign language (English). Specifically, these internal factors are language anxiety, self-confidence, motivation, self-esteem, positive attitude, frustration and self-realization. Each item corresponds to each of these internal factors respectively.
As it can be seen in item 1 in graph 1, most students have answered the option “strongly disagree” regarding the state of anxiety when they have to express themselves in English in front of their classmates. There is the same quantity of students who have answered “agree” and “disagree” regarding this first item. Finally, only one student has “strongly agreed” that s/he feels language anxiety.

Item 2, about self-confidence in the English class and other subjects in English shows that most students “agree” that they have self-confidence in this situation. It is significant the fact that there are more of them who have chosen “strongly disagree” instead of “disagree”.

Motivation is measured in item 3. The answer with the highest score is “agree”, what displays the idea that students feel motivated in the English subject and other subjects taught in English.

Similarly, the results obtained for item 4, about self-esteem, have manifested that most of the students’ cohort “agree” they have high self-esteem which helps them manage themselves in English.

Positive attitude was looked upon in item 5. This time, students have answered that they have a positive attitude towards the English subject as well as towards other CLIL subjects.

Item 6 was about feeling frustration when they did not understand anything in English. Here, students have answered “strongly agree” and “agree” thus, showing that they feel frustrated before a situation of no understanding.

Finally, item 7, about feeling self-realization when everything or almost everything is understood in English, presents that students feel so, since most of them have chosen “strongly agree” as their answer.

Motivation and attitude towards the learning situation were part of Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model of language learning and they were considered as paramount for the outcomes when learning a FL. This study has shown that students consider motivation really important for the good development of their learning process.

Moreover, language anxiety also deserves a mention here, since, as Woodrow (2006), MacIntyre & Gardner (1989) and Horwitz (2001) remarked, anxiety specific to a situation is the kind of anxiety found in the context of an L2 classroom. Although most students have “disagreed” that they feel language anxiety when expressing themselves in English, there is still an amount who admits that they do feel anxious in this situation.

Krashen’s (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, apart from anxiety and motivation, includes self-confidence as a factor which works as a mediator in SLA. Thus, the fact that
most students in this group (21 out of 27) have chosen “agree” or “strongly agree” about feeling self-confidence in the English class or in other subjects in English shows, following this author, that most of them possess an *analytic orientation* and, as a consequence, will process language-related information easily.

![Graph 1. Internal Factors affecting students' learning of a FL (Block 1)](image)

**Block 2** deals with the degree students consider *External Factors affect their learning of a foreign language (English)*. These external factors are the following: familiar atmosphere, classroom atmosphere, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, recreational motives and formative or educational reasons. Items from 8 to 13 are based on these external factors. Graph 2 displays the results presented below.

About the extent to which students consider that their *familiar atmosphere* affects their learning of English, item 8 shows that this is not the case. Most of them have answered that they disagree, while there is also an amount who considers that it does affect them.

In item 9, about whether a positive or negative *atmosphere in the classroom* affects their learning of the FL, the vast majority has admitted that this is so.

Most students have “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the *integrative orientation* (item 10) moves them to learn English. They want to identify themselves with the English-speaking community.
The highest means can be found in items 11 and 12, regarding *instrumental orientation* and *recreational motives* respectively. This shows that students give most importance to these two items when considering English, and that they find it quite useful, in general, to find a good job or to play videogames, among other aspects.

To finish with this block, *formative or educational reasons* are taken into account in item 13. Here, students have also given this item one of the highest scores. Thus, improving and broadening one’s education by means of the English language seems to be quite important for them.

The variables integralization and instrumental and integrative orientations are included in Gardner’s (1985) *socio-educational model* of language learning. He demonstrated that these variables influence students learning of an L2, and this study has confirmed it.

The results found in item 8 manifest an interesting case. It seems curious that most students have answered that their familiar atmosphere does not affect their learning of English as teenagers are easily influenced by everything that happens around them. Maybe embarrassment or any other similar feeling have caused them to answer so, but it is worth mentioning since this presents the idea that they do not relate their life outside school with their life inside it. This implies that they do not think of their families as an integrative aspect in their lives and necessary and enriching within the school framework itself.

Gee (2007) investigates videogames and claims they are positive in the learning of a FL. Students in this group have admitted (by means of giving the second highest score to item 12) that they regard being able to play videogames in English as one of the most attractive features that makes them get involved in its learning.
**Block 3** bases on the *ways in which students face internal and external factors and their reactions to these*. The ways and reactions studied have been: praise for a good performance, frustration, motivation - easy classroom activities, anxiety, self-realization, self-esteem, lack of motivation in a negative familiar and classroom atmosphere, motivation related to recreational purposes and raise of interest and improved linguistic skills related.

As it is displayed in graph 3 below, more than 50% of the students’ cohort feels completely good when the teacher *praises* them for a good performance in English (item 14).

More than 40% of the students feel “a little” *frustrated* when they are not able to succeed in classroom activities (item 15). Nevertheless, it must be noticed that 23 out of 27 students feel frustrated at different levels and only 4 do not feel frustration at all.

Item 16, about the relationship between *motivation* and *easy activities* in the English classroom, shows that students relate these two aspects as most of them have answered that they feel motivated when classroom activities are easy.

*Language anxiety*, measured in item 17, has demonstrated that students predominantly feel a little anxious when they have to speak in English in class. Woodrow (2006), MacIntyre & Gardner, (1989) and Horwitz (2001) had claimed that this kind of anxiety must be taken into account when learning a FL, and here as in item 1 in graph 1, it has also been proved that students feel it and affect their learning.
More than 70% of the students have admitted that they feel complete *self-realization* when they pass a test or exam in English. This item (18) has got the highest mean in the graph.

Item 19 deals with the question whether students’ *self-esteem* raises when they can *help other classmates* with the subject. 50% has answered that their self-esteem completely raises, and more than 20% has answered that their self-esteem raises a lot.

Most students do not have *lack of motivation* because of a negative familiar atmosphere, although some of them do (item 20).

Item 21 has shown that most students have a little *lack of motivation* when the *atmosphere in the classroom* is negative, affecting their learning.

The relationship between *motivation* and *recreational purposes* is analysed in item 22. More than 60% of students has answered that their motivation increases when they can use English for these purposes (to travel abroad, watch TV, etc.).

Finally, item 23 gets the highest mean. More than 70% of students have agreed that their interest in English increases when they see that their *language skills* are improving.

A general overview of this graph shows that there is almost a consensus regarding positive reactions and positive results and vice versa. More specifically, students feel good when they are praised by their teachers (item 14), when they face easy classroom activities in English (item 16), when they pass an exam in English (item 18), when they can help their classmates in the English subject or in CLIL subjects (item 19), when they can use English for recreational purposes (item 22) and, finally, when they can notice their linguistic skills are improving (item 23).

On the other hand, frustration when they cannot succeed in classroom activities in English (item 15), language anxiety (felt by 80% at different levels and shown in item 17), lack of motivation related to a negative familiar atmosphere (item 20) and lack of motivation linked to a negative classroom atmosphere (item 21) present the opposite side. Thus, the tendency in this group seems to be positive, showing a preference for getting good results and feeling good when these are achieved.

To finish the interpretation of graph 3, students’ answers concerning item 15 must be analysed. This item is about students feeling frustration when they do not succeed in classroom activities. The graph shows that only 40% of these students feel “completely” frustrated or “a lot” of frustration in this situation. This implies that they do not give much importance to the good execution of classroom activities, and this is a quite interesting point to be looked upon and compared with teachers’ answers and reactions to it.
4.2. Teachers’ viewpoints

After describing the outcomes of the students’ cohort, it is now time to do the same with the teachers’. The number of teachers that has participated in this study is more reduced than the students’, since only the 3 English teachers working at this high school and the teachers of CLIL subjects for this group has been surveyed, that is, 7 altogether. Nevertheless, interesting results have been found and valuable conclusions can be drawn.

The teachers’ questionnaire consists only of one block. So, block 1 deals with the ways teachers help their students face and overcome the handicaps related to internal and external factors they can find when learning a FL, in this case, English. The questionnaire is made up of 10 items.

More than 70% of the teachers’ cohort “strongly agree” that they try to help their students to overcome their anxiety when they have to express themselves in English in front of their classmates. The remaining 28% “agree” (item 1).

Almost 90% of the teachers has admitted that they try to raise the motivation of their students (item 2).

Again, more than 70% has answered that they try to raise their students’ self-esteem in order to help them manage in English (item 3).
Exactly the same has been the score obtained in item 4, about the intention of creating a positive attitude on the part of the students towards the English language.

As for item 5, almost 90% has stated that they help their students so that they cannot feel frustration when they do not understand anything in English.

Item 6 has achieved the highest mean, 100%. On this occasion, teachers were asked about them praising their students when these ones perform successfully in the English classroom.

In item 7, most teachers (4 out of 7) answered that they did feel frustrated when their students did not get the desired goals in the English lesson or the lessons they teach in English. 60% “agree” and “strongly agree” about feeling frustrated in this situation, thus showing their concern when the objectives are not reached by their students.

Once again, teachers have answered positively regarding self-realization. More than 70% has indicated that they feel self-realization when their students get good results in English (item 8).

Item 9 shows that 60% of teachers considers that students who have worked hard enough throughout the school year should pass to a higher level although they may not have passed all the exams, while the remaining 40%, disagrees. It is noteworthy here that there are no extreme answers regarding this aspect, that is, no a teacher has answered “strongly agree or disagree”. This implies that no radical positions are assumed by teachers when this issue is considered.

Finally, more than 50% of the teachers has declared that they award their students when these ones get the objectives (item 10). The rest of the teachers “strongly agree” about this.

Beebe (1983) classified a reproach from the teacher among the situations in the classroom that create risk-taking or fear in the students. As already seen in the Literary Review (section 2), although high risk-taking can be useful to some extent, it does not always produce positive results in the learning of a FL. Hence, teachers put this into practice, and this has been demonstrated in item 6, which has got the highest mean (100%). This item focused on praising students when they perform successfully in the English class. This way, teachers provide positive feedback to students increasing their motivation.

An overall look at graph 3 displays a crystal-clear view of teachers’ attitudes and reactions to their students’ performance in the English subject and CLIL subjects.

Teachers show a positive attitude to try to help their students facing handicaps such as language anxiety and frustration. On the other hand, they also try to improve their motivation
and self-esteem, praise their good performance, feel frustrated when their students do not achieve the desired objectives or feel self-realization when they do.

Graph 4. Ways used by teachers to help students face internal and external factors affecting their learning of a FL

4.3. Across-cohort comparison

For the purpose of finding similarities and differences between the two cohorts, a comparison of both comes next. It can be observed that, in general, the stakeholders’ results are similar.

Eight out of the twenty-three items in the students’ questionnaire are related to eight out of the ten items in the teachers’ questionnaire. Their relationship is as follows:

Items 1 in both questionnaires are related. Most students admitted that they did not feel anxiety when having to express themselves in English in front of their classmates and teachers also admitted that they help them in this situation.

Item 3 in the students’ questionnaire is linked to item 2 in the teachers’. Students said that they feel motivation in the English class and teachers strongly agreed that they try to motivate their students in the English class.

Item 4 in the students’ questionnaire and item 3 in the teachers’ are also related. Self-esteem was analyzed in these items. Students’ self-esteem helps them manage in the English classroom and teachers try to improve and increase this internal factor.
There is a relationship between items 5 in the students’ questionnaire and item 4 in the teachers’. A positive attitude towards English is possessed by students and teachers try to create and foster it.

Another relationship can be found between items 6 and 5 in the students’ and teachers’ questionnaires respectively. Students’ answers showed that they feel frustration when they do not understand anything in English. Most teachers claimed that they help them not to feel frustration on this occasion. These are the items where more different answers have been detected. It seems as if teachers’ purpose of trying students not to feel frustration in this situation does not work properly as the results in graph 1 show that more than 10% of this group of students feel frustrated.

These five aspects have shown the relationships found between students and teachers regarding internal factors (block 1 of the students’ questionnaire). The remaining related items correspond to ways of facing these factors and reactions (block 3 of the students’ questionnaire). These come next:

Item 14 in the students’ questionnaire and item 6 in the teachers’ are matched too. Here, all the teachers’ cohort answered the same, that is, they strongly agreed when asked about them praising their students when they perform successfully in class, and most students responded that they felt good when the teacher praised them.

Item 15 (students) and item 7 (teachers) are connected. The percentage of students who admitted that they feel frustration when they are not able to succeed in classroom activities is higher than that of teachers when their students do not get the desired objectives in English.

Finally, item 18 in the students’ questionnaire and item 8 in the teachers are also linked. These two items show that both students and teachers feel self-realization when the first ones pass an English test or exam and the second ones can see that their students are getting good results.

The general picture shows that there is wide agreement between students’ and teachers’ answers in the related items, that is, both cohorts react similarly regarding factors such as anxiety, motivation-, self-esteem, positive attitude, frustration, praise and self-realization.

Something outstanding and out-of-the-average in this comparison is that although item 15 in the students’ questionnaire and 7 in the teachers’ seem quite similar, they are not. Students seem not to consider classroom activities as important as teachers do, since, even more than 80% feel frustrated when they do not succeed in classroom activities, 13 out of 27
of these students feel only “a little” frustrated. Nevertheless, more than 50% of teachers “agree” or “strongly agree” that they feel frustrated when their students do not get the desired goals in English. From this, it can be inferred that students do not give much value to classroom activities.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The nature of this research was exploratory and based on survey data. Thus, the first limitation that can be found is the survey data’s validity as the number of cohorts was constrained to a convenience sample. Therefore, the potential generalization of the study is far from being appropriate to be taken into account if other settings and cohorts are not considered.

As a consequence, geographical limitations spring as another limitation, since the study has been circumscribed to a specific site, that is, a particular high school in a city (Algeciras, Cádiz).

Another limitation is the lack of methodological triangulation as the study has been carried out by means of qualitative research in which questionnaires have been the only tools employed to gather the data.

The number of items could also be regarded as a limitation of the study. Only some internal and external factors that affect the learning of a FL have been analyzed, namely: motivation, (language) anxiety, self-confidence, attitude, self-esteem, frustration, self-realization (among internal factors) and familiar and classroom atmosphere, instrumental and integrative orientations, recreational motives, formative or educational reasons (among external factors). The reactions of the students to these factors and the teachers’ ways of facing and helping them have also been part of this study.

A further limitation might be the fact that parents have not been included in the cohorts. They could have provided another point of view, and maybe give a wider vision of how these affecting factors are treated by them, how they react before them and how they try to solve problems derived from them if there is any.
6. LINES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section provides the possibility of suggesting new lines for future research on this field. These lines could be addressed towards the research community in case it is interested in broadening the scope of the investigation either applying it to more groups, different in size, in geographical locations or of different ages.

As displayed in the Literature Review section, many authors have shown their interest in this field. Thus, it comes as a matter of fact that more research will be conducted around the different factors that affect the learning of a FL.

The variables looked upon in this study can be reduced or widened and even completely changed depending on aspects such as if students’ and teachers’ personalities change, if external factors are modified because of social characteristics such as new tendencies in lifestyles, educational models or globalizing influences as could be the technological era that we are living at the moment and which is unifying ideas, thoughts and beliefs all around the world. This could be interpreted as if, for example, students gave more importance to instrumental orientation and recreational motives than to formative or educational reasons, since the technological world is gaining more and more importance every day. Or if, for instance, the future brought about modifications in the educational system, thus changing from a learning-teaching classroom environment to an at home one, in which students would not need to go to school to learn, and therefore, no factors such as classroom environment could be taken into account when studying which are the ones which affect students’ learning of a FL.

All this can only be investigated adapting this kind of studies to the current times when they are being conducted. So, these are hypotheses that can and should be adapted to surrounding conditions.

7. CONCLUSION

This study started as an investigation about the internal and external factors that affect the students’ learning of a foreign language. Therefore, three Objectives were the starting points to launch it and the guidelines to conduct it. Three Research Questions were also a requisite for the good implementation of the investigation, and finally, 3 Research Hypotheses also became an indispensable part of it in order to prove their validity and reliability.
Consequently, a display of what has been discovered, how it has been analyzed and the conclusions reached are shown below.

**Objective 1** was “To identify which external and internal factors are the most influential on students’ learning process”. The descriptive statistics operations carried out in the students’ questionnaire have shown that, among the internal factors, students gave the highest means to self-confidence, motivation, self-esteem, positive attitude and self-realization. Regarding external factors, students considered instrumental orientation, formative or educational reasons and recreational purposes (in this order) as the most influential on their learning of English. This means that they value their improvement and broadening of their education with practical purposes such as finding a good job, social recognition or promotion at the top of all the external factors studied in this research.

Contrarily, the internal factors that got the lowest means were language anxiety and frustration, implying that a small part of the group has these feelings during their learning process. As for the external factors, a negative familiar atmosphere, followed by a negative classroom atmosphere and integrative orientation are the ones with the lowest means. This means that students do not consider their families as one of the cornerstones in their development as persons and, more concretely, students. This position that students have chosen suggests that they regard education as something individual or in group, but only when in an educational environment.

**Objective 2** was “To gauge the ways in which students face these factors”. In this case, the descriptive statistics operations implemented discovered that the top mean was obtained in item 18, in which 20 out of 27 students answered that they feel self-realization when they pass an English test or exam. This reaction was followed by item 23, related to the raising of their interest in English when they can see that their linguistic skills are improving. The relationship between motivation in English and recreational purposes, feeling good when the teacher praises them, frustration when they do not succeed in classroom activities and the raising of their self-esteem when they can help other classmates in English were the more chosen reactions chosen by the students, demonstrating that this group of students really cares about their learning of English and have negative feelings when they do not get the desired objectives, whereas they show clearly positive reactions when they get the target goals.

**Objective 3** was “To investigate how teachers can help them overcome these handicaps”. On this occasion, teachers’ answers were also analyzed following descriptive statistics and the results showcased that the top mean was reached in item 6 of the teachers’ questionnaire, in which they admitted that they praise their students when they perform
successfully in the English class. Trying to improve the students’ motivation and help them not to feel frustration when they do not understand something in English are the other two most chosen ways by teachers to help their students overcome handicaps in the English classroom and other subjects in English. In general, it can be stated (basing this statement on teachers’ answers) that they have and show a positive attitude towards the students’ learning process of or in English. Their answers have been crystal-clear as far as trying to help students feel comfortable and at ease in English are concerned.

In order to continue with the outline proposed at the beginning of this section, the Research Questions of this study must be commented on and interpreted.

**Research Question 1** was “Are the factors (internal and external) that affect the FL learning process delimited?”. The results derived from the answers of the students’ cohort in the questionnaires have displayed that they consider the factors proposed quite influencing in their learning of a foreign language. As previously stated, students have given most importance to the following factors: self-confidence, motivation, self-esteem, positive attitude, self-realization, instrumental orientation, formative or educational reasons, and recreational purposes. This, of course, is delimited to the factors studied in this investigation, and other ones could get completely different outcomes.

On the other hand, the factors, both internal and external, with the lowest means can also be considered as delimited, since their delimitation comes from the other side, that is, they are significant for not having so high means. Here, language anxiety and frustration (on the part of internal factors) and a negative familiar atmosphere, a negative classroom atmosphere and integrative orientation (on the external ones) can be taken into account.

**Research Question 2** was “Are students facing these factors as something natural in their learning process?”. From the answers of the students in their questionnaire, it can be inferred that this group of students face these internal and external factors as something natural in their learning process. In general terms, they accept their own reactions to all the factors, both internal and external, which affect their learning of the FL. The general pattern has been having positive reactions to positive situations (passing an English exam, praise from the teacher or self-realization) and the other way round, having negative reactions to negative situations (not succeeding in classroom activities).

**Research Question 3** was “Do students feel that teachers are helping them in their learning process?”. As for the answers to this research question, students widely agreed that they feel good when their teachers praise them, and teachers showed a clear inclination to
help their students in all the circumstances in which these ones can feel any kind negative feeling, be this: frustration, anxiety, lack of motivation or low self-esteem.

Finally, the Research Hypotheses were three as well.

**Research Hypothesis 1** was “Learners who live in a disruptive atmosphere seem to have more difficulties in learning”. Looking at graph 2, about external factors, it can be observed that most students disagree with this statement. They have acknowledged that a negative atmosphere at home does not influence their learning of English. This has been the most chosen answer, although it must be noticed that 11 out of the 27 students have answered that they think that a negative atmosphere influences negatively in their learning. As previously stated, this outcome appears as quite curious and interesting, even thought-provoking as students’ choice in their answer lets the door open to different interpretations such as if they have answered so because of embarrassment to accept that their familiar atmosphere is not good or if they have chosen it because it is the truth.

**Research Hypothesis 2** was “The motivation of students increases when they achieve good results”. To analyze this research hypothesis, graph 3 must be examined. It is clearly perceived that students have graded item 18 with the highest grade; they feel self-realization when they pass an English test or exam. The second highest grade corresponds to item 23, in which they declare that their interest in English raises when their linguistic skills improve. This research hypothesis can, then, be confirmed: motivation and good results are closely related. Dörnyei (1994) regarded motivation as the chief determinant when learning a foreign language. Krashen’s (1982) also included it in his Affective Filter Hypothesis and admitted that motivation along with anxiety and self-confidence was one of the mediators between the linguistic input in a classroom and the learner’s ability to learn.

**Research Hypothesis 3** was “Having prospects in life help students in their learning process”. Graph 2, on external factors, is the most appropriate one to take or leave this research hypothesis. Item 11, about instrumental orientation, was the most chosen among all the external factors influencing students’ learning of a foreign language. This orientation comprises finding a good job, promotion, social recognition, etc. Therefore, students choosing this item provide a really explicit idea that they have prospects, look beyond daily routine and want to improve in life. Item 13, regarding formative or educational reasons was also one with the highest means, showing that they intent to improve and widen their education as a first step to get a better life in the future.

Nonetheless, not so much enthusiasm has been found in item 10 about integrative orientation. On this occasion, 18,5% has “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that they want to
learn English in order to identify themselves with the English-speaking community implying, once again, that these students look at the learning of English not as a social activity, but as something more individual.

The pedagogical implications that can be derived from this research are:

✓ Students need to feel positive feelings in order to perform successfully in class.
✓ Students highly value teachers’ acknowledgement of their work.
✓ Students have a high sensitivity regarding their results in class.
✓ Teachers must continue with their dedication to students.
✓ Teachers are quiet positively considered by students, since they admit that their opinion influences their mood.
✓ Teachers are doing a great work supporting their students in difficult situations.
✓ Students consider their familiar atmosphere as no influential in their learning process.
✓ Students do not show much interest in identifying themselves with the English-speaking community.
✓ Some students feel language anxiety and frustration during their English learning process.
✓ Some teachers feel frustrated when their students do not get the desired objectives.

In conclusion, this study has shown stakeholders’ perceptions of the impact of the factors analyzed. Motivation, as constantly stated by many authors, has been proved to be one of the most influencing factors concerning the learning of a foreign language. This motivation can be said to be related to achievement, since getting good results in class, receiving teachers’ praises or getting a good job or social recognition have been among the most chosen reasons to learn English.

But still much has to be investigated in this interesting field which leaves doors wide open to further research.
8. REFERENCES


9. APPENDIX 1

CUESTIONARIO: FACTORES INTERNOS Y EXTERNOS QUE AFECTAN EL APRENDIZAJE DE LA LENGUA EXTRANJERA (INGLÉS). UN ESTUDIO DE GRUPO.

1. CURSO:
2. EDAD:
3. SEXO:
4. NACIONALIDAD:
5. FECHA:

POR FAVOR, INDICA HASTA QUÉ PUNTO ESTÁS DE ACUERDO CON LOS SIGUIENTES ASPECTOS RELACIONADOS CON LOS FACTORES QUE AFECTAN TU APRENDIZAJE DE LA LENGUA EXTRANJERA (INGLÉS).

1 = EN TOTAL DESACUERDO
2 = EN DESACUERDO
3 = DE ACUERDO
4 = TOTALMENTE DE ACUERDO

1. FACTORES INTERNOS QUE AFECTAN MI APRENDIZAJE DE LA LENGUA EXTRANJERA (INGLÉS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORES INTERNOS</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Siento ansiedad cuando me tengo que expresar en inglés en clase delante de mis compañer@s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Tengo confianza en mí mism@ en la clase de Inglés y otras asignaturas que se dan en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Me siento motivad@ en la clase de Inglés y en otras asignaturas en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Mi autoestima es alta y me ayuda a desenvolverme en la clase de Inglés y otras asignaturas en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Tengo una actitud positiva hacia la asignatura de Inglés y otras asignaturas que se dan en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Siento frustración cuando no entiendo algo en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Me siento realizad@ cuando entiendo todo o casi todo en inglés.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. FACTORES EXTERNOS QUE AFECTAN MI APRENDIZAJE DE LA LENGUA EXTRANJERA (INGLÉS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORES EXTERNOS</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. La atmósfera familiar afecta mi aprendizaje del inglés. Si la atmósfera es positiva, me siento más motivad@. Si es negativa, me siento menos motivad@.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
9. La *atmósfera en la clase* afecta mi aprendizaje del inglés. Si la atmósfera es positiva, me siento más motivad@. Si es negativa, me siento menos motivad@.

10. **Orientación Integrativa.** Quiero aprender inglés porque quiero identificarme con la comunidad anglófona (conocer e interactuar con sus miembros).

11. **Orientación Instrumental.** Quiero aprender inglés por razones prácticas (encontrar un buen trabajo, reconocimiento social, promoción, etc.).

12. **Motivos recreativos.** Quiero aprender inglés para viajar al extranjero, ver la tele y escuchar la radio en inglés, jugar a videojuegos, etc.

13. **Razones educativas.** Quiero aprender inglés para mejorar y ampliar mi educación.

### 3. REACCIONES Y MANERAS EN QUE AFRONTO ESTOS FACTORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REACCIONES</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Me siento bien cuando el/la profesor/a me alaba por mi actuación en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Me siento frustrad@ cuando no me salen bien las actividades de clase en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Me siento motivad@ cuando las actividades de clase en inglés son fáciles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Me pongo nervios@ cuando tengo que hablar en inglés en la clase.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Me siento realizad@ cuando apruebo un examen en inglés.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Mi autoestima sube cuando puedo ayudar a otr@s compañer@s con la asignatura de Inglés y otras asignaturas en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Me siento desmotivad@ en clase cuando mi atmósfera familiar no es buena.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Me siento desmotivad@ cuando la atmósfera de la clase no es buena.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Mi motivación aumenta cuando puedo utilizar el inglés para propósitos recreativos (para viajar al extranjero, ver la tele y escuchar la radio en inglés, jugar a videojuegos, etc.).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Mi interés en el inglés aumenta cuando noto que mis habilidades lingüísticas están mejorando.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU COLABORACIÓN**
CUESTIONARIO: FACTORES INTERNOS Y EXTERNOS QUE AFECTAN EL APRENDIZAJE DE LA LENGUA EXTRANJERA (INGLÉS). UN ESTUDIO DE GRUPO.

1. CENTRO:
2. EDAD:
3. SEXO:
4. TIPO DE PROFESORADO:
   Lengua extranjera
   Área no lingüística
5. SITUACIÓN ADMINISTRATIVA:
   Funcionari@ con destino definitivo
   Funcionari@ con destino provisional
   Interino: Otro:
6. SU NIVEL EN LENGUA EXTRANJERA QUE ENSEÑA ES:
   A1      A2      B1      B2      C1      C2
7. ASIGNATURA QUE ENSEÑA EN INGLÉS:
8. FECHA:

INDIQUE HASTA QUÉ PUNTO ESTÁ DE ACUERDO CON LOS SIGUIENTES ASPECTOS RELACIONADOS CON LAS FORMAS EN QUE USTED AYUDA A SUS ALUMNOS A AFORTAR LOS FACTORES INTERNOS Y EXTERNOS QUE AFECTAN SU APRENDIZAJE DE LA LENGUA EXTRANJERA (INGLÉS)
1 = EN TOTAL DESACUERDO
2 = EN DESACUERDO
3 = DE ACUERDO
4 = TOTALMENTE DE ACUERDO

FORMAS DE AYUDA PARA SUPERAR LOS HANDICAPS DE SUS ALUMNOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMAS DE AYUDA PARA SUPERAR LOS HANDICAPS DE SUS ALUMNOS</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Intento ayudar a mi alumnado a superar su ansiedad cuando tiene que expresarse en inglés delante de sus compañeros.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Intento mejorar la motivación de mi alumnado en la clase de inglés o de la asignatura que doy en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Intento mejorar la autoestima de mi alumnado para ayudarle a desenvolverse en inglés.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trato de crear en mi alumnado una actitud positiva hacia la asignatura de inglés y/o la asignatura que doy en inglés.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ayudo a mi alumnado a no sentir frustración cuando no entiende algo en inglés.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Alabo la actuación de mi alumnado cuando actúa bien en la clase de inglés o la asignatura que doy en inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Me siento frustrad@ cuando mi alumnado no consigue los objetivos deseados en el área de inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Me siento realizad@ cuando mi alumnado consigue buenos resultados en el área de inglés.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Considere que el alumnado que no han trabajado lo suficiente no debería pasar al siguiente curso.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Premio a mi alumnado cuando alcanza los objetivos.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>