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Etapa final y estabilización emocional en el desarrollo de la interlengua
(Affective plateau and ultimate attainment in interlanguage development)

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RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL DE LA TESIS DOCTORAL TITULADA

ETAPA FINAL Y ESTABILIZACIÓN EMOCIONAL EN EL DESARROLLO DE LA INTERLENGUA

(AFFECTIVE PLATEAU AND ULTIMATE ATTAINMENT IN INTERLANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT)

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Este estudio longitudinal explora la naturaleza y las etapas del desarrollo del fenómeno del “interlengua” (Selinker, 1972) en el caso concreto de los alumnos hispanohablantes que aprenden inglés en un contexto de enseñanza de secundaria y bachillerato en España. Los primeros pasos de la investigación se centran en los conceptos de estabilización lingüística (Selinker, 1972; Han, 2001) y el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés, intentando identificar un momento concreto o una etapa en el desarrollo de la interlengua en el que el proceso del aprendizaje se ralentiza y los alumnos pierden ritmo en la adquisición de nuevos contenidos. Asimismo, el presente estudio pretende desvelar las principales características de la interlengua y hallar los principales agentes afectivos que motivan la voluntad de los alumnos a aprender y perfeccionar el idioma inglés. Finalmente, el estudio pretende describir la interlengua y definir la etapa final de su desarrollo desde la perspectiva de los alumnos de la investigación.

Con el fin de obtener una visión global sobre el fenómeno del aprendizaje del inglés en términos modernos, el estudio adopta el carácter multidisciplinar y analiza el fenómeno de la interlengua utilizando conceptos teóricos de varias disciplinas, tales como la lingüística, la sociolingüística, la psicología, las teorías de aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero y la metodología del aprendizaje de segundas lenguas. Teniendo en cuenta la general incertidumbre en la investigación anterior acerca de una definición concreta y absoluta de

lo que constituye la etapa final del desarrollo de la interlengua, la presente tesis representa un intento de definir este fenómeno con mayor precisión tomando los objetivos y factores motivacionales del alumno como el punto de partida.

En primer lugar, la tesis se propuso a comprobar si los sujetos de la investigación llegan a experimentar los efectos de la estabilización lingüística, en qué etapa de su aprendizaje dichos efectos son visibles y que destrezas resultan más afectadas. En segundo lugar, la meta final fue averiguar qué razones del carácter motivacional o afectivo pueden inducir a esta estabilización.

Las **hipótesis de la investigación** son las siguientes:

1. E

El ritmo del aprendizaje decrece en la etapa avanzada del desarrollo de la interlengua en el caso de los alumnos analizados y este fenómeno se debe a los factores afectivos de los alumnos.

2. L

Los alumnos analizados no pueden denominarse como estancados en la etapa avanzada del aprendizaje puesto que su nivel de la interlengua coincide con sus expectativas iniciales y, en consecuencia, ellos se perciben como alumnos que han alcanzado su meta.

3. L

Los alumnos estudiados no consideran que la última etapa del desarrollo de su interlengua debe igualarse a la suficiencia nativa.

Para alcanzar los propósitos de la investigación y comprobar las hipótesis propuestas, la autora de la tesis realizó una monitorización longitudinal del desarrollo de la interlengua de los 22 alumnos (11 alumnos y 11 alumnas) durante cuatro etapas escolares, desde 2º de

ESO a 1º de Bachillerato, ambos inclusive. Los criterios aplicados en el momento de seleccionar los participantes del estudio se encuentran resumidos a continuación:

1. L

Los alumnos seleccionados formaron parte del cuerpo de alumnos con un buen rendimiento académico y actitud positiva en el colegio.

2. L

Los alumnos seleccionados han tenido a la autora de la tesis como docente durante al menos dos años académicos.

También, es importante señalar que todos los alumnos seleccionados comparten en el momento del inicio del estudio las características como su idioma materno (español); su primer idioma extranjero (inglés) y la duración de la tuición de inglés, que en este caso fue 13 años académicos, incluyendo la etapa de primaria. Finalmente, cabe mencionar que el número de participantes ha sido aumentado de 22 alumnos a 53 alumnos en la etapa final del estudio (25 alumnos y 28 alumnas), que se centraba en el análisis del cuestionario motivacional. La decisión de aumentar el número de los participantes en la fase del cuestionario permitió a la autora del estudio recolectar un número de datos más sustancial y mejoró la potencial generalización de los resultados de la encuesta.

El análisis práctico de la investigación se llevó a cabo en tres etapas. Asimismo, como referencia del estado de desarrollo de las capacidades de los alumnos en inglés se utilizó el corpus que se componía de tres tipos de datos recolectados. En la primera etapa de la investigación se formó la primera parte del corpus, que constituía los resultados de los exámenes de Cambridge, implementados en el colegio como forma adicional de evaluación. Los exámenes analizados fueron Cambridge First Certificate (FCE) recogidos en la etapa de 2º ESO, Cambridge Certificate en Advanced English (CAE) recogidos en la etapa de 4º ESO y Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE), estos últimos

recogidos en la etapa de 1º Bachillerato. Con el fin de identificar las destrezas en las que los efectos de la estabilización ejercen mayor influencia, los resultados de los exámenes de Cambridge fueron analizados por aptitudes, comparando los niveles de desempeño de los alumnos en cada examen progresivamente, desde Cambridge FCE hasta Cambridge CPE. La segunda parte del corpus de datos se corresponde con los trabajos escritos de los alumnos recogidos en cada etapa oficial de monitorización (ESO2, ESO4, Bach 1) y ha sido analizada en la segunda etapa de la investigación. El análisis de estos trabajos fue ejecutado siguiendo el método de Brown (1973) conocido como “obligatory occasion analysis”. Esta etapa se centró en revelar las áreas de la interlengua donde los alumnos tenían tendencia de aglomerar el mayor número de fallos e indicar cuales fueron los fallos más ocurrentes. Finalmente, para poder identificar las razones principales a que se deben la pérdida de ritmo y calidad del desarrollo de la interlengua se entregó a los estudiantes una encuesta realizada sobre 30 afirmaciones que trataban acerca de la motivación hacia el aprendizaje del inglés y la identidad del alumno en la que tuvieron que indicar si estaban de acuerdo o no con las afirmaciones. El diseño del cuestionario usado en la encuesta, asimismo como el análisis de los resultados de ésta han sido realizados desde la perspectiva de la matriz teórica denominada “Ideal L2 Self-Image” (Dörnyei, 2009), así como tomando en cuenta los conceptos de “international posture” o “postura internacional” (Yashima, 2002, 2009) y “linguistic investment principle” o “el principio de la inversión lingüística” (Pierce, 1995).

El análisis comparativo de los resultados de los exámenes de Cambridge ha demostrado cierta tendencia al ralentizamiento del ritmo en el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés por parte de los sujetos de la investigación. La tendencia a interiorizar más lentamente y con menos calidad los conceptos léxicos y gramaticales, se ha comprobado que se produce entre las etapas de Cambridge First Certificate y Cambridge Advanced, donde los alumnos

obtuvieron resultados bastante más bajos en las destrezas de gramática, vocabulario, comprensión escrita y expresión oral en el examen de CAE comparado con los resultados en las mismas destrezas en el examen de FCE. Por otro lado, es importante mencionar que el ritmo de tuición no había decrecido en el periodo entre 2° de ESO y 4° de ESO y que los alumnos estaban sometidos a la misma cantidad de horas semanales de la asignatura de inglés dentro de su horario lectivo. Las mismas destrezas sufrieron los efectos de estabilización también en la etapa entre Cambridge CAE y Cambridge CPE (de 4° de ESO a 1° de Bachillerato). El “obligatory occasion analysis” (Brown, 1995) de los trabajos escritos por los alumnos efectuado en la segunda etapa de la investigación ha demostrado que las áreas más afectadas por aglomeración de errores en todas las etapas de monitorización suelen ser la sintaxis (el orden de palabras en una oración), el vocabulario (colocaciones), así como los tiempos y formas verbales.

En cuanto a las razones del ralentizamiento del ritmo del desarrollo de la interlengua, la encuesta ha identificado una tendencia fuerte por parte de los alumnos a compartir una “postura internacional” (Yashima, 2002). En otras palabras, los alumnos aparentan percibir el idioma inglés como un código para la comunicación con el mundo extranjero, como una herramienta que ellos usarán para manejar los conceptos que no pertenecen a su cultura y etnicidad, asimismo como para comunicarse con no-españoles. Por otra parte, la encuesta ha confirmado que los adolescentes asocian el inglés con habilidades clave para su futuro éxito profesional y prestigio. De este modo, el reto de aprender inglés se compara con el “principio de la inversión lingüística” (Pierce, 1995) que los alumnos hacen en el periodo de su escolaridad. Otro dato reseñable es que los sujetos de la investigación exhiben un fuerte sentido de su identidad como españoles, donde la cultura e idioma español juegan el papel principal por delante de otras lenguas extranjeras que se proponen aprender. Por consiguiente, ninguno de los encuestados señala que su meta final fuera llegar a obtener un

nivel nativo en inglés, sino a tener la suficiencia necesaria para aprobar los exámenes de Cambridge a los cuales se enfrentan. Finalmente, la generalización de los datos obtenidos con la encuesta indica que la razón principal que impide a los alumnos avanzados progresar en su aprendizaje del inglés, sin variaciones en el ritmo, es la ausencia de la necesidad (según su percepción) de tener el nivel de conocimiento equivalente al nativo. Teniendo en cuenta que los motivos para aprender inglés pueden ser entendidos como puramente prácticos, la obtención de un certificado Cambridge que demuestra el manejo de inglés a nivel internacional cobra más sentido como una meta final de un alumno hoy en día. Hablando en términos simples, y tal como lo perciben los sujetos de la investigación, no hay necesidad práctica de igualarse a hablantes nativos y la “interlengua” en su etapa avanzada parece ser suficiente para el mundo de hoy.

En conclusión, los resultados de la investigación respaldan las hipótesis propuestas por la autora de la tesis en los comienzos de la investigación:

1. E

El estudio demuestra que el ritmo del aprendizaje del idioma inglés se ralentiza en ciertas áreas del lenguaje durante la etapa avanzada del desarrollo de la interlengua. A su vez, este fenómeno está motivado por la ausencia de motores afectivos en el caso de los alumnos analizados ya que el estudio demuestra que su percepción de la etapa final del aprendizaje coincide con la obtención del certificado del Cambridge Proficiency in English (la hipótesis 1);

2. L

Los resultados del estudio sugieren que los alumnos se encuentran satisfechos con el resultado de su aprendizaje y no perciben la necesidad de avanzar en sus estudios y perfeccionar lo aprendido. En consecuencia, los alumnos no pueden considerarse como

alumnos estancados en su aprendizaje, sino como aquellos que han triunfado alcanzando su objetivo inicial (la hipótesis 2);

3.

L

Los resultados de la encuesta demuestran que los alumnos no ven la suficiencia nativa como un reto obligatorio y se centran en alcanzar objetivos de carácter más práctico y definido, como, en su caso, lo es Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (la hipótesis 3).

Los resultados del estudio, a pesar de reflejar el proceso del desarrollo de la interlengua en un caso concreto de 22 alumnos españoles, pueden ser extrapolados a un mayor número de estudiantes de inglés en el mismo “contexto externo” del aprendizaje de segunda lengua según Siegel (2003). Asimismo, los resultados de la tesis pueden estar útiles para la práctica de la enseñanza del inglés como el idioma extranjero desde el punto de vista motivacional, ya que los resultados de la tesis revelan la importancia de definir los objetivos y la meta final para cada alumno en el momento en que empieza sus estudios. Además, el presente trabajo demuestra la importancia de cultivar el enfoque del alumno sobre su particular meta final durante el proceso del aprendizaje, en vez de meramente asumir que la última etapa del desarrollo de la interlengua es la misma para todos los alumnos y se iguala a la suficiencia nativa.

Para terminar, y con el objetivo de agilizar la lectura de la presente tesis, cabe detallar la estructura de la misma. El estudio se divide en siete capítulos y cuatro apéndices. El primer capítulo ofrece una extensa introducción que revela los propósitos del presente estudio y herramientas, tanto teóricas como prácticas, que la investigadora usó para alcanzar estos propósitos. Los capítulos segundo y tercero están dedicados a estudios teóricos anteriores relacionados con el enfoque de la presente tesis. El cuarto capítulo describe el contexto de la investigación y la naturaleza del establecimiento educativo implicado en el estudio y sus

normas y regulaciones relevantes para los propósitos de la presente investigación. El quinto capítulo ofrece la formulación detallada de los objetivos y las hipótesis del estudio, asimismo describe el método de la investigación, los participantes del estudio y el corpus de datos utilizados. El capítulo sexto presenta los resultados del análisis práctico de la tesis y la interpretación de los mismos, ofreciendo detalles relevantes según cada etapa de investigación. Finalmente, el séptimo capítulo se centra en la generalización de los resultados de la investigación, yuxtaponiéndoles a las hipótesis iniciales. Además, el capítulo menciona limitaciones del presente estudio, desvela varias propuestas para un posible futuro estudio en el mismo ámbito y detalla las implicaciones prácticas que los resultados de la presente tesis pueden tener hoy en día. En cuanto a los apéndices, el primero, segundo y tercero recopilan los ejemplos de trabajos escritos de los alumnos utilizados para la segunda etapa del análisis práctico de la investigación. El cuarto apéndice, a su vez, ofrece un ejemplo del cuestionario sobre la motivación, utilizado para la etapa final del estudio práctico.

SUMMARY OF THE THESIS IN ENGLISH

Foreign language acquisition has always been an extremely attractive sphere of research for linguists, educators and psychologists as it bridges many different disciplines by implicating a variety of aspects, such as human cognition, language and its relation to thought construction and to knowledge consolidation, motivation towards achieving new goals, one's self-perception or one's identity.

The originality of the present study and the gap it attempts to fill in the domain of EFL research is the multidisciplinary approach it adopts in order to take one more step towards the precise definition of the nature of ultimate attainment as far as EFL research is concerned. Namely, the study approaches the phenomenon of ultimate attainment from an eclectic perspective that draws on such fields of study as linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychology, second and foreign language acquisition theories, as well as EFL teaching methodology. What allows the study to obtain noteworthy results is a learner-centered perspective towards the definition of an end state of interlanguage development, where such factors as learner's personal ambitions in terms of English are given major attention, and not the general perception of near-nativeness as a final destination of a learning process.

Aims, Hypotheses and Research Questions of the Study

The present study looks into the development of interlanguage in the case of twenty-two Spanish secondary school students with the aim to identify a certain stage where they tend to experience the influence of stabilization. The author of the study claims that there is a noticeable halt in the pace of interlanguage development students experience on the advanced stage of their EFL studies. The purpose of the study, first of all, is to provide qualitative and quantitative proof for such a halt, as well as to identify the areas

of interlanguage, by skills, where the effects of this halt are more striking. Further, the author aims to examine the possible motives for such a halt to occur. It is the belief of the author that students' interlanguage development slows down considerably at the advanced stage of its development due to the motivational constraints induced by the social context¹ of the students. Thus, the nature of these motivational constraints is proposed to be identified and analyzed here.

The hypotheses of the study are closely related to its purpose and are formulated in the following way:

1. There is a certain decrease in the pace of learner language development at the advanced stages of learning practice as compared to the earlier stages and such a decrease is induced mainly by motivational factors.
2. The decrease in the pace of learner interlanguage development cannot be denominated as "stabilization" in the case of present study since students equalize the official C2 level of EFL to their "ultimate attainment" and thus, to their ultimate and achieved goal.
3. The perception of the ultimate attainment stage in EFL is not compared or equalized to native-like performance in the case of the Spanish secondary school EFL learners under study.

In order to provide the present research with narrower foci, the following research questions were formulated on the basis of the three hypotheses mentioned above:

1. Can we provide quantitative or qualitative evidence for the decrease in the pace of interlanguage development?

2. What areas of interlanguage tend to be affected by the decrease of pace and quality of development? Can we identify the reasons for these areas to be suffering such effects?
3. On which stage of interlanguage development does motivation towards the acquisition of EFL decrease and what are the main reasons of such phenomena?
4. What are the main motives to acquire EFL as seen by the subjects of the study?
5. What are the main factors that shape students' attitude toward EFL?
6. What role/roles do students assign to EFL in terms of their future self-image?
7. What are the main goals as defined by the students in terms of EFL acquisition?
8. Can a Feared L2 self-image become the principal motivation drive for the students who have already achieved a Cambridge Proficiency stage?

The Participants of the Study

The participants of the research observed during the period of four years represent a group of twenty-two students (11 males and 11 females) of the school in question. On the first stage of the practical investigation students belonged to the 2nd grade of secondary education (13 year old teenagers), on the second stage they were on their final stage of lower secondary education, which is the 4th grade (16 years old), and the final stage of observation coincided with the first stage of higher secondary education (17 years old students). However, it must be noted here that the number of subjects of the study has been increased from 22 students to 53 (23 males students and 28 female students in total) exclusively on the final stage of the formal analysis, which was dedicated to the motivational questionnaire. Such an influx of 31 new respondents was

necessary to make the data collected by the questionnaire more reliable as the new students involved in the study on this particular stage were of the same age and characteristics as the ones employed by the study on the outset. This measure has also permitted the author of the research to obtain a more general picture of students' motivational ground towards the acquisition of English on this particular stage of their interlanguage development and for this particular socio-linguistic setting.

The Methodology of the Study

The investigation comprises three formal stages. The first stage displays the Cambridge EFL exam results of the students at every stage of the observation (First Certificate, Advanced Certificate, Certificate of Proficiency in English) breaking the evidence of students' competence into the sections according to the linguistic skills, which are as follows: reading, writing, listening, speaking and Use of English (grammar +lexis). This section also presents the comparative study between the Cambridge EFL examinations sat by the subjects at three different stages of monitoring by offering a vision of longitudinal progression of students competence with the aim to trace the evidence of a certain halt in the pace of students' interlanguage development. To be more particular, the results of every paper of Cambridge examinations in question on all three stages of formal observation (FCE, CAE, and CPE) are assigned a certain percentage value and recorded in a database in order to trace any change in the pace of interlanguage development that might produce itself. Thus, five databases are created altogether to hold all the recollected data, which are as follows: Reading FCE, CAE, CPE; Writing FCE, CAE, CPE; Use of English FCE, CAE, CPE; Listening FCE, CAE, CPE and Speaking FCE, CAE, CPE. Finally, the data are represented in the form of bar diagrams to visualize the change of pace of learner language development per each skill area.

The second stage of the study aims at identifying the exact areas of interlanguage that seem to be affected by a certain halt. In order to achieve this goal, the author of the study performs both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The qualitative analysis uses a custom-tailored method to identify the error-concentration areas in students' in-class written works; meanwhile the quantitative analysis represents an adapted version of Brown's (1973) obligatory occasion analysis used to quantify the errors committed by students in every error-concentration area. That is, the in-class written works are collected at all three stages of formal observation (FCE- 13 year old students; CAE – 15 year old students, and CPE-16-17 year old students) and analysed from a two-fold perspective: the degree to which each writing complies with the task set by the teacher and the level of interlanguage development students are expected to have at each stage of observation, as defined by Cambridge organization and European Framework for Learning Languages (i.e. FCE – Level B2; CAE – level C1, and CPE- level C2). The analysis of written works concentrated on the following error-stricken areas: word order, word choice and collocations, as well as tenses and verb choices. Further, the next step taken by the author is aimed at quantifying the error occasions on every stage of formal observation (FCE, CAE, CPE) and comparing the obtained data in order to exhibit a certain progression of error-occasions from a longitudinal perspective. For this purpose, Brown's (1973) obligatory occasion analysis is used by the present research in its customized version. Finally, this stage of analysis is concluded by offering visual graphs that represent the development of each type of an error (or token) analysed in its longitudinal progression from the first stage of analysis to the last one (from the Cambridge FCE to the Cambridge CPE).

The third stage of the study attempts to reveal the reasons for the halt of the learning pace in terms of the subjects of the study and their motivational constraints. This goal is

pursued by designing a questionnaire that focuses on a variety of possible motivational engines, followed by a debate among the respondents provoked by the outcome of the questionnaire. On this stage, the research operates one of the latest frameworks on EFL motivation put forward by Dörnyei (2009) for analyzing motivational constraints of learners with an “international posture”(Yashima, 2009), which deals with learner’s personal perception of themselves and practical motives for foreign language acquisition. The main aim of the questionnaire and the debate is to find evidence for the assumption that a virtual halt of learning pace students might experience could be rooted in their motivational disposition towards the EFL acquisition. The questionnaire also aims at identifying the reasons for acquiring EFL that students might entertain, as well as attempts to define the uses and functions the subjects of the study preconceive for their English when, according to them, it is fully acquired. As to the design of the questionnaire, it comprises thirty-five statements that the subjects of the study are supposed to agree or disagree with. The statements of the questionnaire dwell on the possible images that respondents might have of themselves as presupposed by the author of the research taking in consideration their age, milieu and the current educational and labour situation in Spain, which can be generally placed between the three following axes: integrative motivation; the concept of European citizen identity and personal future self- image as EFL users. The results obtained by the questionnaire are analysed by revealing the most prominent motivational engines the respondents appear to manifest and their connection to three main axes mentioned above in order to state which aspects of European identity, desire to integrate into the target community be it British or American, or/and personal future self conceptualization appear to influence students motivation towards the acquisition of English, as well as shape their perception of ultimate attainment.

The Structure of the Study

The dissertation comprises seven main chapters, as well as four appendices. The present introduction is followed by Chapter Two, dedicated to the theoretical considerations concerning foreign language acquisition process. Chapter Three deals with theoretical developments in terms of social constraints in the field of foreign language acquisition by shedding the light on such concepts as social context of a learner and English as a global language. Chapter Four of the study offers a detailed description of the context, to which the students under analysis are subjected. The author gives information about the organization of the educational establishment under analysis, the curriculum of the students and the place English occupies in it, as well as she provides a detailed description of the all the stakeholders involved in the process of students' academic development in general, and English language acquisition in particular. Finally, a description of such Cambridge Examinations as First Certificate, Certificate in Advanced English and Certificate of Proficiency in English used as tool for the practical analysis in the study can be found in this chapter. Chapter Five of the present dissertation offers a clear statement of the objectives of the study, its hypotheses, as well as the research questions. It also gives a detailed description of the method followed by the practical analysis of the study stage by stage, specifying its theoretical underpinnings. Finally, the chapter offers a detailed description of the data used in the research and the participants of the study. Chapter Six exposes the results of the empirical research and the discussion of these results. Chapter Seven of the study provides general conclusion of the research, juxtaposing the initial hypotheses and research questions conceived by the author on the outset with the results of the investigation. The study offers an extensive list of bibliography with all the sources used for the development of the study organized in an alphabetical order. The present

dissertation offers four appendices. Appendices One to Three consist of the written works of the students on different stages of their interlanguage development, from the FCE stage to the CPE stage respectively. Finally, Appendix Four provides an example of the questionnaire on motivation administered to the students on the final stage of the empirical research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Scope and Purpose of the Study

Foreign language acquisition has always been an extremely attractive sphere of research for linguists, educators and psychologists as it bridges many different disciplines by implicating a variety of aspects, such as human cognition, language and its relation to thought construction and to knowledge consolidation, motivation towards achieving new goals, one's self-perception or one's identity. It has been generally accepted by researchers in the field of Foreign Language Acquisition (hereinafter FLA) (Selinker, 1972; Beck, 1998; White, 2003) that each learner creates their own "version" of the foreign language they are acquiring. Such a language is commonly known as "learner language" or "interlanguage" (Selinker, 1972) – the language in the making, a transitional stage on the way to the "final acquisition". It has been assumed long enough that the stage of "final acquisition", which is conceived as a final goal, or ultimate attainment for every foreign language learner should be close to a native-like performance. Though some scholars acknowledge that ultimate attainment is not necessarily defined by near-nativeness (Han, 2004; Birdsong, 2005), the idea of desirable proximity of interlanguage to the native command is rather prominent. To illustrate, the following is the definition that David Birdsong gives to the term "ultimate attainment":

"In second language acquisition (L2A) research, ultimate attainment refers to the outcome or end point of acquisition, and is used interchangeably with terms final state, end state and asymptote. "Ultimate" is not to be thought of as synonymous with "native-like" **although, native-likeness is one of the observed outcomes of L2A.**" (Emphasis added) (Birdsong, 2005: 18)

In addition, most of the methodology, including second language acquisition courses and textbooks nowadays are designed by native users of a language and are focused on the norms of native command of a language, thus, shaping the current of interlanguage

development towards native-like performance¹. Consequently, the level of success each learner would exhibit has customary been identified by comparing it to the standard native-like performance. To illustrate the common character of such an assumption, such internationally accepted form of interlanguage assessment as Cambridge examinations, which happen to dictate the character and direction of numerous EFL courses worldwide can be brought to light. In particular, the highest possible level of interlanguage development contemplated by these examinations is the one to be certified with the Cambridge Proficiency in English diploma and the description of this level given by the Cambridge organization is as follows:

“It [the CPE certificate] shows you can communicate with fluency and sophistication **like a native speaker**.”²

However, such description of ultimate attainment is not supported by the official Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, where the highest level of interlanguage development denominated as C2 (the same denomination adopted by the Cambridge CPE certificate) is emphasized not to imply native-like performance or near-nativeness. The following is the excerpt from the official description of interlanguage levels conceived by the European Framework for Learning Languages:

“It cannot be overemphasised that Level C2 is not intended to imply native speaker competence or even near native speaker competence.”³

Such apparent inconsistency of definitions attributed to the end-state of interlanguage can be observed not only in the EFL teaching market, but also in the academic domain of EFL acquisition theories. For instance, scholars such as Beck (1998) or White (2003)

¹ Despite the existing ELF theories and developing methodology, the majority of EFL courses on the market nowadays are still designed towards native-like performance.

² Clarification and emphasis added. Retrieved from <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/21952-cpe-proficiency-leaflet.pdf> on 26th of January, 2014)

³ (Retrieved from Council of Europe, “Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). A Manual”, <http://www.coe.int> on 26 of January, 2014)

suggest that “interlanguage” as such can never be compared to “human language” or, in other words, native language competence as it will never develop to the stage when it is equal to the state owned by native-speakers. In the same vein, a certain phenomenon of “interlanguage fossilization” or “stabilization” (Selinker, 1972; Han, 2001; 2004) has been identified by scholars in the process of constant comparison of the developing learner language and the native-like performance. It has been claimed, thus, that interlanguage tends to stop developing at an advanced stage and a learner encounters a “personal plateau” (Flynn and O’Neil, 1988). However, if the focus in terms of the trajectory of learner language development is shifted from native-like performance to a maximum possible level of proficiency to be attained by every learner individually, there would be a possibility not to regard ultimate attainment as necessarily native-like performance, but as an individually defined, “fossilized” or “stabilized” form of interlanguage on its advanced stage of development.

Revolutionary as it may seem, this idea has attracted attention of the author of the present study and has become one of the foci of the research, especially as it is dedicated to the acquisition of English as a foreign language. Bearing in mind the fact that English is an international code of communication, as well as considering the emphasis given to the importance to dominate English as an effect of globalization, the level of proficiency that each EFL learner aims to achieve nowadays could rather be defined by motivational factors than by such an abstract concept as native-like performance. Such motivational factors could be, for instance, the ability of a potential learner to use English for professional or personal needs dictated by his immediate reality. That is, EFL acquisition could be seen nowadays as an undertaking characterized by highly individual factors and as a process defined by personal goals of each learner induced by their reality. The novelty of this proposition resides in the

nature of the personal goals that modern reality shapes for a potential learner, which seem to adhere a highly practical character and not necessarily be synonymous with near-nativeness, nor with the desire to integrate into a target language community. Consequently, in order to reveal the factors that constrain interlanguage development, as well as in order to describe the end state conceived by a modern learner one has to analyze such personality-bound factors as the identity of a learner, the milieu, the perception a learner might have of himself and the learner's emotional world among others.

The originality of the present study and the gap it attempts to fill in the domain of EFL research is the multidisciplinary approach it adopts in order to take one more step towards the precise definition of the nature of ultimate attainment as far as EFL research is concerned. Namely, the study approaches the phenomenon of ultimate attainment from an eclectic perspective that draws on such fields of study as linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychology, second and foreign language acquisition theories, as well as EFL teaching methodology. What allows the study to obtain noteworthy results is a learner-centered perspective towards the definition of an end state of interlanguage development, where such factors as learner's personal ambitions in terms of English are given major attention, and not the general perception of near-nativeness as a final destination of a learning process. Moreover, the study also challenges such concepts as "fossilization" or "stabilization" (Selinker, 1972; Han, 2001) in the process of learner language development as these concepts seem to have been conceived with an idea of ultimate attainment being equalized to near-nativeness. In other words, presuming that the end state is not compared to native-like performance, a form of interlanguage on its "stabilized" phase might as well be the end state itself, especially if it is viewed as such by a learner himself. Finally, such train of thought might as well lead the present

research into assuming that the nature of ultimate attainment is plural and not singular (i.e. each learner defines his own point within a continuum of interlanguage development as a final goal), as each learner might entertain a different vision of himself as a user of English due to the different individual factors that shape and direct his interest to acquire the language in the first place.

The present study looks into the development of interlanguage in the case of twenty-two Spanish secondary school students with the aim to identify a certain stage where they tend to experience the influence of stabilization. The author of the study claims that there is a noticeable halt in the pace of interlanguage development students experience on the advanced stage of their EFL studies. The purpose of the study, first of all, is to provide qualitative and quantitative proof for such a halt, as well as to identify the areas of interlanguage, by skills, where the effects of this halt are more striking. Further, the author aims to examine the possible motives for such a halt to occur. It is the belief of the author that students' interlanguage development slows down considerably at the advanced stage of its development due to the motivational constraints induced by the social context⁴ of the students. Thus, the nature of these motivational constraints is proposed to be identified and analyzed here.

1.2. Theoretical Perspectives that Inspired the Study

The present study concerns itself with the phenomenon of learner language, which, by definition, foregrounds a potential learner as a central object of investigation since he can be viewed as the “owner” and the author of his own L2 in making. Another key term used in the present study to refer to learner language is “interlanguage” put forward by Selinker (1972) to describe a linguistic system in making that finds itself on

⁴ A set of social trends and values that influence a learner as a result of his immediate reality, as well as learner's self-perception as an individual within his immediate reality. (Siegel, 2003)

the trajectory of development towards the state of its ultimate attainment, which often bears the character of “near-nativeness”. Despite the fact that the term “interlanguage” is operated by the present study as often as the term “learner language”, it is also questioned by the hypotheses of the present research since the author aims to prove that ultimate attainment, or the final state of learner language development, cannot be characterized by near-nativeness as perceived by learners themselves.

Thus, bearing in mind that the present study regards the nature of a learner as a point of departure, the research adopts a highly multidisciplinary character in order to assess the factors that might shape the process of learner language development, be they of cognitive, biological, psychological or psycholinguistic character.

First of all, the study provides an overview of second language acquisition theories from Behaviorists towards the latest theories with a clear aim to show the gradual change of focus from the nature of an L2 being acquired to the nature of a learner that shapes the acquisition process. This approach mirrors the same pattern or focus shift followed by the present research itself, which moves from the careful analysis of interlanguage production towards the nature of learners’ motivational ground towards EFL acquisition. Then, the author of the study looks into the ways to define and characterize interlanguage adopted in the previous research only to learn that interlanguage might have no opportunity to be fully classed as any human language due to its innate deficiency that prevent it to be fully developed in all the aspects (Beck, 1998; White, 2003). One of the reasons for such assumption could be the fact that L1 happens to exercise an important influence on the process of learner language development by such processes as L1 interference (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1996; Han, 2004; Bialystock, 1994), L1 transfer (Zobl, 1980; Andersen, 1983, Kellerman, 1995a),

or “preprogramming” (Slobin, 1996) proved by the present research to be still active on the advanced stages of acquisition.

In an attempt to find theoretical underpinning for interlanguage innate incompleteness, as well as aiming to witness such “defective” state of interlanguage manifest itself at a certain point, the study turns to such domain as maturation. It has been widely accepted by scholars in the field that a learner disposes of a certain sensitive period when the learning of a language is effortless and natural and after which it is largely hampered by neurobiological factors. Lenneberg’s (1967) Critical Period Hypothesis (hereinafter CPH) defines such a period as being a stretch of time in an early childhood up to the beginning of adolescence (ages 2 to 13). As quoted in Han (2004: 45), Lenneberg claims:

Most individuals of average intelligence are able to learn a second language after the beginning of their second decade, although the incidence of “language-learning-blocks” rapidly increases after puberty. Also automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear after this age, and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a laboured effort. Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty. However, a person can learn to communicate in a foreign language at the age of forty (Lenneberg, 1967:176).

Although the age parameters of the subjects of the study exclude them from the direct focus of Critical Period Hypothesis, as the formal observation of the students under study starts at the age of 13, the dynamics of their learner language development cannot be subjected to the effects of CPH for two main reasons. First of all, the gradual loss of the pace of interlanguage development in certain linguistic domains is only observed on the advanced stages (15 and 16-17 year old students) as compared to the intermediate stage (13 year old students). Finally, the subjects of the present study are proved to surface certain basic grammatical and lexical mistakes that were meant to be acquired on the initial stages of their exposure to EFL, which, indeed, took place during the

frame of CPH. This, in turn, shows that certain incompleteness in the process of acquisition can take place despite the learner being within the positive influence of CPH.

In the attempt to identify the reasons for learner language to be considered as innately incomplete or to encounter examples of such incompleteness in the previous research, the investigation concerns itself with the concept of fossilization (Selinker, 1972) or stabilization, which are the concepts operated mainly in terms of adult second language acquisition and could be extrapolated to the subjects of the study since they do reach the age of 16-17 on the last stage of data collection. Selinker defines the phenomena in the following way:

“Fossilization is the process whereby the learner creates a cessation of interlanguage learning, thus stopping the interlanguage from developing, it is hypothesized, in a permanent way...The argument is that no adult can hope to ever speak a second language in such a way that s/he is indistinguishable from native speakers of that language.”(Selinker, 1996b, as cited in Han, 2004:15).

Two major observations should be made here about the definition presented above. First of all, Selinker appears to acknowledge that it is a learner himself who creates the cessation of interlanguage development, placing the learner in the centre of the dynamics. Moreover, by suggesting that learner language can never be indistinguishable from the native speakers' command, which complies with earlier mentioned assumption that interlanguage is innately imperfect and can never be compared to human language. However, Selinker (1972) seems to put the concept of fossilization forward both as the reason for the inability of interlanguage to attain native-like form and as a product resulting from such inability. This observation was first made by Long (2003), who criticised the term of fossilization for being “explanandum” and “explanans” at the same time. What is vital about this observation is that Selinker's (1972) theory does not

appear to infer on any reasons for fossilization to instate itself. With the passing of the time, the concept of fossilization has been developed further to be claimed to have a *modular* nature, where not all the spheres of interlanguage cease their development and not all of them experience cessation on the same stage of development (Long, 2003; Han, 2004). A more flexible version of fossilization is named “stabilization” (Han, 2001), which presupposes that a once ceased to develop interlanguage can still continue its development if the necessary motivation for doing so arises. The term stabilization, being linked to such domain of FLA as motivation, is the one being operated by the present study to refer to the noticeable reduction of pace of learner language development in terms of the subjects of the study.

Once the innate incompleteness of interlanguage and the inevitable character of stabilization seem to be confirmed by the previous research, the present study concerns itself with the exact stage of interlanguage development where a learner seems to produce cessation of his own acquisition process and the reasons for such an undertaking. It is important to note here that the previous research seem to focus on the nature of interlanguage as its primary object of investigation and does not appear to provide a clear definition of an ultimate attainment as to its characteristics or temporalization within the process of learner language development. Thus, and bearing in mind Selinker’s supposition of a learner being the impeller of cessation of interlanguage development, the present study shifts its focus from the nature of interlanguage to the nature of a learner. Once a learner becomes the focal point of investigation, such factors as social context, linguistic identity and motivational constraints come into play. In an attempt to identify the end state of interlanguage development as viewed from the perspective of a learner, it is vital to identify the factors that shape learner’s motivation towards the acquisition of EFL in the first place

and the functional uses he aims to assign to it once, in his personal opinion, his learning process is finalized. Here the author of the research attempts to define such key aspects as social context (Siegel, 2003) of the learners under her study and their “sociocultural milieu” (Gardner, 1983; 1985; 1988). Another factor not be overlooked here is the nature of the target language itself, as English bears an international character and is often defined as lingua franca, which assigns a major practical importance to EFL acquisition nowadays. In order to assess the degree to which all these factors shape learners motivational ground in terms of the process of acquisition of EFL and his perception of the ultimate attainment as a final goal of this process, a newest framework in motivational theory is employed by the present research. Stemming from the field of phycology (Markus and Nuriious’ “Future Self-concept”, 1986), Dörnyei’s motivational L2 Self System framework manages to embrace such vital factors for learner’s nature analysis as social constraints, personal linguistic identity constraints, practical motivational goals and learner’s personal future image of himself inspired on his personal hopes and dreams. The author of the study employs such concepts as Ideal L2 Self-image, the Ought-to L2 self-image (Dörnyei, 2009) and the Feared L2 Self-image (Markus and Nurius, 1986), as well as she bears in mind the “External L2” social setting (Siegel, 2003) the subjects find themselves in and the importance to master English as an international language emphasized by European linguistic policies and current labour market in order to infer on students’ perception of their ultimate attainment in terms of EFL acquisition.

1.3. Participants of the Study

The participants of the research observed during the period of four years represent a group of twenty-two students (11 males and 11 females) of the school in question. On the first stage of the practical investigation students belonged to the 2nd grade of

secondary education (13 year old teenagers), on the second stage they were on their final stage of lower secondary education, which is the 4th grade (16 years old), and the final stage of observation coincided with the first stage of higher secondary education (17 years old students). However, it must be noted here that the number of subjects of the study has been increased from 22 students to 53 (23 males students and 28 female students in total) exclusively on the final stage of the formal analysis, which was dedicated to the motivational questionnaire. Such an influx of 31 new respondents was necessary to make the data collected by the questionnaire more reliable as the new students involved in the study on this particular stage were of the same age and characteristics as the ones employed by the study on the outset. This measure has also permitted the author of the research to obtain a more general picture of students' motivational ground towards the acquisition of English on this particular stage of their interlanguage development and for this particular socio-linguistic setting.

The general group of participants of the study had been selected for the research according to the unified criteria, which were as follows:

1. Subjects of the study must belong to the "standard majority" of the school in order to increase the transferability (generalizability) of research results. Thus, the selected students were the ones who have been recommended by the school to sit Cambridge FCE exam in June 2009 and those who passed it;
2. Students selected as subject of the study had to be under EFL instruction of the author of the study at least for two academic years.

Another important characteristic is the uniform character of subjects' linguistic life experience as they share the same L1 (Spanish), the same first L2 (English) and the same amount of exposure to L2 throughout their lives (13 years) as they all experienced

their first contact with EFL at the age of 3 as a part of their formal primary education in the school under investigation. This, without doubt, increases the generalizability of the results of the study from a sociolinguistic point of view since the social setting of the subjects as L2 learners can be denominated as “external L2”, which happens to be a majoritarian L2 learning setting as far as English is concerned nowadays, according to Siegel (2003). In addition, such a lengthy period of exposure to EFL, both formal and informal, allows the author of the study to operate such theoretical developments as Lenneberg’s (1967) Critical Period Hypothesis or theories on fossilization and stabilization, which happen to be some of the major foci of the research. Finally, the fact that all participants of the study share the same mother tongue can be regarded as a safe point of departure for any assumptions on L1 influence upon the English interlanguage development, in case such are happen to be made further in the study.

1.4. Hypotheses and Methodology of the Study

The hypotheses of the study are closely related to its purpose and are formulated in the following way:

1. There is a certain decrease in the pace of learner language development at the advanced stages of learning practice as compared to the earlier stages and such a decrease is induced mainly by motivational factors.
2. The decrease in the pace of learner interlanguage development cannot be denominated as “stabilization” in the case of present study since students equalize the official C2 level of EFL to their “ultimate attainment” and thus, to their ultimate and achieved goal.

3. The perception of the ultimate attainment stage in EFL is not compared or equalized to native-like performance in the case of the Spanish secondary school EFL learners under study.

In order to provide the present research with narrower foci, the following research questions were formulated on the basis of the three hypotheses mentioned above:

1. Can we provide quantitative or qualitative evidence for the decrease in the pace of interlanguage development?
2. What areas of interlanguage tend to be affected by the decrease of pace and quality of development? Can we identify the reasons for these areas to be suffering such effects?
3. On which stage of interlanguage development does motivation towards the acquisition of EFL decrease and what are the main reasons of such phenomena?
4. What are the main motives to acquire EFL as seen by the subjects of the study?
5. What are the main factors that shape students' attitude toward EFL?
6. What role/roles do students assign to EFL in terms of their future self-image?
7. What are the main goals as defined by the students in terms of EFL acquisition?
8. Can a Feared L2 self-image become the principal motivation drive for the students who have already achieved a Cambridge Proficiency stage?

In attempt to prove the hypotheses exposed above and to answer the research questions, the study has been conceived to bear a longitudinal character, which has generally been suggested by many researchers in the area of interlanguage development (e.g. Patkowski, 1980; Han, 2001; 2004; Selinker, 1975; Long, 2003). Thus, the author

observes the development of interlanguage of twenty-two Spanish secondary school students during the period of four academic years (i.e. ages 13-17). Another prerequisite acknowledged by the researchers (e.g. Patkowski, 1980; Han, 2001; 2004; Long, 2003) as a necessary one in terms of studies on stabilization is the fact that learners under analysis have an advanced or near-native level of EFL officially certified by Cambridge Examinations, as opposed to a subjective evaluation of the students' level provided by the researcher herself, as it has been customary practiced in this type of studies. Another strength of the study could be the fact that the sociolinguistic "external L2 setting", as defined by Siegel (2003) is considered to be the most common among EFL learners around the globe, which makes the results of the study generalizable internationally, where the social context of learners is similar.

The investigation comprises three formal stages. The first stage displays the Cambridge EFL exam results of the students at every stage of the observation (First Certificate, Advanced Certificate, Certificate of Proficiency in English) breaking the evidence of students' competence into the sections according to the linguistic skills, which are as follows: reading, writing, listening, speaking and Use of English (grammar +lexis). This section also presents the comparative study between the Cambridge EFL examinations sat by the subjects at three different stages of monitoring by offering a vision of longitudinal progression of students competence with the aim to trace the evidence of a certain halt in the pace of students' interlanguage development. To be more particular, the results of every paper of Cambridge examinations in question on all three stages of formal observation (FCE, CAE, and CPE) are assigned a certain percentage value and recorded in a database in order to trace any change in the pace of interlanguage development that might produce itself. Thus, five databases are created altogether to hold all the recollected data, which are as follows: Reading FCE, CAE, CPE; Writing

FCE, CAE, CPE; Use of English FCE, CAE, CPE; Listening FCE, CAE, CPE and Speaking FCE, CAE, CPE. Finally, the data are represented in the form of bar diagrams to visualize the change of pace of learner language development per each skill area.

The second stage of the study aims at identifying the exact areas of interlanguage that seem to be affected by a certain halt. In order to achieve this goal, the author of the study performs both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The qualitative analysis uses a custom-tailored method to identify the error-concentration areas in students' in-class written works; meanwhile the quantitative analysis represents an adapted version of Brown's (1973) obligatory occasion analysis used to quantify the errors committed by students in every error-concentration area. That is, the in-class written works are collected at all three stages of formal observation (FCE- 13 year old students; CAE – 15 year old students, and CPE-16-17 year old students) and analysed from a two-fold perspective: the degree to which each writing complies with the task set by the teacher and the level of interlanguage development students are expected to have at each stage of observation, as defined by Cambridge organization and European Framework for Learning Languages (i.e. FCE – Level B2; CAE – level C1, and CPE- level C2). The analysis of written works concentrated on the following error-stricken areas: word order, word choice and collocations, as well as tenses and verb choices. Further, the next step taken by the author is aimed at quantifying the error occasions on every stage of formal observation (FCE, CAE, CPE) and comparing the obtained data in order to exhibit a certain progression of error-occasions from a longitudinal perspective. For this purpose, Brown's (1973) obligatory occasion analysis is used by the present research in its customized version. Finally, this stage of analysis is concluded by offering visual graphs that represent the development of each type of an error (or token) analysed in its

longitudinal progression from the first stage of analysis to the last one (from the Cambridge FCE to the Cambridge CPE).

The third stage of the study attempts to reveal the reasons for the halt of the learning pace in terms of the subjects of the study and their motivational constraints. This goal is pursued by designing a questionnaire that focuses on a variety of possible motivational engines, followed by a debate among the respondents provoked by the outcome of the questionnaire. On this stage, the research operates one of the latest frameworks on EFL motivation put forward by Dörnyei (2009) for analyzing motivational constraints of learners with an “international posture”(Yashima, 2009), which deals with learner’s personal perception of themselves and practical motives for foreign language acquisition. The main aim of the questionnaire and the debate is to find evidence for the assumption that a virtual halt of learning pace students might experience could be rooted in their motivational disposition towards the EFL acquisition. The questionnaire also aims at identifying the reasons for acquiring EFL that students might entertain, as well as attempts to define the uses and functions the subjects of the study preconceive for their English when, according to them, it is fully acquired. As to the design of the questionnaire, it comprises thirty-five statements that the subjects of the study are supposed to agree or disagree with. The statements of the questionnaire dwell on the possible images that respondents might have of themselves as presupposed by the author of the research taking in consideration their age, milieu and the current educational and labour situation in Spain, which can be generally placed between the three following axes: integrative motivation; the concept of European citizen identity and personal future self- image as EFL users. The results obtained by the questionnaire are analysed by revealing the most prominent motivational engines the respondents appear to manifest and their connection to three main axes mentioned above in order to

state which aspects of European identity, desire to integrate into the target community be it British or American, or/and personal future self conceptualization appear to influence students motivation towards the acquisition of English, as well as shape their perception of ultimate attainment.

1.5. Overview of the Thesis

The dissertation comprises seven main chapters, as well as four appendices. The present introduction is followed by Chapter Two, dedicated to the theoretical considerations concerning foreign language acquisition process. First of all, the chapter gives a concise historical overview of theories on language acquisition, followed by the analysis of the most prominent theories on the role of L1 in the process of interlanguage development. Since one of the foci of the present study are the concepts of fossilization and stabilization, the author draws her attention to such theoretical concepts as maturational constraints, their role in foreign language acquisition in general, and Lenneberg's (1967) Critical Period Hypothesis in particular. Needless to say, there is an extensive reference to Selinker's (1972) fossilization and stabilization theories in this chapter, as well as Han's (2004) numerous attempts to revisit this concept.

Chapter Three deals with theoretical developments in terms of social constraints in the field of foreign language acquisition by shedding the light on such concepts as social context of a learner and English as a global language. Further, since the author of the study is interested in the motivational forces that may constrain learner language development, this chapter offers the overview of the most prominent and recent developments in the area of EFL and motivation. Apart from offering a detailed description of Dörnyei's (2009) Ideal L2 motivational self system as a tool to be used later in the study for the practical analysis of students' motivation, the author draws on

some other developments in the field of psychology that are later used to define possible educational implications for the findings.

Chapter Four of the study offers a detailed description of the context, to which the students under analysis are subjected. The author gives information about the organization of the educational establishment under analysis, the curriculum of the students and the place English occupies in it, as well as she provides a detailed description of the all the stakeholders involved in the process of students' academic development in general, and English language acquisition in particular. Finally, a description of such Cambridge Examinations as First Certificate, Certificate in Advanced English and Certificate of Proficiency in English used as tool for the practical analysis in the study can be found in this chapter.

Chapter Five of the present dissertation offers a clear statement of the objectives of the study, its hypotheses, as well as the research questions. It also gives a detailed description of the method followed by the practical analysis of the study stage by stage, specifying its theoretical underpinnings. Finally, the chapter offers a detailed description of the data used in the research and the participants of the study.

Chapter Six exposes the results of the empirical research and the discussion of these results. This chapter consists of three main stages. On the first stage of practical analysis the author offers the results of every Cambridge examination taken by the subjects of the study, which have been compared longitudinally according to the basic skills. On the stage two of the study Brown's (1993) Obligatory occasion analysis is applied to students' written works and the results of this analysis are compared longitudinally in order to provide quantitative illustration of the halt in the pace of intrelanguage development students are claimed to experience. The third stage of the empirical

research deals with the possible reasons for such a halt to produce itself and motivational constraints are analyzed here by means of a questionnaire administered to the students and followed by a debate. Finally, this chapter consolidates all the results of the empirical research with the purpose to create an entire picture of the situation in which students under study find themselves in terms of their interlanguage development. Both qualitative and quantitative data are juxtaposed and analyzed in order to offer a full image of a modern EFL learner with a clear emphasis on the apparent state of one's acquisition capacities, and, more importantly, the motivational and the emotional factors that shape the perception of oneself as a learner in Spanish EFL context nowadays.

Chapter Seven of the study provides general conclusion of the research, juxtaposing the initial hypotheses and research questions conceived by the author on the outset with the results of the investigation. Furthermore, this chapter also provides possible educational implications of the results, as well as deals with the limitations of the study and possible directions for future research.

The study offers an extensive list of bibliography with all the sources used for the development of the study organized in an alphabetical order.

The present dissertation offers four appendices. Appendices One to Three consist of the written works of the students on different stages of their interlanguage development, from the FCE stage to the CPE stage respectively. Finally, Appendix Four provides an example of the questionnaire on motivation administered to the students on the final stage of the empirical research.

1.6. Summary and Final Remarks

The aim of this introductory chapter is to provide a reader with a succinct version of the dissertation, as well as to give a clear picture of the main concern of the present research and its multidisciplinary nature. The chapter is initiated by the description of the scope of the research, its purpose and the identification of the gap the present study attempts to fill into. Further, the overview of the previous theoretical developments that have inspired the study and shaped its course are presented. Then, the author of the research offers a description of the participants of the study, which is followed by the clear statement of the hypotheses, research questions and methodology of the research. Finally, the structure of the research is described chapter by chapter with the aim to aid further navigation through the study and the final remarks of the author are offered.

It is very much hoped that the present investigation will become a discrete contribution into the field of EFL by offering a fresh outlook on the factors that enact interlanguage shaping and, more importantly, the ones that characterize the nature of a learner's motivational system. On the personal note, the author of the study is a multilingual teacher of English as a foreign language with an "academic self" deeply associated to English and "emotional self" tied to Spanish and Russian. It is her hope, therefore, that concepts such as the function and nature of interlanguage, as well as the definition of ultimate attainment are revisited from the point of view of each individual learner and his motivational setting.

2. FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1. LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORIES

2.1.1. Introduction

It would be rather logical to assume that any study on second/foreign language acquisition should give a brief insight into the historical development of this field of study in order to clarify the basic concepts to be referred to in the course of this research. The basic concepts this theoretical overview deals with are as follows: SLA vs. FLA, the first contemplations on second language acquisition and the role of Lado's (1957) "Contrastive Analysis" in language teaching; the introduction of such milestone concepts in linguistics as the "Language Acquisition Device" (LAD) and the concept of "Universal Grammar"(UG) attributed to Chomsky (1963), as well as his distinction between linguistic "competence" and "performance". Furthermore, the chapter follows the development of empirical thought in terms of language acquisition and sheds the light on the two major hypotheses that stemmed out of Chomsky's ideas and finalized the generally-accepted modern view of basic components in a language acquisition process, which are Krashen's "Input Hypothesis" and Swan's "Output Hypothesis". Such important posterior theories in language acquisition as Schmidt's (1990) and Gass'(1997) "Social Interaction" and "Negotiation of Meaning" concepts, as well as "Interaction Hypothesis" (Long, 1996) are also given due attention in this section. The chapter is finalized with the theoretical developments of so-called "cognitivists", among which are DeKeyser's (2003) cognitive language learning stages, Schmidt's (1990) "Noticing Hypothesis", McLaughlin's (1990) "Restructuring" process, as well as the importance of "skill-related practice" suggested by DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996) and the role of "corrective feedback" in language acquisition, first put forward by Johnson (1998, 1996).

2.1.2. Basic Distinctions between SLA and FLA

The two traditionally formed and defined routes of language acquisition since 19th century have been denominated as Foreign Language Acquisition and Second Language Acquisition. Though the two terms are often used interchangeably in the field of language acquisition theory, there is a rather slight difference between them to be specified here. First of all, Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) has always been conceived as a model where the language to be learned is always somebody else's mother tongue and the emphasis is on learning the target language in the combination with the target culture in order to integrate within the target community (Graddol, 2006). According to Graddol (2006), the interest that drives a potential learner to indulge into FLA process has to do with the prestige and status that such a knowledge would help one to attain and the final goal is always to emulate target society behavior.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) model, on the contrary, attempts to assume and emphasize the role of English language in the society where it is taught instead of putting so much stressing the importance of the target community and culture (Graddol, 2006). It is often assumed that English in such countries is used at least in some spheres of everyday life in line with a local language (e.g. Kenya and some other African countries where education is done through English or Samoa, where English is an official administrative language) and the population of such countries is essentially bilingual (Siegel, 2003).

Taking in consideration the historical distinction between the two methods, the present study is focused more on FLA rather than on SLA, as it deals with English as a subject in Spanish secondary and high school context. However, it is important to note here that modern theory on language acquisition does not always provide a clear differentiation

between the two terms as soon as biological, cognitive and social constraints of language acquisition are dealt with.

2.1.3. The Structuralist-Behaviourist Period

The officially denominated research in FLA begun in 1970s, when a variety of influential theories on language acquisition have been developed. However, the research in second language acquisition has based itself on some prior research in L2 learning, which, despite focusing more on L1 development and bilingualism than on the processes involved in second language acquisition, still forms a solid linguistic basis for posterior FLA theories. This chapter is dedicated to the first and rather influential period in FLA research, denominated as Structuralist-Behaviourist period.

According to Cook (1993), the roots of Structuralist-Behaviourist theories lie in Weinreich's (1953) research on bilingualism, where he attempts to classify various forms of coexistence between two linguistic systems and describe the processes of interference between them (Cook, 1993). The results of his research allowed him to define three different types of bilingualism, which are the following: "coordinative bilingualism", where the two linguistic systems of a bilingual speaker are believed to exist in a parallel mode, without any connection between the cognitive conceptualizations of reality; "compound bilingualism", where one cognitive conceptualization of reality makes use of two linguistic codes; and finally, "subordinative bilingualism", where one linguistic system is activated through another. The following diagram, adopted from Cook (1993) shows the main difference between the three types of bilingualism defined by Weinreich.

Diagram 1

A) Coordinated bilingualism

Language 1	Language 2
Separate Coexistence	

B) Compound Bilingualism

Linguistic System 1	Linguistic System 2
One cognitive concept	

C) Subordinative Bilingualism

Linguistic/Cognitive System 1
Linguistic/Cognitive System 2

(Adapted from Cook, 1993: 9)

Weinreich's study on the ways of interference between the languages has been used and, in a way, complemented by Robert Lado (1957), who shifted the focus from the bilingualism onto Second Language acquisition. According to Cook (1993), Lado contemplated the positive, as well as negative influence that L1 system can exercise on the acquisition of a second language. With a clear objective to help language teaching Lado has elaborated the system of "contrastive analysis" - an analytical tool to be used to benefit the design of language-teaching programmes. Unlike Weinreich, who was interested in the processes of interference between L1 and L2 in case of bilinguals, Lado

contemplated the influence of L1 on the process of L2 acquisition as a positive or a negative force, which, in some occasions, facilitates L2 acquisition, and in other occasions, hinders it. According to Lado, as specified by Cook (1993), the similarities between L1 and L2 systems provide perfect opportunities for positive language transfer and thus, facilitate L2 acquisition. However, the differences between L1 and L2 systems can be defined as potential problematic areas for a learner, where negative transfer from L1 is bound to occur and hinder L2 acquisition. Thus, Lado concentrated his effort mainly on the research of the possible areas for negative transfer, focusing his attention on the differences between L1 and L2 systems by conducting Contrastive Analysis between L1 and L2. According to this scholar, the aim of language instruction was to draw learners' attention to the differences between the linguistic systems of their mother tongue and the language to be acquired with an objective to prevent possible errors that would occur due to negative transfer. Lado's work has inspired many researchers to carry out comparisons between different pairs of languages aiming at identification problematic areas for language students. However, these comparative studies focused mainly on the linguistic systems alone, without taking in consideration the specificity of learner agent as such, which has become one of the major criticisms to Lado's theory. It has been proved that many of the assumed problematic areas defined by the methods of Contrastive Analysis has not shown to be problematic at all in case of some specific learners.(Cook, 1993). Weireich's and Lado's notion of interrelation and interdependence between L1 and L2 systems, despite the existing criticism, has some valuable concepts for the development of FLA research, as we as for the preset study. To be more specific, the acknowledgement of the importance of L1 for L2 acquisition and the role it can play in the learning process can be defined as one of the fundamental preliminary ideas proposed by the linguists in the first decades of FLA research.

Another fundamental input Lado has made into the theory of language acquisition in general, as well as in FLA is the concept of “system of habits” that underlies grammatical structure of any language. Such “habits” are automatic responses a speaker is able to provide as a reaction to the speech of other individuals and these habits are developed as a result of exposure to speech situations and regular practice. In other words, the linguistic behavior of an individual was seen by Lado, and a number of other influential linguists of the time (E.g. Skinner, 1957), as a performance of linguistic habits, which have been acquired unconsciously as a result of exposure to linguistic performances of other individuals and the opportunity to participate in them. In terms of the official terminology, this phenomenon was denominated as the “stimulus-response” pattern. This view has been supported for a rather large period in FLA research and it has been denominated as “Structuralist-Behaviourist” approach to FLA analysis. (Cook, 1993)

2.1.4. Chomskyan Period

The Structuralist-behaviourist idea of linguistic systems being a set of habits acquired by constant exposure to linguistic performance of others and imitation of that has met serious criticism in 1960ies mainly by Noam Chomsky (1963), who suggested that unsustainability of behaviorists’ theory was easily proved by the fact that human beings are perfectly able to understand, as well as produce phrases they have never been exposed to. Thus, following this idea, a linguistic system of an individual has been described by Chomsky as a constantly developing construct, where creativity and personal initiative as language user act as main engines that foster development. According to Chomsky, every child in the process of L1 acquisition develops his own linguistic system, or, in other words, “independent grammar” to cater for their communicative needs and this system cannot be perceived as an undermined version of

adult language, but as a language of its own (Cook, 1993:14). What is important here, especially for the present study, is the idea of a certain independent “learner language” (though introduced as a proper term much later by other scholars), which establishes the linguistic system created by a language learner as primary object of analysis. Another major shift in the course of language acquisition research proposed by Chomsky was the change of focus from linguistic performance or “behavior”, to linguistic competence, or “knowledge” of a language. Chomsky’s major concern was to unveil the mystery of how a language is acquired and how it is assimilated by a human mind. For Chomsky, the explanation for the processes of human mind connected to language acquisition lied within the presupposed existence of a certain system, or mental device that helps a human being process all the linguistic input and transform it into their own personal “independent grammar”. This idea received a major support from the linguistic community of the time and the in-born human capacity to acquire language in a creative and individual way has acquired the term “Language Acquisition Device” or LAD (Cook, 1993). The diagram, adopted from Cook (1993: 200) below illustrates the essential principals of LAD.

Diagram 2

Input (Language data a learner is exposed to)	LAD	Output (Personal “independent grammar” of a learner)
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Another phenomenon that Chomsky attempted to explain was the process of transformation that children’s “individual grammar” had to undergo in order to reach the state of a language spoken by adults, that is, the correct form of a language. The

explanation offered by Chomsky implicated a certain “hypothesis-testing” method, where he compared a child to a scientist who formulates hypotheses about the correct forms of a language, tests them against the correct language he hears around and then amends them accordingly to match the correct forms. A vital component of LAD, according to Chomsky, was an “evaluation measure” – a device that allowed a child to evaluate his “individual grammar” as worse and less correct than the adult language he is exposed to and then to make the necessary improvements (Cook, 1993:16). The idea of “hypothesis testing” was accepted with enthusiasm by the scholars of the time, unlike the concept of “evaluation measure”, which did not seem to get much future development. According to Cook (1969: 208), the definition of the “hypothesis-testing” model could be as follows:

“Each successful hypothesis is an interim grammar accounting more successfully for the data he is exposed to. The last hypothesis is the final adult grammar of competence in the language.” (Cook, 1969:208).

Later on Chomsky’s LAD theory got transformed into a more complex and general construct, namely the theory of Universal Grammar. The UG theory presupposes the innateness of language acquisition skills and defines certain principles and parameters to describe learner grammars. Chomsky (1986) and other scholars, like, for example, Cook (1988), aim to describe the main characteristics of the input a learner receives, the contents of the “black box”, or LAD, and the features the output is supposed to acquire (Cook, 1993:200).

When discussing Chomsky’s contribution into FLA research it would also be coherent to mention the two major hypotheses that appeared as a reaction to his theories and, as well, based themselves on the latter. These theories are Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (1982) and Swain’s Output Hypothesis (1985). Chomsky was the first scholar to

emphasize the importance of input that a learner receives in the process of acquisition as according to his model, language learning was possible only if a creative and active learner questions the input he is exposed to. This idea was developed further by Krashen (1982), who did not focus his attention so much on a learner, but on the characteristics of the input a learner should receive for language acquisition to happen successfully. According to Krashen, a learner should be exposed to the target language tailored to his needs as the new input should be one level ahead from the current knowledge a learner possesses. This requirement to the quality of linguistic input renders it challenging, yet accessible and “comprehensible” to a learner. In other words, a language acquisition process for Krashen can be compared to climbing a continuous ladder until perfection is achieved (Cook, 1993.) The Input Hypothesis was a powerful element of a complex “Monitor Theory” that Krashen (1985) has put forward. Another interesting and debatable element of this theory was the idea that learning can have two incompatible natures: “incidental” and “intentional”. For Krashen (1985), “incidental” learning is the key to success in SLA, whilst “intentional” learning is something he advocates against. This idea has not found much support among the FLA researchers due to the rather uncontrollable and ambiguous nature of “incidental” learning as such. Likewise, scholars have not quite taken on board Krashen’s distinction between “learning” and “acquisition”, which is tied to the concepts of “incidental” and “intentional” learning in a mode that “acquisition” is supposed to be unintentional and in a way “incidental” and “intentional” learning presupposes deliberate focus on language. Moreover, much empirical research has used these two terms interchangeably, comprising the present study.

Whilst Krashen focused on the qualities of input as a primordial element of FLA process, Miriam Swain has given a closer attention to Chomsky’s idea of an “active

learner”, who participates in his own learning by “testing his hypotheses”. Swain (1985) suggested that the most effective mode of participation in an acquisition process that a learner can follow is generating relevant output. According to Swain (1995), learner’s output is not only a mere practice, but a tool that learners can use for detecting gaps in their personal grammar as well as for testing their hypotheses against the correct language they interact with and reflecting on the outcome of communication.

Swain’s Output Hypothesis (1995) was the final touch that shaped the modern understanding of language acquisition process, which could be perceived as a three/fold model (input – learner’s output – input) that continuously reproduces itself until a learner attains perfection. This model has been a focus of an extensive posterior research, a brief account of which can be found in the following section of the present study.

2.1.5. Further FLA Theories

The theories of Behaviorists, the models proposed by Chomsky and the hypotheses they inspired have laid a solid basis for FLA research, as well as triggered a great amount of posterior studies in this domain. As it has been mentioned above, Chomsky was the first scholar to give explicit importance to the figure of a language learner, as well as to the input a learner receives in the process of language acquisition. These two ideas have been given a lot of attention by the forthcoming scholars and many studies have been focusing on the role of the input or on the specificity of a learner since then. According to such scholars as Schmidt (1990), or, later on, Gass (1997), social interaction is crucial for the development of learner’s “individual grammar”, as precisely the interaction introduces the vital opportunity for a learner to negotiate the correct linguistic form against the constant input he receives with an objective to maintain the flow of

communication. This theory implies an “active” learner, who participates in his own learning by making “conversational adjustments” and by negotiating the meaning he attempts to create. Despite having appeared several decades later, the theory of social interaction is rather close to Chomsky’s idea of a “creative learner”, who tests hypotheses against the input and enhances his own learning. Yet the social-interactivists have emphasized the importance of comprehensible input even more, by suggesting that input, being one of the most important components to meaning-negotiation, had to be instructional and flexible. According to Long (1996), the input has to provide an opportunity for a learner to receive corrections, either explicit or implicit and to encourage “conversational adjustments”. Thus, social-interactivists defined interaction as a process that presupposed a certain negotiable reshaping of the input (“conversational adjustments” mentioned above) according to the communicative goals pursued in the given communicative situation. This theory has received a name of The Interaction Hypothesis and it is attributed to Long (1996).

In the late 1980s, however, in line with the importance given to the input, a personal effort and attention of a learner has become a focus of research. So called “cognitivists”- researchers whose main interest lied in the field of psychology and psychological theories of language learning, doubted the existence of an innate mechanism created specifically for language learning (LAD) and suggested that language acquisition can be compared to any process of learning done by a human brain. According to De Keyser (2003), language acquisition can be compared to any skill acquisition and it normally undergoes three official stages: “declarative knowledge” (knowledge acquired intentionally), “proceduralized knowledge” (“declarative knowledge” that undergoes a lot of practice and becomes more automatic),

and “automatic knowledge” (“proceduralized knowledge” that undergoes even more further practice and becomes fully assimilated by the learner’s brain).

Being concerned with the role of consciousness within FLA, cognitivists have given a greater consideration to a figure of a learner and to the activity of human brain than to a nature of the input, unlike it was done by the predeceasing researchers in the field. Schmidt (1990; 2001) came forward with the idea of “Noticing Hypothesis”, where the major importance was paid to the capacity of a learner to “notice” certain parts of the feedback he is exposed to while completely overlooking the others. According to Schmidt (2001), a learner is only capable to retain certain “surface structures” of the target language he is exposed to (or the exact structures he receives) and not the abstract rules that these structures exemplify. Thus, in order to enhance learning, “noticing” can be stimulated by the one who provides comprehensible input in various modes, like, for instance, drawing learner’s attention to the abstract analysis of a linguistic form and away from the surface structure (Long,1996) or varying forms of input in order to maintain learner’s attention acute (Long and Robinson, 1998).

Another important theoretical assumption put forward by the cognitivists is the phenomenon of “restructuring”, which is, according to McLaughlin (1990), a cognitive process that involves the integration of already stored information in learner’s brain. This process, despite leading to the expansion of learner language, might cause a temporary change in acquisition pace and even bring about errors that a learner has not been observed to make before.

As it has already been mentioned above, cognitivists compare language acquisition process to the acquisition of any other skill human beings need to acquire to adjust to their reality. Thus, quite logically, a number of “skill-acquisition” theories advocate the

idea of declarative knowledge becoming proceduralized as a result of an amount of skill-related “practice” it undergoes. In other words, according to DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996), in order to automatize listening skills a learner must undergo a certain amount of listening practice that would not in any case mean the overall improvement of learner’s linguistic performance, but an exclusive improvement of his listening skills. However, these researchers also suggest that automatization of one skill may have an effect on other skills as, eventually, all skills are connected within one linguistic system. Skill acquisition scholars have also focused on the very nature of “practice”, attempting to define the parameters it should dispose of. Thus, for DeKeyser (1998), practice had to occur within the communicative context, which would be one of the most important requirements for proceduralization to enter a long-term memory:

“(…) proceduralization is achieved by engaging in the target behavior –or procedure- while temporarily leaning on declarative crutches (…)” (DeKeyser, 1998: 49)

For Johnson (1988, 1996), one of the most important issues after the “target behavior practice” was the feedback. This researcher suggested that a process of learning should imply a three-fold exchange between a learner and the learning environment, which would be “acquire-perform-acquire”, where the latter acquisition would happen as a result of corrective feedback.

2.1.6. Conclusion

In conclusion of this chapter on historical development of FLA theories the following trajectory of empirical thought can be traced:

1. Bilingualism as human linguistic ability first attracts attention of scholars and three types of bilingualism/ three modes of L1 and L2 relationship are defined by Weinreich (1957);
2. L1 influence on the process of L2 acquisition is first traced and analyzed by Lado (1957) and “Contrastive Analysis system” as the first theory with practical implications on L2 teaching is developed (Lado, 1957);
3. Chomsky (1963) first pays attention to “independent grammar”, or the state of “interlanguage” as it gets denominated later by Selinker (1972);
4. Chomsky (1963) delimitates the difference between the concepts of “linguistic competence” and “linguistic performance”, where the former is the knowledge a learner accumulates and the latter is the practical use a learner is able to make of that knowledge;
5. Chomsky (1963) introduces his milestone theory of Language Acquisition Device and Universal Grammar, first exposing language acquisition as an innate human ability indebted to a certain “language gene” all humans are claimed to have;
6. Language input becomes protagonist in the field of language acquisition theory and Krashen (1982) introduces his “Input Hypothesis”, suggesting the most important drive for language acquisition is quality input a learner should receive;
7. Learner’s output attracts the interest of scholars and it is hypothesized by Swain (1985) that a learner needs to have an opportunity to produce and analyze his own output in order to detect and mend the gaps in his developing grammar.

(Output Hypothesis by Swain, 1985). Thus, finally the modern three-fold understanding of language learning process is shaped, which is: input-learner's grammar-output;

8. Social aspects of language learning become a centre of attention of linguists and it is assumed that “social interaction” and “negotiation of meaning” (Schmidt, 1990 and Gass, 1997) are crucial for learner's “reshaping of the input” according to the conversational needs (Long, 1996). Long's (1996) “Interaction – hypothesis” attributes major importance to communication between speakers for a successful language acquisition;
9. A large group of linguists doubt the existence of Chomsky's LAD and suggest that language learning can be compared to any other process of human learning and, therefore, it undergoes the following three cognitive stages of development: (1) declarative knowledge, (2) proceduralized knowledge, (3) automatic knowledge (DeKeyser, 2003). In this vein, Schmidt (1990) introduces his “Noticing Hypothesis”, where the major importance in terms of language learning is attributed to the amount of information a learner is actually able “to notice” from the output he faces. Further, McLaughlin (1990) offers the concept of “restructuring” and suggests that the development of learner grammar is based on the process of constant restructuring of the latter until it meets the standards imposed by the target language. DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996), in their turn, postulate that learning progresses due to the amount of “skill-related practice” through “target behavior” that a learner happens to get. Finally, Johnson(1988, 1996) draws the attention of scholars to the importance of corrective feedback for the successful development of learner language.

2.2. THE NATURE OF LEARNER LANGUAGE

2.2.1. Introduction

As it can be fairly judged from the previous section, the attention of linguists in terms of second language acquisition has gradually shifted in the course of history from the focus on the nature of the L2 exclusively to the focus on the learner. Thus, this chapter deals with the notion of “independent grammar”, as it was first denominated in 1963 by Chomsky, which represents the linguistic structure “in making” or a constantly changing and reshaping itself representation of target language that a learner creates in the process of L2 acquisition. Later on, a term of “interlanguage” has been introduced by Selinker (1972) to denominate the concept of learner language and this is the term that has been widely employed in the field of FLA ever since. The chapter aims to clarify the concept of interlanguage by offering its extended definition, delimitating the initial characteristics of learner language according to the latest developments in the field, as well as inferring on the nature and importance of L1 influence in the development of interlanguage as the existence of such has been generally accepted by the scholars in the field. First Lado (1957) with his “Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis”, then Bialystock (1994) and Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) confirm that L1 structure, be it linguistic or cognitive, does undermine the acquisition of L2 by serving as the basis for it. Further, Zobl (1980) speaks about errors induced by L1 transfer, while Andersen (1983) and Kellerman (1995a) define two different types of L1 transfer, namely “Transfer to Somewhere” (Andersen, 1983) and “Transfer to Nowhere” (Kellerman, 1995a). Kellerman’s “Transfer to Nowhere” inspires Slobin’s (1996) theory of “pre-programming”, where such a process as “thinking for speaking” induces L1-bound system of thought-formation and thus, inhibits native-like expression in L2. Sorace (1993), in turn, speaks about the phenomenon of “optionality” as a process a learner

undergoes while choosing which structure/item to use before production, an L1 or an L2 one. Finally, in the field of sociolinguistics, Kroll and Sunderman (2003) and Jared and Kroll (2001) suggest that the phenomenon of “cross-language competition” is responsible for the fact that bilinguals sometimes surface non-target-like structures while using their L2, or even their L1, as the two linguistic systems have an equal ability to influence each other.

2.2.2. The Concept of Learner Language or Interlanguage

The notion of interlanguage was first mentioned by Selinker (1972) in reference to the linguistic system “in making” (Selinker, 1972:56) that a learner creates while being exposed to the L2 input. It was assumed that interlanguage is a kind of a temporary linguistic system, or grammar, that is a subject to a constant change and restructuring on the continuum where the final goal is a native-like performance. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) refer to the interlanguage as “(...) the oral or written language produced by learners” (Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005: 4) These researches also point out that the nature of learner language is not monolithic and the variation within interlanguage can happen due to the social factors and psycholinguistic factors, or the inter-relationship between the two. Thus, the quality of interlanguage that a learner would be exposing while speaking with his teacher in class might be very different from the one he would expose in an examination or public event. In this respect, White claims that “knowledge and use of knowledge do not always coincide” (White, 2003:37), meaning that it is quite common for researchers within the field of interlanguage to see performance as an equivalent to competence and to make judgements about the L2 competence and state of learner’s interlanguage by analysing performance. However, while discussing forms and methods of analysing learner language, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) do also distinguish between the learner L2 competence “in making” and L2 performance “in

making”, but suggest that it appears to be rather difficult to analyse purely the competence, as the implicit knowledge of a learner is easily evidenced. Performance, on the contrary, is rather easy to use as data in order to infer on the cognitive processes underlying the output learner provides, which is why learner language has been commonly researched by the analysis of learner’s performance. As far as learner’s performance is concerned, one must not forget that L2 performance can be viewed as expression or as a content. According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), a researcher can infer on what a learner actually knows by examining the linguistic forms he produces. However, the actual topics that learner can choose to communicate about can be regarded as data for analysis. In other terms, a researcher might focus on the topics related to the attitudes a learner manifests towards the L2 and the L2 community, as well as to the behaviours a learner engages in while learning L2.

As to the present study, the notions of learner language and interlanguage are used interchangeably to define learner’s L2 system in making and both expression and content are treated as data for analysis. To illustrate, the practical study focuses on the analysis of students written works, as well as their L2 performance in different other skills (speaking, reading, lexis and listening) in the form of exam scores. Further, the practical study turns to content data such as students’ opinions on their own progress on the way of L2 acquisition, their attitudes towards L2 community as well as the concepts they might have about their motivation to acquire L2.

2.2.3. Initial State of Interlanguage and UG

In line with the studies on the state of interlanguage, there is research on interlanguage and its connection to Universal Grammar. The basic concern that still makes FLA scholars wonder is whether we could legitimately speak about the “logical problem of

L2 acquisition”(White, 2003:22). That is, likewise in the case of L1 acquisition scholars operate the term of “logical problem of language acquisition” based on the idea that a child, though receiving an L1 input, which is rather limited in its complexity, still come up with a rather complex L1 language production. This mismatch between the quality of language input and the quality of children’s language output, also known as “poverty of the stimulus”, is believed to be remediated by Universal Grammar, which helps children to synthesize and upgrade their linguistic competence notwithstanding the quality of input (White, 2003). In terms of L2 acquisition, however, no consensus has been reached so far as to the degree to which universal grammar might influence learner language, or whether it does exercise any influence at all. Much research has been focused on possible existence of “logical problem of L2 acquisition” and scholars have come to different conclusions, no one of which can be considered as final, however.

One of the most influential hypotheses in this domain is FTFA or Full Transfer/Full Access hypothesis, offered by Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996). The main argument of this hypothesis is that L2 interlanguage, or grammar, bases itself completely on L1 grammar and has no access to universal grammar mechanisms whatsoever. According to these scholars, a learner adapts the linguistic knowledge he already possesses (L1 grammar) to the one projected on him by the L2 input. Epstein’s (1996) and Flynn’s (1996) ideas, however, contrast with FTFA as they both suggest that an L2 learner does not make use of L1 grammar for the benefit of his interlanguage, as Universal Grammar must be the initial state for every L2 interlanguage. That is, as summarized by White (2003:31):

“(…)the early grammar in principle has available all functional categories, features and feature values, from UG, so that appropriate representations for the L2 can be constructed without recourse to categories or features from the L1. As far as representation of functional categories is concerned (…) the L2 categories are in place from early on; because they are appropriate, there is no need for subsequent restructuring of the grammar.”

The Minimal Trees Hypothesis suggested by Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994, 1996), in its turn, agrees with FTFA assumption that the initial stage of L2 interlanguage does converge on L1 grammar, but, this time, not completely, but only in terms of lexical categories, which are assumed to be drawn from the L1. As far as functional categories are concerned, The Minimal Tress Hypothesis views them as absolutely absent from learner language grammar. This assumption indicates that Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994, 1996) see interlanguage as an incomplete and initially defective system. Such defectiveness, however, is viewed as temporary, as these researchers postulate that functional categories develop within the interlanguage system over the time.

Eubank (1993, 1994) and later Eubank and Grace (1998), though agreeing to Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996) on the fact that learner language does rely much on L1 grammar on the initial stage in terms of lexical and functional categories, maintain that the nature of some of those categories is “inert” or unspecified in terms of being weak or strong, like they normally are in natural human languages. Beck (1998) goes even further than this assumption and suggests that such inert categories within learner language never fully develop and acquire strong or weak character, and thus, learner language is permanently defective in comparison to natural human languages. In other words, one can assume here that according to these scholars, L2 interlanguage can never be equal to L2. (Beck, 1998) Such an idea, though apparently rather revolutionary, has been questioned and actively tested by scholars in the field and, Yuan (as appears in

White, 2003), for example, has managed to prove that some interlanguage categories could evolve into stronger or weaker forms depending on L2, as opposed to their initial state of inertness.

To conclude this section, it is important to say that research in the field of learner language and its relation to Universal Grammar principles is in its development and no convincing finalized conclusions have been drawn yet in whether UG constrains interlanguage development or not or in terms of the nature of interlanguage itself.

2.2.4. L1 Interference

Since the present study focuses on a certain group of language learners that belongs to the same ethnic group and shares the same culture and mother tongue, it is quite relevant to give an overview of the theories on the influence that L1 might exercise on interlanguage.

From the very start of FLA research, L1 influence on the development of learner's L2 system has been a focus of attention. According to Han (2004:65), there are some general assumptions on the issue of L1 interference within FLA process that have survived through the decades of FLA research. First of all, Schwartz and Sprouse (1996; as quoted in Han, 2004:66) claim that L1 grammar is being used by second language learners as a first source of an organized grammatical system that they access when starting to learn a foreign language. According to these scholars, a potential foreign language learner utilises his L1 system till the point when it fails to assign the working representation to the L2 data, and this is when the restructuring of the system starts. In their own words:

“All the principles and parameter values as instantiated in L1 grammar immediately carry over as the initial state of a new grammatical system on first exposure to the input to the target language (TL). This initial state of the L2 system will have to change in light of the TL input that cannot be generated by this grammar, that is failure to assign the representation to input data will force some sort of restructuring of the system (“grammar”), this restructuring drawing from options of UG. (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1996:41 as appears in Han, 2004:66)”.

As far as the cognitive processing is concerned, Bialystock (1994) maintains an opinion similar to the one above on the agency of L1 in the process of a foreign language acquisition. This scholar suggests that mental representations of learner’s reality developed in the course of L1 acquisition provide a basis and a starting point for the representation that will be developed for the second language. In other words, Bialystock (1994) claims that a learner applies his L1 proper knowledge creation mechanism to the second language up to the moment when such a procedure stops being effective and a new knowledge creation skill has to be developed to match L2 representation of reality.

Now, that it has been illustrated that L1 system of grammar and cognitive mechanisms represents a point of departure for every foreign language learner, it is important to note that adult L2 learners do not share the same level of readiness and the same potential. It has been first suggested by Lado (1957) within the framework of his Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis that the typological proximity between an L1 and an L2 can make the acquisition of an L2 more or less complex for a learner. This assumption has survived over the years of research and is still prominent within the field of FLA as Han (2004:67) quotes Schacher (1996) to illustrate this point:

“The adult’s knowledge of a prior language either facilitates or inhibits acquisition of the L2, depending on the underlying similarities or dissimilarities of the language in question. An adult speaker of English will require considerably less time and effort to achieve a given level of ability in German than in Japanese because the similarities between English and German, at all levels, are much greater than those between English and Japanese, and the adult’s prior knowledge of English influences subsequent acquisition...The closer two language are in terms of syntax, phonology and lexicon, the more likely it is that higher levels of completeness can be reached.”

By the notion of “levels of completeness” Schachter means the ultimate stage of learner’s interlanguage development. That is, according to Lado (1957) and Schachter (1996), the more similar is the L1 structure to the L2 one, the easier it will be for a learner to acquire the L2 and the better the final outcome of his effort will be.

2.2.5. L1 Transfer

Though it is quite clear from the above that L1 influence over the acquisition of L2 can be both positive and negative, in the view of the aims of the present study we will turn our attention exclusively to the transfer-inspired delay in L2 learning. According to Zobl (1980), there are two types of errors in the interlanguage development, namely: developmental errors and transfer errors. What is more, these are L1 transfer errors that have a tendency to fossilize and hamper interlanguage development in the long run. Zobl (1980) maintains that the stimulus for fossilization might be the tendency of a learner to make use of the common rule in a mature language system, which is L1 and in the developing one, which is L2.

As to the phenomenon of L1 transfer as such, the previous research in the field distinguished between the two main types of transfer: “transfer to somewhere” and “transfer to nowhere”. The basic distinction between Andersen’s (1983) “transfer to somewhere” and Kellerman’s (1995a) “transfer to nowhere” is that the former occurs between the two typologically proximate languages and is a conscious process, while

the latter is possible between the two completely different linguistic systems and it is absolutely unconscious (Han, 2004:69-72). To give more details, “transfer to somewhere” happens when: 1) a developing L2 system disposes of a place, or an eminent function for an item to be transferred from L1 and incorporated into interlanguage and also when b) the L2 input somehow induces or motivates such a transfer. According to Kellerman (1995a), transfer to somewhere can be considered as a strategy a learner uses to fill into the gaps of his developing interlanguage in order to reach a certain communicative goal in an on-going communicative task.(Han, 2004) As to “transfer to nowhere”, it is a process that is argued to happen on a subconscious level as it deals with the cognitive conceptualization of reality “borrowed” from the L1 system and mapped onto the interlanguage without learner’s explicit control over the whole matter (Han, 2004).

Transfer to nowhere as a concept gave way to Slobin’s “thinking for speaking” , which, in its turn, was based on Sapir-Whorf’s idea that thought and language are inseparable and since languages are different, so are the world-views of different nations. Slobin (1996:70) defines the transfer of “thinking for speaking” as “a special kind of thinking that is intimately tied to language – namely, the thinking that is carried out, on-line, in the process of speaking”. By carrying out a cross-linguistics study of picture narration by English, Spanish, Turkish, Hebrew and German child and adult speakers, Slobin (1996) found out that each language has its own conceptual structure and even children who learn two different languages end up with two different conceptual structures to form their vision of the word. Thus, according to this scholar, each language learned in one’s childhood constrains a learner in terms of selectivity of linguistic devices used to process the reality. In this respect, Slobin, as quoted by Han (2004:76) argues:

“Each native language has trained its speakers to pay different kinds of attention to events and experiences when talking about them. This training is carried out in childhood and is exceptionally resistant to restructuring in adult second-language acquisition. (1996:89)”

In other words, each learner is, from the very start and all through the process of learning, equipped with a certain system of “thinking for speaking” that he inherits from his L1. This “thinking for speaking”, or a system of conceptualization of reality and verbalizing it in forms of language, will inhibit, or in some cases of extreme proximity between L1 and L2, help a learner to develop his interlanguage on the way to the ultimate attainment. Consequently, according to the concept of “thinking for speaking”, every learner is, in a way, “pre-programmed” by his L1 to access and make use of L2 acquisition process in his own particular way. The notion of “pre-programming” was first suggested by Slobin (1996) and many other scholars have investigated this phenomenon ever since. As it is aptly summarized by Han (2004), Schachter (1996b) suggests that the constraints of the L1 usually become the constraints of the L2 as learners tend to rely on their previous knowledge to construct new one. Likewise, Carroll (2001:196, as appears in Han, (2004:72) claims that: “learners map L2 stimuli onto L2 categories wherever they can”. Sorace (1993) has conducted a study among the near-native speakers of Italian and native speakers as controls to test the effects of pre-programming. The results of the study have shown that despite their near-native proficiency, students still displayed in their performance features proper to their L1 but deviant from L2. This scholar has argued that L1 pre-programs learners in such a way that it determines the selection of items they, subconsciously, will choose to notice and assimilate into their interlanguage. As Han points out (2004:85), Sorace’s study, along with the many other studies carried out in this respect, induces to assume that the knowledge of an L1 can be a potent source of fossilization in adult L2 acquisition. What is interesting here is that such an assumption also includes advanced or even native-like

learners, whose interlanguage is supposed to have reached high, or even the highest possible (Sorace's study, 1993) stage of development.

2.2.6. Optionality and Related Concepts

In her study on near-nativeness, Antonella Sorace (2003) suggests that both native and non-native speakers experience the effects of a certain phenomenon of "optionality" (Sorace, 2003: 135). She uses Muller's definition to explain the essence of the phenomenon, which is: "(...) optionality can be defined as the existence of two or more variants of a given construction that are identical in meaning and have a clear correspondence in form" (Muller, 1999 in Sorace, 2003:135). To illustrate, a case of optionality in English could be the omission of the relative pronoun "that" following the construction "I think". That is, both versions, the one with "that" in the sentence and the one without it would be correct and speaker's mind would have to discriminate between the two at the moment of speaking and opt for one of the versions. In the case of non-native speakers, though, optionality gets more complex. According to Sorace (2003:139), it has three possible forms: "(i) L2 learners have the L1 as an additional source of optionality; (ii) L2 optionality tends to persist at advanced competence levels; (iii) residual optionality is found at ultimate L2 attainment." Thus, Sorace claims that the transfer of L1 constructions into L2 interlanguage can be a result of residual optionality, when L2 learner opts for an L1 structure rather than a corresponding L2 one. According to Sorace:

"The persistence of optionality at advanced stages of development, including L2 end state, is a consequence of the fact that L2 learners may not be exposed to data that are robust and/or frequent enough to expunge one of the optional variants from the grammar. In the typical L2 end state characterized by optionality, optional variants are not in free variation: a steady state is reached in which the target option is strongly but not categorically preferred and non-target option surfaces in some circumstances." (Sorace, 2003:140)

In her study Sorace (2003) raises another important issue in terms of near-native L2 competence, which is the mutual influence that L1 and L2 grammars tend to exercise over each other. She suggests that near-native speakers of L2 tend to experience alterations in their L1 grammar and are proved to surface structures more proper to their L2 while speaking L2. She claims:

“(...) we could hypothesize that truly successful L2 learners are the **minority** who manage to maximally differentiate the L1 rankings from the L2 rankings, so that there are no **overlaps** between them: these learners acquire native L2 competence and at the same time **preserve their L1 intact**.” (Sorace, 2003: 145, emphasis added)

Sorace’s conceptualization of L1 interference through optionality and the effects L2 acquisition can produce on learner’s L1 come in line with Kroll’s and Sunderman’s (2003) developments within the area of L2 acquisition and cognition. These researchers speak of a certain “cross-language competition” (Kroll and Sunderman, 2003: 110), and, converging on the previous research in the field (.e.g.: Green, 1998, Pavlenko, 1999, Jiang, 2000, and others) , suggest that L1 always remains present in the cognition of an L2 learner and more often than not a learner has both L1 and L2 option in mind before production due to the fact that the access to the semantic representations of concepts in case of bilinguals is shared between the two languages they master. Thus, Sorace’s optionality can also be explained on cognitive level, where L2 speakers manipulate two grammars, but a unique code of semantic representations. More than that, according to Jared’s and Kroll’s (2001) study, the cross-linguistic influence, or the L1-L2 mutual influence is more obvious when both languages are “activated”; that is, when a bilingual speaker is asked to switch from his L1 and L2 with a high frequency (Jared and Kroll, 2001 in Kroll and Sunderman, 2003:110). In respect to this, Jared and Sunderman (2003:110) state: “When both languages are active, the system appears to be functionally non-selective with respect to language”. In other words, these researchers

claim that when a bilingual or a near-native speaker is asked to switch from his L1 to his L2 with high frequency, his cognitive system does not access his two grammars separately, but regards them as one. This idea, without doubt, helps us to explain why, according to a wide group of scholars (Sorace, 2003; Kroll, 2001; Long, 2003; Bialystock, 1994 etc.), even near-native L2 speakers surface non-target like forms and their L2 is not faultless.

In line with the ideas expressed above is the concept of Competition Model, offered by Bates and MacWhinney (1981, 1982, and 1987). In attempt to infer on the processes of interlanguage development and bearing in mind that learner's mind operates same processing devices, or cues irrespective of a language(i.e.: L1 and L2 share same processing cues) , these researchers suggested that linguistic behaviour is governed by general cognitive mechanisms, and not by language-specific ones. As quoted by Pienemann, Bates and MacWhinney claim that: "the surface conventions of natural languages are created, governed, constrained, acquired, and used in the surface of communicative functions" (Bates and MacWhinney, 1981: 192 in Pienemann, 2003:683). Consequently, any language learner, be it an L1 or an L2 learner, processes language input and forms interlanguage grammar by identifying the cues and their communicative purposes. An example to illustrate this principle is given by Pienemann (2003):

"The linguistic forms used to mark grammatical and semantic roles differ from language to language. For instance, agreement marking, word order, and animacy play a different role in the marking of subject-hood and agency in different languages. Linguistic forms are seen as "cues" for semantic interpretation in on-line comprehension and production, and different cues may compete, as in the above case of the marking of subject-hood". (Pienemann, 2003: 683)

Exactly this aspect of competition between the cues, not-proper to any of the speaker's languages, not L1 neither L2, give the name to Bates and MacWhinney's model.

2.2.7. Conclusion

Ever since the notion of “independent grammar” was introduced by Chomsky in 1963, the concept of linguistic system “in making” or “interlanguage” (Selinker, 1972:56) has been a focus of multiple studies in the field of second language acquisition in attempt to infer on the factors that shape its development and delimitate its boundaries, if such are proved to exist. Traditionally, the interlanguage has been viewed as a system under constant reshaping that finds itself on the continuum of development with a final goal being, intuitively, native-like performance (Selinker, 1972). In terms of the composition of an interlanguage system, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) were the ones who suggested that interlanguage comprises L2 competence in making and L2 performance in making, quite like any L1. According to these researchers, interlanguage competence can be studied through the analysis of interlanguage performance, as well as through the characteristics of the content that a potential learner is able to develop his L2 performance in.

Another dimension of interlanguage studies concerns itself with the nature of the initial stage of interlanguage and whether learner language, same as any human language on its initial stage of development, has access to Universal Grammar. In other words, the researchers have been wondering whether there exists such concept as “Logical Problem of L2 acquisition” same as there exists “Logical Problem of L1 acquisition” (White, 2003). In this respect, several contradictory hypotheses have been developed. To illustrate, FTFA, or Full Transfer/Full Access theory put forward by Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996) postulates that L2 bases itself completely on L1 structure and has no access to UG whatsoever, while Epstein (1996) and also Flynn (1996) claim that the initial stage of all L2 grammars is UG. The Minimal Trees Hypothesis (Vainikka and Yong-Scholten, 1994, 1996), in its turn, suggests that only lexical categories of L2

grammar are based on L1, and all the functional categories are subjects of gradual development of interlanguage.

Speaking about the concept of development of interlanguage as such, there are scholars that consider that it is, in fact, limited and that interlanguage can never become equal to a natural human language for it has certain “inert” categories that will never obtain target-like shape (Beck, 1998). Pienemann (1998a, 2003), on the contrary, views the possibility of steady interlanguage development and advocates the idea that interlanguage can reach uniform development across the same skill types within the framework of his “Steadiness Hypothesis”.

As it can be seen from above summary of theoretical thought, notwithstanding the proliferation of theories on interlanguage, a final consensus between the scholars as to the nature of learner language and its initial state has not yet been reached. Neither has it been clearly proved that interlanguage can be considered absolutely equal to any other human language and that so called “native-like” performance is, actually, not a myth. However, scholars generally seem to agree that L1 has a certain important influence on the L2 interlanguage development. From the very dawn of studies on language acquisition Lado (1957) came up with Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, suggesting that some learners are more ready to acquire a certain L2 due to the proximity of their mother tongue to the structure of that L2. This idea has been supported to date by various theories. To illustrate, Schachter (1996) claims that L1 can either help or hinder L2 acquisition, depending on how similar it is to the L2 being studied. Furthermore, Bialystock (1994) suggests that every learner transfers his L1 – related knowledge creation mechanism to the L2 interlanguage until the new, L2-proper mechanism does not develop. Schwartz and Sprouse (1996), in their turn, postulate that the beginning of

each L2 interlanguage is the L1 system, as it is the first source of organized grammar for a learner.

As researchers generally agree that L1 does interfere with L2 acquisition, such an “intervention” is commonly known as “L1 transfer”. Zobl (1980) postulates that there are two types of errors possible in a learner language, which are developmental errors or L1 transfer errors. These are the L1 transfer errors, which, according to Zobl (1980) have a tendency to stay in a learner’s interlanguage for a lengthy period of time. Speaking about L1 transfer, it is important to mention two types of transfer defined to date, which are “transfer to somewhere”(Andersen, 1983) and “transfer to nowhere”(Kellerman, 1995a). While “transfer to somewhere” is a conscious process where a learner is trying to use L1 items or structures in his L2 interlanguage in order to fill into the gaps and fulfil a certain communicative purpose, “transfer to nowhere” is an unconscious process induced by L1-related system of conceptualization of reality, which is getting mapped onto the L2 interlanguage. Kellerman’s (1995a) “transfer to nowhere” gave way to Slobin’s (1996) concept of “thinking for speaking”, where an L1 conceptual structure used to form one’s vision of the world is used while operating an L2. Sorace (1993) goes further than these theories and suggests that L1 pre-programmes learners in terms of which item they will choose to notice and take on board out of the whole amount of L2 input they receive. Later on this researcher also speaks of “optionality”, the mechanism that allows a learner to keep both L1 and L2 structure present in their cognition, which sometimes results in learner opting for an L1 item while operating L2 system. This idea takes us to the domain of sociolinguistics, where Kroll and Sunderman (2003), suggest that not only L1 structure can potentially influence L2 structure, but also it can happen vice versa as, according to these researchers, a bilingual speaker always keeps both L1 and L2 grammar present in his

cognition and thus, disposes of two active grammars and one code of semantic representations. Jared and Kroll (2001) support this idea and claim that a cross-linguistic influence happens when both L1 and L2 are activated in speaker's cognition, which explains the fact that even native-like L2 speakers sometimes surface non-target-like structures. Finally, Bates and MacWhinney (1981, 1982, and 1987) agree with this assumption as demonstrated by their "Competition Model".

2.3. FLA AND MATURATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

2.3.1. Introduction

This section can be considered as one of the most important in the present study as it attempts to clarify the relationship between learner's age and success in foreign language acquisition, which appears to be an important issue since the study focuses on teenagers as language learners. First of all, the section offers the general overview of the concept of maturational constraints and the different developments there are in respect to language acquisition and age in the field of biology, cognitive science and social physiology. Then, the section sheds the light on such milestone concepts in SLA research as "Critical Period Hypothesis" (Lenneberg, 1976) and Fossilization (Selinker, 1972); as well as summarizes the recent developments of those concepts and sites some basic criticism they have been confronted with so far. Finally, the chapter outlines basic factors that differentiate the concepts of stabilization and fossilization, as well as offers an overview of the concepts and theories connected to the basic distinction between cognitive and linguistic complexity.

2.3.2. The Concept of Maturational Constraints

Maturational constraints as a factor playing a significant role in the process of second language acquisition has first been mentioned in 1959 by the two neuroscientists, Penfield and Roberts. These scholars stated that children language learners were claimed to be at an advantage before adult language learners in terms of biological and neurological qualities as it was suggested that cerebral flexibility allowed language acquisition until the limit age of nine. It was also claimed that within the limit period children learner indirectly through the exposure to the target language and after the age of nine their learning was mediated by the already acquired L1 system and, therefore, was not direct and not so successful.(Penfield and Roberts, 1959). This idea gave basis for so-called “Fundamental Difference Hypothesis”, formulated as such by Bley-Vroman in 1989, which states “while children learn language through implicit, domain specific mechanisms, adults have lost most of their ability to learn language implicitly, and must instead use their explicit, problem-solving capacities in L2 acquisition”(Hyltenstam and Abrahamson, 2003:548).

Later on, Lenneberg (1967) suggested that the loss of these optimal biological conditions for language acquisition was explained by the “completion of hemispheric lateralization” and thus, the ideal period for language acquisition should be until a learner reaches puberty (Lenneberg, 1967 as referred to by Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2003: 539). This is what gave the essence to Lenneberg’s Critical Period Hypothesis, dealt with in detail in the following section of this chapter.

The existence of maturational constraints for language acquisition has been contemplated as a default explanation for unsuccessful endeavours to acquire an L1 by children with an onset in their late childhood. Taking in consideration that the acquisition of a mother tongue is considered to be an inevitable process in line with

motor and cognitive development, in normal conditions and with sufficient L1 input from child's social environment, the complete L1 linguistic system should develop by the age of five. (Gleitman and Newport, 1995, Singleton, 1989, Pienfield and Roberts, 1959 in Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2003). This consideration has received its confirmation by various studies carried out with children who were deprived of L1 input until the age of 6 or 7. These studies have proved that such children have failed to reach native-like performance since the onset of L1 learning was later than it would be considered to be normal taking in account maturational constraints (Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2003). More than that, some researchers, as, for instance, Ruben (1997) postulate that the critical period for acquiring phonology might be over by the age of one, as his research has shown that a child who has been diagnosed with hearing insufficiency at the age of 12 months exposed lower phonetic sensibility than his peers when tested later on at the age of 9 (Ruben, 1997 in Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2003).

As it has been aptly summarized by Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003), maturational constraints in terms of language acquisition can be explained within three major frameworks of thought: biological, social-psychological and cognitive.

In terms of biological explanations for age effects on language learning it has been largely attributed to the phenomenon of myelination that is believed to affect "cerebral plasticity" or, as stated by Eubank and Gregg (1999) "the ability of neurons to make new connections, and varied connections depending on the stimulus"(Eubank and Gregg, 1999:69 in Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson 2003: 561). Myelination is a process that starts at the fetus stage of human development and is believed to finish completely around puberty. This process involves human brain cells wrapping the neurons with myelin – a substance that consists of lipids and proteins, which provides neurons with

nutrition and facilitates the transmission of electrical signals between them. Another biological process within the human brain that can serve as an explanation for maturational constraints is the strengthening of the connections between the neurons. According to Pulvermuller and Schumann (1994), language acquisition is conditioned by the two systems of cortical connections between neurons, baptised by Braitenberg as A-system, which is an early process and B-system, which is a latter process (Braitenberg, 1878). Thus, before myelination has finalized completely in same areas of the brains, the cortical connections between the neurons are strengthened locally by so-called axon-collaterals. That is why, according to Pulvermuller and Schumann (1994), phonological and syntactic system finds itself prone to maturational effects at a much higher degree than semantics, pragmatics and vocabulary, as in the case of the former the connections between neurons are handled by A-system while the latter is a subject of the B-system. Having given a general overview of biological processes that have been believed to explain maturational constraints in terms of language acquisition, it must be remarked here that it has not yet been fully proved by any study that the decrease of ability to acquire a language with maturation is completely down to biological reasons only. Much research has been handled in the area of social and psychological factors that might influence language acquisition in combination with biological constraints. As it has been suggested by Hyltenstam and Abrahamson (2003:563-564), the major social factors that have been demonstrated to influence language learning are the following: “motivational, affective/attitudinal, and input factors (...) social and psychological factors relating to amount and type of instruction, verbal analytical ability, metalinguistic awareness, and a general talent for acquiring languages”. It is believed, thus, that a combination of the factors quoted above tends to

influence the process of language acquisition in line with biological constraints a learner might have.

Apart from the biological and social and psychological factors, language acquisition process is also believed to be affected by cognitive constraints. First of all, the following three hypotheses should be mentioned in this connection, namely: Bley-Vroman's (1989) Fundamental Difference Hypothesis, Completion Hypothesis (Felix, 1985), and Less is More Hypothesis (Newport, 1990). As it has already been stated above in the previous sections of this study, fundamental Difference Hypothesis is based on the idea that adult learners, unlike children, cannot access the universal grammar principles to aid their learning and that is why they have to learn by analysing the language input by using problem-solving procedures. Felix (1985), on the contrary, argues that even though adult still might be able to access the universal grammar, their ability for analysis and their problem-solving skills compete with and finally win over the universal grammar principles. Finally, Newport (1990) suggests that children have limitations of cognitive capacity due to the immature state of their brain and thus, they just store the components of the input and do not try to analyse it as adults do. This tendency to analyse the language input and reason over it prevents adult learners from absorbing new input and learning at a higher speed. Another study worth mentioning here is the one that focused on "lifespan cognition", conducted by Bialystock and Hakuta (1999). These researchers have analysed census data from 63,690 Spanish- and Chinese- speaking immigrants in USA, with an onset of foreign language learning between the ages of zero and over seventy and the duration of exposure of ten years or more. Their study has revealed that the cognitive ability to process and store new information, be it language - related or not, decreases over time in the case of older learners and can be denominated as a general cognitive decline. Thus, according to

Bialystock and Hakuta (1999: 172) as quoted in Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003: 565): “age-related changes in ultimate language proficiency are to be attributable to these cognitive changes and not a to a specific language module that is constrained by a maturational schedule”.

Needless to say, there has not yet been a general consensus about what factors definitely underlie maturational constraints for language acquisition, neither as there has been any clear proof that maturational constraints do play such a decisive role in language acquisition as they are claimed to. It is more reasonable to believe then, according to all the previous research conducted in the area, that it is a combination of various, be it biological, social and psychological or cognitive that influences language acquisition.

2.3.3. The Critical Period Hypothesis

In terms of constraints hindering interlanguage development in the process of foreign language acquisition, the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) must certainly be mentioned. CPH was proposed in 1967 by a psycho-biologist, Lenneberg and its essence is in the idea that second language acquisition has all the chances to be successful in the period before puberty, which is between the age of 2 and 13. According to Lenneberg (1967), after this critical to learning period is over, acquisition is hampered by a string of neurobiological factors. As quoted in Han(2004: 45), Lenneberg claims:

“Most individuals of average intelligence are able to learn a second language after the beginning of their second decade, although the incidence of “language-learning-blocks” rapidly increases after puberty. Also automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear after this age, and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a laboured effort. Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty. However, a person can learn to communicate in a foreign language at the age of forty”. (Lenneberg, 1967:176)

Lenneberg's CPH was welcomed with interest by the researchers in the field and a variety of issues in connection with it and not addressed by Lenneberg have then been investigated. Thus, Oyama (1976), Long (1990) or Patkowski (1980) claimed that there is rather a linear relation between age and second language acquisition than a rectangular one, as it was originally conceived by Lenneberg. That is, these researchers suggested that CPH is not as absolute as Lenneberg exposed it to be since acquisition still happens beyond the framework of critical period and there is no sharp discontinuity in the process of language learning after the critical period is over. These scholars suggested that instead of a 'critical period' there is a 'sensitive period', when learning appears to be more effortless. Johnson and Newport (1989) converge on the studies of Oyama (1976) and Patkowski (1980) by suggesting that: "There is a gradual decline in language learning skills over the period of an on-going maturational growth and a stabilization of language skills at a low but variable level of performance at the final mature state" (Johnson and Newport, 1989:97). These researchers also suggest that the decline of learning efficiency observed on the stages posterior to the critical period one is immune to the amount of exposure to L2 a learner might have and the L2 input does not produce any noticeable effect on the state of interlanguage. Thus, it can be claimed here that this research presupposes that adult second language acquisition cannot be totally successful and adult learners, by the general rule, are unable to attain native-like performance in a target language. Other focus of the researchers in terms of CPH has been on the domains of language prone to be affected by maturational constraints as it has been assumed that not all the linguistic domains are affected in the same way and not all the adult learners show the same aptitude as to the interlanguage development. Patkowski (1980), for instance, proved that syntactic proficiency was directly connected to the age of a language learner and the later the process of L2 syntax acquisition is

initiated the lower is the quality of intake. Patkowski's study has provided clear evidence for sensitive period in terms of syntax acquisition or, in other words, he has provided evidence for existence of age limitations to acquire native-like performance in terms of syntax. Patkowski's research was inspired on the earlier study of Scovel (1969), who has proved that phonology is another linguistic domain where acquisition cannot be complete if it does not take place within the framework of a sensitive period (Han, 2004). These studies show that critical period has, in its essence, a modular nature. In other words, rather than assuming that there is a critical period for language acquisition as such, it would be more suitable to suppose that there are multiple critical or sensitive periods for different linguistic domains, e.g. phonology or morphosyntax (Han, 2004). However, there are some other linguistic domains, e.g. lexicon and pragmatics as according to Eubank and Gregg (1999), which do not seem to be affected by maturational constraints the way others do. Which linguistic domains tend to fall under the influence of maturational constraints can be judged by the state of learner's L1, as assumed by Schachter's Incompleteness Hypothesis (1996). According to Schachter, there are sensitive periods, or "windows of opportunity", for all the linguistic categories to be acquired by a human being in terms of Universal Grammar (UG), and if these categories are not acquired at the right maturational stage, they will never be acquired. In other words, a learner can miss out on the opportunity to acquire a certain linguistic concept and thus, his language acquisition will be incomplete. Subsequently, since each learner brings into the L2 acquisition process a different, essentially incomplete, set of UG parameters depending on his L1, each learner has a different predisposition to acquiring L2 (Schachter, 1996). Here, one can notice a certain parallel with the theory of L1 influence onto the L2 acquisition and, in particular, the theory of pre-programming (Slobin, 1996), explained in detail in the previous section. Another

important assumption induced by the Incompleteness Hypothesis is, by all means, the existence of critical periods within the critical period. That is, as suggested by Han (2004:61), there are perfect moments for acquiring every linguistic concept that arise within the sensitive periods for language acquisition in general, that is, as stated earlier, between the age of 2 and 13.

The notion of critical period within the area of FLA has been tested by researchers ever since the concept was introduced by Lenneberg in 1967 and it must be said here that no study has fully demonstrated the effects of critical period on FLA in terms of the whole target language system, but just in some domains. That is, as stated in Hyltenstam and Abrahamson (2003), some studies managed to prove that their subjects could achieve native-like performance in some areas of L2, but, however, not in all of the areas as the non-native-like forms were believed to exist in the areas outside the scope of analyses.

2.3.4. The Notion of Fossilization

According to Han (2004), the notion of fossilization dates back to the theoretical frameworks of Weinreich (1953), where it was referred to as “permanent grammatical influence” or Nemser (1971), who spoke about “permanent intermediate systems and subsystems” (Han, 2004:14). However, it was Selinker (1972), who researched the notion in more detail and expanded the concept. Selinker (1972), as outlined in Han (2004), has developed the concept of fossilization starting with an assumption that fossilization is “a mechanism” that “underlies surface linguistic material which speakers will tend to keep in their IL productive performance no matter what the age of the learner or the amount of instruction he receives in the TL.” (Selinker, 1972:229, in Han, 2004:14). It is also important to note here that in one of his first definitions for fossilization Selinker suggests that a permanent cessation of IL development instates

itself despite “ learner’s positive ability, opportunity, and motivation to learn and acculturate into target society” (Selinker and Lamandella, 1978: 187, as appears in Han, 2004:15) For the benefit of the present investigation it is important to highlight here that Selinker, as it can be judged by the definition above, does not seem to regard motivation as a strong learner-generated force that is capable of preventing fossilization. It can also be seen here that the form of motivation that Selinker contemplates is the integrative one as he speaks about learner’s desire to integrate within the target society.

Further, Selinker starts by suggesting that fossilization is a local phenomenon and it affects “items, rules, and subsystems which speakers of a particular L1 tend to keep in their IL relative to a particular TL” (Selinker, 1972:215 as cited in Han, 2004:14). Nevertheless, as his investigation progresses, he refines the concept of fossilization to a final definition, which is as follows:

“Fossilization is the process whereby the learner creates a cessation of interlanguage learning, thus stopping the interlanguage from developing, it is hypothesized, in a permanent way...The argument is that no adult can hope to ever speak a second language in such a way that s/he is indistinguishable from native speakers of that language”. (Selinker, 1996b, as cited in Han, 2004:15).

Thus, as seen from the definition above, fossilization for Selinker becomes a global phenomenon that affects the whole interlanguage system, not only some concepts, as it was supposed before. We can also see that Selinker believes fossilization to be innate and inevitable in terms of adult L2 acquisition and thus, the end state or ultimate attainment of any adult L2 learner will be an incomplete or faulty L2 system (Han, 2004). Selinker’s study served as motivation to a considerable amount of research on fossilization and the phenomenon has been investigated ever since and attributed different definitions. As Han (2004) aptly summarizes, apart from Selinker’s “fossilization”, there are notions of “virtual halt” (e.g. Lowther, 1983, Perdue, 1984),

“linguistic monstrosities” (Hammerly, 1983), “plateau”(E.g. Flynn and O’Neil, 1988), “rigor mortis” (Long, 1988, 1997), “stopping short” (Towel and Hawkins, 1994),“fossilized variation” (Schachter, 1996a), “permanent optionality” (Sorace, 1966), “siesta” (Sharwood Smith, 1997), “end state” (Lardiere, 1998a) and others (Han, 2004:14).

When defining fossilization, there are other two key issues to be dealt with. To be more particular, Selinker’s study has set about two major concerns, namely: whether fossilization is local, as it has first been assumed by Selinker, or global, as it has been suggested by him later; as well as if fossilization can be seen as a product or a process (Han, 2004:21). According to Han (2004), it is more plausible and safe to assume that fossilization is a process that affects only certain concepts of interlanguage, and not an end state of interlanguage development where the entire learner language system is affected. Such an assumption seems to be fear as it is the only one that can be and has been explicitly proved and illustrated by extensive research in the field since demonstrating that an interlanguage system is fossilized on all levels and has no hope for future development would be a rather difficult enterprise involving not only surface or behaviourist but also cognitive aspects of acquisition (Han, 21-23). Consequently, fossilization is largely believed to have a “modular nature” (Han, 2004:106) and different areas and concepts of interlanguage are affected by fossilization on different stages of development. To be more particular, Han(2004) summarized the previous research on the modular nature of fossilization and suggests that it has four facets of manifestation, which are as follows: “(1) fossilization selectively affects linguistic features within a linguistic domain; (2) it selectively affects L2 comprehension and production; (3) it selective affects L2 competence and performance, and (4) it selectively affects some domains of an interlanguage.” (Han, 2004: 106) It is important

to note here that the notion of a “fossilized domain” was later extended by Selinker (1976) into the concept of “fossilized contexts”, as specified by Long (2003: 489). Long (2003:489) suggests that fossilization across contexts can be evidenced through certain “fluctuation” or “variability” and a linguistic item fossilized in one context might prove to be still developing in another. Such assumption, without any doubt, exposes fossilization as a rather dubious and difficult to trace phenomenon.

Posterior research in the domain of fossilization only extended Selinker’s definition, as noted in Han (2004). Ellis suggested that fossilization affects both target-like forms of interlanguage, as well as non-target-like ones, or errors. As quoted in Han (2004:16), Ellis(1985) states:

“Fossilized structures can be realized as errors or as correct target language forms. If, when fossilization occurs, the learner has reached a stage of development in which feature X in his interlanguage has assumed the same form as in the target language, the fossilization of the correct form will occur. If, however, the learner has reached a stage in which feature Y still does not have the same form as the target language, the fossilization will manifest itself as error”. (Ellis, 1985:48)

As it can be seen from the statement above, Ellis presumes that the stage of interlanguage development when the progress of the learning process stabilizes is inevitable and it affects the whole system of learner language the way it finds itself at this crucial moment. Notwithstanding Ellis’s assumptions, the majority of SLA research still regards fossilization as a phenomenon that deals with error or deviant form automatization only. Hyltenstam, for instance, claims the following:

“Fossilization – according to observations-is a process that may occur in the second language acquisition context as opposed to first language acquisition. It covers features of the second language learner’s inter-language that deviate from the native speaker norm and are not developing any further, or deviant features which – although seemingly left behind – re-emerge in the learner’s speech under certain conditions. Thus, the learner has stopped learning or has reverted to earlier stages of acquisition”. (Hyltenstam, 1988:68, as quoted in Han, 2004:17).

As it can be gathered from the quotation above, Hyltenstam does not only believe that L2 learner's errors fossilize at a certain stage of interlanguage development, but he also claims that a learner can experience a backslide in his progress. As emphasized by Han (2004:17), backsliding is often associated to the prime symptom, or manifestation of oncoming fossilization.

Finally, Han (2004) offers his own definition of the phenomenon, basing his statement on Selinker's dual view of fossilization being both a cognitive mechanism and a performance-related notion. Thus, for Han (2004: 22), fossilization is defined on a two-tiered level:

“COGNITIVE LEVEL: Fossilization involves those cognitive processes or underlying mechanisms that produce permanently stabilized forms.

EMPIRICAL LEVEL: Fossilization involves those stabilized interlanguage forms that remain in learner speech or writing over time, no matter what the input or what the learner does.”

Thus, Han (2004) sees fossilization as both a process on the cognitive levels and, on empirical level, as a product since fossilized forms can be clearly observed in the output of a learner. We can also see out of the first part of the quotation above that Han supposes that fossilization is a phase of interlanguage development where a learner becomes immune to any type of input, as well as he loses control over his fossilized output and stop noticing his faulty performance. This researcher emphasizes that it is nothing but fossilization on the cognitive level that provokes fossilized output, thus fossilization becomes at same time a cause and the outcome or, as pointed out by Long (2003, in Han, 2004), an “*explanandum*” - a phenomenon to be explained, and an “*explanans*” - the explanation itself. This, according to Han, could be the main criticism of his dual vision of the concept. Moreover, the duality of fossilization has provoked substantial criticism. As Long (2003: 518) puts it:

“Fossilization has been beset with definitional and methodological ambiguities from the outset, not least as to whether it is (i) a term used to *describe* the permanent end-state of IL development (in some subsystems end or discourse domains, for some learners, (ii) a terms used to *explain* permanent cessation of learning short of the target, despite ample opportunity, motivation, and ability to acquire the target language, or (iii) *both*. In other words, fossilization has sometimes been explanandum, the phenomenon to be explained, sometimes explanans, the putative explanation, and sometimes explanandum and explanans.”(emphasis in the original)

Apart from the very definition of fossilization, there are other two major criticisms that Long (2003) voices in terms of the research within this concept. First of all, he suggests that researchers tend to equate fossilization and general non-nativelike attainment, whether permanent or not. Long (2003) remarks that this is a mistake as non-native like forms present in one’s interlanguage for a long period can be a product of stabilization, and not fossilization, as a permanent character of these forms is rather difficult to prove. More than that, according to this scholar, fossilization as a phenomenon has only been assumed and not yet demonstrated empirically to date since all the studies conducted in this domain have suffered from any of the following flaws: “(1)selecting inappropriate learners for study, (2) basing findings on insufficient data, (3) using inadequate analyses (Long, 2003: 520).” Thus, Long (2003) suggest that further research in terms of cessation of interlanguage development should better concentrate on the concept of stabilization, and not fossilization. His reasons are as follows: “(i) the existence of stabilization is not a doubt, (ii) it avoids the methodologically problematic “permanence” issue, (iii) it makes an additional subset of claims empirically testable; and (iv) unless and until solid evidence appears of the psychological reality of fossilization, it lightens the burden of FLA theory and theories by one variably operationalized and as yet empirically unsubstantiated construct” (Long, 2003: 521).

Another error frequently committed by the researchers in terms of fossilization is tying the concept together with maturational constraints. According to Long (2003:519):

“If fossilization is to have value as a construct in SLA theory, it must refer to something other than this general age-related decline in the capacity to acquire any language, first or additional, that is to a loss of ability to acquire *second*(including foreign) language.”(emphasis in the original)

What is interesting and new in Selinker’s (1972) concept of fossilization for Long (2003) is the claim about the “loss of capacity to acquire” (Long, 2003: 519) a language fully and attain native-like performance. Otherwise, according to this scholar, the concept of fossilization, both as a process and as a result, is redundant in the field of FLA research due to the existence of such notions as stabilization, L1 influence and maturational constraints.

2.3.5. Selective Fossilization Hypothesis

Selective Fossilization Hypothesis has been put forward by Han in 2009 to explain and predict intra-learner selectivity and inter-learner variability (Han, 2013: 145) in terms of fossilization, since it has been widely assumed and proved that fossilization is a selective phenomenon and it affects different linguistic domains and different learners in distinctive ways and on distinctive stages of interlanguage development. To back up this point Han(2013) speaks about idiosyncratic character of fossilization and summarizes the previous research in the following way:

“This idiosyncrasy has several facets: first, fossilization occurs in learners under different circumstances (Bruzzese 1977; Schumann 1978; Shapira 1978; Stauble 1978; Lardiere 1998, 2007; Han 2000, 2006, 2010; White 2003a). Second, fossilization varies in its target and scope from individual to individual. Third, for individual learners, the factors contributing to fossilization are not always the same. Fourth, the timing of fossilization differs both across and within individual learners. Fifth, fossilization may affect the interlanguage systems of learners differently, under conditions that are otherwise similar.(Han, 2013:145)”

Within the framework of his Selective Fossilization Hypothesis, Han (2009) postulates that the degree of fossilization as well as the item/notion to be fossilized can be

determined by analyzing the two key factors in L2 acquisition: markedness of a linguistic feature within learner's L1 and the intensity and frequency, or "robustness" (Han, 2009) of the L2 input in terms of this particular linguistic feature. In other words, if a particular linguistic concept/item is unmarked (frequent and invariable) within learner's L1 system meanwhile the L2 input in terms of this feature is non-robust (infrequent, variable), such a linguistic feature is prone to fossilization. On the contrary, if a linguistic item is marked (infrequent and variable) within learner's L1 system and the L2 input is robust (frequent, invariable), acquisition will occur. Han's (2009) Selective Fossilization Hypothesis allows him to make certain predictions about fossilization, which he summarized below:

"First, certain TL usages are by default susceptible to fossilization because the input received by the learner is never going to be strong, because of their rarity and the intrinsically variable relationship between form, meaning, and function. Second, learners of the same TL with the same L1 background are inclined to fossilize the same set of TL constructions, because of the shared unmarked usages in the L1 and exposure to similar non-robust input from the TL. Third, for certain TL constructions, individual learners may break free from or fall prey to fossilization as a result of their accidental exposure to robust or non-robust input. Fourth, a learner may fossilize in a particular way because of the accidental nature of input exposure. Fifth, evidence of fossilization is most reliably found in learners' natural and spontaneous output; the learner attempts to express his/her own meaning in an L2 and is most likely to fall back on his/her L1 as the conceptual basis for articulation (Han 2010; Han & Lew 2012 in Han, 2013: 146-147)".

Since Selective Fossilization Hypothesis (Han, 2009) attributes a great value and role to learner's L1 in the process of interlanguage development, Han suggests that fossilization should be studied taking in consideration not only the specificity of a target language, but the specificity of L1 in the utmost.

2.3.6. Distinction between Fossilization and Stabilization

Since the present study employs both terms, stabilization and fossilization, it is important here to offer a detailed description of both concepts and explain the difference

between them. According to Han (1998) and Selinker and Han (2001), stabilization and fossilization form a part of the same continuum, but, however, the concepts cannot be synonymous. (Han, 2004) These researchers postulate that there are three possible types of stabilization. The first type is defined as “a temporary stage of getting stuck” as a natural phase of learning when new concepts take their time to be assimilated by a learner. The second type of stabilization is connected to interlanguage restructuring – the period when the development of certain linguistic features might seize for a lengthy period of time (up to five years). The third type of stabilization is defined by Selinker and Han (2001) as “long-term cessation of interlanguage development” (Han, 2004:102) and this type is the one that, for the benefit of empirical research, can be treated indistinguishably from fossilization. Selinker and Han (2001) see the third type of stabilization as a process leading to fossilization or as a final stage of interlanguage development before it is affected by fossilization (Han, 2004). As referred by Han (2004: 103), Long (2003) expresses the belief that stabilization is the first sign of fossilization and the basic difference between the two concept is the length of permanence. This researcher also claims that, most probably, an empirical research focused rather on the stage 3 of stabilization and its causes would shed much light onto the phenomenon of fossilization and that, in fact, the empirical research on stabilization seems to be more adequate than the one on fossilization (Han, 2004). However, in response to that, Han (2004) warns of the existing difference between fossilization and stabilization and suggests that it would not be wise to combine the two concepts all the way through and a certain distinction should be made at the point of generalizing on the obtained data. For instance, Han (2004:103) points out that not every case of stabilization is a potential case of fossilization and it should not be treated as such by researchers in the field. As far as the present study is concerned, it focuses on

stabilization in its 3rd phase and uses the terms of stabilization and fossilization interchangeably complying with the ideas expressed above.

2.3.7. Cognitive vs. Linguistic Complexity

As it has already been discussed above in the previous sections, not all the linguistic domains are prone to stabilization and not all the linguistic notions stabilize in the same way. As it has been demonstrated by the extensive previous research in the field, the “learnability” (Han,2004) of a linguistic concept is determined, in large lines, by its complexity. The complexity, in its turn, is a two-fold concept that comprises linguistic and cognitive complexity, which are rather different notions. While linguistic complexity is static and, in large lines, determined by the nature and structure of learner’s L1 (Han, 2004), cognitive complexity is a dynamic notion that that can change as long as a learner’s interlanguage progresses. According to Pienemann’s Teachability Hypothesis (1985, 2002), a learner has to reach a state of “developmental readiness” in order to be able to assimilate certain linguistic notions. In other words, a learner has to be equipped with all necessary morphosyntactic and semantic prerequisites in order to be able to incorporate certain linguistic concepts into his her interlanguage (Han, 2004:141). Thus, as Han (2004) draws on Pienemann’s study, the constraints that govern teachability are the ones that emerge from the architecture of one’s interlanguage (Han, 2004:141). Pienemann’s study (1985, 2002) has inspired the design of “learnable syllabuses” or a structured organization of concepts to be taught to an L2 learner progressively following a system of increasing cognitive complexity. (Han, 2004). Teachability hypothesis, while clarifying the notion of complexity, sets about a concern of how to define the degree of cognitive complexity each linguistic item/concept might have in order to determine the degree of learnability it has. According to VanPatten (1996), the learnability of an item has a direct connection to its salience within the

system of learner's interlanguage. In other words, basing his assumption on the idea that a learner tends to process the input of the meaning rather than the one of the form, the salient linguistic concepts turn out to be the ones that carry meaning. In connection to this, we must single out the concept of redundancy of a linguistic system, exemplified by Han (2004:142), which is as follows:

“An example of the latter would be English third person singular –s. This form undoubtedly has semantic content in that it encodes the semantic notion of third person singular, as well as the temporal frame within which the action occurs. Yet it is made redundant by the co-occurrence of lexical items (e.g., he, everyday) that expresses the same meaning. Moreover, syntactically, the English canonical subject-verb word order renders the –s redundant, for the notion of “third person singular” is already carried by the subject. Hence, the form has low communicative value, and as such, it has low perceptual salience.”

Thus, a redundant linguistic feature that carries more of syntactic value than communicative one tends to be overlooked by a learner and, if ever assimilated, assimilated on much later stages of interlanguage development. Han (2004) quotes VanPatten (1996:30) to illustrate this concept:

“Grammatical form conveying semantic information that also is encoded lexically will tend not to be detected; the learner instead relies on the lexical items for the semantic information. The learner's internal mechanisms will detect grammatical form early on only if it is relatively high in communicative value. Otherwise, grammatical form is detected over time only as the learner's ability to get meaning from the input is increasingly automatized (becomes effort-free). This increasing automatization of comprehension releases attention resources for the processing of form that was previously skipped (undetected).”

In order to raise learners' awareness of linguistic concepts they overlook as their interlanguage gradually develops, explicit instruction has been singled out as a measure to take. As it is pointed out by Han (2004), such researchers as Ellis (1994b), Ellis and Laporte (1997) or Long and Robinson (1998) have advocated explicit instruction as an instrument that makes learners notice certain aspects of a language and thus, speed up their process of L2 acquisition. Han (2004:135) summarizes the vast array of studies on

the benefits of explicit grammar instruction by suggesting that a balanced combination of explicit and implicit learning would be best option to facilitate interlanguage development as explicit instruction would help a learner to notice certain language elements and implicit learning would give a learner an opportunity to interiorize and automatize the newly learned concepts. This general assumption has been made taking in consideration Swan's (1985, 1993) Output Hypothesis, which focuses on the role of production in second language acquisition. For this researcher, the amount of output he can generate on the path of L2 acquisition determines the fluency and the automatization of acquired concept. Another theoretical development to clarify here is Seliger's (1977) idea that successful learners are the ones who manage to take full advantage of the classroom input, as well as extend the acquired concepts beyond the classroom context and they are to be denominated "high input generators". On the other hand, the learners who depend greatly on the classroom input are less successful ones and are referred to as the "low input generators"(Selinger, 1997 in Han, 2004).

In terms of actually "noticing" linguistic elements throughout the learning process, implicit or explicit one, Schmidt's (1994) Noticing Hypothesis is worth attention. As it has already been outlined in previous sections of the present study, Noticing Hypothesis stems from the idea that learners have a certain capacity to pre-determine the salience of the linguistic concepts being taught to them and thus, they only notice or make an effort to assimilate only those, that they choose to be important. In other words, according to Schmidt (1994), a learner does not truly notice or aim to acquire everything that is taught to him.

2.3.8. Conclusion

Eventually, in order to summarize this rather lengthy section, the main body of researchers in the field of FLA tend to attribute certain importance to the age of a learner as a factor inhibiting acquisition of a second/foreign language, although the beliefs as to the degree and manner of such a negative influence over interlanguage development are not uniform. Nevertheless, one can distinguish a continuum of thought development within the area of so-called maturational constraints bind with certain logics, which is presented below in a succinct form:

1. Penfield and Roberts (1959) first come up with an idea of maturational constraints for language learning, suggesting that children have an advantage over adults and the top age limit for the most trouble less language acquisition is nine years old.
2. Bley-Vroman comes up with “Fundamental Difference Hypothesis” in 1989 and claims that all L2 learning is mediated by L1 and thus, is not direct and cannot be fully successful.
3. Lenneberg (1967) dwells upon all the previous research in terms of age and language acquisition and introduces his “Critical Period Hypothesis” (CPH) to mark FLA research forever. Lenneberg (1967) suggests that all successful language learning happens until puberty, in the age period between two and thirteen. Other scholars scrutinize the bases of the hypothesis and come up with a different definition: “Sensitive Period” instead of “Critical Period” in order to emphasize that a learner still has a slight possibility to be successful after puberty (e.g.: Oyama, 1976; Long, 1976; Patkowski, 1980).
4. CPH inspires yet more research in the area. It becomes generally assumed that Critical Period has a modular nature (Han, 2004) and some areas of

interlanguage are more prone to be influenced by the effects of Critical Period than others. To illustrate, Scovel (1969) suggests that phonology and morphosyntax are the spheres to be definitely affected by Critical Period in the case of almost all the L2 learners and later, Patkowski (1980) claims that so is syntax. On the contrary, Eubank and Gregg(1999) manage to prove that such areas as lexicon and pragmatics are not prone to be affected by maturational constraints and can count on constant on-going development if such are the intentions of a potential learner.

5. All the previous research inspires Selinker (1972) to define the concept of “fossilization”, the main argument of which is that “no adult can hope to ever speak a second language in such a way that s/he is indistinguishable from native speakers of that language” (Selinker, 1996b, as cited in Han, 2004:15).
6. The concept of fossilization attracts the attention of a multitude of scholars in the field and the main questions get asked for the first time: “Is fossilization local or global?, as well as : “Is fossilization a process or a product?”(Han, 2004). Needless to say that no uniform answer has been given to these questions yet. The general assumption, however, is that fossilization has a modular nature and therefore, it is local. Fossilization is also assumed to be a process, rather than a final state of interlanguage development, as it is considered to be virtually impossible to prove the opposite (Han, 2004).
7. Hyltenstam (1988) dwells on the concept of fossilization and suggests that it can also provoke “backsliding”. i.e. Lerner’s L2 accumulated knowledge can actually get deteriorated if there is no deliberate further development.
8. Schachter (1996) introduces his “Incompleteness Hypothesis”, suggesting that there are “windows of opportunity”, or certain exact periods of time on the continuum of interlanguage development when certain linguistic concepts

should be acquired. Further, in case a learner misses those exact periods to acquire a certain item, this item cannot be acquired later on and his/her interlanguage will be incomplete. This hypothesis applies both to L1 and L2 acquisition.

9. Long (2003) criticizes the concept of fossilization as being “explanandum” and “explanans” at the same time and suggests that unless the definite loss of capacity to acquire an L2 is proved, fossilization can be seen as a redundant concept in the field of FLA research for the already existing concepts of stabilization.
10. Researchers try to explain maturational constraints in terms of language learning from biological, cognitive and social psychological points of view. Eubank and Gregg (1999) suggest the idea of myelination as a biological process affecting cerebral plasticity and impeding learning at certain age. Cognitive linguists come up with “Fundamental Difference Hypothesis” (Bley-Vroman, 1989), Competition Hypothesis (Felix, 1985), Less Is More Hypothesis (Newport, 1990) and the “lifespan cognition” concept by Bialystock and Hakuta (1999) in order to explain adult’s disadvantage as to language acquisition if compared to children. Hyltenstam and Abrahamson (2003) summarize the recent developments in the sphere of social physiological linguistics and suggest that language acquisition is constrained by a variety of factors, some of which are: motivation, attitudes towards L2 community and towards learning environment, quality and character of input, metalinguistic awareness and talent for language learning.

11. Han (2009) revisits the concept of fossilization and introduces his own Selective Fossilization Hypothesis, which represents a framework for defining the linguistic items and concepts that can be prone to fossilization.

3. SOCIAL AND MOTIVATIONAL ASPECTS OF FLA

3.1. FLA and SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS

3.1.1. Introduction

This section aims to unveil the importance of certain sociolinguistic factors in the domain of L2 acquisition, such as sociolinguistic settings for L2 learning, social context, the character of “sociocultural milieu” (Gardner, 1983; 1985;1988), the notions of prestige, status and power in terms of L2 acquisition, as well as the notion of linguistic “investment” (Peirce, 1995). Speaking about the prestige and status of English as an L2, the chapter turns to the concept of English as a global language (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006), as well as to the notion of English as lingua franca. Finally, the risks entailed by English as a global language are described in detail, as well as the changes within the field of EFL methodology are presented.

3.1.2. Social Context

Taking in consideration the fact that language is a social phenomenon, the influence of social context on second or foreign language acquisition has always been estimated as rather important, especially within the field of sociolinguistics. The factors usually taken in account when L2 context is studied, according to Siegel (2003:178), are as follows: “(...) whether the L2 has a widespread or restricted functional role in the society, whether it is spoken as a native language by a significant section of the population, (...) whether most of the society is monolingual or bilingual (...) the particular variety of L2”. This researcher distinguishes between various sociolinguistic settings for second language acquisition, which, naturally, help to define and reflect upon the context. The following table, adapted from Siegel (2003: 179; emphasis in bold and clarifications in italics added), gives a graphic summary of those settings:

Table 1

Sociolinguistic Settings for Second Language acquisition (Siegel, 2003:179)

Setting	Typical Learners	L2	Examples
<p>Dominant L2</p> <p><i>(“majority language setting”: L2 used in all spheres of community life as it is a mother tongue for the majority of the population of this community)</i></p>	<p>Speakers of minority languages /E.g.: immigrants, swamped indigenous people)</p>	<p>Dominant or majority language</p>	<p>Turks learning German in Germany; Native Americans learning Spanish in Peru</p>
<p>External L2</p> <p><i>(L2 is not used for everyday communication in society and it is learned in a classroom as a language of a distant community or as a lingua franca)</i></p>	<p>Speakers of the dominant language</p>	<p>Foreign or distant language</p>	<p>Japanese learning English in Japan; English speakers in Western Canada learning French</p>
<p>Coexisting L2</p>	<p>Speakers in multilingual environments</p>	<p>Nearby language spoken by a large proportion of population</p>	<p>German speakers learning French in Switzerland</p>
<p>Institutional L2</p> <p><i>(L2 used in official government institutions and domains, but not for everyday communication between its learners)</i></p>	<p>Speakers in multilingual environments</p>	<p>Indigenous or imported language with a wide range of official uses</p>	<p>English in India, Swahili in Tanzania, English in Samoa</p>
<p>Minority L2</p>	<p>Speakers of dominant language</p>	<p>Language of minority group (indigenous or immigrant)</p>	<p>English speakers learning Welsh and Panjabi</p>

Once different types of settings have been defined above, Siegel (2003) claims that the variety of an L2 usually studied is the standard version, which, at least in terms of English as an L2, might not reflect the communicative needs of the learners. This scholar suggests that a typical role-model for a learner of an L2 has normally been a native monolingual speaker of target language. However, the reality shows that the majority of users of English nowadays or, in other words, the majority of possible communicative partners the learners of English as an L2 might have, are non-native bilinguals. Cook (1999) agrees with Siegel (2003) on the subject of “native speakerism” and even suggests that proficient L2 speakers of English are better models to be used for L2 learners, instead of the native speakers.

In terms of foreign language acquisition (especially English) and social constraints, it is also very relevant to evoke such crucial notions as status, power, prestige and social identity that interact with each other and influence learner’s attitude towards L2 and thus, govern his motivation and determine the degree of success. A number of sociolinguists share the opinion of social identity being tightly knit with one’s linguistic and cultural identity (Cook, 1999; Gardner and Clement, 1990; Siegel, 2003; Peirce, 1995, and others.). The degree of prestige and social importance given to a certain L2 determines its status and often, as it is the case with English as L2, associates this L2 to power. Consequently, individuals striving to acquire this L2 are, in reality, striving to obtain a place within their society that would imply more power and, alongside with power, would give them prestige and higher status. In terms of identity, as suggested by Peirce (1995: 14), this paradigm can be described in the following way:

“Language learners, like other people, have complex, non-static social identities which depend on both social structures and day-to-day social interaction. The efforts learners are willing to invest in acquiring the L2 are closely bound up with their changing social identities as well as the returns they expect to receive”.

In other words, Peirce (1995) claims that a proposition to acquire an L2 can be compared to the decision to make an investment into one's future, where the benefits of such an investment can be enjoyed in a form of a higher social status and more power. The proper concept of "investment" in terms of FLA was introduced by Peirce (1995) as a development of Bourdieu (1997, as claimed in Siegel, 2003) idea of "language as cultural capital", where the intricate relationship between power and identity are treated as concepts proper to the field of FLA. Further, the desire to obtain the linguistic ability associated with social triumph and one's future triumphant social identity could, therefore, be one of the most significant motivation drives a learner might have nowadays. For instance, Dörnyei's (2009) "Motivational Ideal L2 Self System" is one of the recent theories, which attempts to combine some aspects of the well-known concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation into one model focused on one's future self-representation, or social identity as a main motivator for FLA. This theory is explained and exemplified in further sections of this study devoted to FLA and motivation.

Further, the prestige of a certain L2 in a certain community is determined mainly by the characteristics of the "sociocultural milieu", where such factors as the L2 being widely-represented in society or bilingualism being a highly appreciated skill enter into play. (Siegel, 2003:187) These aspects have been analysed extensively by Gardner (1983, 1985, 1988), as a part of his "socioeducational model". This model was used to analyse the L2 acquisition through formal instruction in a classroom environment and Gardner has revealed that sociocultural milieu has direct effect on learners' attitudes towards the target community and, hence, also the degree of motivation a learner might have. According to Siegel, (2003) this model considered two possible outcomes of L2

acquisition: linguistic, related to the level of one's L2 proficiency acquired, and non-linguistic, related to re-evaluation of learner's vision of himself at the expense of the new cultural and social concepts acquired.

3.1.3. English as Global Language

As the present study deals with some aspects of English as an international language and the importance attributed to this language within the sphere of education nowadays, it seems only logical that the notion of English as global language should be clarified. According to Crystal (2003), a language achieves a global status when it acquires an international recognition due a special role attached to it in every country. Thus, apart from having a mother tongue status for a great number of speakers, a global language has to be taken up by the speakers of different languages either as a co-official language or as a priority second language to be acquired within the educational system. It would be relevant to mention here that English does meet these requirements as it keeps spreading all around the globe establishing itself as a co-official language in quite a number of countries (e.g. some African states) and, definitely, as a priority foreign language to be learned worldwide. Graddol (2006) in his discussion of changes within the systems of modern education suggests that English has become viewed as a basic skill to be acquired in school and many countries have incorporated this language in their educational systems not as a foreign language of choice, but as a subject with the same importance as mother tongue or numeracy. More than that, the demographic changes within world societies, as well as the globalization of world economy has caused, as claimed by Graddol (2006) a radical change in the sphere of university education, which, in its turn, has influenced school education. He claims that the trend the modern university education has been experiencing for the past decades is global competition with English being used as lingua franca within the academic domain.

Drawing on statistics provided by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 100 leading world universities are located in English-speaking countries and provide education in English. This fact motivates universities in non-English speaking countries to provide instruction in English and thus, such systems as Content Based Language Integrated Learning (hereinafter CLIL) have recently become rather popular (Graddol, 2006). To illustrate his point, Graddol (2006:74) quotes The Economist:

“The top universities are citizens of an international academic marketplace with one global academic currency, one global labour force, and increasingly one global language, English. They are also, increasingly, citizens of a global economy, sending their best graduates to work for multinational companies. The creation of global universities was spearheaded by the Americans; now everybody else is trying to get in on the act”. (The Economist, 8 September, 2005, as appears in Graddol, 2006:74)

Apart from the university students and professors, young researchers nowadays also take advantage of English being an international academic language and travel in order to enrich themselves with international experience. This movement of students and professionals was even further facilitated by the Bologna Process in 1999, that standardised higher education according to UK model. Standardisation has also happened within the domain of second language proficiency, English language included, due to European Union Framework for Learning Languages, where every level of foreign language proficiency is described according to the skills and abilities a learner should possess and graded on a scale between A1, or basic rudimentary knowledge, to C2, near-nativeness. European Union has also stated, as a part of its linguistic policy, that an ideal EU citizen should dominate 3 European languages: his mother tongue plus two more foreign languages (<http://europa.eu>). This regulation has become a standard within the language policies of countries members of European Union and two foreign languages have been incorporated into school educational programmes of these countries ever since.

David Graddol (2006) considers that these major changes within the sphere of education are the reaction to the fact that English now is on its fourth phase of development that has instated itself after the Period of Middle English and has been baptised as Global English period. The reason why English and not any other modern language is presently gaining status of a global language can be explained by the overpowering influence of Great Britain and, later in history, United States on the world's politics and economy. According to Crystal (2003), the making of global language depends predominantly on the political and military power of its speakers. However, apart from having a certain nation force its language upon the rest of the world as a result of its political and economic activity, over the recent decades society has developed a necessity for globally shared means of cross-cultural communication. Crystal (2003), points out that English nowadays is extensively used as a language franca to assure communication between the nations that do not share any common language. According to Graddol (2006), the migration between countries has increased over the recent decade and no fluency in a national language is required to obtain working positions and lead normal life in a foreign country as long as one has a high level of English. In addition, as it has already been stated above, international academic and business communities currently employ English as a vehicle for communication fostering cooperation among the professionals all around the globe. Furthermore, as Crystal (2003) suggests, the modern era can be characterized by a technological boom that makes the immediate communication across the globe possible. Thus, the use of a global language as means of cross-cultural communication nowadays has been made both necessary and highly feasible.

Notwithstanding the benefits of a global language in the sphere of international communication, there are certain possible risks single language predominance in the

world can bring about. Crystal (2003) argues that these risks can be enhanced by the idea of global language generating a certain type of elite society that would exclude any member who does not master the language. However, this argument can be instantly rejected due to some research findings in the area of second language acquisition. The research has shown that, if need be, a global language can be acquired easily and used for different purposes in a parallel with a mother tongue of a speaker. Some of the other fears provoked by the global language emergence bring about the subject of reluctance of native speakers to acquire any other foreign language as they expect to be understood in their mother tongue anywhere they happen to travel. Crystal (2003) supports this idea by mentioning the unwillingness of English native speakers to learn any other language provoked by the general lack of interest towards foreign language learning fostered by the rapid development of English as a global language. Nevertheless, this scholar claims that the trend for acquiring a foreign language by the native English speakers has been making its slow entrance into British and American society mainly due to the business relations these countries has been establishing with the nations where English is not so widely used/understood. Another fear associated to the development of one common global language is the death of minority languages. This argument rests upon the idea of smaller languages not being able to compete with the global one in terms of the number of speakers among the future generations, which, eventually, would lead to a linguistic death. However, Crystal (2003) is rather critical of this idea as he claims that the maintenance of minority languages falls into direct responsibility of the speakers and the preservation of the endangered tongues is mainly down to the language policies of respective governments. Thus, the influence of global language upon the situation of minority languages in the world would only lead to the death of the latter if the respective language policies allow it. David Graddol (2006) agrees to this assumption

and claims that English as global language is not directly responsible for the decrease in the number of modern languages. This scholar suggests that : “The downward trend in language diversity became before the rise of English as a global lingua franca. English has a great impact on national languages, higher up the linguistic food chain.” (Graddol, 2006:60)

3.1.4. Linguistic Imperialism

After the discussion of the implications English has as a global language, as well as some fears attached to it, it would be interesting to turn to the one of the major risks this phenomenon is claimed to have. Phillipson (1996) evokes the definition of imperialism provided by Galtung, which states six mutually related forms of imperialism: economic, political, military, communicative, cultural and social. For Galtung, imperialism is “ a type of relationship whereby one society can dominate another” (Galtung as quoted in Phillipson, 1996:52). Another important term to define while speaking about language imperialism is linguicism, which, according to Phillipson (1996:55), is a social practice that “involves representation of the dominant language, to which desirable characteristics are attributed, for purposes of inclusion, and the opposite for dominated languages, for purposes of exclusion.” Linguistic imperialism, so often attributed to the present status of the English language, is claimed to be a sub-type of linguicism and an integrated part of any form of modern imperialist practices, be it cultural, educational, social or economic ones (Phillipson, 1996). In terms of modern imperialist practices, Phillipson and Galtung claim that Anglophone cultural standards gradually invade the rest of the world filling into the “gaps” of other cultures (e.g.: terminology used in ICT technologies and computer language) and, sometimes, substituting the existing cultural trends. Another example of cultural imperialism could be the gradual change of social

ideas in terms of standards of professionalism imposed by mainly American patrons of behaviour. The type of behaviour and attitude expected nowadays from, let's say, a Spanish office manager is radically different from what was expected from an office worker twenty years ago when Spain was not under such influence of American culture. In this connection, Phillipson (1996), claims that Anglophones are somehow viewed nowadays as a source of professionalism, which, apart from its other implications, is largely applied to professional, academic training and ELT. To illustrate, ELT methodology and teaching materials are largely developed by English speaking countries ("the centre" according to Galtung quoted in Phillipson, 1996) and then exported to the rest of the world ("the periphery", *ibid.*). More than that, the general prestige of the native models of language teaching diffused by "inter-state actors" (Preiswerk as quoted in Phillipson, 1996:54), or native speakers as teachers, seems to be the prevailing pattern of English language teaching worldwide notwithstanding the current situation of English being a vehicle for global communication as opposed to the tool for integration within native English-speaking community. One attempt to break such a pattern has been a consolidation of an alternative teaching method denominated as English as Lingua Franca method, or ELF (Graddol, 2006:87). In the basis of ELF there is an assumption that a new role model for a learner of English should be a fluent bilingual or multilingual speaker who uses English mainly for communication with other multilingual individuals on an international level, and not with native speakers only. The teaching methodology thus, should be varied and certain aspects of pronunciation and grammar that are normally not used by the majority of non-native speakers of English and which do not inhibit communication should not be taught, or at least, demanded from learners as a norm of fluency (Graddol, 2006:87). The determination of such features of English is still in process and the international

organism denominated VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English) has been established to consolidate and analyse examples of English learner language on its high stage of development to accomplish this task.

3.1.5. Conclusion

This chapter revealed some relevant aspect of social context for L2 acquisition, which are believed to shape learner's attitudes towards the L2 in general, as well as to the L2 learning environment in particular. To begin with, it turned to Siegel's (2003) classification of different types of sociolinguistic settings for L2 acquisition that define learning context, which are as follows: Dominant L2, External L2 (the case of the present study), Coexisting L2 and Minority L2. This researcher also offered a clear definition of a present potential role-model for L2 acquisition, which should be a non-native bilingual instead of an existing native monolingual. Further, the chapter presented a list of some other assumptions that constrain L2 acquisition from the social point of view, such as the idea of social and cultural identity being tightly connected to the linguistic identity of an individual (Cook, 1999; Gardner and Clement, 1990; Siegel, 2003; Peirce, 1995, and others). As far as other factors influencing motivation towards L2 acquisition, prestige, status and power associated with L2 knowledge and skills was mentioned in the chapter. These are the factors, which, according to Gardner's (1983,1985,1988) "Socioeducational Model" shape the attitudes towards a certain L2 within a " sociocultural milieu", or a certain society where L2 being learned. In other words, Gardner suggests that the attitudes towards the L2, positive ones when induced by the potential prestige and power associated with L2, or negative ones can determine the degree of motivation and success that members of this society have when learning this L2. Further, Peirce (1995) comes up with an idea of linguistic "investment", when

L2 is acquired as a certain “investment” for a better future position within a society, induced by the beliefs that exist in this society as to the L2 prestige.

Finally, the chapter also touched upon the notion of English as a global language, which appears to be rather relevant nowadays, when this language is being acquired worldwide due to its international status and prestige (Graddol, 2006). As stated by Graddol, 2006), English has become a basic skill required worldwide and it has obtained a status of lingua franca in the academic ambit and the ambit of higher education. (Graddol, 2006; Crystal, 2003). The international importance of English has also been recognized by the modern European Union linguistic policies. It should not come as a surprise, in this respect, that such an international success of one particular language also trails a number of important risks behind itself, such as linguistic imperialism or a possible extinction of minor languages (Phillipson, 1996; Graddol, 2006). The chapter is finalized by the discussion of the existing teaching methodology and the emphasis is made on the changing character of this domain, where such teaching methodology as ELF (English as Lingua Franca) is gaining influence.

3.2. FLA AND MOTIVATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

3.2.1. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the leading theories on FLA and motivation as it has, in line with many other factors and constraints discussed in the previous sections, always been in the centre of FLA research. First of all, the chapter focuses on defining the profile of a modern learner and the motives such a learner might have to acquire a language additional to his mother tongue. Then, the most influential classical and modern theoretical developments on motivation are presented in detail, namely Gardner’s and Lambert’s (1972) integrative motivation, Gardner’s (1972) instrumental motivation,

Yashima's (2002, 2009) "international posture" and, finally, Dörnyei's (2009) Ideal L2 Motivational Self System. The chapter also presents the latest developments within Dörnyei's concept, as well as mentions certain criticism it has faced in the field of FLA so far.

3.2.2. Integrative and Instrumental Motivation

Within the framework of L2 motivation theory, integrative orientation and instrumental orientation concepts could be considered as the two most powerful and most controversial ones. To begin with, the integrative orientation concept, put forward by Gardner and Lambert (1972: 132), can be described as "reflecting a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group". For Gardner and Lambert, the process of a second language acquisition could be compared to the process undergone by an infant when acquiring a mother tongue. In other words, the willingness to integrate into and from a part of a linguistic community of one's parents can be compared to the desire and motivation to integrate into an L2 linguistic community while acquiring its language (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). The concept of Integrative motivation has been questioned and criticized by many scholars and two main forms of integrative orientation were defined, namely a "strong integrative motivation", meaning a desire to fully integrate into a target community and to get identified with it and a "weak integrative motivation", which was defined as a sense of affiliation and interest towards the target community (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009: 2). Moreover, according to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009:2), the strong integrative motivation was put to test in 1983 by Clement and Kruidinier (Clement and Kruidinier, 1983) and little evidence was found in favour of this concept.

However, the concept of integrativeness as motivation for L2 acquisition has found itself under most intense criticism during the recent years, when motivational researchers, likewise the sociolinguists have realized that the identity of a modern learner has changed dramatically. Whilst some 30 years ago learning a second language could be motivated by a genuine interest to the culture and mentality of its speakers, nowadays English has become a tool for international communication within a globalized society. Moreover, the ownership of English language does not belong to a specific community of speakers as the nature of English language is now shared between the multiple varieties of “Englishes” around the world as well with the concept of global language it has acquired over the decades. Thus, the concept of integrative motivation as a driving power of learner’s interest towards the language seems to be rather doubting. This ‘special status’ of English as a language for international communication has provoked a vast array of new theories on motivation other than integrative concept. In the centre of the majority of these theories is the learner’s identity and the role that English would play in the process of development of one’s identity. According to, for instance, Yashima (2002:57), a modern learner is known to have developed an ‘international posture’, or international outlook where English is conceptualized as a vehicle of communication with everything foreign or international, not only the native speakers of English, but the whole ‘foreign’ or ‘external world’ community, as opposed to ‘home’ or ‘internal’ one. Another motivational theory that places a learner’s identity in the centre of motivational constraints for language acquisition is a sociolinguistic theory put forward by Norton (as appears in Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009: 4). According to Norton, the identity of an L2 learner has to integrate a language learner and the language learning context. For this researcher, the concept of identity translates as the relationship between a learner and the world across the time

and the space and within the dimensions of present and the envisaged possible future. Thus, Norton, same as Peirce (1995), develops a concept of ‘investment’, where the acquisition of a foreign language is seen as an investment for the learner’s future identity.

In line with the integrative motivation, instrumental motivation has long been considered as another strong driver for foreign language acquisition. According to Gardner (1972), instrumental motivation relates more to the communicative value of a foreign language and it is triggered by utilitarian purposes that a learner might conceive for the language he is trying to acquire, for instance those of acquiring a better job position, furthering one’s career or fulfilling some educational requirements. Unlike the concept of integrative motivation, instrumental motivation has not endured such an amount of harsh criticism over the years. However, it has also been revisited numerous times and even amplified. According to Yashima (2009: 145-146), for instance, a motivational drive that is in function in case of a modern EFL learner is dealt with by the concept of “international posture”, which is a merger between the two classical concepts of integrativeness and instrumentality. In other words, since the image of an English-speaking community has undergone a dramatic change over the recent years, it is now identified not only with any of the multiple communities of native English speakers around the world, but also with a whole global community of nations “other than one’s own”. Thus, according to Yashima (2009:146), modern EFL learners share the willingness to communicate and to integrate into the whole global international community using English as a vehicle of communication. In large lines, EFL learners nowadays regard English as more of a lingua franca and do not associate it to any particular community of native speakers: however, an element of integrativeness is still present. Moreover, examining the desire of EFL learners to communicate with the

global society and to integrate into it is believed to be brought about by the instrumental motivation, that tends to translate as the willingness to establish friendship and business relationships with other cultures in order to obtain certain profit. Yashima's theory of "international posture" and the concept of English as lingua franca could be regarded as natural response to the trends of the modern society toward globalization and internalization of cultural identities. European Union linguistic and cultural policies enhance the importance of intercultural dialogue and foreign language acquisition and labour market around the globe seems to adopt a certain multi-lingual and multi-cultural pattern. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that a good command of English as a foreign language and intercultural skills seem to be a mandatory attribute of a contemporary professional. This concept has exercised a strong influence on education as well as on the self-image that a modern language learner, driven by practical needs and personal ambitions might construct of himself. According to the number of the recent theories, exactly this self-image is the main motivational engine in terms of EFL acquisition.

3.2.3. Self-Motivation

Before passing over to the detailed description of L2Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009), that happens to be one of the focal theoretical frameworks used in the present study, it is important to give an overview of another recent theoretical development employed by the study, which deals with learner's capacities to generate self-motivation. Drawing on Bandura and Schunk (1981), Ushioda (Ushioda: 2013) refers to the idea of metalinguistic awareness and metalinguistic skills being important factors for shaping one's learning process and influencing motivation. Ushioda stresses the importance of learner's sense of competence and personal agency for the enhancement of his intrinsic motivation. According to this scholar, the learner's metacognitive discourse or "thinking about thinking" skill is vital for learner's development of control

over his interlanguage and an on-setter for the feeling of “ownership” of a learning process. Ushioda (2013) emphasizes the importance for a learner to be able to analyze his own process of foreign language acquisition and to develop certain skills of self-motivation and competence-assessment, as well as to acquire learner autonomy.

3.2.4. L2 Motivational Self-system

As it has been commented above in the section 2.1., a variety of new concepts have appeared due to the major shift in SLA motivational theory when the main attention has been drawn away from the target culture and community and towards the identity of a language learner. Another powerful theory that seems to be gaining importance is Dörnyei’s concept of The L2 Self Motivational System (Dörnyei, 2009). This concept was born out of a large-scale longitudinal survey of the attitudes that Hungarian students exhibited towards learning such foreign languages as English, German, French, Italian and Russian that Dörnyei and his team of researchers published in 2006 (Dörnyei, 2006). The study has shown that across several years of data collection students have exhibited a unified pattern of attitudes towards learning a foreign language, irrespectively of any of the five languages cited above. The dilemma that Dörnyei and his team encountered was the method of data interpretation that would enclose such concepts as integrativeness, instrumentality and learner’s identity. Such a dilemma was overcome by suggesting a new framework that gave a different vision to the ‘classical’ motivational concepts as integrativeness and instrumentality and was based on the theory of possible selves, first originated in the field of psychology put forward by Markus and Nurius in 1986. As explained in Dörnyei (2009: 11-12), Markus and Nurius (1986) were the first ones to place person’s self-concept from present into future, bringing forward the acknowledgement of the fact that a self-image does not only consist of self-knowledge gathered from the past experiences, but also encloses the

as-yet unrealized potential one believes to have, as well as one's hopes, wishes and fantasies. These scholars spoke of multiple future selves, divided into three basic categories: one's ideas of what he might become, what one wants to become and what one is afraid of becoming. These concepts of the possible one's future selves become, according to Markus and Nurius (1986), the 'future self-guides' and determine individual's behavior and give a certain instrumental character to it as it becomes purposeful (Dörnyei, 2009: 11). Dörnyei, in turn, has translated this psychological theory of multiple selves into linguistics and has applied it to FLA. Thus, the L2 Motivational Self System is formed by three major concepts, which are as follows (Dörnyei, 2009: 29):

4. *Ideal L2 Self*, which is associated to the learner's image of himself in the future as a fluent L2 speaker. In case a learner sees himself as an ideal fluent speaker of L2 in the future, this image can serve as a powerful motivational force as a learner would want to reduce the discrepancy between his current self and the imagined ideal self. This aspect of the theory agrees with the theory of integrativeness and internalized instrumentality, as a learner is supposed to be driven by the desire to integrate with his own future ideal self and take practical actions to arrive to the state he imagines.
5. *Ought-to L2 Self*, which concerns the qualities a learner believes he ought to have in order to meet the expectations of society on his way towards his ideal self- image, as well as to avoid possible negative outcomes of his acts. Here, again, the internalized instrumental motives can be traced as a part of the framework.
6. *L2 Learning Experience*, which deals with the motives related to the immediate learning environment a learner finds himself in, such as the classroom, the teacher, the fellow students, or the experience of success or failure in the process of acquisition.

Therefore, the new vision on integrativeness within the framework of Dörnyei's research has shifted from the desire to integrate with the target language community to the desire to integrate with one's ideal self-image, who is a fluent speaker of the target language and an efficient communicator with the members of the target community. In other words, the focus in terms of motivation has become more learner identity-centred for the reason that it has turned from the outer motivational factors, as the target community, to the inner one, as one's personal image of himself. What concerns instrumentality, Dörnyei (2009: 28) postulates that being a successful professional who masters a foreign language naturally forms a part of one's ideal future self, which means that instrumentality is naturally a part of the motivational force generated by the desired future L2 self. However, Dörnyei, dwelling on Higgins's (1987, 1998) ideas, makes a clear distinction between two types of instrumental motivation: the one related to the Ideal L2 self and the one related to the Ought-to self. To illustrate, in case the acquisition of a foreign language is motivated by the desire to obtain promotion at work, it is assigned a "*promotion*" character and forms a part of the Ideal L2 self. On the contrary, if the acquisition of a foreign language is motivated by the fear of failing an exam or losing one's job, it is thought to have a "*prevention*" character and is associated to the ought-to self (Higgins, 1987, 1998 as appears in Dörnyei, 2009: 28). Needless to say, that in both of the cases the motivational flow is characterized by instrumental interest of improving one's current life situation or, at least, not lowering its quality.

It is important to stress here that the innovation this theory brings, apart from integrating a theory from the field of psychology into the field of linguistics and foreign language acquisition, is the fact that it dwells on the goal theory⁵ and considerably extends it.

According to Pizzolato (2006: 58) as cited in Dörnyei (2009: 15): "Unlike goal theory,

⁵ A theory in the field of psychology that defines goal-setting and task-involvement as motivational engines (Ford and Nichols, 1987).

possible selves are explicitly related to a long-term developmental goal involving goal setting, volition (via adherence to associated schemas), and goal achievement, but are larger than any one or combination of these constructs". So, according to Dörnyei (2009:15-16), an Ideal Future L2 Self can be defined as a self-relevant and self-defining goal envisaged not only as a desired future state, but also as a state experienced in present through emotions and imagery. Consequently, the importance of imagination and imagery comes to the foreground when we deal with Dörnyei 's Motivation L2 Self System, likewise it has always been a vital part of Markus and Nurius's theory on motivational self-systems, which was the first one to bring fantasy into the self-concept construct. Dörnyei (2009:17) quotes Markus (2006: xii) in his paper on the L2 Motivational Self System:

"We were impressed by the fact that people spend an enormous amount of time envisioning their futures. We know that this imaginative work has powerful consequences. Possible selves can work to energize actions and to buffer the current self from everyday dragons and many less overt indignities as well...In the U. S., it is both a bright light and a moral imperative to tailor one's own version of American Dream. The notion that one should "dream on", "keep the dream alive" , and that if you dream it, you can become it" is a critical element in the world's cultural imagination about the U. S....People across a wide array of contexts are capable and willing to generate possible selves."

Having described the structural parts that form Dörnyei 's L2 Motivational System and having stressed the importance of imagery and imagination that provides us with the idea that Ideal selves in general and Ideal L2 selves in particular are a natural outcome of channeled human fantasy, it is important now to explain how L2 motivational self-system is actually put into action. Dörnyei refers to the self-discrepancy theory (Higgins's, 1987, 1999) as the framework that could explain the functioning of an Ideal L2 Self Image as a motivational guide. According to Higgins, an individual strives to minimize the gap that separates his current self-image from the one he desires to have in the future and the course of action that he adopts is determined by the envisaged end-

state of getting completely identified with the fantasized self-representation. Further, according to Dörnyei (2009:19), there are six conditions that can enhance or hinder the offset of the L2 motivation self-guide, which are as follows: 1) availability of an elaborate and vivid future self-image, 2) perceived plausibility, 3) harmony between the ideal and ought selves, 4) necessary activation/priming, 5) accompanied procedural strategies, 6) the offsetting impact of a feared self.

Ruvulo and Markus (1992), as referred to by Dörnyei (2009:19), insist that for generating powerful motivation an individual must have a vivid and elaborate self-image, and not just a weak idea of himself in the future. According to these scholars, the more detailed the future self-image is, the more likely it is to stir up the necessary motivational response. In addition, these scholars postulate that a future self-image can become a powerful motivational driver only in case an individual sees the desired state as perfectly feasible and feels in control as to the strategies to achieve it. Further, Dörnyei (2009) stresses the importance of the two possible selves (the Ideal one and the Ought-to one), to be in harmony and to function as a whole, not against each other. That is, the motivational flow would be more consistent and powerful if both Ideal Future self-image and the Ought-to self-image were focused on the same characteristics an individual aims to possess. For instance, obtaining a good level of foreign language proficiency could be considered as a good quality to have by the current environment a certain language learner finds himself in, as well as it could form part of his ideal future self-image. Thus, both Ought to Self and the Ideal Future Self would be sharing one characteristic and the motivation towards obtaining this characteristic would, therefore, be uni-channeled and powerful. Moreover, once a vivid image of a future self is elaborated, believed in and appreciated by significant others, it has to be activated. However, not all the self-images created become active motivators for future action as

only those that get triggered by some self-relevant events in the life of an individual have the chance of becoming so. On the top of that, a motivational self-image can easily remain only a fantasy if it does not come with a certain stratagem designed to take an individual from the point of departure (his current self-image) to the final destination (the desired future self-image) (Dörnyei, 2009:21). Finally, Dörnyei (2009:22), supported by the earlier research of Oyserman and Markus (1990), argues that the motivational flow could be considerably enhanced in case an individual finds himself between the two possible self-images: the attractive one (desired future self) and the feared one that threatens to instate itself once the ideal self fails to do so. Dörnyei illustrates this concept by giving an example from the academic life, where it is often the fear to miss the deadline for a project that provides us with necessary motivation to work hard and not the imagined success the project might have when finished.

The recent developments of Dörnyei's motivational L2 Self System (Dörnyei, 2009) can be summarized by the concept of Directed Motivational Current (hereinafter DMC) (Dörnyei: 2013.) A DMC is a motivational drive which is different from any type of on-going general motivation a student might have, like, for instance, learning the language for one's possible future career or for any other L2 future-self- related goal. Dörnyei defines it in the following way:

“A DMC is (...) a highly intense burst of motivational energy travelling along a specific pathway towards a clearly defined goal; it is over and on top of the steady motivation which a good students will exhibit throughout the year.” (Dörnyei: 2013)

In other words, a DMC is a temporary and very highly-powerful motivational force that functions within an already-established learning path and takes a learner to a higher level of interlanguage development in a much shorter period of time than it would have taken him to reach it at his customary learning pace. Such highly powerful motivational

momentum can capture a student when he defines a clear short-term goal that he is very willing to reach. In an attempt to illustrate the concept of DMC, Dörnyei gives examples of a person who sets a goal of losing weight and reaches his goal by changing his daily routine and eating habits adequately. Exploiting this example further, one can presume that a healthy lifestyle and regular exercise is something that we all consider positive. Thus, this notion could be a long-term, “always there” motivation each of us might have in order to change our lifestyles. However, only do we succeed in actually doing so when DMC focused on the clear goal of weight loss comes into play. Apart from a clear goal-orientedness, a DMC has other dimensions to bear in mind, such as: “salient and facilitative structure”(there should be a clear starting point and a clear system of steps to follow for an individual to reach the set goal), “clear perception of progress” (a learner must feel that he is progressing on the way towards his goal), “positive emotional loading”, and, finally, participant ownership of the learning process and perceived behavioral control over the progress that is being made towards the goal. Referring to the dimension of ownership, it has to be stressed that a learner must believe that he disposes of all the capabilities that are needed for reaching his goal and the state of achieving the set purpose is fairly feasible.

3.2.5. Benefits and Threats of the Ideal L2 Self Framework

Macintyre, Mackinnon and Clement (2009:43-65) in their article on the connection between the recent theoretical movements within the field of EFL motivation and the previous research identify three clear advantages, as well as six potential threats in Dörnyei’s theory of Motivational L2 Self system. The first two benefits of L2 self system in terms of motivation are linked to the fact that it revisits the traditional concept of integrativeness by removing the focus of a learner away from the target language group and society on to his own future personality. Thus, the educational application of

ideal L2 self system is rather optimistic as a potential learner is not anymore obliged to adopt certain fixed characteristics of the target culture, but to integrate a foreign language into his own personality and mentality. More than that, Ideal L2 self system as a motivator does not focus on any native speaker community in particular and learner's progress is not evaluated according to the success or failure to integrate into any particular culture. Finally, the third clear benefit of Dörnyei's theory is, according to Macintyre et al. (2009:43-65), is the fact that it comprises multiple goals that a language learner might have in terms of his language learning activity. As quoted by Macintyre et al. (2009:52), Dörnyei himself points out that: "hardly any research has been done to examine how people deal with multiple actions and goals, how they prioritize between them and how the hierarchies of superordinate and subordinate goals are structured". Thus, language learning is a part of one's personal development and a personality of a learner is constantly reshaped in the process of acquiring new skills, which explains a constant change of one's goals and motives to do certain things. In this connection, the Ideal L2 self system and its open-ended character cater very well for the needs that a language learner might have in terms of perceiving his own learning and its goals. (Macintyre et al., 2009:52).

As to the three possible dangers the Ideal L2 self system as a framework for research on motivation might have, there might be a slight problem with the measurement of a possible self and the definition of one. In other words, what one's possible Ideal L2 self is exactly and how the degree of motivation connected with it can be measured is still an open issue. Another concern is the proliferation of terminology within the research on motivational L2 self and there is an obvious risk of losing the big picture of language learning in general if one becomes too occupied with the nuances of possible selves as a linguistic and psychological notion. Further, according to Macintyre et al. (2009: 54-

55), a possible self-image in general and an Ideal L2 self- image in particular depend greatly on such cultural aspects of a language learner as his ethnic belonging, social identity, as well as his mentality. As a consequence, no generalizations can be made about the nature of an ideal L2 self for the sake of drawing global conclusions on motivational patterns learners around the globe might have. Another threat that an Ideal L2 self-image might have in terms of motivation is, as it has previously been mentioned by Markus and Nurius (1986) and Dörnyei (2009), its proximity to the concept of a goal. Though Dörnyei (2009) specifies that an Ideal L2 self-image is not a goal, but a future vision of oneself, it still shares certain characteristics with a notion of a goal. That is, an Ideal L2 self-image is only activated as a motivational drive if it is perceived by a learner as challenging and plausible at the same time. More than that, likewise the goal theory, Dörnyei's theory of self-image as a motivator makes an emphasis on the clear plan of action that a motivated learner has to have in order to commence and truly own his learning practice. Thus, an Ideal L2 self-image without a clear course of action attached to it and mentalized by a potential learner would not become a motivational force. Moreover, according to Macintyre et al. (2009:56), an L2 self-image is likely to change over the time and there is no guarantee that it always will include the same characteristics in terms of foreign language proficiency. Bearing this fact in mind, one can assume that an ideal L2 self might change the intensity of its motivational force in terms of language learning over the time. Finally, there is also the issue of the relationship between the notion of possible selves and one's social identity. How an image of one's Ideal L2 self might form a part of the identity-shaping processes is still open, as a self-image always depends on the way an individual construes himself and the others within his reality (MacIntyre et al., 2009:57).

To finish this section on motivation in EFL acquisition, I would like to adopt Macintyre's et al. (2009:43-65) outlook on the current research on motivation in the field of foreign language acquisition. According to this scholar, it is of utmost importance now, that the research on motivation is on its new level of development, not to disdain all the previous research done in this field for the benefit of the new ideas. Thus, it would be beneficial for any research in EFL that concerns itself with motivation to revisit the previous research in this sphere and attempt to reintegrate it into the new developments, instead of just applying the newest theoretical frameworks, such as, for instance, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self can be.

3.2.6. Motivation and “Life Story” Concept

Another theoretical framework of analyzing motivational constraints of a language learner, which is inspired on the discipline of psychology and ties in with Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self-System, is McAdams' (2001) “life story” concept. As explained in Haidt (2006: 142), in his article “The Physiology of Life Stories”, McAdams (2001) speaks about the three levels of human personality: the lower level of basic traits of character influenced by our genes; the second level of “characteristic adaptations” where the basic traits of our character meet person's environment and behavioral adaptations take place; and the third level of personality where “life story” is shaped. According to McAdams (2001), a “life story” is an “evolving story that integrates a reconstructed past, perceived present and anticipated future into a coherent and vitalizing life myth” (Haidt, 2006: 143). Thus, a “life story” that we create with ourselves as a central figure is a reflection of the way we perceive the world around us and ourselves in it, tied into a coherent process that has a certain beginning and a certain identified goal towards which we are moving. In this case, Dörnyei's (2009) L2 motivational self-system can be seen as an integrative part of this “life story”, where a

language learner sees himself as an individual with a certain level of education and cultural development who speaks English in addition to his mother tongue. McAdams (2001) suggests that our life stories are created using our own interpretation of our behavior, as well as using the comments others make about us. Consequently, one can suppose that a life story is a certain, deeply subjective, confabulation of reality and our role in it, which helps us to make sense of the reality we face and all the events we go through. Thus, it is only logical to suppose that each individual desires to be satisfied with his life story and if there is a certain detail, which does not seem to be attractive to our self-perception, we establish a goal to change it and we look for mechanisms to achieve such a goal. In other words, an individual who perceives himself to be a fluent English language speaker as a part of his self-image would be looking for mechanisms to achieve such fluency. Hence, the need of every individual for confabulation of one's life story that would satisfy him can also be seen as a potent motivational force for bettering oneself in certain aspects and getting close to one's perfect image. Needless to say that such an image could be linked to foreign language fluency. Finally, McAdams's (2001) "life story" theory could be seen as a larger framework of analyzing personality development, which could enclose frameworks based on the multiple selves, such as Dörnyei's (2009) Motivational L2 Self system. This theory has been described here as it is extensively employed further in the paper to discuss the findings of the research and to suggest educational implications for the results of the study.

3.2.7. Conclusion

As it can be gathered from this section, the research within the field of motivation nowadays is very active and many new concepts are being introduced as the motives to

acquire languages in addition to one's mother tongue are changing dramatically. It is Yashima (2002, 2009), who clearly defines an "international posture" of a modern language learner, where an L2 is acquired as a tool to communicate with the "foreign" or "external" world as opposed to "home" and "internal" circle. Thus, a language learner nowadays does not strive to integrate within the target community whose language he is acquiring, but aims to acquire a tool for international communication with people from different cultures. As a consequence, the concept of "integrative motivation", introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1972) seems to have lost its initial force. However, another classical motivational concept, also belonging to Gardner (1972), still maintains its positions within the field of FLA and motivation - the concept of "instrumental motivation", which presupposes that learner's desire to acquire an L2 is driven by certain utilitarian purposes.

One of the latest developments in the field of FLA and motivation, however, aims to unite the two classical Gardner's concepts on motivation, the integrative one and the instrumental one with the concept of learner's identity. Dörnyei (2009), drawing on Markus and Nurius' (1986) developments in the field of psychology, comes up with his new revolutionary framework of L2 Motivational Self System for an L2 acquisition. This framework presupposes that a learner is motivated to acquire an L2 because of his desire to get integrated with his future ideal L2 self, as a part of his future imagined self-image. Using the ideas of Higgins (1987, 1999), Dörnyei (2009) suggests that a potential learner visualizes his future image as a fluent L2 speaker and thus, desiring to minimize the gap between such a future image of himself and his present situation, gets motivated to acquire the L2. Apart from a motivational L2 self-image, Dörnyei (2009) defines other two components of his framework, which are: the ought-to L2 self, or an image of oneself expected of a learner by his immediate society, and the L2 learning

experience, which consists of such aspects as the classroom atmosphere, the personality of a teacher or learner's aptitude to acquire certain L2. Dörnyei (2009) specifies, that it is of the utmost importance that learner's ought-to-L2 self and learner's ideal L2 self shared the majority of characteristics for the successful development of motivational force. Other important conditions for the onset of the Ideal L2 self motivational force are as follows: "1) availability of an elaborate and vivid future self-image; 2) perceived plausibility; 3) harmony between the ideal and ought selves; 4) necessary activation/priming; 5) accompanied procedural strategies; 6) the offsetting impact of a feared self" (Dörnyei, 2009:19). The most recent development in Dörnyei's framework was presented in the Symposium on motivation in an L2 classroom, on the 10.05.13, which was the concept of a "Directed Motivational Current"(hereinafter DMC). A DMC, according to Dörnyei (2013), is a short-term motivational drive that works within an already established learning path and is able to take a learner much further on the continuum of his interlanguage development than his customary learning pace would have done. The onset and the ultimate success of a DMC is dependent on the following conditions: "salient and facilitative structure" (clear onset); "clear perception of progress"; "positive emotional loading"; "participant ownership of the learning process", "perceived behavioral control over the progress" (Dörnyei, 2013). In line with this theory, Ushioda (Symposium, 2013), drawing on Bandura and Shunk (1981), emphasizes the importance of learner's control of his own progress and claims that a learner should develop a certain "metalinguistic awareness" of his own learning process.

Finally, Macintyre (2009), singles out three positive aspects of Dörnyei's Ideal L2 Motivational Self System, as well as cautions about six possible risks it might have. As to the positive aspects, according to Macintyre (2009), Dörnyei's framework manages to change the focus of motivational flow from a certain particular target community, to

the learner's future personality, thus getting rid of a great amount of stress as to teaching methods and evaluation of success. Another advantage is the fact that Dörnyei's framework allows multiple goals for language acquisition, as well as presupposes that those goals might change over the time as learner's personality develops and his image of himself changes. As to the potential threats, Macintyre (2009) warns about the difficulty of definition, measurement and generalization such concept as ideal L2 self might present, as it is highly personal, always changing and very dependent on the culture of a learner. Macintyre is also concerned about the proliferation of terminology within the construct itself, which, in his view, might lead to a great amount of confusion in the future. This scholar wonders about the apparent closeness this framework has to the "goal theory" (Pizzolato, 2006) as well as about the nature of relationship between Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self system and social identity shaping mechanisms, which is still open to investigation. Finally, McAdams (2001) "life story" theory can be viewed as a larger framework for personality development analysis, where the Ideal L2 Motivational Self-system can be considered as an integrative part of one's self-image shaping processes within the conception of reality each individual tends to define for himself.

4. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

4.1. General Description of the Context

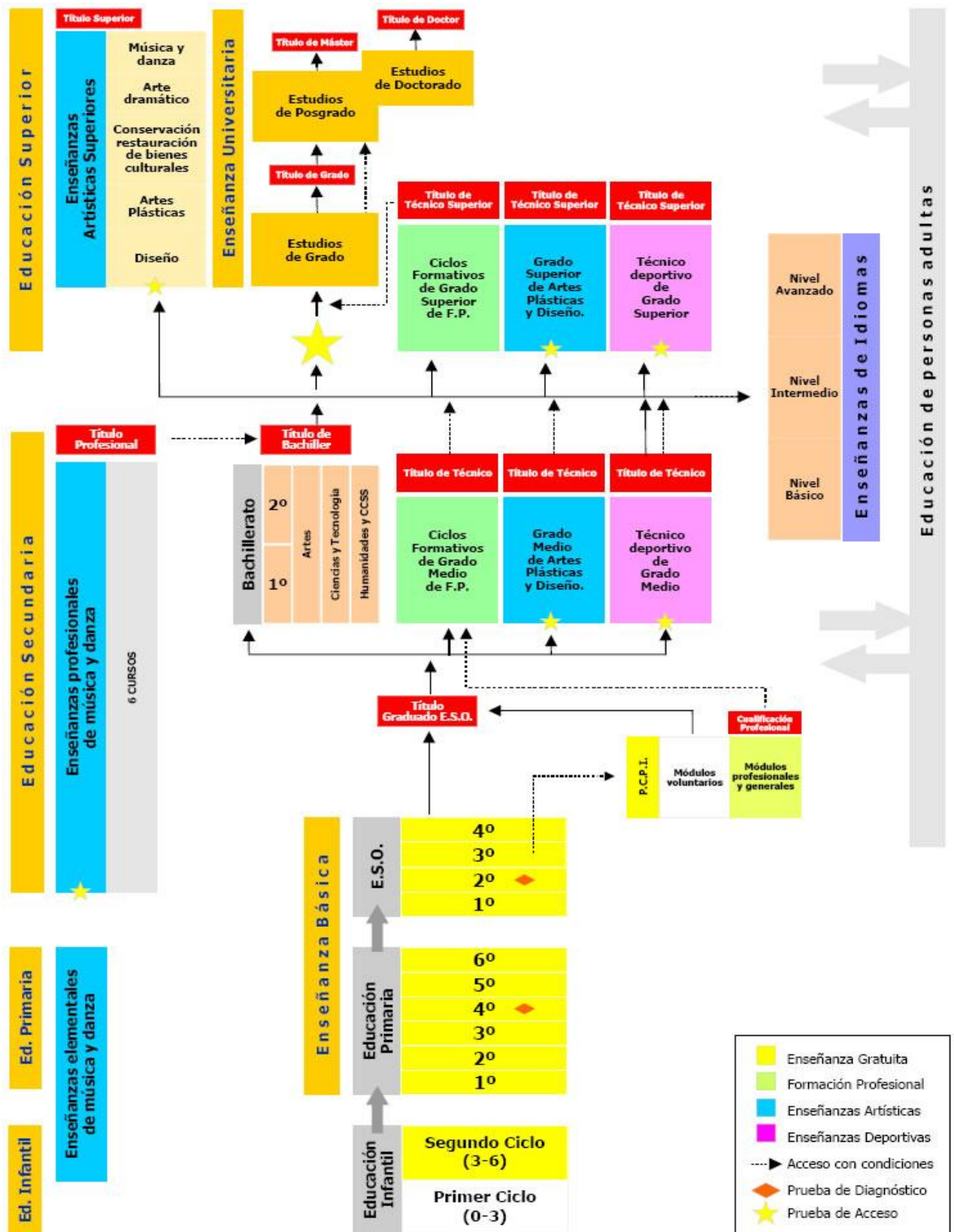
The present investigation aims at conducting a detailed analysis of learners' interlanguage development adopting English as second language students aged 14 to 19 as subjects of the study. Learners in question receive a regular input of English within their secondary education programme as students of a private-own educational establishment in Madrid. Students are native Spanish speakers and according to their timetable, they face from four to seven hours of EFL input weekly. According to school policy, EFL classes include traditional EFL instruction, as well as English literature classes and preparatory classes for Cambridge exams assimilated in the school as a means of external evaluation. Further, the school provides extra exposure to English language by offering Society and Culture and Local and Global Citizenship as subjects being taught through English on the regular basis. Finally, students of 1st grade of higher secondary studies (17 year olds under analysis) have an option of choosing an extra 4-hour-per-week class focused on the improvement of Oral Communication (speaking and listening skills) exclusively. The evaluation system adopted in the school is based both on internal and external evaluation. Internal evaluation involves three minor exams and one major exam per each evaluation period (two and a half months). As to external evaluation, school represents the official Cambridge examination centre and students are expected to sit Cambridge FCE (13 year-olds), CAE (15 year-olds) and CPE (17-year-olds) exams. The results of Cambridge examinations largely determine the streaming of students according to their levels of proficiency. Thus, students who pass the above stated Cambridge examination at due age form the groups of a higher level of performance, while those who fail Cambridge examinations at the age indicated above or do not sit those examinations for the lack of L2 proficiency constitute lower level groups. The recent practice has shown that students tend to be successful at

external evaluation and thus, they tend to be promoted to higher groups in their vast majority. However, the success of such students in terms of interlanguage is not uniform as their productive skills tend to fall under the required norm. The statistical data collected in the school have shown that Cambridge examinations are largely passed gratitude to students' high performance in receptive skills, whilst papers involving productive skills (Use of English paper, Writing paper and, in case of CAE and CPE, Speaking paper) are very close to the borderline. The reasons for CAE and CPE level stagnation and the ways of preventing stagnation from instating itself are major concern of the school, same as of the present study.

4.2. Detailed Description of the School

The educational establishment under analysis is private-owned and operates within the Spanish system of education, offering both primary and secondary education to its students. The general structure of Spanish Educational system according to Spanish Educational Law (LOE) is outlined in the Table 1 (following page).

Figure 1. Spanish Educational System (LOE)



The school runs a complete set of obligatory and optional subjects as outlined in the Royal Decree 1631/2006 of 29th of December and the Local Decree 23/2007 for Madrid area so that to ensure the complete education to its students starting from the first year of primary and up to the second year of post-compulsory secondary education. The basic competences and minimum contents for every subject on every stage of education are the ones dictated by the Spanish National Curriculum. However, the school deviates from the state-designed minimum contents as far as the subject of English is concerned, as it offers its students considerably more hours of EFL exposure than it has been determined by the state curriculum. Thus, the complexity and the contents of the course in case of English as a subject are more demanding. For instance, whilst the state curriculum contemplates level B2 of English as a final goal of post-compulsory secondary education, the school under study expects its students to reach C2 level. In order to reach such an ambitious objective the school under analysis expects its students to face up to six hours of EFL classes per week, as well as to study a certain amount of subjects through English. Apart from an intensive EFL exposure during the academic year, the school organizes regular exchange programmes for secondary students by offering Spanish students to follow a three-month study programme in Canada. As a rule, 25% of students opt for participating in Canada Exchange project at least twice during the period of secondary education.

Another resource offered to the students for individual EFL practice is the school computer lab and the online language learning tool known as Tell Me More programme. The Tell Me More programme offers online practice of five basic skills usually tackled in the process of foreign language acquisition, which are: use of language, reading, writing, speaking and listening. Each student of the school receives an individual learner's account for English as a first language and either French or German as a

second language. Each account is then monitored by English teacher and French/German teacher in order to track student's individual progress in online learning, as well as in order to assign work to be done by the student. Due to the fact that Tell Me More programme offers language practice up to the level B2 of language proficiency, in terms of EFL practice the programme is generally used by the students of first and second grade of secondary only. However, the programme appears to be rather useful for second language practice as students start learning French or German in the first year of secondary and normally achieve the level B1- B2 in the fourth year of their secondary studies.

Apart from online self-study resources, the school counts with two learner's libraries focused on primary and secondary education where magazines, books and DVDs in English can be borrowed from.

4.3. Primary School

Despite the fact that the present study focuses mostly on the learning process of older teenagers, primary school of the educational establishment in question is worth looking at as the vast majority of the secondary students subjected to the study come from that level of education.

First of all, it is important to mention that the primary school follows devised curriculum, where 50% of subjects are taught through English and other 50% of subjects are taught through Spanish. In terms of subject division, students take Art, Natural Science and Society and Culture through English apart from receiving their daily EFL classes. Moreover, in the last two years of primary education the number of subjects taught through English language is increased by introducing two other subjects taught through English, which are as follows: Citizenship (fifth grade of primary) and

English literature (sixth grade of primary). As a rule, an average school day consists of 3 classes taught through English (one or two of those could be actual EFL classes) and other 4 classes including Physical Education taught through Spanish.

In order to check students' progress in English language acquisition the school employs Cambridge tests for Young Learners, adopted in school as a form of external evaluation. Thus, students of the second year of primary are expected to sit Cambridge Starters, the third year of primary is focused on Cambridge Movers and the fourth year of primary is finalized with Cambridge Flyers. The last cycle of primary education aims at preparing students to the system and the objectives of secondary school and students are expected to face such Cambridge multitask (speaking, listening, reading and writing) tests as KET (fifth year of primary) and PET (sixth year of primary), which are structured in a similar way as the Cambridge tests taken in secondary school. It is important to mention here that students are not streamed according to their learning abilities or level of EFL, so the external examinations are normally sat by the vast majority of students as a general procedure. KET and PET examinations, however, are not compulsory for all primary students of the school and are only taken by those who receive an official recommendation from the school. The decision of granting students a recommendation to sit KET or PET belongs, as a rule, to the committee of teachers who keep record of their students' EFL progress made over several years. As far as the not recommended students are concerned, these are given a period of one year to improve their EFL skills in order to sit the exam. Thus, the students who do not do KET exam in the 5th year of primary due to the lack of EFL proficiency would sit the exam in the 6th year of primary, whilst those students who do not do PET in the 6th of primary would do it the 1st year of secondary education. To conclude, roughly 70% of primary students are

usually recommended to sit KET and PET in due time and only 30% of students do these examinations a year later than their classmates.

In terms of internal evaluation, the school follows Spanish Educational Law (LOE) and implements 4 formal evaluations per academic year, which are: First evaluation (held in December to test the contents acquired in the period from September to December), Second evaluation (held in March to test the contents acquired from September to March), Third Evaluation (Held in June to test the contents acquired in the period from September to June) and final evaluation (held in June for students who have failed the Third evaluation). There is also an informal, so called Initial evaluation, held in September, which is aimed to test the contents acquired in the previous academic year and to determine the level students bring in the beginning of the academic year in all of the subjects on school curriculum. Apart from formal evaluations dictated by Spanish law, there are also informal by-weekly tests that school implements at all levels of Primary education with the aim to monitor students' progress. As to the subjects taught through English, the contents acquired by students in the period of each evaluation are tested by a separate evaluation exam in the 1st and 2nd years of primary. From the 3rd year of primary and onwards, however, students are expected to sit a longer EFL exam with integrated activities dedicated to science or English literature.

The following Table 2 offers a schematic representation of subjects studied by students on the primary stage of education in the schools under analysis, as well as internal and external examinations taken by the students.

Table 2
Primary School Subjects and Examinations

Year of Primary Education	Daily Curriculum	Internal Examinations	External Examinations
1 st Year of Primary 2 nd Year of Primary	<u>3 classes in English</u> (EFL, Art, Natural Science, Society and culture) <u>3 classes in Spanish</u> <u>1 class of Physical Education in Spanish</u>	Initial evaluation By-weekly tests 4 Evaluation exams per year Separate evaluation exams for EFL and Science through English	----- Cambridge Starters
3 rd Year of Primary 4 th Year of Primary		Initial evaluation By-weekly tests 4 Evaluation exams per year Science component integrated into EFL evaluation exam.	Cambridge Movers Cambridge Flyers
5 th Year of Primary	<u>3 classes in English</u> (EFL, Art, Natural Science, Society and Culture, Citizenship) <u>3 classes in Spanish</u> <u>1 class of Physical Education in Spanish</u>	Initial evaluation By-weekly tests 4 Evaluation exams per year Citizenship component integrated into EFL evaluation exam	Cambridge KET
6 th Year of Primary	<u>3 classes in English</u> (EFL, Art, Natural Science, Society and Culture, English Literature) <u>3 classes in Spanish</u> <u>1 class of Physical Education in Spanish</u>	Initial evaluation By-weekly tests 4 Evaluation exams per year English Literature component integrated into EFL evaluation exam	Cambridge PET

As far as teaching staff and methodology employed in the school, 40% of teachers are native speakers of English and other 60% of teachers are local teachers with Spanish as L1. As a rule, the teachers working in nursery and in the 1st year of primary are only

Spanish speakers as the policy of school specifies this condition as obligatory one emphasizing that there has to 100% understanding between younger primary students and their teachers. The teaching method implemented in this school on this educational stage is communicative approach, where no L1 is spoken in all EFL and CLIL classes. It is relevant to note here that over the past 2 years it has been the official policy of school to implement cooperative learning strategies into the teaching methodology practiced to date. The method chosen by the school authorities employs the idea of teamwork as its essence, where students, grouped according to their learning abilities, perform various tasks together and help each other acquire new concepts. Cooperative learning strategies are now being actively used on the stages of nursery and 1st year of primary, whilst the overall aim is to convert this method into the basic method of instruction on all stages of primary and, later, ESO (Obligatory Secondary Education).

In terms of materials used for EFL and CLIL classes, the school uses McMillan EFL textbooks and Natural Science Books, as well as Art, Science and Citizenship books translated from Spanish into English by Santillana Publishers. With the aim of preparing students from External Cambridge examinations, one EFL class per week is usually dedicated to the work with past papers of the examinations in question, acquired directly from Cambridge publishers.

In order to broaden students' exposure to English language, the school offers regular trips to UK. Students of 5th and 6th grade of primary are encouraged to spend two months in UK during their summer holidays, as well as there is an opportunity to study the first 6 weeks of the academic year in an English boarding school. However, these language programmes are not very popular with primary students and only 10% of students take advantage of them.

4.4. Secondary School

Unlike the system followed in primary school, secondary school does not follow 30% English/70% Spanish system and rather focuses on mother tongue as a basic vehicle for general education. However, the considerably high level of English that students tend to have in this school is maintained all throughout the period of secondary education by the elevated number of EFL classes. As far as compulsory secondary education is concerned, ESO 1, ESO 2, ESO 3 students receive 6 hours of English per week, whilst ESO 4 students receive 5 hours. As to post-compulsory secondary education, students of the first grade of higher secondary school receive 5 hours of English per week and students of the second grade receive 4 hours. Apart from the regular EFL classes, students benefit from a number of subjects taught through English, such as Global and Local Citizenship (obligatory in ESO 2; a 2-hour/week course), Society and Culture (obligatory for all grades of secondary and for the first grade of higher secondary studies, a 2- hours/week course) and English Oral Communication course (an optional subject designed for the first and second grades of higher secondary studies; a 4-hour/week course).

The educational establishment under investigation streams students according to their level of English starting from the second year of secondary education (ESO 2). According to the current European legislation as well as the internal decision of the school, the Common European Framework of Reference for Learning Languages, as well as Cambridge ESOL examinations are used as a reference for students' levels of ESL performance (Table 3 and Figure 2 below):

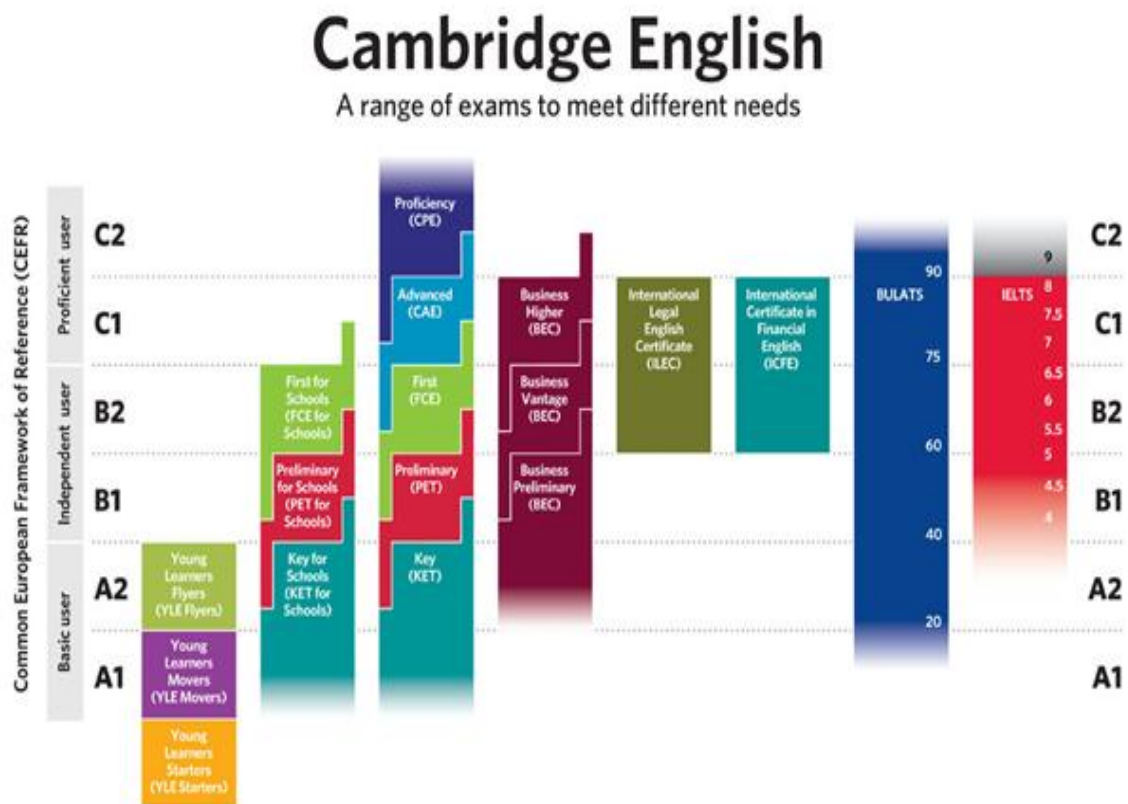
Table 3. General Description of ESL Abilities per Level

Level		Table A1. Salient Characteristics: Interaction & Production
Proficient User		It cannot be overemphasised that Level C2 is not intended to imply native speaker competence or even near native speaker competence. Both the original research and a project using CEFR descriptors to rate mother-tongue as well as foreign language competence (North 2002: CEFR Case Studies volume) showed the existence of ambilingual speakers well above the highest defined level (C2). Wilkins had identified a seventh level of "Ambilingual Proficiency" in his 1978 proposal for a European scale for unit-credit schemes.
	C2	Level C2 is intended to characterise the degree of precision, appropriateness and ease with the language which typifies the speech of those who have been highly successful learners. Descriptors calibrated here include: <i>convey finer shades of meaning precisely by using, with reasonable accuracy, a wide range of modification devices; has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative level of meaning; backtrack and restructure around a difficulty so smoothly the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.</i>
	C1	Level C1 is characterised by a broad range of language, which allows fluent, spontaneous communication , as illustrated by the following examples: <i>Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions. There is little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies; only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.</i> The discourse skills appearing at B2+ are more evident at C1, with an emphasis on more fluency, for example: <i>select a suitable phrase from a fluent repertoire of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get the floor, or to gain time and keep it whilst thinking; produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.</i>
Independent User	B2+	B2+ represents a strong B2 performance. The focus on argument, effective social discourse and on language awareness which appears at B2 continues. However, the focus on argument and social discourse can also be interpreted as a new focus on discourse skills. This new degree of discourse competence shows itself in conversational management (co-operating strategies): <i>give feedback on and follow up statements and inferences by other speakers and so help the development of the discussion; relate own contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.</i> It is also apparent in relation to coherence/cohesion: <i>use a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas; develop an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.</i>
	B2	Level B2 represents a break with the content so far. Firstly there is a focus on effective argument : <i>account for and sustain his opinions in discussion by providing relevant explanations, arguments and comments; explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options; develop an argument giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view; take an active part in informal discussion in familiar contexts, commenting, putting point of view clearly, evaluating alternative proposals and making and responding to hypotheses.</i> Secondly, at this level one can hold your own in social discourse : e.g. <i>understand in detail what is said to him/her in the standard spoken language even in a noisy environment; initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly; interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without imposing strain on either party.</i> Finally, there is a new degree of language awareness : <i>correct mistakes if they have led to misunderstandings; make a note of "favourite mistakes" and consciously monitor speech for it/them; generally correct slips and errors if he/she becomes conscious of them.</i>
	B1+	B1+ is a strong B1 performance. The same two main features at B1 continue to be present, with the addition of a number of descriptors which focus on the exchange of quantities of information, for example: <i>provide concrete information required in an interview/consultation (e.g. describe symptoms to a doctor) but does so with limited precision; explain why something is a problem; summarise and give his or her opinion about a short story, article, talk, discussion interview, or documentary and answer further questions of detail; carry out a prepared interview, checking and confirming information, though he/she may occasionally have to ask for repetition if the other person's response is rapid or extended; describe how to do something, giving detailed instructions; exchange accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non-routine matters within his field with some confidence.</i>
	B1	Level B1 reflects the Threshold Level specification and is perhaps most categorised by two features. The first feature is the ability to maintain interaction and get across what you want to , for example: <i>generally follow the main points of extended discussion around him/her, provided speech is clearly articulated in standard dialect; express the main point he/she wants to make comprehensibly; keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.</i> The second feature is the ability to cope flexibly with problems in everyday life , for example <i>cope with less routine situations on public transport; deal with most situations likely to arise when making travel arrangements through an agent or when actually travelling; enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics.</i>

Basic User	A2+	A2+ represents a strong A2 performance with more active participation in conversation given some assistance and certain limitations, for example: <i>understand enough to manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort; make him/herself understood and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations, provided the other person helps if necessary; deal with everyday situations with predictable content, though he/she will generally have to compromise the message and search for words; plus significantly more ability to sustain monologues</i> , for example: <i>express how he feels in simple terms; give an extended description of everyday aspects of his environment e.g. people, places, a job or study experience; describe past activities and personal experiences; describe habits and routines; describe plans and arrangements; explain what he/she likes or dislikes about something.</i>
	A2	Level A2 has the majority of descriptors stating social functions like <i>use simple everyday polite forms of greeting and address; greet people, ask how they are and react to news; handle very short social exchanges; ask and answer questions about what they do at work and in free time; make and respond to invitations; discuss what to do, where to go and make arrangements to meet, make and accept offers.</i> Here too are to be found descriptors on getting out and about : <i>make simple transactions in shops, post offices or banks; get simple information about travel; use public transport: buses, trains, and taxis, ask for basic information, ask and give directions, and buy tickets; ask for and provide everyday goods and services.</i>
	A1	Level A1 is the lowest level of generative language use – the point at which the learner can <i>interact in a simple way, ask and answer simple questions about themselves, where they live, people they know, and things they have, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics</i> , rather than relying purely on a very finite rehearsed, lexically organised repertoire of situation-specific phrases.

(Council of Europe, “Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). A Manual”, <http://www.coe.int>)

Figure 2. Comparative Analysis of ESL Abilities between Cambridge examinations and CEFR)



(University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/cefr.html)

The two levels existing within the school system are: Tier 1 and Tier 2, the latter being the highest (B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Languages in case of ESO 2). The approximate number of students per group does not exceed 20 students. Students of different levels use different materials and work at different paces: Tier 1 students being slower learners than Tier 2 students. Despite the difference between levels, both Tier 1 students and Tier 2 students are expected to concentrate on the same objective, which is, generally speaking, passing Cambridge examinations adapted in school as a form of external evaluation. According to the general planning of the school that concerns students' progress, the first and second years of secondary education are dedicated to studying for Cambridge First Certificate in English (hereinafter FCE) examination, taken in the end of the second year. Thus, students are expected to improve their knowledge of English in the period of two academic years from the level B1 required for passing Cambridge PET done in the sixth year of primary to the level B2 needed for passing Cambridge FCE. Further, the third and fourth years of secondary education are dedicated to preparation of Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (hereinafter CAE), which is a C1 level of foreign language proficiency according to the Common European Framework. The ultimate goal pursued by the school is to bring its students to the level C2 of language proficiency tested by the Certificate of Proficiency in English (hereinafter CPE). Successful students sit CPE in the end of their first year of post-compulsory secondary education (first year of higher secondary school).

Another external examination done in the school is Trinity College examinations for Oral Proficiency in English. Unlike Cambridge exams, Trinity examinations are not obligatory and usually offered to students whose grammar and writing skills appear to be considerably lower than their speaking skills. As a rule, Trinity examinations are

taken by the students of first and third year of secondary school (so called “non-Cambridge” years), as well as by the students who have not succeeded in passing Cambridge FCE in the end of their second year of secondary. The levels of Trinity examinations normally taken by students are as follows: levels 6-7 in ESO 1, levels 8-9 in ESO 3.

Apart from the external examinations done in the end of each two-year period (ESO2, ESO 4, BACH 1), students are expected to sit internal monthly examinations (three minor tests throughout a three-month long evaluation period) and a major evaluation exam done in the end of each evaluation (3 times throughout the academic year). The internal examinations are designed by the Department of Modern Languages of the school and aim at testing students’ progress on their way to Cambridge examinations. The content of the internal examinations reflects the minimum contents of study programme designed by the department of modern languages of the school taking text books used in class as a basis. The minimum contents represent certain areas of grammar and vocabulary that students are expected to cover each year in their EFL class. In general, first and second year concentrate on the language needed to meet the standards of B2 level, third and fourth year cover the grammar and vocabulary necessary for C1 level and the first and second year of post-compulsory secondary studies aim at mastering the language needed for C2 level of foreign language proficiency.

The system described above concerns mainly the successful students who pass Cambridge examinations in the period marked by the school as an appropriate one: end of ESO 2 for FCE, end of ESO 4 for CAE and end of BACH 1 for CPE. However, although the majority of students (80%) tend to pass Cambridge tests in due time, there is a number of students who do not succeed in these examinations. A failure of a

Cambridge test usually means that the students will have to sit the exam again, as a rule, in the period of 6 months. Thus, a student who fails an examination in the month of June is expected to sit the same examination in December of the next academic year as a sort of an academic debt, while following the study programme designed for the next Cambridge exam to be taken. In case if the failing student belongs to Tier 2 level and his academic debt is not settled in the period of one academic year, he is likely to be moved down to Tier 1 level. Students are generally not allowed to sit a higher level Cambridge exam if the lower level exams have not been passed.

In order to estimate the general number of potential Cambridge passes the school carries out two types of mock tests of the following character: a Cambridge test (FCE, CAE or CPE depending on the phase of secondary education) in the beginning of every academic year on all the levels of secondary education to evaluate the starting potential of students to successfully complete the preparatory course they are facing and a corresponding Cambridge test done in December of every exam year, that is in ESO 2, in ESO 4, and in Bach 1. The results of December mock test must reach 60% of correct answers for a student to receive an official recommendation from the school to sit the corresponding Cambridge exam. However, student whose results fall below 60% are also allowed to take the examination together with the recommended students if they express the will to do so.

In order to ensure that a majority of students pass Cambridge examinations the school follows FCE, CAE and CPE preparatory programmes. As far as FCE and CAE are concerned, the preparatory programme usually lasts two years, whilst in case of CPE students are expected to get ready for the exam in the period of one academic year. In terms of materials, students follow exam-focused text books, as well as they analyse past exam papers to get accustomed to the format of the exam. Apart from the main text

book and the exam practice book, students are expected to get through a Grammar Practice Book that offers additional grammar practice throughout the year, as well as they are expected to cover two readers in English.

In terms of oral skills practice, students receive a conversation class every week, when a regular EFL group is split in two parts between two teachers so that every student gets a chance to improve their oral expression. The main focus of conversation classes is normally the speaking part of Cambridge exams, which can vary in non-exam years (ESO1, ESO 3) when conversation teachers tend to focus on general oral proficiency of students and active assimilation of new vocabulary through speaking.

The basic teaching methodology used in the school under analysis is, mainly, the communicative approach and Test–Teach-Test (hereinafter TTT) technique. The communicative approach appears to be the methodology that lies in the basis of the majority of text books published nowadays, which explains the active implementation of this method in the school. TTT technique, in its turn, allows teacher to diagnose the knowledge students have previously acquired in a certain sphere in order to shape adequate teaching scheme, which, instead of repeating the already known concept, introduces the ones that students may lack. Apart from the communicative approach and TTT technique, the teachers in the school are encouraged to employ inductive, guided inductive and deductive approaches to present the material to the students. The choice of approach, as a rule, depends on the difficulty of the material. Task based approach is also given a wide use in the school's teaching practice when students are asked to perform a long or a short term task that helps them to feel a sense of achievement upon having completed a group or individual project. Moreover, the task based approach appears to be one of the favourite ones for the subject of Society and Culture taught

through English as students' performance in this subject is evaluated through a pair or group project they are expected to accomplish in the end of every evaluation.

As to interaction created in class, the school policy reinforces pair and group work to foster students' interaction, as well as to create situations for authentic communication in English. The major scope of the interactional patterns practiced in class are based on the method of cooperative learning, where students work in small groups helping each other towards completion of a certain common task they are assigned by a teacher. Each student in such a group is usually assigned a certain role or is given clear instructions to follow so that students learn to collaborate and perform tasks by cooperative effort, which is a very useful skill for their professional future. The method implies a specific strategy of students' grouping that involves stronger students working with some weaker students. In practice, teachers usually make use of 2+2 interactive pattern where two stronger students work with two slightly weaker students. It is important to note here that, according to this method, stronger students will never be grouped with those who are much weaker than them to avoid students' discouragement and the fall of learning morale.

The language of interaction with all teachers of English department both in and outside the classroom is English and no translation into students' mother tongue is permitted.

The teachers that form the English department in the school under study represent in their majority native speakers of English (11 native teachers out of 16 EFL teachers in general), whilst five other teachers of the department are qualified non-native teachers of Spanish, Serbian and Latvian origins. EFL teachers are expected to take up to four groups of students per academic year generally giving EFL and Society and Culture classes. Apart from teaching time, the teachers are expected to design and mark monthly exams and evaluation exams for their students, as well as to supervise the Society and

Culture projects students are expected to accomplish. As a rule, the school organizes teacher-training events for its staff every academic year, which teachers are expected to assist on the regular basis.

As far as the school's population is concerned, the students are generally Spanish native speakers proceeding from different areas of Madrid. The majority of students, however, come from the area on the north of Madrid, where the school is situated. The school under analysis appears to be one of the most prestigious schools in Madrid as far as EFL is concerned, thus students tend to have a clear understanding of the purpose of their studies, which is achieving a high level of EFL proficiency. In large lines, it can be claimed that the school counts with a rather high degree of parental support as EFL seems to be acknowledged by the majority of students' families as one of the major priorities of education. Many students in the school enjoy additional private tuition in EFL, as well as frequent educational trips to English speaking countries funded by their families.

5. METHOD AND PROCEDURE

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of the present chapter is to outline the general structure of the practical research by stating, first of all, the hypotheses of the study, its clear objectives, as well as the procedure followed by the author of the study to achieve these objectives. Further, the chapter offers a description of the data used in the research, gives general characteristics of the participants involved in the study and outlines the main theoretical frameworks employed for the benefit of the present research.

5.2. Hypotheses and Research Questions

The main presupposition harboured by the author of the present research is linked to the pace of learner language development and the quality of the latter on its advanced stages. Taking in consideration the fact that the researcher herself is a non-native speaker of English and has been working as an EFL teacher for over 8 years, one of the main observations made over the years of EFL teaching practice induces her to infer that the pace of development and the quality of interlanguage varies depending on the stage of EFL acquisition a learner finds himself in, which complies with numerous existing theories in the field of second language acquisition, such as Selinker (1972), Long (1997), Han (2004), to name a few. Furthermore, the careful observation of EFL learners over the year of teaching practice has allowed the author of the study to suppose that such changes might be induced mainly by motivational constraints the EFL learners might experience. More than that, the research questions such concepts as “ultimate attainment” in EFL being compared to native-like performance, as well as the concepts of fossilization or stabilization in terms of foreign language acquisition. Thus, the hypotheses of the present research are as follows:

1. There is a certain decrease in the pace of learner language development at the advanced stages of learning practice as compared to the earlier stages and such a decrease is induced mainly by motivational factors.
2. The decrease in the pace of learner interlanguage development cannot be denominated as “stabilization” in the case of present study since students equalize the official C2 level of EFL to their “ultimate attainment” and thus, to their ultimate and achieved goal.
3. The perception of the ultimate attainment stage in EFL is not compared or equalized to native-like performance in the case of Spanish secondary school EFL learners under study.

In an attempt to prove the hypotheses stated above the author of the research has delimited a list of research questions, which focus on the concrete aspects of interlanguage development, motivational factors and the environment of the EFL students under analysis. The list of the research questions is as follows:

1. Can we provide quantitative or qualitative evidence for the decrease in the pace of interlanguage development?
2. What areas of interlanguage tend to be affected by the decrease of pace and quality of development? Can we identify the reasons for these areas to be suffering such effects?
3. On which stage of interlanguage development does motivation towards the acquisition of EFL decrease and what are the main reasons of such phenomena?
4. What are the main motives to acquire EFL as seen by the subjects of the study?
5. What are the main factors that shape students’ attitude toward EFL?
6. What role/roles do students assign to EFL in terms of their future self-image?
7. What are the main goals as defined by the students in terms of EFL acquisition?

8. Can a Feared L2 self-image become the principal motivation drive for the students who have already achieved a Cambridge Proficiency stage?

5.3. Objectives

The objectives of the present study are manifold. First of all, the research attempts to provide the qualitative and quantitative evidence for the decrease of pace and quality in the process of second language acquisition on the advanced stages of learning by analysing a scope of pre-selected data. Then, the study attempts to reveal the concrete areas of interlanguage that seem to be most affected by these phenomena, as well as discuss the possible reasons for these areas to be experiencing such effects. Further, the author of the study attempts to unveil the reasons for the halt in interlanguage development that are presumed to reside mostly in the nature of the subjects' motivational disposition towards the EFL acquisition and the spectrum of factors that shape it. Finally, the author strives to define the main aspects that construe learner's self-image in terms of EFL, as well as attempts to clearly delimitate the main traits of a learner's self-image.

The investigation aims to achieve its objectives by monitoring a group of 22 selected students of the educational establishment in question in terms of their EFL progress during the period of three academic years (ages 13 to 14, 15 to 16, 16 to 17). The reasons behind opting for a longitudinal study are based on the general assumption existent within the field FLA studies for it to be the best method to follow the development of interlanguage and trace the symptoms of certain "fossilization", or a stage when a learner hits the asymptote in his learning process and the amount of input does not anymore mean progress (Selinker, 1972; Han, 2004).

5.4. Data Collection

As far as the data of investigation is concerned, the present research applies three different types of data collection.

5.4.1. Cambridge Examinations

First of all, the results of the official EFL Cambridge examinations are used to monitor students' progress longitudinally as these examinations represent a standardized level-testing mechanism designed to provide a reference of the quality of interlanguage for EFL students worldwide. Another reason to employ Cambridge examinations as a form of data collection in the present research is the fact that these examinations have been accepted by the educational establishment in question as a form of external evaluation and the EFL courses run in the school, as well as didactic materials used by EFL teachers are shaped towards these examinations. Finally, the data obtained by a longitudinal comparative study of Cambridge examinations within the period of four years provides a satisfactory amount of quantitative data in order to trace any changes in the pace or quality of learner language development claimed by the research as one of the objectives.

To be more particular, three official Cambridge examinations have been used for the data collection in the present study, namely: Cambridge First Certificate in English (level B2 according to the European framework for learning languages) done by students on the first stage of longitudinal analysis at the age of 12; Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (Level C1) sat by the students on the second stage of the analysis at the age of 15 and, finally, Cambridge Proficiency in English (level C2), done on the final stage of analysis at the age of 16. A detailed description of the EU framework of learning languages and its relation to Cambridge examinations can be

found in the Context of the Study section. As to the structure of Cambridge examinations, all three exams in question test students' knowledge according to the following skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking and use of English, which is a combined test on grammar and vocabulary.

5.4.2. In-class Written Performance

Secondly, the internal school written works are used as an alternative form of data collection by the study, which have been collected and compared longitudinally within the period of four years simultaneously with Cambridge Examinations data collection. The reason behind the use of in-class spontaneous written assignments for data collection is the intention to identify the areas of interlanguage affected by the decrease in the pace and quality of development, as well as exemplify the most prominent areas of error-concentration. The written works used for the study were based on the Writing paper tasks of Cambridge Examinations depending on the age of students and the Cambridge Examination they were to sit on this stage of their academic development. Thus, 12-year old students performed writing tasks based on Cambridge First Certificate, 15-year old students practiced writings based on Cambridge certificate in advanced English and 16-year old students produced writings based on Cambridge Proficiency in English. As to the genre of writings, these were both formal and semi-formal pieces, such as essays, articles, reports, proposals and letters. The writings used for the present research have been collected over the period of four years and they can be found in their integrity in the APPENDICES One to Three together with the exact formulations of a task for each type of writing.

The written works have been selected for the study according to the following principles: *authenticity of production* (the writings had to be a product of each student

under analysis individually, no group or pair work productions have been accepted); *spontaneity of production* (the written works selected have been produced within the time limit of 50 minutes and without any prior preparation or reference materials to be used during the writing period), *task-based character* (all the written works had a word limit and a uniform task for students to fulfil). Thus, the written works selected for the study could be considered legitimate examples of authentic and spontaneous communication in target language, which is an important requirement for analysing the development of the learner language, according a number of scholars, Ellis (2005), Brown (1973), Krashen (1974), Larsen-Freeman (1976) amongst others.

5.4.3. Questionnaire and the Debate Task on Motivation

Finally, a custom-tailored questionnaire has been designed and administered to students with the aim to identify the general factors that shape their attitude towards EFL, as well as to define general characteristic of student's self-image as EFL learners and users. Then, with the aim to reply to the final three research questions and provide students with the feedback of the questionnaire, an in-class debate with the subjects of the study and their peers has been carried out.

In order to reveal motivational constraints that the subjects of the study share in terms of EFL acquisition, the design of the questionnaire has been based on such theoretical frameworks as Gardner and Lambert's integrative and instrumental motivation (1972), Dörnyei's motivational Self-system (2009), as well as on the EU Council's Design of a Future "European citizen" in Terms of languages. Consequently, the composition of the questionnaire and the nature of questions are as follows: 35 statements, some of them are aimed to infer on respondent's Ideal Selves, Ought-to Selves and Feared Selves, while some other focus explicitly on integrative motivation and instrumental

motivation. The majority of the questions reflect some aspects of a “European citizen” model.

The reason why the present study infers on EU linguistic policy among the other theoretical frameworks mentioned above is that Spain has been a member state of EU for 27 years now and EU legislation as well as the labour market has greatly influenced Spanish attitude towards the acquisition of foreign languages in general and the educational policies of the state in particular. Moreover, this research follows the development of EFL skills among school students, who find themselves as direct subjects of common EU educational policies that promote *multilingualism*, *multiculturalism* and *mobility* for educational and labour purposes (E.g. Education and Training 2020, Agenda for New Skills and Jobs (2010) and Youth on the Move (2010), as well as labour market trends.

In a nutshell, EU framework for education and vocational training sets a clear aim for every EU citizen to master two European languages in addition to his mother tongue. The reasons behind the development of this linguistic policy are culturally grounded as well as they have practical work-oriented implications. First of all, according to the articles 2 and 3 TEU and articles 6 and 165 TFEU, as well as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000), a language is an integral part of one’s identity and a direct manifestation of culture and, therefore, it has to be respected and preserved. In the framework of the European Union, *multilingualism* and *multiculturalism* introduced by its members is viewed as a strong point of the union and a focal point for the development of educational policies of every member state. In addition, not only the ability to use a foreign language for communication is stressed by the EU linguistic policy, but also the intercultural mediation is singled out as an important skill to possess by EU citizens. Apart from the cultural implications of foreign language proficiency,

EU also stresses the importance of linguistic skills to enhance the employability and encourage the free circulation of work force, or mobility on the territory of the EU (COM, 2008).

To conclude, the idea of a future ideal EU citizen as it comes across the official EU development policies presupposes an individual with a high level of linguistic performance in three European languages, great intercultural mediation skills and a high degree of flexibility in terms of work and country of residence. This image of a future citizen has been actively taken on board by Spanish educational establishments and it seems to become increasingly appealing to the educational stakeholders. To illustrate, Spanish schools teach two foreign languages to their students at an early age as a normal practice now, bilingual educational programmes have become a new sweeping trend across the country, the International Baccalaureate programme has become an important asset to school finishers over the recent decade, students international exchange programmes have proved to be a success and, finally, Spanish higher education has become standardized and EU objective-focused by entering Bologna system. Last, but not least, foreign language proficiency has become one of the most valued qualities on the Spanish labour market.

The questionnaire of the present study has been inspired greatly on the image of the future EU citizen as it comes across through the EU policies exposed above and the questions that deal with this image are the following: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,14,16,17,19,20,21,27,28,30,33,34,35. To illustrate, here is the text of some of the questions cited:

1. I see myself doing my university studies in both English and Spanish interchangeably.

2. I see myself in a relationship with a person from a different culture and our language of communication would be English.
3. I see myself as a CITIZEN OF THE WORLD where the differences between nationalities are not so important and the international language is ENGLISH.
4. I think that speaking English is a skill that everyone should have, quite like driving a car or using an iPhone.
5. I think that if in the future I will have a badly-paid job if my English is poor.

Despite the quite reasonable criticism the integrative motivation concept (Gardener and Lambert, 1972) has been subjected to within the recent decades, the questionnaire used in the present study has employed some ideas akin to this concept in order to test the strong and weak desire students might have to engage with the two main English speaking communities as far as European SLA is concerned, namely British and American ones. These questions were as follows:

12: I do not think that it is very important to sound exactly as a native speaker when I speak English. (Strong integrative motivation)

22: I see myself moving to an English speaking country for a long period of time (10 years) and speaking only English both at home and at work there. (Strong integrative motivation)

23: I feel attracted to British culture very much, I love the music, the cinema, the literature, the mentality. In my adult life I would like to form part of British society. (Strong and weak integrative motivation)

24: I feel attracted to American culture very much, I love the music, the literature, the cinema, the mentality. In my adult life I would like to form part of American society. (Strong and weak integrative motivation)

As to the concept of instrumental motivation (Gardener, 1972), it has inspired a group of questions from the questionnaire, which are as follows: 5,9,11,14,27,32,33,34,35. These questions, naturally, coincide with the ones cited above in the section dedicated to the concept of EU citizen as they deal with virtually the same concept – one’s future identity within the framework of the modern life. To illustrate, here is the text of the questions 9 and 14:

9. I think that in my future English will be as important as Spanish for my work.

14. I think that speaking skills in English are the most important ones for my future work life.

Finally, the present study has used Dörnyei’s (2009) theory of L2 motivational selves extensively for the elaboration of the questionnaire focused on students’ motivation. The author of the study has presupposed three possible future self-images that the respondents might share as peers, individuals belonging to the same strata of society and students of the same educational establishment. Another factor taken into consideration while construing the possible future selves of the respondents was the future EU citizen description offered by European Union educational committee.

The following two out of the three images were based on Dörnyei’s motivational framework: the ‘ideal L2 self-image’ and the ‘ought-to L2 Self-image’. The third self-image used by the study was the ‘feared L2 self-image’, not conceived by Dörnyei as a part of his motivational theory, but originally proposed by Markus and Nurius (1986). In the questionnaire the future ‘feared L2 self-image’ underlies the questions connected to the possible negative future images students might have of themselves in connection to the English language (e.g. poor English skills leading to having a badly-paid job). Below there is a table that offers the classification of questions from the questionnaire according to the self-images they aim to trace.

Table 4
Classification of Questions of the Motivational Questionnaire⁶

IDEAL L2 SELF QUESTIONS	OUGHT-TO SELF QUESTIONS	FEARED SELF QUESTIONS
1;2;3;4;6;7;8;9;16;17;18;19;2 1; 22;23;24	5;10;11;12;13;14;15;20;2 9; 30	25;26;27;28;31;32;33;34;3 5

As far as the design of the debate is concerned, the questions discussed by the students stem out of the concerns provoked by the two main theories, namely: Dörnyei’s motivational L2 Self System and the concept of Direct Motivational Current (DMC) (Dörnyei: 2013.), as well as Ushioda’s (2013) autonomy and metacognition influence on motivation in the process of foreign language acquisition. As far as the structure of the debate task is concerned, the open-in class debate has been organized and structured in the following way:

Agenda: the results of the questionnaire are to be presented and explained to the students and a debate on the following questions has to be initiated:

1. Now, that the majority of you possess the highest EFL qualification possible according to Cambridge and there is no clear focus of passing a Cambridge examination in front of you, do you think that the level of your EFL proficiency has decreased this year compared to the last year?
2. Do you see a possibility of “losing” your level of English in the future if you do not get regular practice?
3. Do you see a possibility of “losing” your level of English if you do not get regular formal instruction?

⁶ For the exact formulation of each question, please consult APPENDIX 4

4. Have you been planning to enroll on any English course after you leave school in order to maintain your level of English?
5. Those of you who have not passed Cambridge Proficiency last year (4 students out of the ones present in the debate) have you been planning to enroll on any English course after you leave school in order to obtain CPE Certificate?

5.5. Participants

Participants of the study form a group of 22 students (11 males and 11 females) of the school in question. On the first stage of the practical investigation when official monitoring of their EFL progress was initiated, participants belonged to the 2nd grade of secondary education (13 year-old teenagers). These students had been selected for the research according to the unified criteria, which were as follows:

1. Subjects of the study must belong to the “standard majority” of the school in order to increase the transferability (generalizability) of research results. Thus, the selected students were the ones who have been recommended by the school to sit Cambridge FCE exam in June 2009 and those who passed it;
2. Students selected as subject of the study had to be under EFL instruction of the author of the study at least for two academic years.

However, on the final stage of the research dedicated to the motivational constraints in terms of EFL acquisition and students self-image as EFL learners and users, apart from the same 22 subjects of the study that have been monitored during the period of four years, other 31 students of the same age and school year have been subjected to the questionnaire as well. Such a measure was taken in order to enhance the reliability of the study, as well as to obtain a more general picture of learners’ attitudes towards EFL. The gender of the respondents has been considered as one of the important factors; there

were a total of 23 male and 28 female respondents. As to the level of EFL proficiency on this stage of the research, all of the participants have passed Cambridge Advanced test and the majority of them taken, and about 50% of them passed the Cambridge Proficiency test. Another aspect to bear in mind here is that the students subjected to the questionnaire are 17 years old and doing their last year of their non-obligatory secondary education. This means that the nature of the questionnaire is very much akin to this stage of students' lives, as it focuses mainly on the future plans and ambitions students might have, as well as the future impressions of themselves as personalities they entertain.

The criteria for participants' selection ties closely with the tools of investigation chosen for the present study, as both Cambridge examinations and students' class work are adopted by the study as reference for students EFL development. For more detailed description of the nature, criteria and aims of the internal school forms of assessment please consult the Context of the Study section.

All the students selected for the research are native speakers of Spanish and have been learning English as their first foreign language since the beginning of their formal primary education in the educational establishment under investigation, which means that they experienced their first contact with EFL at least at the age of 3 and their overall exposure to EFL, both formal and informal, constitutes, for the present moment, on average 13 years. Such a relatively long period of exposure to L2 enables the author of the present research to deal with such theoretical developments as Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967) or theories on fossilization and stabilization, which happen to be some of the major foci of the research. In addition, it is important to note here that the uniform character of participants' linguistic experience, namely the fact that they share the same L1 and the same first L2, which is English for all of them,

increases the generalizability of the results of the study also from a sociolinguistic point of view as their social setting as L2 learners can be denominated as “external L2”, which happens to be a majoritarian L2 learning setting as far as English is concerned nowadays, according to Siegel (2003). In addition, the fact that all participants of the study share the same mother tongue can be regarded as a safe point of departure for any assumptions on L1 influence upon the English interlanguage development, in case such are happen to be made further in the study.

5.6. Formal Procedure and Its Theoretical Underpinning

The investigation comprises three formal stages according to the nature of the data collected, which are: the analysis of Cambridge Examinations; the analysis of In-class written works, as well as the section where the data collected by the questionnaire and the debate task are discussed.

5.6.1. Analysis of Cambridge Examinations

The first stage of practical research displays the Cambridge EFL exam results of the students at every stage of the observation (First Certificate, Advanced Certificate, Certificate of Proficiency in English) breaking the evidence of students’ competence into the sections according to the linguistic skills, which are as follows: reading, writing, listening, speaking and Use of English (grammar +lexis). This stage of the research also presents the comparative study between the Cambridge EFL examinations sat by the subjects at three different stages of monitoring by offering a vision of longitudinal progression of students competence according to every skill section with the aim to trace the evidence of a certain halt in the pace of students’ interlanguage development. The method used for conducting a longitudinal comparison of exam results over the period of four years was rather straight-forward. First, the formal

Cambridge result statements were assigned percentage values and recorded to compile a database according to each skill area across the three tests taken. Then, comparative bar diagrams were created per every skill area to offer a visual example of fluctuation of students' performance across the period of four years.

5.6.2. Analysis of In-class Written Performance

The second stage of the study aims to identify the exact areas of interlanguage that seem to be affected by a certain degree of stabilization. In order to achieve this goal, the author of the study performs both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The qualitative analysis uses a custom-tailored method to identify the error-concentration areas in students' in-class written works, meanwhile the quantitative analysis represents an adapted version of Brown's (1973) obligatory occasion analysis used to quantify the errors committed by students in every error-concentration area.

As far as the exact procedure is concerned, the qualitative analysis aimed at identification of the most recurrent errors to be found in students' writings across the three stages of the official monitoring adapted by the present investigation: ESO 2 (grade two of secondary education), ESO 4 (grade four of secondary education) and the first year of higher secondary studies. The method used on this stage of research consists of evaluation of students' performance according to the task he has been given, as well as the level of EFL knowledge the student is expected to have on every respective stage of the analysis. Thus, the author of the study analyses the written performance of every subject of the study on every stage of the research in order to reveal the areas of language where the most recurrent errors are concentrated. The criteria for such an analysis were exactly the same that are usually used by an EFL teacher of the educational establishment in question at the moment of assessing

students' writings, which are directly linked to the input students receive in class. That is, the following items were considered as errors: grammatical errors such as word order, wrong choice of tenses and wrong formation of tenses, as well as lexical errors like L1 loans, wrong collocations, wrong word formation and inadequately chosen prepositions. The aim of this stage of the analysis was to compare students' performance to the input they receive in class and to the goals established for them by their teacher, as well as reveal and exemplify the areas of learner language that tend to experience major difficulty across the four year of monitoring.

The second step of the analysis on this stage, however, is dedicated fully to quantitative account of students' accuracy concerning the areas of interlanguage identified as problematic on the previous step. The method chosen for this purpose is Brown's (1973) obligatory occasion analysis. Brown (1973) has designed a so-called obligatory occasion analysis in order to examine the accuracy of learners' performance in terms of specific linguistic items, like, for example, Past Simple copula or possessive pronouns. This analysis has been very popular with written evidence of interlanguage, however, it can also be performed with recorded oral examples of learner language. The obligatory occasion analysis has also been used by various scholars (E.g.: Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982) to establish the order of acquisition of a certain linguistic feature. However, the present study focuses mainly on the levels of accuracy of students' performance. The analysis consists of drawing a comparison between all the occasions a learner has to provide a correct language feature in his performance ("obligatory occasions") and the number of times he actually provides it ("supplied occasions") (Ellis, 2005). As stated by Ellis (2005:80), in order to perform an obligatory occasion analysis for accuracy one has to undertake four basic steps:

1. *Determine which morpheme is to be investigated.*

2. Go through the data and identify obligatory occasions for the use of the morpheme.

Count the total number of occasions.

3. Establish whether the correct morpheme is supplied in each obligatory context.

Count the number of times it is supplied.

4. Calculate the percentage of accurate use with this formula:

<i>N correct suppliance in contexts</i>				
<i>Total obligatory contexts</i>	<i>*100</i>	<i>=</i>	<i>per</i>	<i>cent</i>
			<i>accuracy</i>	

According to Ellis (2005:83), an obligatory occasion analysis is only precise and valuable if its coding parameters are clearly stated, motivated and obeyed with consistency all throughout the research. Thus, in the interests of the present investigation it is important to highlight that the author of the study customizes the process of obligatory occasion analysis and focuses on broader areas of learner language as tokens, or units of analysis (obligatory occasions). These areas have previously been identified as the areas of error concentration on the Stage One of the written performance analyses described above. Thus, instead of focusing, for instance, on subject+verb+object order, the present research analyses on its first step the word order as a general area of error concentration. Consequently, any obligatory occasion for a certain word order pattern to be supplied is considered as a token. Thus, any occasion for direct word order, inverted word order, incomplete sentences, cleft sentence constructions, fronting, parallel constructions or passive constructions were considered as obligatory occasions. By using these criteria, the researcher aims to obtain a more general, but yet full picture of students' accuracy in term of sentence structure and, what

is more, coherence. Apart from the word order as an area of analysis, the present research also focuses on word choices on its second step, as well as tense/verb choices on its third step. In terms of word choices, any supply of a collocation and set expression is considered to be a token and as far as tenses/verb choices are concerned, every occasion of use of tenses, as well as any occasion for a discriminative use of gerunds and infinitives are considered as tokens. This generalized manner of performing obligatory occasion analysis allows the author of the study to obtain the full quantitative account of students' accuracy in the areas previously defined as problematic. Such account, in turn, is vital for the study because the aim of the research is not to trace the development of specific language features within learner's interlanguage longitudinally, but to monitor the development of the learner language in general for the opportunity to trace a phase and the areas where the learning pace slows down and a learner arrives to a certain personal plateau.

Finally, it is important to note that according to Brown (1973) and Ellis (2005), a linguistic feature that has been supplied correctly in 90% of cases demonstrated by the obligatory occasion analysis is the feature that can be officially considered as a feature "acquired" by a learner. The reason for establishing the level of acquisition at 90% is motivated by the assumption that 90% correct performance is very close to 100%, which even native speakers fail to deliver due to occasional "slips" (Ellis, 2005:85). However, the percentage of accuracy, regardless that it has been calculated and exhibited in the study for the reference, has no major importance for the present research, again, because of to the generalized character of the research and the aims set by the author. It is important to bear in mind at all times that this study does not attempt to see if certain specific linguistic items have been acquired by the subjects, but

attempts to obtain a general view of students interlanguage and the “faulty” condition it finds itself notwithstanding the continuous input subjects receive.

5.6.3. Motivational Questionnaire and the Debate Task

The third stage of the study attempts to reveal the reasons for the halt of the learning pace in terms of the subjects of the study and their motivational constraints. This goal is pursued by designing, administering and analysing a questionnaire that focuses on a variety of motivational theories, followed by a debate task among the respondents provoked by the outcome of the questionnaire. The ultimate aims of the questionnaire and the debate task are to identify major characteristic traits that construe a self-image of an average learner in terms of the respondents, as well as to find evidence for the assumption that a virtual halt of learning pace students might experience on the advanced stage of interlanguage development may be rooted in their motivational disposition towards the EFL acquisition.

As far as the actual procedure is concerned, the questionnaire is distributed to all the respondents at the same time and no explicit time limit is established for the subjects to complete it. Students have to read the statements of the questionnaire at their own comfortable pace and indicate on the answer sheet whether each of the 35 statements reflects their ideas of their coming future and their present reality or not. Needless to say, that all the respondents of the questionnaire are encouraged to work individually and any form of communication between them during the questionnaire completion is forbidden in order to avoid the subjects influencing each other in their opinion-making process.

The data collected by the questionnaire is analyzed by using two different approaches. First of all, before quoting the results of the questionnaire explicitly, the author of the

research presents a hypothesized version of students' future self-image based on the general assumptions induced by the environment. Then, the author attempts to identify the main aspects that appear to shape respondents' future images of themselves as English language learners and users and compares the picture obtained to the one hypothesized before.

The second approach of data analysis focuses on five main areas of motivational constraints in terms EFL acquisition premeditated by the author of the study in the process of designing the questionnaire, which were as follows:

1. Social pressure and peer pressure
2. Future academic Self image
3. Integrative motivation and EU citizen
4. General Future identity
5. EFL as a subject in school

At this point of the study the data obtained by the questionnaire is analyzed according to these five aspects in order to identify the main motivational engines for EFL acquisition shared by the respondents, the idea of ultimate attainment as to EFL acquisition respondents might share, as well as the role English happens to be assigned within the general conceptualization of a future self-image respondents exhibit.

This stage of practical analysis is finalized by a debate with the respondents and some of their peers on the themes of future identity and motivation towards EFL acquisition raised by the questionnaire.

As to the procedure of the debate task, it comprises three main stages. First, the students are divided into 5 groups of 4 students in each and the list of debate questions is given to them for in-group discussion. Then, the teacher appoints an official speaker in every group and encourages students to share their opinions. Finally, the teacher incites the

students with opposite opinions to support their positions with arguments so that a debate could be sustained. As a result of the debate, students' testimonials are recorded and analysed by the researcher from the perspective of the research questions and objectives previously defined for it. The analysis of the testimonials is carried out with the aim to gain a greater insight into the concept of ultimate attainment in terms of EFL acquisition shared by the students.

As to the theoretical framework used for conducting the data analysis both for the questionnaire and for the debate, Dörnyei's (2009, 2013) Motivational L2 Self System is used as main axis, namely such notions as Ideal future L2 self, Ought-to self, Feared self-image, and Directed Motivation Current in terms of foreign language acquisition.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to expose the results obtained in each of the tree sections of data analysis and provide the discussion of these results in the light of the hypotheses and research questions of the study. The chapter is divided into three main sections, each of them corresponding to a particular stage of data analysis. Finally, each section provides a summary of results and their interpretations.

6.2. Stage One: Cambridge Examinations

On this stage of investigation special attention will be paid to the general pattern of EFL acquisition in terms of skills such as reading, writing, grammar and lexis (Use of English according to Cambridge EFL terminology), listening and speaking. Since it has been widely assumed by scholars in the field that the development of interlanguage has a modular character and different linguistic domains have different optimal periods of acquisition (Schachter, 1996; Selinker, 1972, Eubank and Gregg, 1999, Han, 2004), it seems to be only logical to monitor interlanguage development through different skill domains as proposed by the study. Another reason for choosing this method of investigation on the first stage of analysis is the widely-accepted belief that the nature of ultimate attainment is not a monolith and each linguistic domain has its own threshold of ultimate attainment (Schachter, 1996; Han, 2004).

This stage of practical investigation counts with three phases or points of reference marked within the 3-year period of monitoring, which are dictated by Cambridge examination summons adopted in school in question as a form of external evaluation. The first point of reference coincides with the point of departure of the present study, which is Grade Two of secondary education (13 year-old teenagers). The following point of reference is Grade Four of secondary education (15-16 year-old teenagers)

when students are expected to sit Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English examination, and the final point of reference is the first year of upper secondary studies (1st Bachillerato, 17 year-old teenagers), when students take Cambridge Proficiency in English examination. The results of Cambridge examinations are analysed closely across the three phases of official monitoring in order to reveal the areas of EFL affected by possible interlanguage stabilization. As it has already been mentioned above, the areas of EFL proficiency that fall within the scope of analysis are as follows: reading, writing, listening, speaking and Use of English. The basic reason for choosing the official Cambridge examinations as a material for analysis lies within the global assumption that Cambridge EFL Examinations have become a standard of EFL or ESL knowledge recognized worldwide. Thus, as emphasized by Patkowski (1980;1990), a study that aims to localize a certain stabilization within interlanguage development process should concentrate, in the first place, on advanced learners whose level of L2 proficiency has been officially accredited as advanced or superior, and not just supposed to be such. Another reason for focusing our attention on the results students have obtained in these examinations is the fact that the EFL input the subjects of the study have been receiving ever since they started learning English has always been oriented towards Cambridge EFL standards. In other words, students have been receiving a so-called “exam-oriented” teaching, meaning that the input has always been tailored towards the demands and the format of the exams in question. Thus, it seems quite logical to treat the results of Cambridge examinations as a point of reference that reflects the development of learner language in the specific case of the subjects under scrutiny. For a more detailed description of the nature, criteria and aims of both Cambridge examinations please consult the Context of the Study section.

6.2.1. Preliminary Considerations

The premonition to the present practical investigation was a statistical study of the Initial evaluation exams conducted in the educational establishment in question. The purpose of the study was to create a general picture of students' performance in initial evaluation examinations in the beginning of an academic year that, in fact, mirrors their readiness for Cambridge EFL examinations that they are expected to face. For a detailed treatment of the nature of school initial Evaluation exams please consult the Context section. At the same time, the statistic study aimed to trace a trajectory of students' development in such EFL areas as Grammar /Vocabulary (Use of English Paper in Cambridge examinations) and Reading over the period of two academic years in order to reveal any particular positive or negative changes in students' performance. The results of the statistical study are presented below in the Table 5. It is important to note, however, that Table 5 has not been created as a result of the present investigation; neither was it created by the author of the present study, but kindly provided by the educational establishment in question. Nevertheless, it is used here as an illustration of the onset of the present research – the data that provoked the first concern and the hypotheses of the study. Needless to say, the table is exposed in the study in the format it had initially been provided.

Table 5

Initial Evaluation Results in Grammar and Reading 2009-10, 2010-11

Grammar												
Year	Below Target				On Target				Ahead of Target			
	Number		Percentage		Number		Percentage		Number		Percentage	
	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11
1º ESO	44	41	31	25	75	89	53	54	22	34	16	21
2º ESO	82	61	65	59	40	26	31	25	5	16	4	16
3º ESO	104	75	74	62	25	25	18	21	12	21	9	17
4º ESO	105	59	76	66	13	10	9	11	21	20	15	22
1º BACH	109	46	80	51	23	33	17	36	4	12	3	13

Reading												
Year	Below Target				On Target				Ahead of Target			
	Number		Percentage		Number		Percentage		Number		Percentage	
	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11
1º ESO	40	21	28	13	58	69	41	42	43	74	43	52
2º ESO	62	35	49	34	42	32	33	31	23	36	35	53
3º ESO	86	50	61	41	21	31	15	26	34	40	62	56
4º ESO	85	34	61	38	20	17	14	19	34	38	63	69
1º BACH	85	34	63	38	31	30	23	33	20	26	39	46

As it can be observed from Table 5 above, the general number of students in both EFL abilities in question who are below target according to the school's expectations (the students who are not ready to take and pass a Cambridge examination that corresponds to their year in secondary school) has decreased noticeably in the period from the year 2009-2010 to the year 2010 and 2011. This data means that students have improved their EFL performance in general over this period. However, it is vitally important to note here that the quality of students' performance as far as grammar and vocabulary is concerned has lowered considerably as it does not seem to follow the same pace of improvement as reading skills. To illustrate, the number of ESO 2 (the age of 13) students below target in their reading skills has dropped from 49 % in the year 2009 to 34% in the year 2010, whilst there has only been a rather insignificant change in numbers in terms of grammar (65% down to 59%). Moreover, this particular tendency seems to perpetuate all through the phase of obligatory secondary education as it could

be observed in the case of ESO 4 students, where the percentage of below target students in reading has dropped from 61% to 38%, but in grammar only from 76% to 66%.

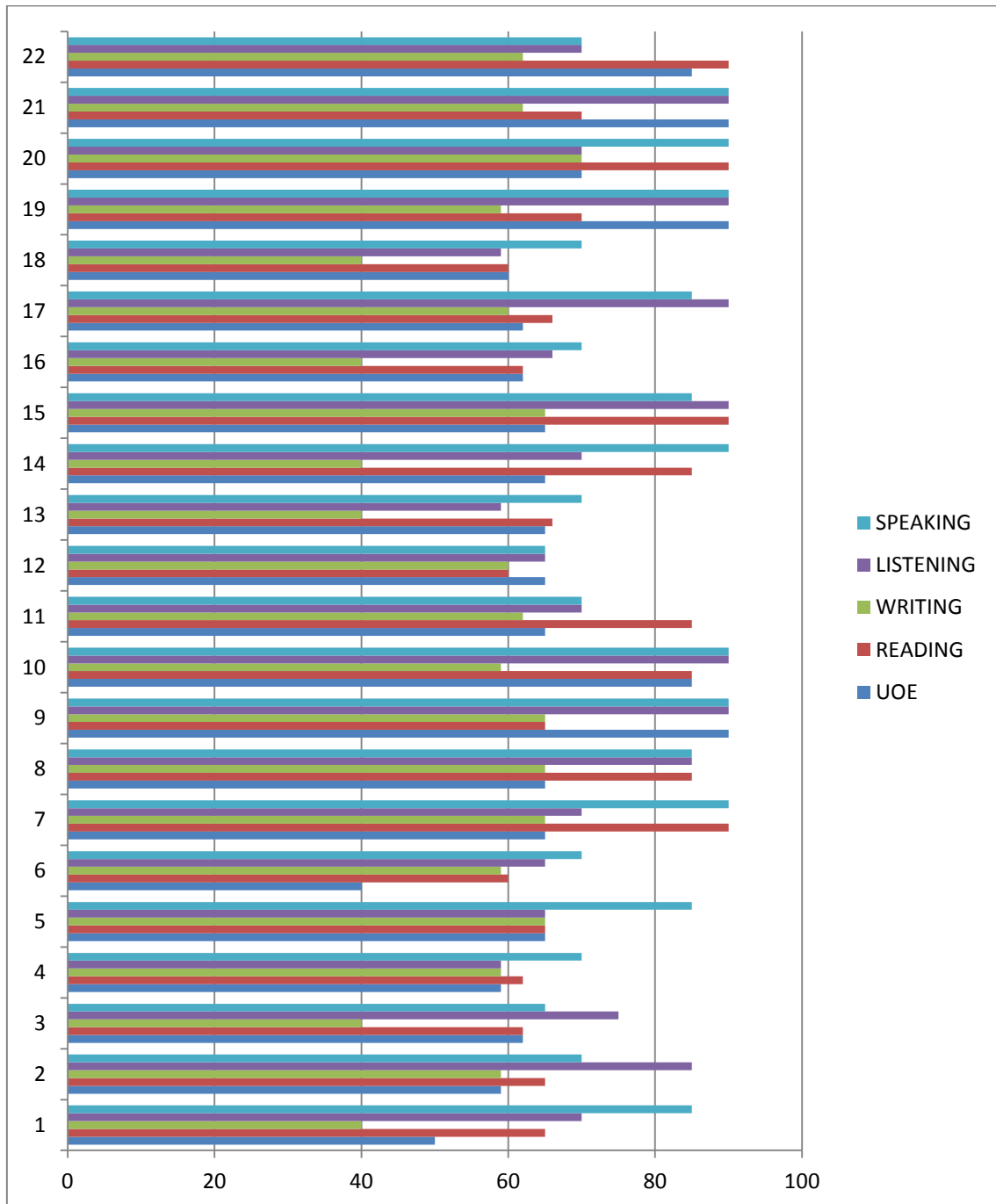
Thus, a major preliminary assumption that could be made after analysing Table 1 is that students' EFL competence has improved substantially over the period of one academic year. However, this improvement cannot be motivated by the students' progress in EFL grammar and/or vocabulary. This conclusion points at a certain phenomenon of halt of students' interlanguage development as far as the intake and production of grammar and/or vocabulary are concerned within the period of obligatory secondary education. This supposition, at the same time, defines a major concern of school's administration, as well as it shapes the course of the present study by suggesting that certain areas of interlanguage development are prompt to a halt in their learning pace.

6.2.2. Cambridge FCE

On this initial stage of investigation the author of the study contemplates the results of the subjects in Cambridge FCE exam, which is the first formal external assessment students experience in the secondary school. According to the European Framework of Reference for Learning Languages, this exam aims to test students' competence in English against the standards of B2 level⁷. Students face this examination in the end of their second year of secondary studies, at the age of 13. The results obtained by the subjects of this study in Cambridge FCE are presented below, in Figure 3.

⁷ For the detailed description of Cambridge examinations please consult the Context of the Study section

Figure 3
Cambridge 2009 FCE Results



As it can be seen from Figure 3⁸ above, the subjects of the study passed Cambridge FCE test with considerable success, excelling especially at oral papers, such as listening (19

⁸ KEY: weak: 35-45%; Borderline: 45-60%; Good: 65-70%; Exceptional: 75-85%; Above Exceptional: 85-100% of the test accomplished successfully.

students out of 22 obtained good to exceptional results) and speaking, where all 22 students without any exception obtained good to exceptional results. However, the results obtained in reading skills are not so remarkable, since only 16 out of 22 students obtained good to exceptional evaluation, and other 6 students were close to failing or borderline. Moreover, the worst performance of the students lies within the area of productive skills, which are Use of English (14 students out of 22 obtained high scoring), and, especially writing, where only 6 students out of 22 performed well or exceptionally well and the rest 16 students were close to failing.

A possible explanation for such a success in oral reception and production can be partially (or completely) induced by the teaching patterns and methods students have been subjected to before sitting the exam, as their major learning experience lies within 6 years of primary education, where students follow a bilingual programme that puts them under obligation to receive and produce oral English on daily basis. Notwithstanding the fact that students receive a great amount of formal grammar and vocabulary input during the first two years of secondary school, as well as they undergo regular writing and reading practice, the superiority of oral skills is still evident on this stage of their interlanguage development.

6.2.3. Cambridge CAE

On this stage of study the author examines the results that the students obtained in the Cambridge for Advanced Learners examination, which is the second formal external evaluation students undergo in the period of secondary education. According to the Common European Framework for Learning Languages, CAE examination responds to the standards of C1 level⁹ of second language proficiency. Students face this

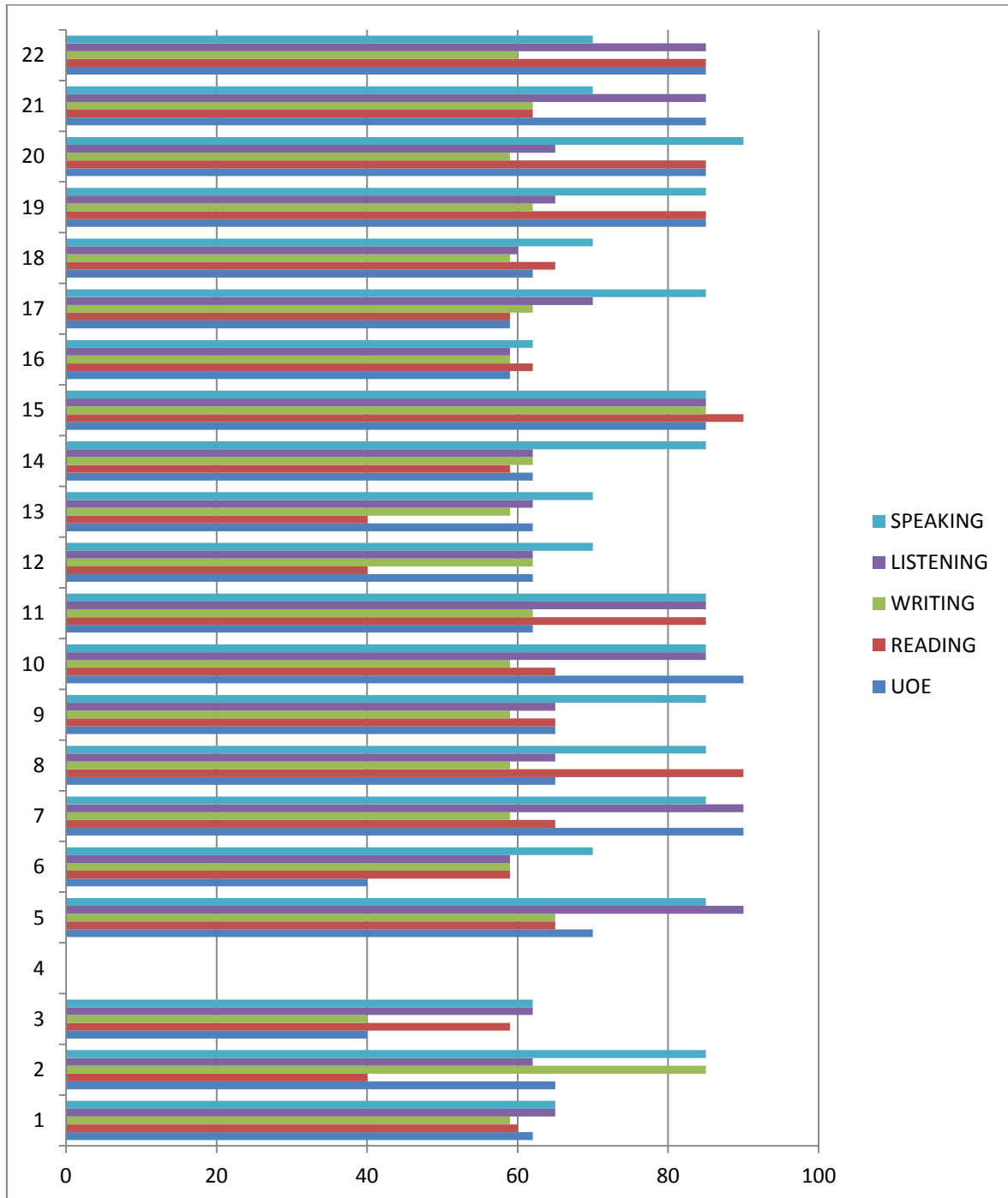
⁹ For the detailed description of Cambridge examinations please consult the Context of the Study section

examination in the end of their fourth and last year of secondary school at the age of 16.

The overall picture of the results obtained by students is presented below in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Cambridge 2011 CAE Results



As it can be seen from Figure 4¹⁰ above, all 21 students who sat the examination obtained a very high result in the speaking paper (exceptional and above exceptional), which marks the tendency established in the case of the results in Cambridge FCE examination, analysed above in section 5.2.2. However, the listening paper already shows a slight decline in students' performance as compared to FCE examination, as practically 50% of the students did not obtain a better result than good-borderline (9 students out of 21). Reading and Use of English papers appear to be other areas that represent greater difficulty for the students as 50% of respondents obtained borderline and weak results. Finally, the skill where students performance tends to be the lowest is Writing, the same as in the case of Cambridge FCE examination, taken by the respondents two years prior to Cambridge CAE (18 out of 21 students showed a rather poor performance, getting close to borderline and borderline results).

A general comment that could be made on this stage of the investigation is that, on the large scale, students' EFL proficiency has declined considerably over the period of two years. Further, the areas that suffered most from this decline are, in the order of importance, the following: writing, reading and Use of English. In contrast, the area of oral expression has experienced a certain improvement, as all of the respondents except one obtained exceptional and above exceptional results (11 above – exceptional, 10 exceptional, 7 good-exceptional, 1 good, 1 good-borderline).

It is important to take in account the fact that during the preparatory period for CAE students received the same number of hours of EFL input as during the preparatory period for FCE, including the explicit grammar and vocabulary input, as well as the implicit EFL practice focused on skills. Despite this fact, however, one can observe a rather evident decline of students' EFL proficiency in the three focal areas, such as

¹⁰ KEY: weak: 35-45%; Borderline: 45-60%; Good: 65-70%; Exceptional: 75-85%; Above Exceptional: 85-100% of the test accomplished successfully.

writing, reading and use of English (which have been identified as challenging areas for students already in FCE) as well as, rather unexpectedly if compared to FCE results, listening. These results lead to an assumption that students might experience a certain decline of pace and quality in the process of their interlanguage development within the period of year three and four of secondary education. Such a halt in EFL acquisition could be motivated by several factors of different nature, such as, for example, critical Period Hypothesis, motivational constraints or the specificity of Cambridge CAE examination, which originally targets a more mature learner than the subjects of the present investigation. However, in order to offer a more substantial explanation of this phenomenon, a more thorough analysis is needed, which follows later in the present study.

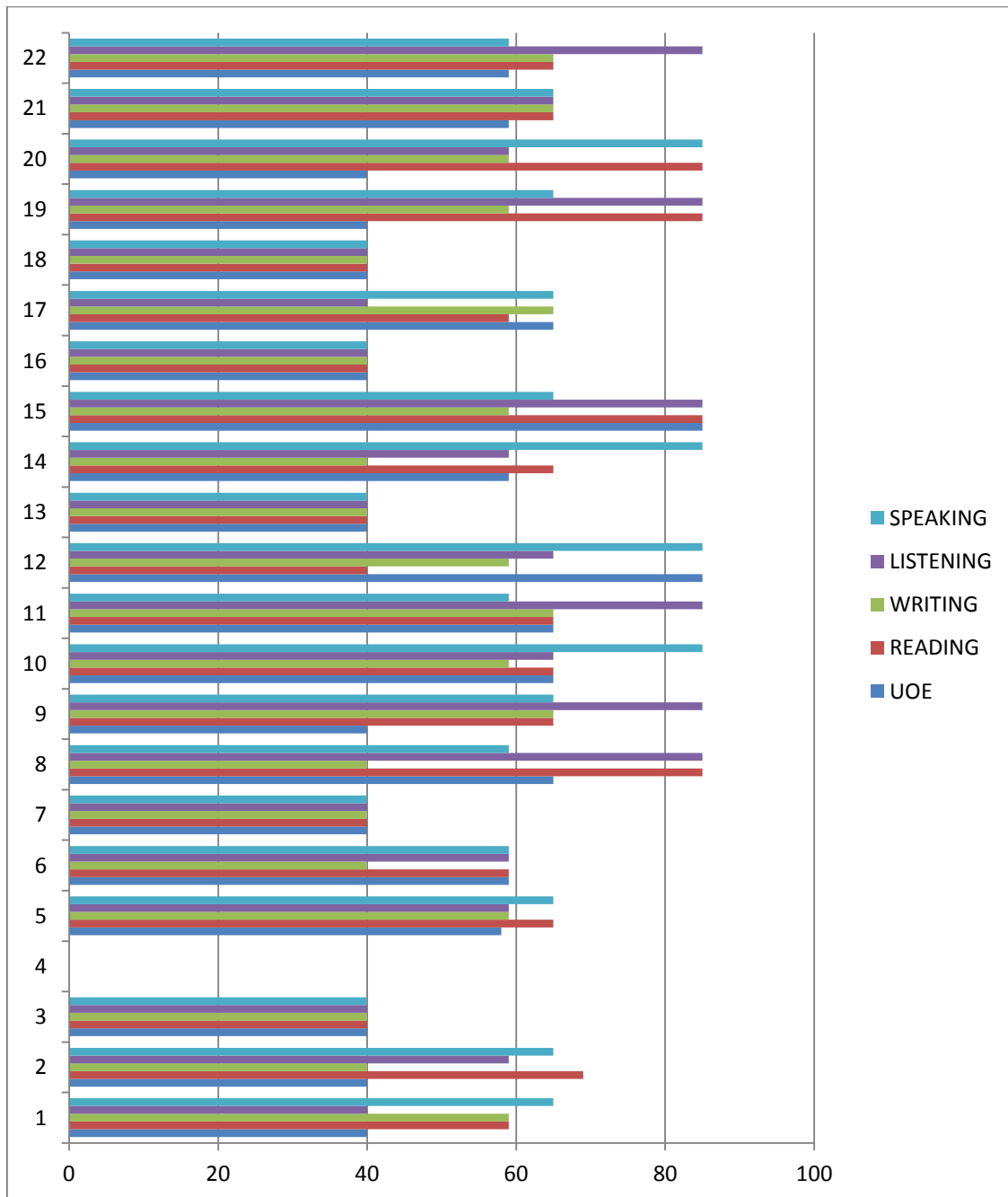
6.2.4. Cambridge CPE

The last stage of interlanguage development analysed by the study is the one that is marked by a Cambridge Proficiency in English¹¹ examination. According to the Common European Framework for Learning Languages, this examination reflects a C2, or the highest degree of interlanguage proficiency. The examination taken by the students represents a version prior to modifications made in 2012. The students take a CPE exam at the age of 17, when they finish 1st year of non-obligatory secondary education. The results of the examination have been graphically represented in the Figure 5 below.

¹¹ For the detailed description of Cambridge examinations please consult the Context of the Study section

Figure 5

Cambridge 2012 CPE Results



As it can be observed from Figure 5¹² above, the tendency for a decline in acquisition pace and for the decrease of quality of interlanguage has continued on to the next stage

¹² KEY: weak: 35-45%; Borderline: 45-60%; Good: 65-70%; Exceptional: 75-85%; Above Exceptional: 85-100% of the test accomplished successfully.

of analysis, the CPE examination. According to the data summarized above, over 50% of participants (13 out of 21 students) obtained a weak/borderline result in the Use of English test (Grammar and Vocabulary). The low performance in the test was shown in the area of written expression, where 16 out of 21 students obtained a weak/borderline score, which is quite similar result to the one obtained in a CAE examination (18 out of 21). As to the listening skills, the quality of interlanguage has decreased in the period between the CAE and CPE level as 9 out of 21 students have obtained a weak/borderline results, instead of the same number of students obtaining a good-borderline results in a CAE test. Finally, the area least affected by the certain decrease in the pace of interlanguage development seems to be oral production, as the majority of students obtained a good and above results in the CPE speaking test and only 9 out of 21 obtained a lower result.

Further, the Figures 3, 4 and 5¹³ are presented below together for a better illustration of the halt in the pace of interlanguage development in order to offer a logical transition to the next stage of the study, where the results of Cambridge examinations are juxtaposed longitudinally and by skills.

¹³ KEY: weak: 35-45%; Borderline: 45-60%; Good: 65-70%; Exceptional: 75-85%; Above Exceptional: 85-100% of the test accomplished successfully.

Figure 3 Cambridge 2009 FCE Results

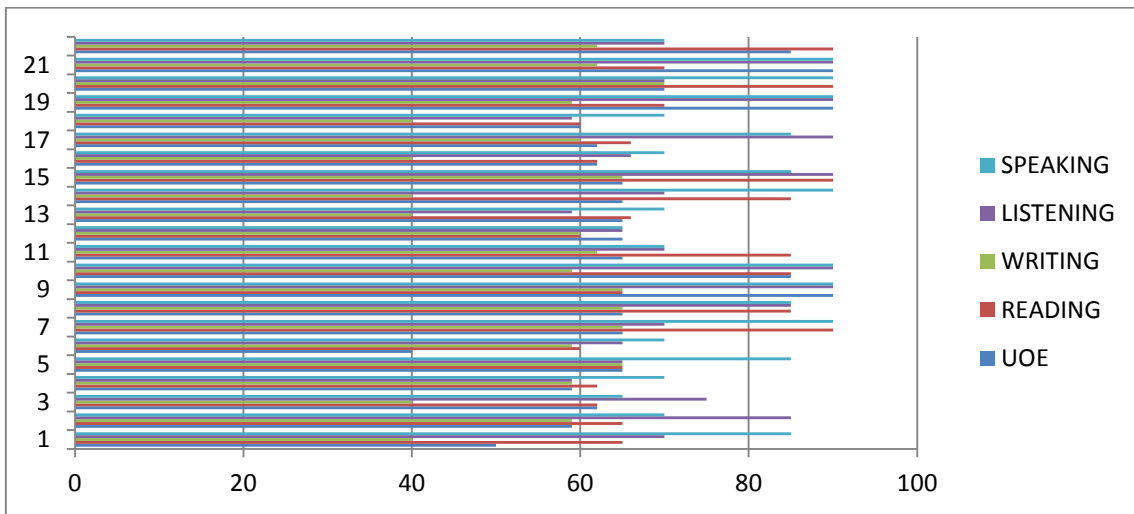


Figure 4 Cambridge 2011 CAE Results

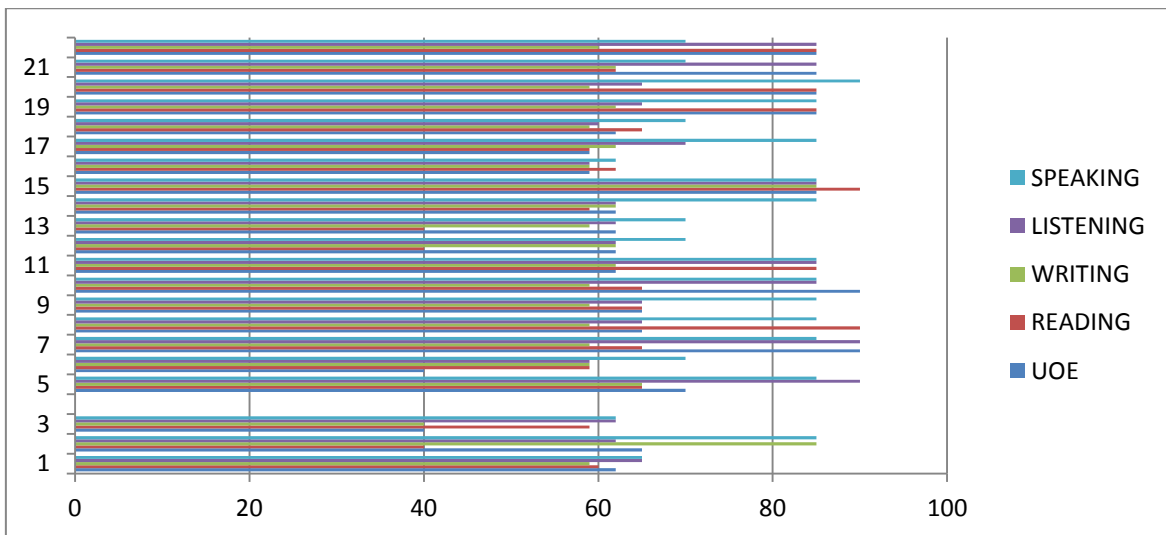
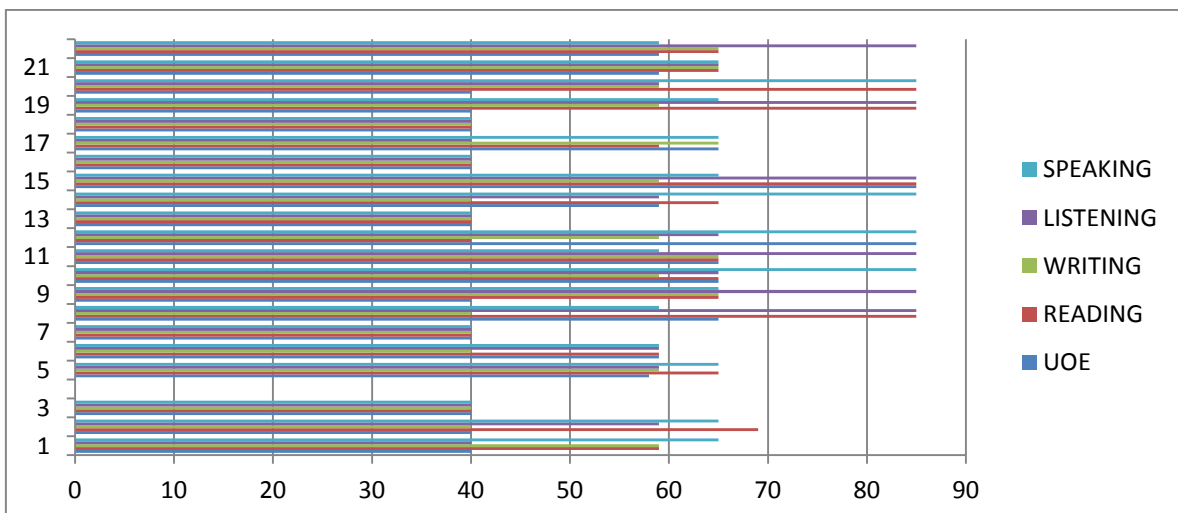


Figure 5 Cambridge 2012 CPE Results

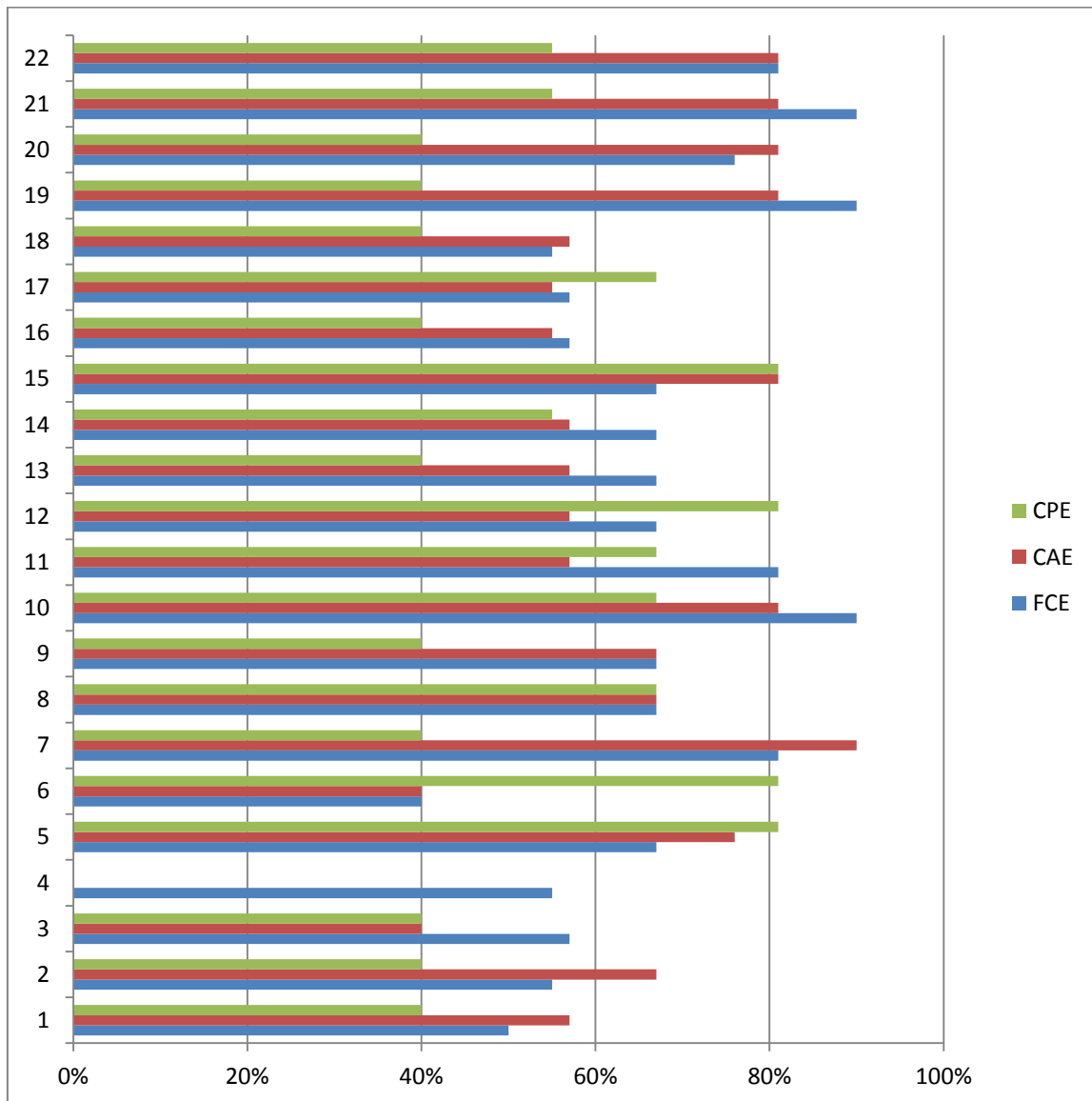


As it can be seen from the generic representation of Cambridge results above, the majority of the students tend to achieve at least 60 % of success in almost all the skills at the FCE level. Further, it can be clearly observed from the figures above that this score drops on the next control stages of Cambridge CAE and especially of Cambridge CPE, where the majority of results tend to drop to a 40% score. Needless to say, such a visual juxtaposition of results from all three control stages allows the author of the study to illustrate a clear reduction of pace in learners' interlanguage development – a phenomenon, which is treated in more detail on the next stage of the analysis.

6.2.5. Comparative Study of Cambridge Examinations

On this stage of the practical study it is important to contemplate a general picture of the results students obtained in three Cambridge tests they have done in the period of four years of observation. The general scope of exam results should be contemplated per each language area students have been tested in with the aim to reveal the area prone to be affected by stabilization. The results of students' performance per each language area tested are represented below in Figures 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

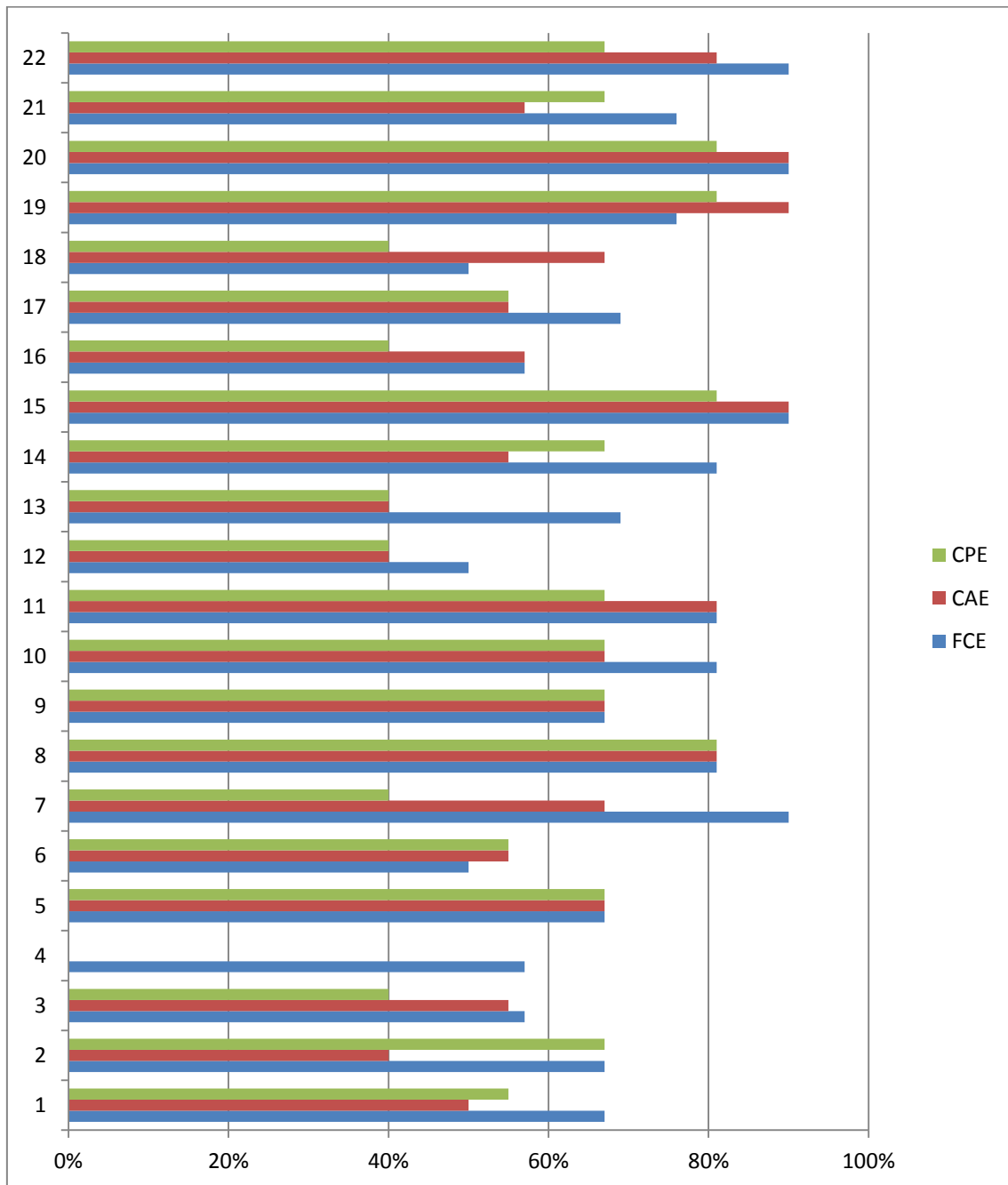
Figure 6
Cambridge Use of English (Grammar and Vocabulary) Paper
A Comparative Representation of Results



As it can be seen from Figure 6 above, only 5 out of 21 respondents have improved their performance in the areas of grammar and vocabulary over the learning period of two years that separates FCE examination and CAE examination. Further, 14 out of 21 respondents, which is the absolute majority, have experienced a decrease of interlanguage quality during this period, while 4 out of 21 students offered the same quality performance in CAE as in the FCE examination. What is more, the tendency for

a decrease in students quality of language acquisition can be clearly traced by a comparison of FCE and CAE results with the ones of CPE, as 13 out of 21 respondents have obtained lower scores in a CPE grammar and vocabulary test than in the CAE or even FCE ones. It is also important to note here that only one respondent out of 21 has managed to keep a stable pace of interlanguage development and obtained the same level of proficiency in every examination under study. Another remarkable case is the respondent number 5, who showed a positive progression of language acquisition, where the scores obtained in each exam rose on a higher level respectively. Likewise, the respondent number 15 has shown the same level of interlanguage development on the CPE level as he did on the CAE level. The general picture, however, suggests that subjects of the study have decreased their pace in language assimilation over the years and performed with less success in CPE examination than in the two preceding ones. The same tendency for a decrease in students' proficiency can also be observed in the following Figure 7 that juxtaposes FCE, CAE and CPE reading results.

Figure 7
Cambridge Reading Paper
A Comparative Representation of Results



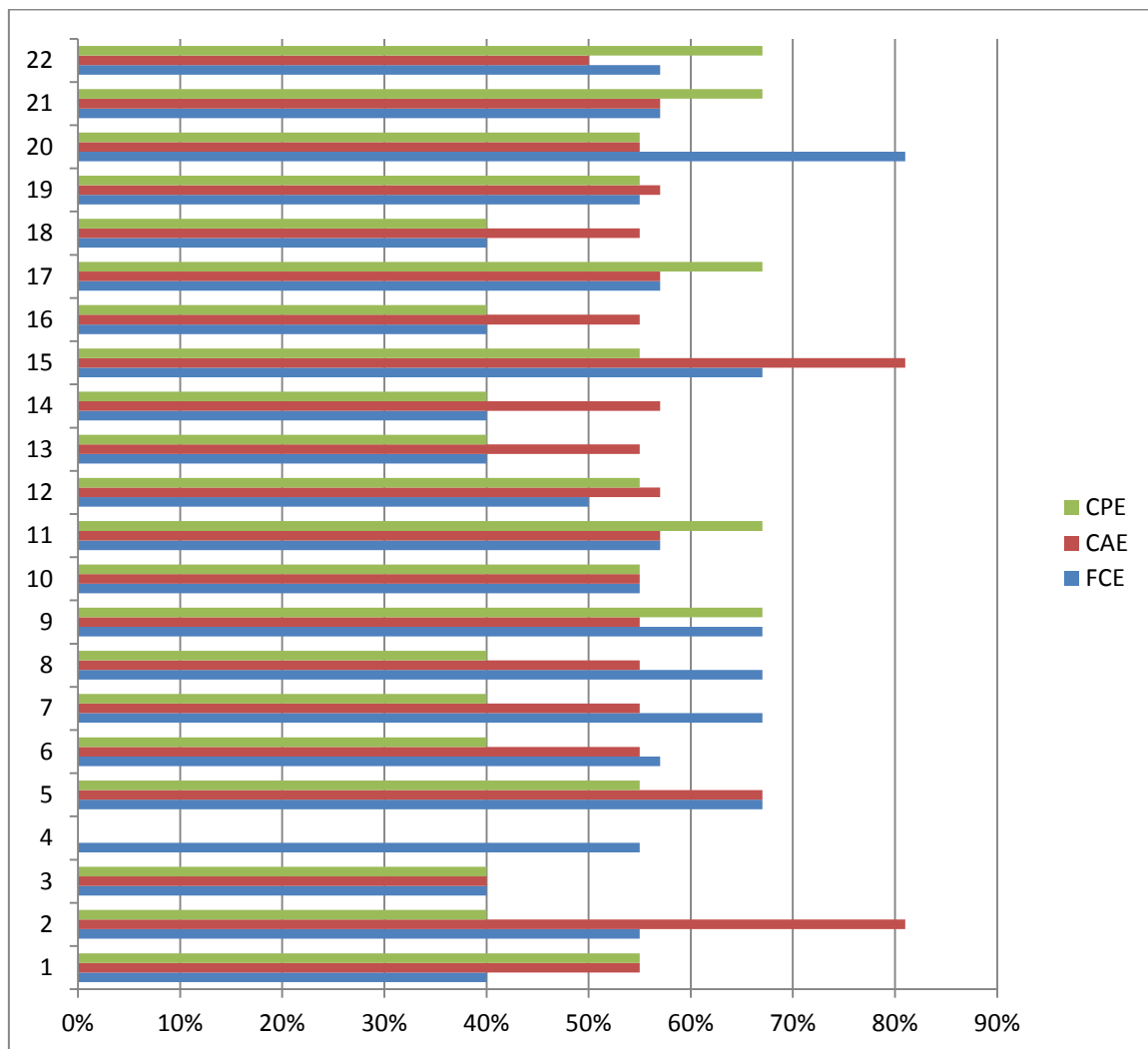
The comparative analysis of FCE and CAE results graphically exposed above in Figure 7 makes the halt in students reading skills development rather obvious as only 2 students out of 21 have shown the positive progression of interlanguage development over the two year period that separated Cambridge FCE and Cambridge CAE (subjects 19 and 18 did better in a CAE reading test than in a FCE one). While 3 out of 22

subjects have managed to keep the same pace of interlanguage development over the two years of observations and obtained identical scores in FCE and CAE examinations, another three respondents were equally successful in all the examinations taken. Nevertheless, the majority of students, just as in the case of the Use of English area discussed above, have experienced a decrease of acquisition pace or intensity, as CPE reading scores, in most cases, are lower than FCE or CAE ones. Further, the analysis turns to the area of writing, where a certain loss of quality in language acquisition is also rather obvious.

Figure 8

Cambridge Writing Paper

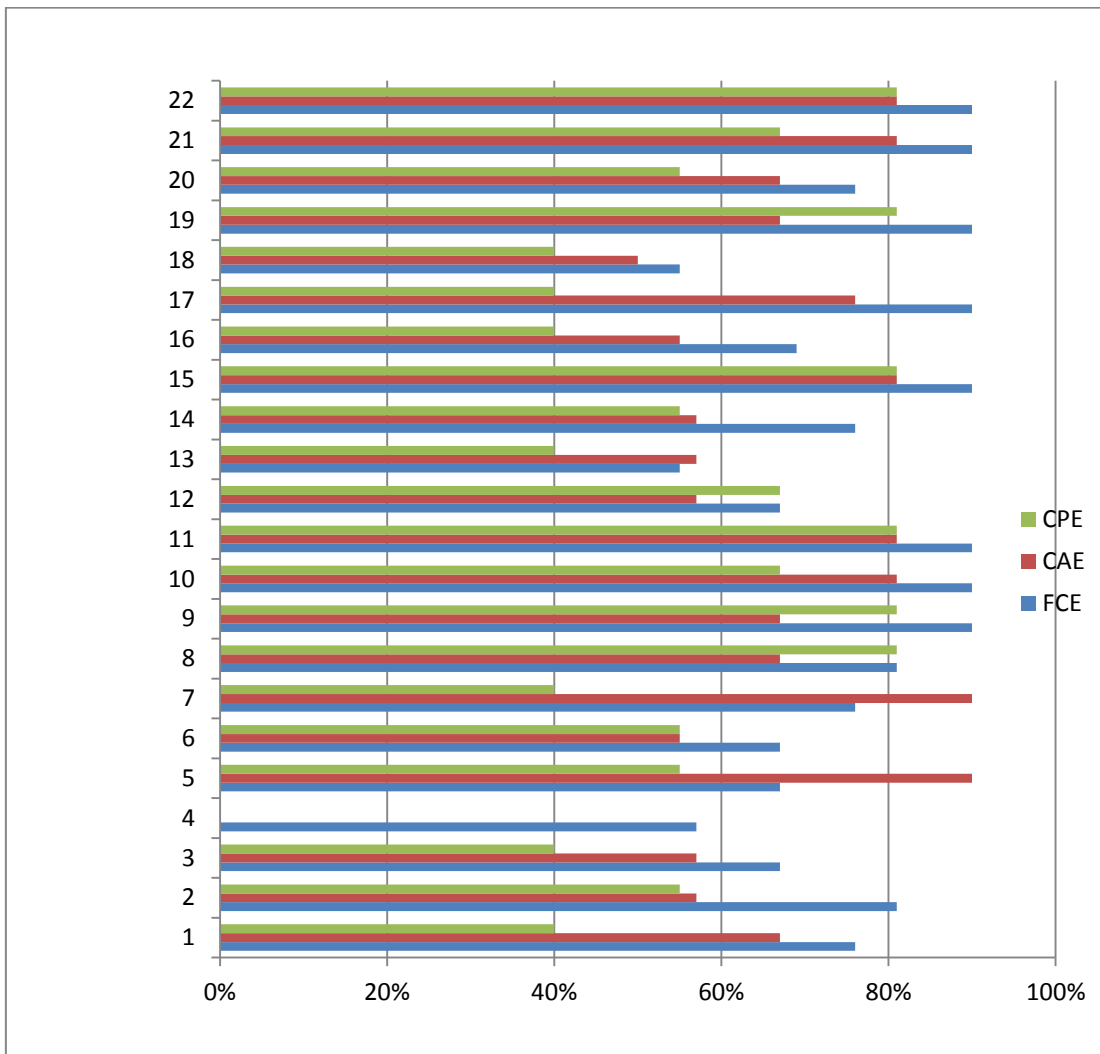
A Comparative Representation of Results



As it can be seen from Figure 8 above, nearly 50% of the respondents experienced an improvement in the area of writing skills in the period that separates FCE examination from the CAE one (10 students out of 21 performed better in CAE writing tests than in the FCE one), whilst 6 students out of 21 have obtained a worse result in CAE than in FCE, and 5 students out of 21 have achieved the same result in CAE as in FCE. The fact that almost 50% of the students have improved their writing performance over the two year period of the Pre-CAE preparatory studies could be explained, among other factors, by the level of maturity students have at the stage of the CAE examination. This examination is done in school in the year four of secondary studies when students attain the age of 16, which meets the demands of the Cambridge writing papers better than any earlier school age. As far as the next stage of analysis, the CPE examination, is concerned, the picture is rather optimistic as well. Namely, 12 out of 21 respondents have managed to keep or even improve the pace of acquisition maintaining equal scores in both CAE and CPE papers (7 respondents) or even showing a more quality performance in CPE than in an CAE exam (5 respondents).

The following focus of the present analysis is Cambridge listening paper, which presents a rather surprising and steep decrease of students performance since listening and speaking seemed, on the first steps of the study, to be the areas not challenged by the stabilization of interlanguage development.

Figure 9
Cambridge Listening Paper
A Comparative Representation of Results



As it can be seen from Figure 9 above that 18 students out of 21 obtained lower scores in CAE listening test than they did in FCE listening test and only 3 students out of 21 managed to obtain higher scores. Such a decrease in the students' listening skills could be explained by various factors, such as, for example, the lack of exposure to the genre of spoken language tested in CAE examination or the lack of motivation to acquire the register and genre of language needed to succeed in Cambridge CAE (for the detailed description of Cambridge examinations please consult the Context of the Study section). The same negative progression in the students' listening skills development can also be

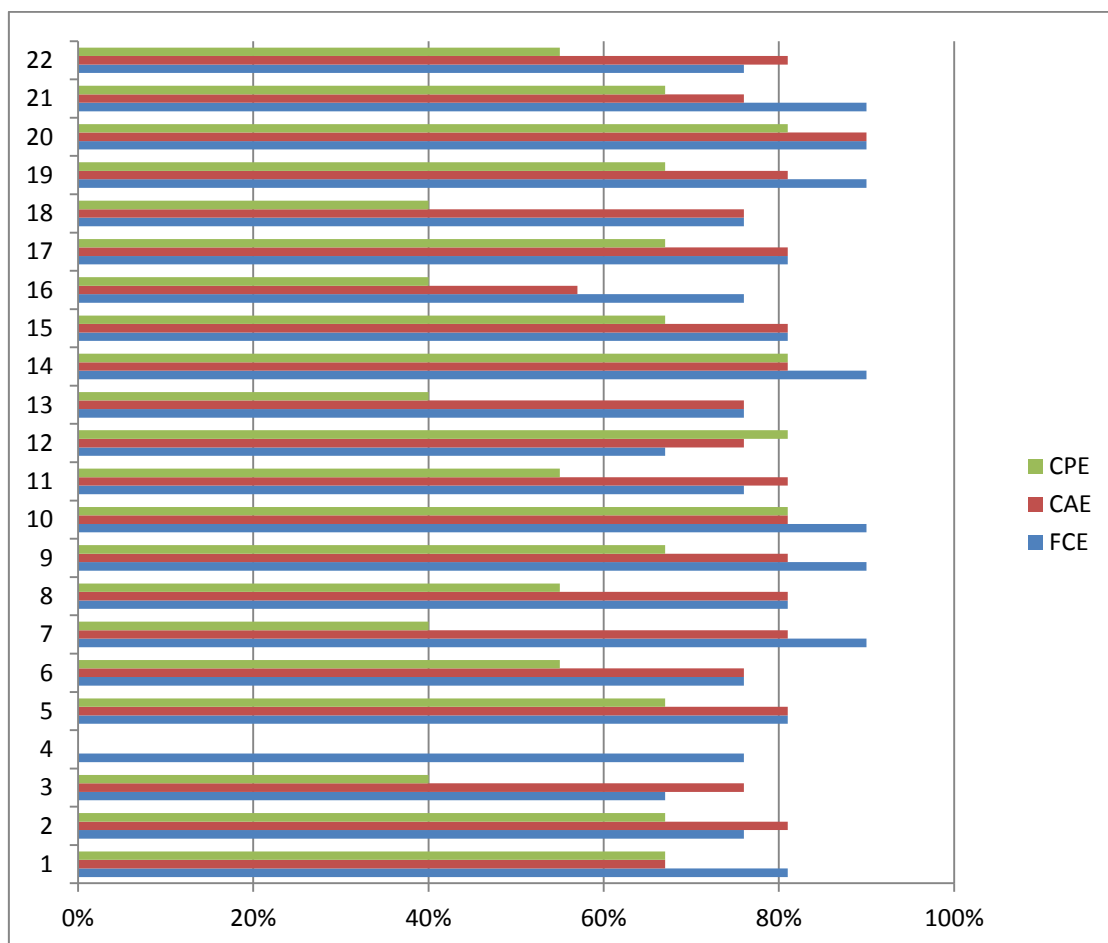
observed on the following stage of analysis, where no respondents appear to show a better listening score in the CPE test than in any of the preceding ones. However, 7 out of 21 manage to keep their results equal to the ones they obtained in the CAE examination. It is also worth mentioning that 4 respondents performed more successfully in a CAE test than in the CPE one and 3 of them showed a steady healthy progression in their interlanguage development up to the CAE level, when they obtained their highest scores (on the next level, however, the scores have dropped).

The last area to focus on is the area of speaking skills, represented below in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Cambridge Speaking Paper

A Comparative Representation of Results



As it can be observed from Figure 10, speaking skills appear to be a rather safe area for students in the FCE towards CAE period as far as the pace of acquisition is concerned as 11 out of 21 students have managed to achieve similar or very close to the similar results in both FCE and CAE tests. However, as it can clearly be seen from the Figure 10 above, all these respondents have experienced a considerable decrease in the pace of their learning during the one-year period that separates CAE and CPE examinations. Only one student out of 21 has managed to keep a steady positive progression in speaking skills development throughout the 4 years of observation (respondent 12). The rest of the respondents have shown a more predictable gradual loss of pace in acquisition over the period of observation from FCE level on to CPE level.

6.2.6. Summary of Stage One

As it could be observed from Figures 6-10 and the analyses that followed each of those figures, it would be logical to assume that such areas of interlanguage development as Grammar and Vocabulary (Use of English in Cambridge examinations), Reading and Speaking are the ones prone to the loss of quality/pace in interlanguage development. In other words, a potential learner of English as a foreign language can be assumed to experience a decrease of efficiency in acquiring the target language grammar, as well as reading and speaking skills over the years of invariable intensity of formal input and exposure to the target language.

6.3. Stage Two: In-class Written Performance

6.3.1. Introduction

This stage of practical research is dedicated to the careful analysis of students' in-class performance, namely their written works.

6.3.2. Identification of Error-Stricken Areas: ESO 2 Written Works

The analysis of errors will first of all concentrate on the written production samples collected on the stage of B1+ (ESO 2) development of subjects' interlanguage. The analysis has shown that the major difficulty of the students of this level is lexis, concerning mainly formal vocabulary, word formation, collocations and prepositions. Whilst students give a rather successful performance in terms of grammar (Tense formation and appropriate use of tenses, verb-noun agreement, basic relative clauses, word order and spelling), except for occasional slips, they are not so successful as to the use of formulas and vocabulary standards proper to formal language.

The generalizations expressed above are illustrated below in the Table 6.

Table 6
Error-Stricken Areas: ESO 2 Written Works

TYPE OF MISTAKE	EXAMPLE
LEXIS: False friends, wrong coinages and transfer from L1	“a <i>supplent</i> teacher” “I have experience working <i>in</i> this kind of job” “I think I could be the best candidate because I have all the <i>clauses</i> you were asking for...” “When I was young my dream was to be a director or a <i>ctitician</i> ...” “You will have more <i>acomodations</i> and an easier life...” “there is more pollution and <i>stressness</i> ”.

	<p>“...what is an <i>undoubtable</i> advantage.”</p>
LEXIS: Prepositions	<p>“I have worked in a primary school as a supplant teacher with children <i>at</i> about six and seven years.”</p> <p>“I like to work <i>on</i> teams.”</p> <p>“...because I have experience <i>on</i> this area...”</p> <p>“I am available every afternoon <i>since five to eight o'clock</i>.”</p> <p>“...<i>in</i> the other hand...”</p> <p>“...you will have less jobs <i>in</i> which to choose...”</p>
GRAMMAR: Sentence structure. Cohesion and Coherence.	<p>“I am really interested in films because when I attended acting classes, I saw many films to see how they acted.”</p> <p>“I would like the job for practicing my English and for <i>meet</i> new people <i>although I</i> like meeting people.”</p> <p>“Here I am going to talk about it giving my personal opinion which not necessary everybody will agree”.</p> <p>“Nevertheless, the truth is that is a hard way of life.”</p> <p>“As a consequence, pollution increases <i>although</i> you can move in public transport. The number of people that live in the city is a consequence of numerous jobs you can find in it.”</p> <p>“On the other hand, living in the countryside for most part of the people very hard.”</p>
LEXIS: Wrong collocations, word formation errors.	<p>“I love <i>seeing</i> movies...”</p> <p>“...<i>a stress</i> life...”</p>
SPELLING	<p>“...<i>Now a days</i> all cities...”</p>

	“Also, you can buy <i>every thing</i> you can imagine.”
GRAMMAR	<p>“A lot of people think that the city is <i>best than</i> the countryside...”</p> <p>“The country also has its facilities and <i>it’s</i> bad things”</p> <p>“...living in the city has <i>it’s</i> good things...”</p>

6.3.3. Identification of Error-stricken Areas: ESO 4 Written Works

The analysis of errors in the written production of B2+ level (ESO 4) showed that students tend to struggle with accuracy as soon as they intend to raise the level of complexity by following the standards of formal register (relative clauses, parallel constructions, inversions, passive constructions). Another observation worth attention in terms of the present analysis is the tendency of students to transfer formal sentence structures from their mother tongue into English. In addition, the same phenomenon can be observed on the lexical level, where students tend either to misuse an English vocabulary item creating wrong collocations, or transfer formal vocabulary items from their mother tongue into English.

Apart from the major observations described above, one could also remark an impressive amount of basic grammatical errors in the writings under discussion. Students tend to still experience problems with tense formation, agreement between nouns, pronouns and adjectives, as well as word order. It is important to note here that such basic grammatical mistakes were more characteristic of the stage B1-B2 of students’ interlanguage development, analyzed in the section dedicated to ESO2 students. The generalizations expressed above are illustrated below in the Table 7.

Table 7
Error-stricken Areas: ESO 4 Written Works

TYPE OF A MISTAKE	EXAMPLE
<p>Lexis: collocations and inadequate word choice</p>	<p>“The <i>worst point of the holiday</i> were the English classes...”</p> <p>“In addition, although the breakfast was fine one day we had <i>to come up with a very small dinner...</i>”</p> <p>“it is <i>a recommended activity to make</i>”</p> <p>“In addition, tours were <i>very good organized,...</i>”</p> <p>“The aim of this report is to show people who travel that <i>going abroad does not only applies shopping and sightseeing...</i>”</p> <p>“I have <i>achieved an unique experience....</i>”</p> <p>“But, before going, make sure they have <i>modified the advantages made before.</i>”</p> <p>“I would like to ask you to consider our proposal and <i>to solve out inquiries.</i>”</p>
<p>Sentence structure: coherence and cohesion</p>	<p>“On the other hand, lunch was not planned by the organization twice, <i>which shown the unhappiness of everyone</i>, and we had to spend our own money to buy sandwiches.”</p> <p>“<i>The programme affected the holiday</i> of five days in Australia, Sidney.”</p> <p>“In addition, <i>they should prepare with better organization, all the excursions in which we have lunch and dinner out.</i>”</p> <p>“But <i>not only</i> tours were planned, (<i>but also – missing</i>) we were taken by the</p>

	<p>organization to wonderful shops, and a disco was booked for the last night.”</p> <p>“Located in the South of Spain and with its hot summer, <i>it is one of the places most visited by tourist all over the year.</i></p> <p>“In this letter, <i>are included the members of the local residents comitee, as they feel extremely disappoinded.</i>”</p> <p>“Also, <i>there are going to be build twelve semi-detached private residences</i>”.</p> <p>“Finally, it is claimed in the announcement that the project is to be done in an unused area, <i>while in there, is the existence of parks, sport centres or children playing.</i>”</p> <p>“I would like to thank you in <i>advance you read into my letter.</i>”</p>
<p>Direct transfer from L1 (Lexis, sentence structures)</p>	<p>“The principal aim of this report is <i>to explain my holiday...</i>”</p> <p>“<i>The last day</i>, the organization took all the group to the most famous disco there, it was incredible!”</p> <p>“In addition, <i>tours were very good organized,...</i>”</p> <p>“, the most enjoyed tour was the night at the Sidney opera, it was <i>espectacular.</i>”</p> <p>“But, before going, make sure they have <i>modificated</i> the advantages made before.”</p> <p>“Even though Sideney, Australia is <i>a far country from Spain, is a place that everyone should visit one day.</i>”</p> <p>“Moreover this traditions enrich national culture and <i>evitate</i> globalization of only</p>

	<p>one culture.”</p> <p>“To go further, residents weren’t <i>told about the project with enough anticipation</i>, as it is taking place in three months time.”</p> <p>“...private residences that are going to be built will be <i>destinated</i> for local people...”</p> <p>“Firstly, in your announcement you say that you make this decision after <i>consultating</i> local residents <i>but no one said that had talked to you in their lives.</i>”</p> <p>“Moreover, in your announcement you refer to the Northgate Common as an unused land but <i>this information is not totally correct because is used</i> by children and adults to play, jog”</p> <p>“First of all, the local residents have not been asked about this project, while <i>in the advertisement is outlined</i> that there has been a local consultation”.</p> <p>“To start with, <i>the announcement talked about</i> the construction with local residents.”</p>
<p>Grammar: tenses, indirect questions, adjective-noun agreement</p>	<p>“If it really happened, <i>I would like to know when did it occur.</i>”</p> <p>“The local residents’ <i>comitee think</i> that...”</p> <p>“...their last <i>announcement affect</i> our community...”</p> <p>“Also, there are going to be <i>build</i> twelve semi-detached private residences...”</p> <p>“The aim of this report is to show people</p>

	<p>who travel that going abroad <i>does not only applies</i> shopping and sightseeing...”</p> <p>“Moreover <i>this traditions</i> enrich national culture and evitate globalization of only one culture.”</p>
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6.3.4. Identification of Error-stricken Areas: BACH 1 Written Works

The analysis of the classwork samples presented below has shown that upon attaining C1 level the students under analysis commit mostly lexical and structural errors, as well as errors that impede coherence and cohesion of a written text. Furthermore, students tend to transfer separate lexical units from their L1, which is Spanish in the case of the present investigation. However, if compared to the writings produced by the same students one year before (analyzed in the study as ESO 4 classroom data), a certain improvement in terms of coherence and cohesion can be observed, as in the case of BACH 1 students, complexity does not necessary overrule accuracy, as it was often the case with ESO 4 students. Nevertheless, another important observation that has to be made here is that Bach 1 students do not tend to take as many risks as ESO 4 students, who experiment with their interlanguage by trying to introduce more complex sentence structures proper to the style of their writing tasks (inversions, parallel constructions, conditionals, impersonal passives) and upgrade their writings to a higher level of complexity. In a nutshell, BACH1 students opt for using the constructions they believe to have mastered and, as a result, they tend to produce more accurate writings by means of not risking to use more complex structures they do not fully dominate.

The generalizations expressed above are illustrated below in the Table 8.

Table 8

Error-stricken Areas: BACH 1 Written Works

TYPE OF A MISTAKE	EXAMPLE
LEXIS: Collocations	<p>“...it would be <i>prudent</i> to renovate the swimming pool...”</p> <p>“...it would be <i>extremely advisable</i> to...”</p> <p>“...the nets are slightly stretched which means that people can not <i>play fluidly</i>...”</p> <p>“...The computers aforementioned are in dreadful conditions as well as <i>aged</i>...”</p> <p>“... <i>a pleasant use</i> of the raised money...”</p> <p>“... the <i>greatly expensive prices</i> of the products available in the snack-bar...”</p> <p>“... Apart from literature, there are no other <i>means of art</i> in the entire school...”</p>
LEXIS: false friends and transfer from L1	<p>“...Having <i>explained the current facilities</i> above...”</p> <p>“... it would be recommendable to buy and install a new net because the <i>actual</i> one is broken...”</p> <p>“... my suggestions on how to <i>administrate the government funding</i>...”</p> <p>“... a wide range of book of <i>variated themes</i>...”</p> <p>“... Another good idea would be to <i>build aninsonorized room</i> for the school band...”</p> <p>“... Another <i>inversion</i> to consider would be the introduction of a cafeteria. ...</p> <p>“... The tennis courts are hard floor and are in the exterior, but due to the</p>

	<p>temperature changes, they have <i>fissures</i> and <i>their nets have holes...</i></p> <p>“... there is a general <i>argument</i> between the students...”</p>
<p>Sentence structure mistakes.</p> <p>Coherence and Cohesion.</p>	<p>“... For the theatre, there should be installed new lightbulbs, new materials for the creation of costumes and decorations, the spectators’ seats should be also changed and we should install new speakers....”</p> <p>“... With reference to the leisure facilities near the college there has been set up a pleasant cafeteria...”</p> <p>“...The tennis courts are hard floor and are in the exterior...”</p> <p>“...Consideration should be given to the weekend activities plan, on the grounds of the poorly variety of activities offered, it would be prudent to investigate ways of extending the activities mentioned above, one way could be making competitions or matches once the current facilities has been improved....”</p> <p>“...The recommendations mentioned will make youngs interested in healthy activities, according to the construction of the gym, and amongst it, the new computers will be beneficial in their experience in this topic which will be useful to their future lives, as it is required in most of the jobs...”</p>

6.3.5. Generalizations: Error-Stricken Areas

As a conclusion of the analyses of errors in the subjects' written production conducted above, one can affirm that all three stages analyzed (B1+, B2+, C1) seem to share a certain set of errors. First of all, on all three stages of interlanguage development students under analysis experience difficulties with formal register. While on the B1+ stage students tend to struggle mainly with formal lexis, on the B2+ and C1 levels they have difficulties both on lexical and syntactic levels.

In more detail, B1+ students have the tendency to transfer vocabulary items from their mother tongue into English, or they produce wrong coinages of English vocabulary items to match the contexts of their writings. It is important to add that on this level students do not show any major difficulties in terms of cohesion, coherence or general grammar. As to B2+ level, tested two years after the B1+ level, students' interlanguage seems to undergo very complex processes of restructuring (Zobl, 1980; Slobin, 1996), hence the abundance of lexical and syntactic errors. The major areas of error concentration on this level seems to be lexis (misuse of vocabulary items, wrong collocations, wrong coinages), syntax (sentence structure, relative clauses, parallel constructions, inversions, emphasis, passive constructions, indirect speech), as well as coherence and cohesion. The common tendency the students show in trying to overcome their difficulties, as it has already been stated above, is transfer of lexical items and syntactic structures from their mother tongue into English, which complies with the vast array of theories on L1 influence over the process of L2 acquisition (Zobl, 1980, Bialystock, 1994, Schachter, 1996). According to the number of researchers in the field, a learner cannot help but map L1 linguistic structures onto his interlanguage, which hinders the process of L2 acquisition. Moreover, according to Lenneberg (1967) and Schachter (1996), some linguistic domains are to be acquired at a certain stage of

language (L1 or L2) acquisition within the Critical Period and if they have not been acquired, there is a very slight opportunity for them ever to be assimilated by a learner. Consequently, mapping an L1 structure over to the L2 seems to be the only option for a language learner who finds himself out of the frame of the critical period framework. In addition, as it has been claimed by Patkowski (1980) and appears to be demonstrated by the present study, syntax is one of the domains prone to certain stabilization in development and the perfect opportunity to fully learn right syntactic concepts of a language seems to be reduced to a certain period in learner's development only. Taking in consideration the above, a new concern raised by the present research is linked to lexis. According to Eubank and Gregg (1999), lexicon can be regarded as the domain where a continuous steady development is possible as a learner is assumed to be able to assimilate new lexis at any stage of learning. The results of the present study, however, show a certain disagreement with this assumption as students under analysis seem to struggle with assimilation of new lexis on the advanced stage of the interlanguage development. As claimed by Eubank and Gregg (1999), the reasons for a certain halt or stabilization in the domain of lexicon are not related to biological critical period, but to other factors as, possibly, limited input (out-ruled in terms of present research, as students receive constant intensive input of new lexis as a part of their course in school) or insufficient motivation (later approached by the study as a possible key motive for stabilization in the case of the subjects of the study).

Another important observation here is an overwhelming amount of grammatical errors students make in their writings. The peculiarity of this phenomenon is that this type of "basic" grammatical errors (e.g. tense formation, articles, agreement between different parts of speech, etc.) have not been observed in the written samples belonging to the same students under analysis recollected two years before. Rather than supposing that

this is a case of a slide-back, I would suggest that the abundance of grammatical errors, and errors in general on this stage can be explained by the idea that students' interlanguage finds itself in the phase of active remodeling, where the safe, well-absorbed standards of the previous stage do not suffice and the new ones must be shaped (Zobl, 1980; Slobin, 1999). Thus, the great number of errors here means active development of interlanguage. This supposition finds a certain justification on the next stage of learner language development analyzed in this study. When the subjects of the study attain a C1+ level (one year of L2 exposure after B2+) the areas of error concentration are still the same, namely, lexis (formal vocabulary, collocations) and syntax (sentence structure, parallel constructions, inversions, emphasis, etc.), but the amount of errors decreases. More than that, the amount of "basic" grammatical errors decreases likewise. These could be the signs of students' interlanguage "settling down" and acquiring a new upgraded structure.

6.3.6. Obligatory Occasion Analysis: Word Order

In order to perform an obligatory occasion analysis on the subject of word order the following linguistic features have been taken in consideration as tokens, or units of analysis: direct word order, inverted word order, incomplete sentences, cleft sentence constructions, fronting, parallel constructions or passive constructions. The analysis has been performed per each subject and at every stage of the interlanguage development monitored by the study. The results of the analysis are presented below in Tables 9, 10, 11, where *OC* stands for obligatory occasions and *S* stands for supplied occasions.

Table 9**Obligatory Occasion Analysis Word Order: ESO 2 DATA**

SUBJECT N	WORD ORDER		ACCURACY
	OC	S	%
1			
2	21	21	100%
3			
4			
5	14	14	100%
6			
7			
8	16	15	94%
9	18	17	94%
10	20	19	94%
11	17	15	88%
12			
13	18	17	94%
14	17	16	94%
15	17	17	100%
16	15	14	94%
17			
18			
19	17	17	100%
20	16	15	94%
21			
22	13	12	94%

Table 10**Obligatory Occasion Analysis Word Order: ESO 4 DATA**

SUBJECT N	WORD ORDER		ACCURACY
	OC	S	%
1	16	12	75%
2	23	23	100%
3			
4	20	18	90%
5			
6	33	30	91%
7			
8	26	24	92%
9			
10			
11	20	14	70%
12			
13			

14	22	16	73%
15	16	12	75%
16			
17	29	27	93%
18	33	28	85%
19			
20	45	41	91%
21			
22	17	13	76%

Table 11

Obligatory Occasion Analysis Word Order: BACH 1 DATA

SUBJECT N	WORD ORDER		
	OC	S	%
1	27	24	89%
2			
3			
4			
5	24	21	87%
6	24	25	96%
7			
8	29	27	93%
9	26	25	96%
10	24	22	92%
11	31	25	81%
12			
13			
14			
15	23	17	74%
16	24	20	83%
17			
18			
19	28	27	96%
20	21	17	81%
21	29	24	83%
22	33	29	88%

On this stage of the analysis we can observe not more than the average of 13 students per stage, as not all the written works of the students under study have been available. Nevertheless, one can easily observe from Tables 9, 10, 11 above and Figures 11, 12, 13 below that students were more successful with word order on their initial stage of language learning (ESO 2), as there are 4 students who exhibited a 100% correct performance, whilst the rest of the students analyzed have shown around average 92% of correct performance as far as this linguistic area is concerned. However, on the posterior stages of the analysis the accuracy students' performance has decreased, as none of the subjects managed to show faultless performance and some of them have even slid back, like, for example, subjects number 5,11,15,19 and 20. To illustrate, the average accuracy performance on the last two stages of analysis are around 86%, which is below the percentage indicator for acquired linguistic features (Brown, 1973; Ellis, 2005). Some of the subjects, however, have kept their level of performance registered on ESO 2 stage.

These results might mean, first of all, that the linguistic area of word order and sentence structure appears to be a perpetually difficult area for students to achieve accuracy in, regardless of the input and constant practice they face. Secondly, it is important to stress here that despite the maturity students acquire during the stages of the present research, they still have not managed to improve their overall linguistic performance in certain language areas, or have even lost the quality of the latter.

Accordingly, if it appears that no improvement has been made to meet the higher level of the more demanding Cambridge exams students face on the later stages of the study, their Cambridge results also exhibit a considerable loss of accuracy, which has been demonstrated on the Stage One of the practical research.

The visual illustration of the comparative analyses between the three data groups according to the domain of word order are represented below, in the Figures 11, 12, and 13.

Figure 11
Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Word Order: ESO 2

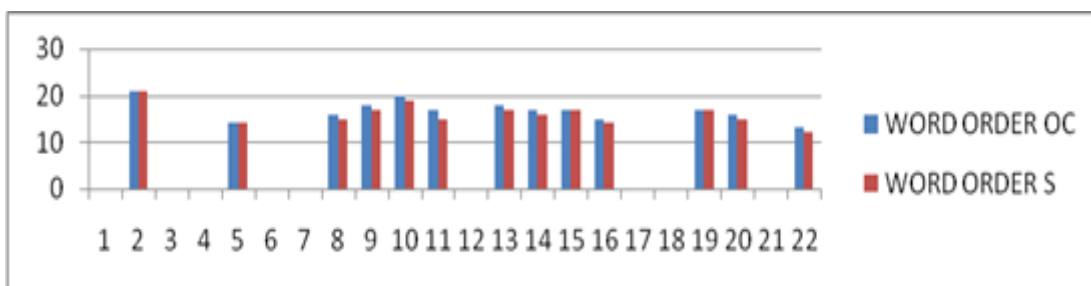


Figure 12
Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Word Order: ESO 4

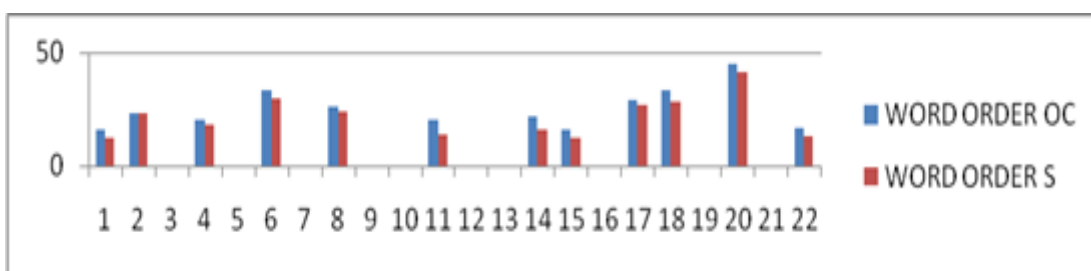
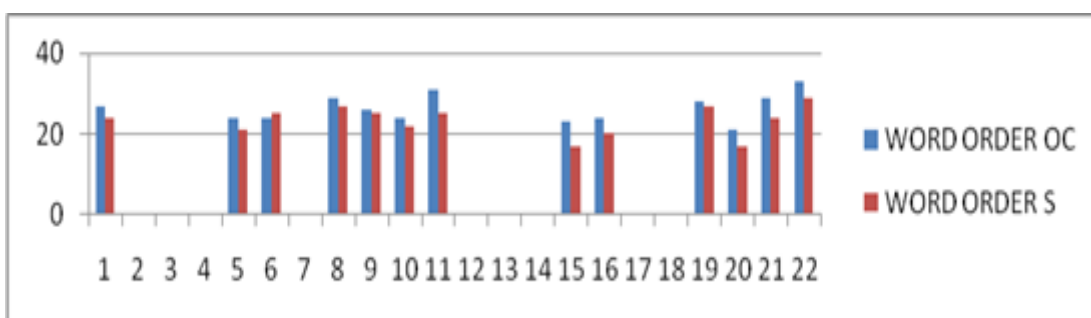


Figure 13
Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Word Order: BACH 1



6.3.7. Obligatory Occasion Analysis: Word Choice and Collocations

In terms of the accuracy students have exhibited in the area of lexis, namely word choices and collocations, a token has been determined as any occasion for a student to provide a correct collocation, set expression or a coinage/derivate. The author of the

study has calculated all the obligatory occasions for the purpose of this study, even the repeated ones as, according to Ellis (2005:83), all the opportunities to use a linguistic feature in a right manner should be computed as a unit of analysis. The results of the analysis are presented below in Tables 12, 13, 14.

Table 12

Obligatory Occasion Analysis Word Choice and Collocations: ESO 2 DATA

SUBJECT N	COLLOCATIONS		ACCURACY
	OC	S	%
1			
2	17	17	100%
3			
4			
5	19	17	89%
6			
7	25	24	96%
8	26	25	96%
9	25	24	96%
10	25	23	92%
11	21	21	100%
12			
13	19	15	79%
14	31	31	100%
15	27	23	85%
16	20	17	85%
17			
18			
19	27	27	100%
20	21	16	76%
21			
22	21	18	86%

Table 13

Obligatory Occasion Analysis Word Choice and Collocations: ESO 4 DATA

SUBJECT N	COLLOCATIONS		ACCURACY
	OC	S	%
1	14	11	79%
2	30	26	87%
3			
4	20	12	60%
5			

6	33	23	70%
7			
8	23	17	74%
9			
10			
11	27	22	81%
12			
13			
14	23	17	74%
15	20	18	90%
16			
17	29	24	83%
18	32	23	72%
19			
20	70	56	80%
21			
22	22	18	82%

Table 14
Obligatory Occasion Analysis Word Choice and Collocations: BACH 1 DATA

SUBJECT N	COLLOCATIONS/WORD CHOICES	ACCURACY	
		S	%
	OC	S	%
1	28	21	75%
2			
3			
4			
5	29	24	83%
6	43	28	65%
7			
8	21	15	71%
9	40	28	70%
10	35	28	80%
11	34	26	76%
12			
13			
14			
15	26	19	73%
16	38	27	71%
17			
18			
19	38	29	76%
20	30	17	57%
21	33	21	64%
22	24	21	87%

On this stage of the analysis we regard the average of 13 students per each monitored period, as not all the written samples were available for the analysis at this point.

Quite similarly to Word Order as a unit of analysis discussed above, word choice and collocations have not experienced improvement in students' performance over the years of input as we can observe that neither ESO 4 nor BACH 1 students managed to exhibit faultless performance in any of the cases analyzed.

Furthermore, it is important to note that whilst there are 4 absolutely correct performance on the ESO 2 stage of the analysis, the accuracy loses its quality steadily on the other two posterior stages. Moreover, the general average scores of accuracy are much lower than in case of word order discussed above (the average of 86% of accuracy in word order against the average of 81% of accuracy in word choice). This data demonstrates, that the linguistic area of lexis in general, and collocations and word choice in particular appears to be a rather problematic area for students, where the development of the interlanguage has lost its pace over the years of input and has encountered a certain "halt" or "stabilization". One more datum in favor of this assumption is the fact, that according to Brown (1973) and Ellis (2005), 81% of accuracy shows that the linguistic feature has not been fully acquired by a learner. This fact, however, has a relative importance to the present obligatory occasion analysis due the generic character of the latter. Some of the students, however, tend to maintain their level over the years of analysis, but there are no cases of students improving their performance, likewise in the case of word order.

The visual illustration of the comparative analyses between the three data groups according to the domain of lexis are represented below, in the Figures 14, 15 and 16.

Figure 14
Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Word Choice and Collocations: ESO 2

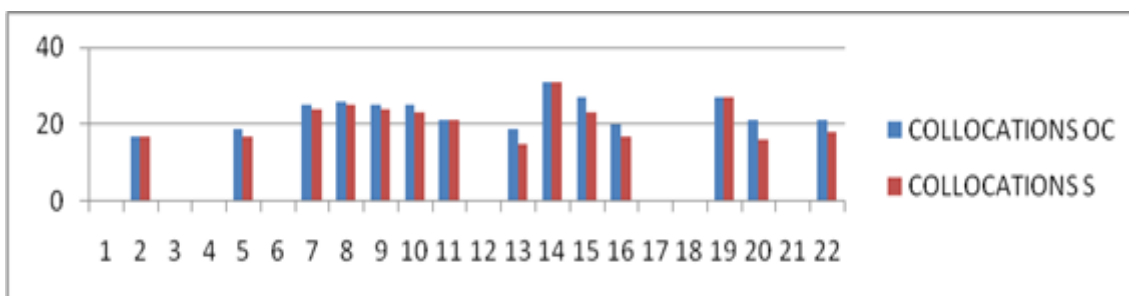


Figure 15
Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Word Choice and Collocations: ESO4

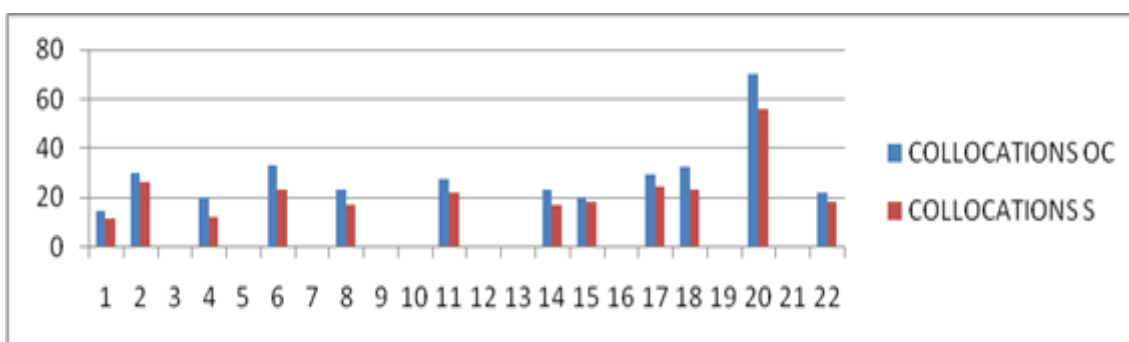
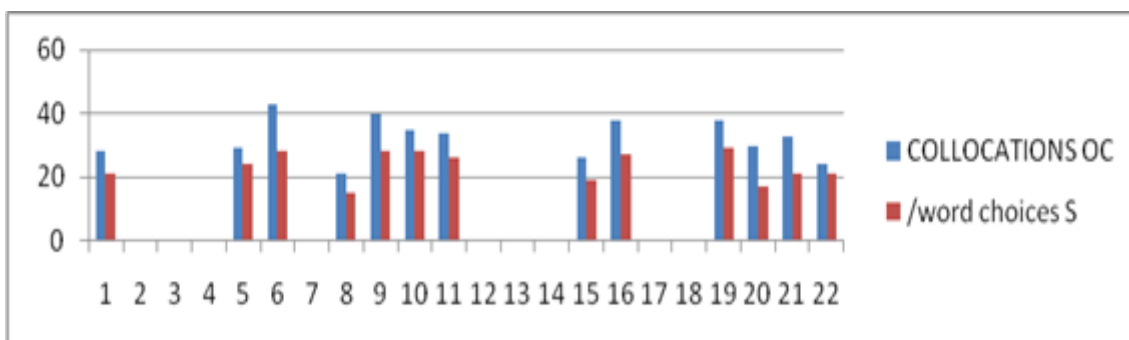


Figure 16
Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Word Choice and Collocations: BACH 1



6.3.8. Obligatory Occasion Analysis: Tenses/Verb Choices

In order to analyze the accuracy of verb use in the students' performance under study, every occasion for a correct tense employment, as well as every occasion for a correct infinitive/gerund employment have been established as a token. These linguistic features have been given a specific attention due to the fact that exactly them tend to be

most problematic for the students, and thus, valuable to the present research. Likewise on the stage discussed above, every occasion has been computed, including the repeated ones. The results of the analysis are presented below in the Tables 15, 16, 17.

Table 15
Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Tenses/Verb choices: ESO 2 DATA

SUBJECT N	TENSES		ACCURACY
	OC	S	%
1			
2	19	19	100%
3			
4			
5	17	16	94%
6			
7			
8	21	21	100%
9	24	22	92%
10	25	21	84%
11	23	23	100%
12			
13	20	19	95%
14	21	20	95%
15	26	26	100%
16	22	20	91%
17			
18			
19	23	23	100%
20	20	19	95%
21			
22	18	18	100%

Table 16
Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Tenses/Verb Choices: ESO 4 DATA

SUBJECT N	TENSES		ACURACY
	OC	S	%
1	25	19	76%
2	32	30	93%
3			
4	31	30	97%

5			
6	48	41	85%
7			
8	31	30	100%
9			
10			
11	29	28	96%
12			
13			
14	26	24	92%
15	28	20	93%
16			
17	41	37	90%
18	55	51	93%
19			
20	60	57	95%
21			
22	33	27	82%

Table 17

Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Tenses/Verb Choices: BACH 1 DATA

SUBJECT N	TENSES		ACCURACY
	OC	S	%
1	38	38	100%
2			
3			
4			
5	33	32	97%
6	33	29	87%
7			
8	33	33	100%
9	48	47	97%
10	43	42	97%
11	44	42	95%
12			
13			
14			
15	31	31	100%
16	29	29	100%
17			
18			
19	42	42	100%

20	32	29	90%
21	46	45	97%
22	43	37	86%

In case of tenses as a unit of analysis, the study has revealed a completely different tendency. Unlike the previously analyzed units: word order and word choice/collocations, Tenses seem to be the area where students have actually shown improvement. (Some of the student actually improved their scores (E.g.: subjects number 1,5,9,16,)), whilst the majority managed to keep their scores at the same, quite a high level of the average 93% that proves the acquisition of the linguistic feature according to Brown 1973; and Ellis, 2005) At least, this is the area where slide back rate is absolutely insignificant as only two students have exhibited the tendency. These results of the analysis can partially be motivated by the relatively “fixed” character of the area: whilst vocabulary and word order is being taught throughout the years with enhancing difficulty (formal vocabulary, new collocations, complex sentences constructions like inversions, emphasis, cleft sentences, fronting and passives), the system of tenses in English does not allow much variation and, therefore, acquisition obtains a more solid basis. The Figures 17, 18, and 19 offer a visual representation of the comparative analyses per each data group in terms of the domain of Tenses.

Figure 17

Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Tenses/Verb Choices: ESO 2

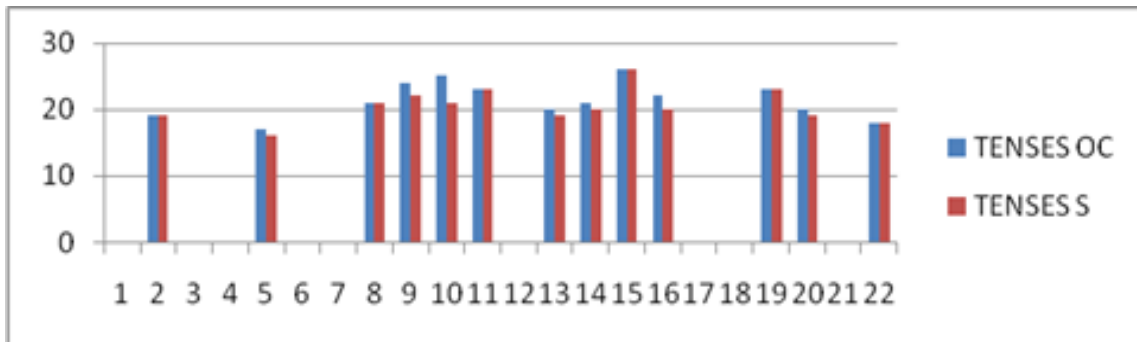


Figure 18

Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Tenses/Verb Choices: ESO 4

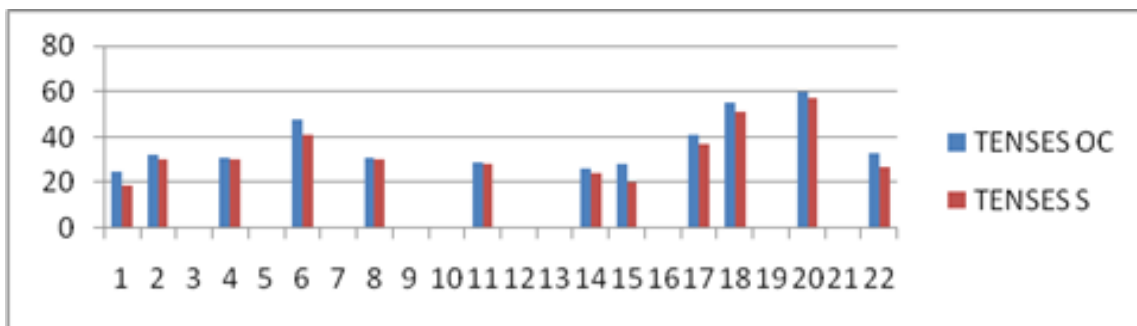
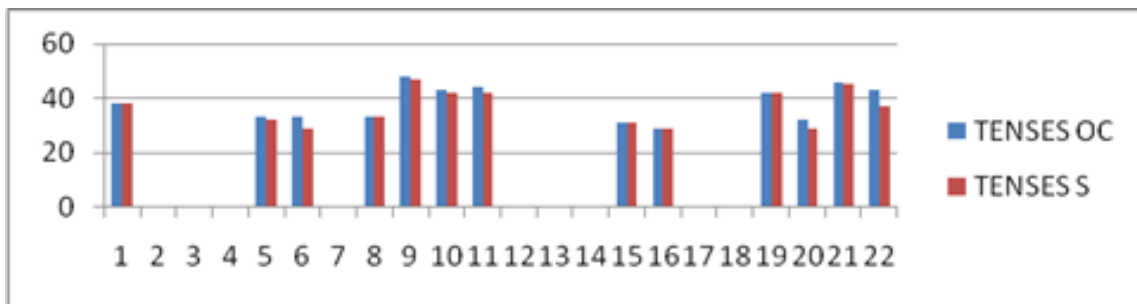


Figure 19

Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Tenses/Verb Choices: BACH 1



For the purpose of the present study the general percentages of students’ accuracy per every stage have been calculated in order to obtain a full picture of group’s progress over the years of input. Thus, ESO2 students have exhibited on average 95 % of accuracy as far as the word order and sentence structure are concerned compared to the 84% they obtained 2 years later, in ESO 4, and 88% of accuracy they showed in BACH 1. The same process can also be observed in the case of Tenses, analyzed by the author

of the study as a linguistic area where errors tend to reoccur. Similarly like in the area of word order, the students under analysis have shown a decrease of quality of production in terms of tenses on the stage of ESO 4, and managed to improve back to their initial scores in BACH 1 (ESO 2 students scored 96% of accuracy, while in ESO 4 there was only 91%, and in BACH 1 the scores got back to the original 96%). It is important to note here, however, that no such tendency has been observed in the area of word choice and collocations, where a steady decrease of the quality of students' production has been observed (ESO 2: 91 % of accuracy; ESO 2: 78% of accuracy and BACH 1: 73% of accuracy). It is important now to focus on the reasons that caused this drop of quality in students' performance on the second stage of the present research, in ESO 4. This datum is even more important bearing in mind the fact that subjects' performance has improved again a year later, in BACH 1.

Finally, the assumptions voiced above could be represented schematically in the following Table 18:

Table 18
Stages of Interlanguage Development

Level B1+	Level B2+	Level C1+
<p>SAFE ZONE 1</p> <p>(a steady pace of interlanguage development, a homogenous shape of interlanguage as to its quality)</p>	<p>COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING IN ACTION</p> <p>(the homogeneity of the interlanguage is distorted as some skill areas improve, whilst other suffer a slide back)</p>	<p>SAFE ZONE 2</p> <p>(the homogeneity of interlanguage is attained again, but on a higher level, as the problematic skill areas appear to gain stability)</p>

6.3.9. Generalization: Obligatory Occasion Analysis

According to the data collected and analyzed above, one could definitely conclude that there is a certain halt in the pace of learner language development as far as the linguistic area of syntax (word order/sentence structure and word choice) is concerned. As it has been quantitatively proved above, one can observe no improvement in these two areas of analysis, but a decrease of accuracy or, in the best cases, the permanency of accuracy scores despite the high amount of EFL input students receive regularly. This tendency can also be explained by the general assumption that the domain of syntax is the one that is prone to fossilization (Patkowski, 1980; Han, 2004). It also has to be mentioned here that errors in syntactic constructions observed by the analysis have, most probably, been induced by the students' L1, as it can be seen on the Stage One of the Practical part of this paper. Such errors could be signaling the phenomenon of "thinking for speaking" (Slobin, 1996), where students are mapping the L1 thought formation mechanisms onto the L2 system.

However, the linguistic area of tenses/verb choices has not been proved as affected by the "halt" in learner language development.

On a different note, both the area of word order and tenses have been identified as the ones harbouring a phenomenon of certain "retard subsequent restructuring" (Zobl, 1980), where students' scores of accuracy suddenly drop on the intermediate stages of research and then tend to improve again. On the contrary, the area of word choice/collocations has not shown a trace of this phenomenon, as the accuracy scores of students are seen to be decreasing progressively through all three stages of interlanguage development analyzed by the study. This particular finding is rather unusual if bearing mind the fact that the previous research in the field of interlanguage

stabilization and fossilization has shown that the linguistic domain of lexicon is not supposed to be prone to any halt in development (Eubank and Gregg, 1999).

As it can be seen from the stated above, the data collected by a quantitative obligatory occasion analysis is rather consistent with the data gathered by the qualitative preliminary error identification analysis, which justifies the method of the study and its purposes.

6.4. STAGE THREE

MOTIVATION QUESTIONNAIRE AND DEBATE

6.4.1. Reasons behind the Questionnaire and the Debate Task

As on the first two stages of practical analysis it has been proved, or at least illustrated, that learners suffered a considerable decrease in the pace of their interlanguage development during the process of preparation for the official Cambridge examinations (FCE, CAE and CPE) the study now turns towards the search for possible reasons to explain such a halt. It has also been hypothesized that such a loss of pace in the learning process could be explained by the decrease of students' motivation towards the EFL acquisition, or, by the mere change in attitudes towards the role of English as foreign language in their lives. Thus, a questionnaire was designed in order to clarify each subject's motivational factors that served as framework for their language learning. In addition, many of their peers were subjected to the same questionnaire as well with the aim to enhance the reliability of the data.

With the purpose of giving the students general feedback on the results of the questionnaire, as they have expressed the will and interest to know them, an open in-class session was set up. Taking advantage of the fact that the majority of subjects of the present study (17 students) as well as their peers were present in this session, a debate

task was initiated on the “state” or “condition” of subjects’ English at the present moment, when they are about to leave school a year after taking the Cambridge Proficiency Test. The purpose of this debate was to clarify students’ motivational drives at the moment when, according to the school as well as Cambridge examination system, they have reached the ultimate stage of an EFL acquisition and can be compared to native speakers of English.

6.4.2. The Aims of the Questionnaire

The main research questions that served as a motivation for the questionnaire are as follows:

1. Have the three self-images proposed by the study proved to be accurate as far the respondents are concerned? Which aspects of these self-images have been conceptualized inaccurately? Which of them have been described correctly?
2. What are the real self-images students have reported to have as a result of the questionnaire?
3. What is the role that students attribute to EFL in their lives?
4. What are the main motivational factors and constraints that the subjects of the study share in terms of EFL acquisition?
5. Can the halt in students’ learning pace be connected to the lack of motivation they experience in the period of Cambridge exam preparation?
6. Can the halt in students’ learning pace be explained by the nature of students’ attitude towards EFL acquisition and the role of EFL in their lives?

In other words, are students simply unmotivated to acquire EFL or are they motivated to acquire a certain level of proficiency, which does not necessarily involve perfect accuracy? Do students see themselves as speakers of a certain level of EFL, which,

according to them, is enough for their current future projects and for their present and future idea of themselves? Can one assume that students might be content with the level of proficiency they have already achieved, as well as with the pace of their learning? Finally, can such phenomenon as *personal plateau* be intentional on a subconscious level due to its connection to such subconscious concepts as the Ideal Self and Ought-to Self?

6.4.3. The Aims of the Debate Task

The post-questionnaire in-class debate task was designed with an aim to clarify students' perception of their EFL proficiency. The author of the present paper expected to discover to what degree students in question feel themselves as "owners" of their acquired EFL skills and how far they feel in control of their future EFL development. Another important issue expected to be brought to light by the debate was a certain *fear* that students might have of losing the quality of their EFL performance in the coming future as they will find themselves out of the school-imposed regular EFL practice and input. Finally, another important aim of the debate was to define the state of students' motivation towards the further EFL studies that they might (and should, as any constant language learners) pursue after leaving school. The research questions pursued in the debate could be formulated in the following way:

1. Does motivation towards the acquisition of EFL plummet once the ultimate short-term practical goal of the students is achieved (CPE certificate) or does it remain alimented by the long-term goal such as an Ideal L2 Self Image?
2. Can a Feared L2 self become the principal motivational drive for the students who have already achieved a Cambridge Proficiency stage?
3. Do students feel that they, indeed, can be compared to the native speakers of English? In other words, do the feel that they "own" their English?

6.4.4. The Expected Outcome of the Questionnaire

The researcher expects, with the help of the survey, to clarify the general picture in terms of motivation towards the EFL acquisition that the subjects of the study share. That is, the survey is expected to reveal the main factors that determine the degree of motivation students have towards learning EFL and that shape the nature of their motivation. The main objective of the survey is to obtain a clear picture of students' future self-model/self-models and to identify the role that EFL plays within those models. The author of the study hopes to find proof for the idea that EFL is seen by the learners in question as a necessary tool for their future professional lives, but not as an integrative part of their future personalities. In other words, the research expects to reveal that EFL is a definite part of subjects' present and future ought-to selves and not their Ideal Selves (though the Ideal self comprises the ought-to self, the latter is society-imposed and duty-driven, there is no genuine personal interest in it). Thus, students reach a certain level, or *comfort zone*, which they consider to be enough, according to their personal assumptions, which, in their turn, are created on the basis of what they see happening in the modern society. In other words, the Cambridge Proficiency certificate becomes an aim, not the actual language proficiency.

Before moving over to the next stage of this chapter, it is important to describe the three hypothesized L2 selves that the researcher has designed and put into the basis of the questionnaire. These three future self-images have been conceived in connection with the description of a future EU citizen – a model that all European educative systems are supposed to focus on and cultivate in their students.

The hypothesized *Ideal Future L2 Self*: It has been assumed that students would imagine themselves in the future as students who use both English and Spanish for their

studies or even do their studies at university entirely in English. The ideal selves would be members of an international group of friends where communication is done in English as lingua franca. Professionally, it has been hypothesized that the respondents would want to see themselves as professionals who work both in Spanish and in English, who travel abroad for business purposes and who even stay in foreign countries on business for lengthy periods of times (5 years or more). In terms of their personal life, they would expect their friends to speak English well and they would see it possible to have a relationship with a foreign partner where the language of communication would be English. It has also been suggested that respondents' future selves would be living in a cosmopolitan city or they would be interested in major English-speaking cultures such as English and American and they might even see it possible to move to an English-speaking country in order to form a part of their target community.

The hypothesized *Ought-to L2 Self* has been presupposed by the author of the study as a future identity that students would form within constraints and constant pressure of their society; it is a future image of what they should be according to the way they might be interpreting the expectations of their surrounding world. Needless to say, according to the theory of future possible selves proposed by Markus and Nurius (1986), the ought-to self-form goes hand in hand, or even forms a part of the future Ideal selves, as they complement each other. Thus, the Ought-to L2 self comprises all the statements of the questionnaire that deal with the idea of being successful as a student or as a future professional. In addition, this future self-image also deals with the expectations students might feel from their peers. As it has been assumed by the author of the study, the respondents would consider it as a fact that in their future successful people would speak English fluently and that speaking English is a skill that would inevitable boost the level of their efficiency as future professionals. It has also been presupposed that

students might see English as lingua franca and, thus, they might consider that native pronunciation is not a must for being considered a fluent speaker of English and that complex grammar and formal vocabulary are the aspects that should be studied only for passing Cambridge Examinations, not for the real use of English. In terms of peer pressure, it has been assumed that students might be experiencing some judgmental attitudes from their peers and as such, they would consider that speaking fluent English might boost their popularity among peers.

As to the hypothesized *Feared L2 Self*, this future self-image deals with the future versions of respondents' lives that they, theoretically, would not want for themselves as L2 learners. These are, in the most of cases, the future images that do not include English in respondents' private or professional life. Thus, the respondents are supposed to fear seeing themselves as students who do not use English in their academic life whatsoever or professionals who either do not use English in their working life or use it very little. It has also been hypothesized that students would fear having to do a badly-paid job in their future for the reason of not speaking English well or, likewise, they would be afraid of being considered by their peers as not intellectual enough because of their poor command of English. Another, supposedly unattractive future image that has been offered to the respondents in the questionnaire is an image of a person who does not travel abroad and does not have any foreign friends. In other words, it would be a non-cosmopolitan identity; a person whose life is based locally and whose only means of conceptualization reality is through his mother tongue.

6.4.5. The Expected Outcome of the Debate Task

The author of the present research expected to discover a low-degree of learner autonomy and EFL ownership among the students, both among the ones who come

across as very confident learners that consider their interlanguage to be fully formed as well as the ones who consider that they have not yet reached the top of their EFL potential. The debate is also expected to bring to light a general sense of a fear that students share towards the possibility of losing the quality of their EFL performance acquired to the date.

6.4.6. The Outcome of the Questionnaire

6.4.6.1.Hypothesized Future Selves vs. Future Selves Defined by the Study

The results of the questionnaire have shown that among the predicted feared selves there were a number of misconceptions on the part of the researcher, as the following statements were designed to be identified by the respondents as undesirable or feared dimensions of their future selves, and they were not seen as such by the majority respondents, as it can be seen from the Table 19 below.

Table 19

Feared-Selves Revealed by the Study¹⁴

FEARED SELF	Male Respondents	Female Respondents
Statement Number	2,4,5,10,19,21,12,24,14,23,22,29.	2,5,12,15,21,23,4,10,22

Thus, as it can be seen from the table above, the hypothesized future feared self-image is rather different from the one respondents seem to share. To illustrate, the respondents do not seem to desire to do their university studies only in English. In terms of their private lives, they do not expect all their future friends to speak English and they do not

¹⁴ For the exact formulation of each question, please consult APPENDIX 4.

see themselves having a relationship with a foreign partner in the future. In addition, the respondents of the study do not consider that English will be as important as Spanish for their future private life. The majority of the male respondents do not see themselves as future citizens of the world where differences between nationalities would not matter and the language of communication would be English. In the same vein, neither male nor female respondents do not conceptualize themselves as adults who would emigrate to a foreign country for a life period and they do not feel attracted to either American or English culture enough in order to ever wish to form a part of those communities. However, it must be indicated here that American culture did seem rather attractive to some female respondents.

Finally, the statement 29 has been ticked by the majority of male respondents as untrue, which means that they do not want to learn English and to be good at it only because it is a subject in school.

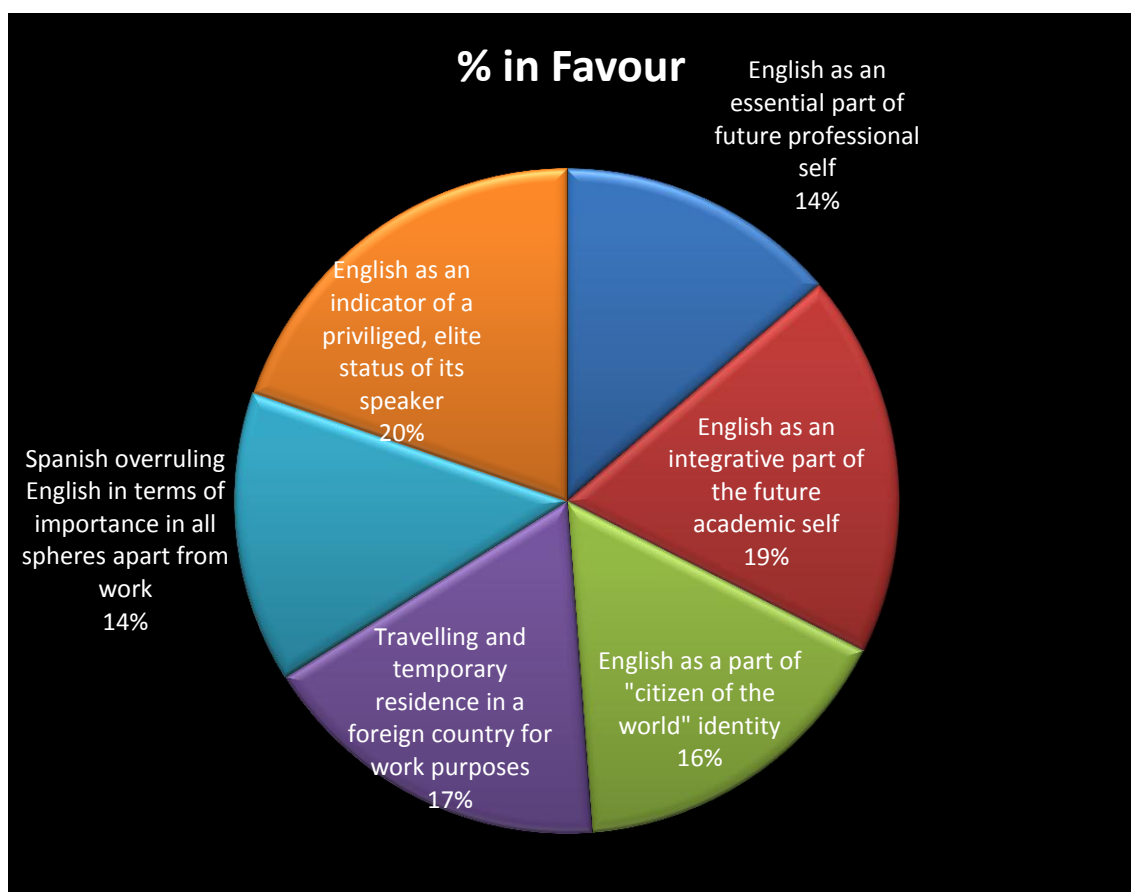
As to the female respondents, they more or less share the male standpoint, but for some exceptions. Namely, the female respondents did not single out such statements as 19, 29 or 24 as untrue ones, which means that they do see themselves as possible future citizens of the world, where the differences between the nationalities do not matter and the language of communication is English. Surprisingly enough, the majority of female respondents agree that the one of the reasons why they study English is because they see it as a subject in school and they want to get a good mark in it. Another interesting finding to mention here is that girls appear to be attracted to American culture and they would contemplate a future possibility to move to this country in order to form a part of this community.

In terms of the Ideal-Self and the Ought-to self comprised within it, the hypothesized future self-image has been generally proved for both male and female respondents, but for one exception. In case of male respondents there has been a consistency of opinions that the idea of not using English for one's future academic life was something that respondents desired and not feared.

In general lines, in order to obtain a graphic representation of students' image of their proper future selves, the major aspects envisaged by the students as desirable for their future personality according to the present survey have been represented in the figure, offered below.

Figure 20

Students' Future Ideal Self Image



As it can be seen from the chart above, the overwhelming majority of students consider English to be an elite skill proper to a successful university student and a future professional. In addition, they also envisage themselves as so defined, "citizens of the world", who reside in a

cosmopolitan city where many different nationalities can co-exist and English could be the language of communication among them. However, as it can be clearly seen from the figure above, students do not see English ever overcoming Spanish in terms of relevance and importance for them and they imagine themselves travelling or moving to a foreign country only for a certain limited period of time and exclusively for work purposes. The detailed treatment of each of the sections in the chart can be found in the section that follows below.

6.4.6.2.Areas of Motivational Constraints Revealed by the Study

Social and Peer Pressure (Ought-to Self-image)

As it can be seen from the data of the questionnaire, both male and female respondents are subjected to a certain level of social pressure as at least 50% of male respondents (12 out of 23) and even more in the case of the female ones (17 out of 28), are sensitive to the general fashion of the modern society, where English is constantly emphasized as an essential skill for a competitive professional. In other words, respondents exhibit a strong tendency to associate their future professional success with a high level of proficiency in English among other skills. However, respondents do not seem to be affected by any peer pressure in terms of the level of English they possess, as the majority has claimed that they do not expect that their fellow students would consider them less intelligent or less popular if their level of English was lower than the average of the group.

Future Academic Self (The Ideal future L2 Self-image and Ought-to L2 Self-image)

According to the data, what seems to be an ideal situation for the respondents in terms of their future university studies is having an opportunity to study both in Spanish and in English, depending on a course they want to choose. The results of the questionnaire

show that 23 male respondents and 17 female ones chose this option as a desirable one. Thus, it can be assumed, that, in general, students see English as a part of their future academic self and as a tool for acquisition of new knowledge in the future in line with their mother tongue. However, it does not seem to be a desirable scenario for the students to do their university degrees in an international university and only in English, where Spanish language would not be present whatsoever (43 respondents out of the total 51 are against this vision of their future). Thus, we might assume that the respondents of the questionnaire do not conceive English as the independent code of knowledge acquisition and new information processing as they still wish to lean in their mother tongue for the development of their future academic selves.

Integrative Motivation and EU Citizen (Ideal L2 Self-image, Ought-to L2 self-image)

37 out of 51 respondents confess that they do not feel attracted to British culture and 19 out of 51 claim that they do not feel any special interest or attraction to the American culture either. Thus, the integrative motivation, as it is evident from these data, would not be the main driving factor for these respondents' interest towards learning English. However, it must be noted here that American culture does seem to be more attractive to the students than British one, and, what is more, the majority of female respondents clearly manifest the interest towards the American culture (21 out of the total 28 females)

30 students out of 51 do not see themselves moving to an English –speaking country for a lengthy period of time (e.g. 10 years), whilst the remaining 21 students do regard such a plan for future as a desirable or possible option. Furthermore, the majority of the students (37 out of the total 51) see themselves travelling and residing in a foreign

country exclusively for working reasons. These data show us that the students under study, both male and female, do imagine their future as professionals who travel for work and even stay in foreign countries for lengthy periods of time for work reasons. However, they do not imagine themselves living in an English-speaking country and becoming a full-fledged part of a foreign society, merging with its cultural identity. In addition, the tendency among the respondents is actually to visualize their future as an inhabitant of a cosmopolitan city where many languages are spoken and where one can meet foreigners easily. To illustrate, 35 out of 51 respondents have claimed that they do see themselves as potential “citizens of the world”, where the differences between nationalities coexist and the international language is English. It is worth to mention here that the majority of such students were females (23 out of 35). Another datum that ties with this assumption is the belief that English is a must have basic skill for a member of a modern society, which is generally shared by the majority of respondents.

Future Identity (Future Ideal L2 Self)

Judging from the results obtained from the questionnaire, it could be assumed that both male and female respondents conceive English as an additional skill they would make use of in life and not as an alternative means of communication and conceptualizing the reality that could rival or go hand in hand with their mother tongue. In other words, English is seen by the students as an additional feature to their current and future personalities, and not an integrative part of their SELVES, of themselves as personalities. To illustrate, 30 out of 51 respondents disagree that English will be as important for them as Spanish in their future private lives. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents (34 out of 51) also manifest the intention to use English in their private lives, not only in their work lives. However, 27 out of 51 students do not see themselves in a future relationship with a person from a different culture, where the language of

communication would be English, and neither do they expect all their friends in their future adult life to be able to speak English (42 students out of 51 disagreed with the statement). This last datum might suggest, to some extent, a certain exclusivity, prestige and a high status associated with the idea of being fluent in English, as students consider that English language skills is a must-have for a successful future, both academic and professional, but, on the other hand, they do not expect everyone to possess those skills in the future.

Language as a Subject in School (Ought-to L2 Self and Feared L2 Self)

The results of the questionnaire show that 25 out of 51 students agreed with the statement that grammar (sentence construction, inversions, complicated passives, etc.) in line with the formal vocabulary are only important for passing the Cambridge exams, and not for their future. What is quite surprising, the majority of those students (17) are male. The female respondents, however, disagree with this statement in their majority as 20 out of 28 students have marked it as a false one. Nevertheless, there are other 8 respondents who share the assumption that advanced grammar and vocabulary would not be useful for their future usages of English and the only reason it should be learned is for passing the Cambridge examinations.

As far as the native-like ability is concerned, the majority of respondents agree that native pronunciation is not essential for having fluent English. This tendency is even more obvious in the case of male respondents, where 20 of the total 23 males do not seem to give a great importance to it whatsoever. Finally, the majority of respondents consider that speaking skills cannot be considered as the most important aspect of language proficiency.

6.4.7. The Outcome of the Debate Task

In the course of the debate students' testimonies have been registered to exemplify certain moods and ideas shared among different participant groups. The testimonies have been grouped according to the research questions that provoked the debate. Below, a selection of testimonies can be found for a closer analysis. The text in italics in brackets represents researcher's comments and translations.

"Jelena (the teacher's name), why do we have to speak in English? I have Proficiency now and you are not native, so let's speak in Spanish!" (Participant 1)

"Yeah, we want to hear you speak in Spanish! Say something!" (Participant 2)

"Que no, en Ingles, hay que practicar, tío." (*No way, in English, we have to practice.*)(Participant 3)

This exchange took place immediately after the students settled down for the debate and the teacher has explained the procedure of the session. This short conversation between three students illustrates the perception some students have of their objectives towards the acquisition of English. Needless to say, it has been emphasized on numerous occasions all throughout the secondary and the higher secondary education in this school that the Cambridge Proficiency certificate is the summit that students have to reach in terms of English. Moreover, it has been suggested by the school that once students are there, there is no further higher qualification they can obtain and thus, they can be compared to native speakers of English and receive a 10 as their final qualification in the subject. In other words, the ultimate goal for these students in terms of EFL has been always clearly defined and extrinsically imposed. Hence, the attitude of the participant 1 and participant 2, who suggest that there is no point for them to speak English to their teacher now as their teacher is not a native speaker and a holder

of a Cambridge Proficiency Certificate just like them. Thus, apparently, they see no reasons to make an effort and express themselves in a foreign language as they have already reached the level of foreign language proficiency their teacher has. The remark made by the participant 3, though, shows a certain fear to lose his English speaking skills as he manifests the desire to practice the EFL he has acquired notwithstanding the fact that he, same as participant 1 and 2, is also in possession of a Cambridge Proficiency Certificate.

The following statements have been produced by the official speakers of the discussion groups as a response the question 1 of the debate:

Group 1 (all holders of a CPE certificate): “We feel we have forgotten grammar...I , for example, just put what sounds good and then it is right...or not...*(laughs)*. Proficiency (CPE) doesn’t expire, no?”

Group 2 (3 holders of CPE and one holder of CAE): “Now we can relax, no? with the proficiency...bueno (*well*), Nacho no (*refers to his classmate with a CAE certificate and laughs*)..We’ve got a 10 in English ...the classes haven’t been very...intensive as last year...like no grammar...only speaking and movies...*(laughs)*, but we still have a good level and we get a 10.”

Group 3 (2 holders of CAE and 3 holders of CPE): “This year we, the Proficiency group, with John (*their English teacher*), we didn’t do nothing...I forgot many things from last year...like grammar...I forgot rules...like Jose (*refers to the students from the Group 1*), I just put what sounds good...but I don’t know why...last year Rosana (*the English teacher they had last academic year*) made us explain everything in Use of English (*grammar + vocabulary part of Cambridge exam*). This year we only had to do

PAUs (*centralized university access examination that high school students in Spain have to take, level B2*) and it's too easy.

The opinions expressed above illustrate that students realize that they may have lost a full control of their English interlanguage. For instance, they admit losing certain metalinguistic skills like inner reasoning or metacognitive control over the choices they make as EFL speakers (e.g. group 1 and group 3 speakers: "I just put what sounds good (..)") It can also be seen that students acknowledge a possibility to experience a loss of their linguistic skills acquired to date in case they do not receive a regular formal input on grammar and vocabulary as the speaker in group 1 openly asks if Cambridge certificates expire or are given for life. Furthermore, all of the students present at the debate agreed that their level of English can decrease easily if they do not get enough practice to maintain it (Question 2 of the debate). In addition, the majority of students also agreed that regular grammar input would be necessary to maintain their level of English (Question 3 of the debate). Some students, however, suggested that oral practice was much more vital for them in order not to forget what they have acquired to date, and not grammar input. It has to be mentioned here that once students pass their Certificate of Proficiency in English examination in the first year of their high school studies, the focus of their English classes changes radically. If in the first year they face intensive grammar and vocabulary input oriented towards the CPE exam, in the second year they do not get formal grammar or vocabulary input and their course is mainly focused on culture of the English-speaking world (mainly British and American). The amount of hours dedicated to English in the timetable decreases to 4 hours per week instead of 6 they normally have in the first year of their higher secondary school studies. Hence, many students highlight the difference between the "condition" of their English last academic year and this one. A good illustration here could be the speaker of the

group 3: “This year we, the Proficiency group, we didn’t do nothing...I forgot many things from last year...like grammar (...)” It would be interesting here to bring up one of the findings revealed by the questionnaire discussed in the previous section, namely the attitude of the students to the acquisition of complex grammar and vocabulary. As the results of the questionnaire show, the majority of respondents regard acquisition of advanced vocabulary and grammar structures as a necessary step towards the Cambridge Certificate, but not as something a language learner should do for the sake of his interlanguage. Thus, once a Cambridge Certificate is obtained and the input of grammar and vocabulary is less intensive, the focus of the students wanders away from enriching their word-stock or EFL syntax. Hence, they feel a certain “loss” in the quality of their English.

The evidence for a certain fear to “lose” the knowledge acquired can also be traced in the following group of statements students gave answering questions 4 and 5 of the debate about their future plans in terms of EFL acquisition. Some examples of students’ statements are presented below:

Group 1. (all holders of a CPE certificate): “We all will take English as a subject at university to practice it...and to get good marks, of course! (*laughs*) In my university you do not have to do English if you have CAE, but I wanna do it...not to forget.”

Group 5 (4 holders of CPE and one holder of CAE): “I will go to academy next year and do CPE here in school. They (*refers to his group mates*) will study English at university...Carlota will study a bilingual career (*he means: degree*) in English and in Spanish.”

Group 3 (2 holders of CAE and 3 holders of CPE): “I’ll go to the academy not to forget English...and Alberto wants to get CPE next year, so he’ll go British Council”

6.4.8. Conclusion

As the aforementioned analysis has demonstrated, the hypothesized ideal self- image the respondents might construe of themselves as far as EFL is concerned coincides, amid some exceptions, with the one that respondents appear to manifest as the result of the motivation questionnaire. To be more particular, the following aspects seem to be the ones that shape students' self-image in terms of EFL:

- English is seen as an indicator of an elite or “privileged” status of its speaker as it is assumed to “certify” speaker's level of intelligence and readiness to be a competitive and a high-fee earning employee. To illustrate, the overwhelming number of respondents did not expect all of their friends or possible future colleagues at work to possess advanced EFL skills.
- Students appear to conceive English as an additional aspect of their future academic-selves. However, they do not see English as the only possible code to be used for new knowledge acquisition and thought formation. In turn, Spanish is the principal language conceived for such purposes.
- Students regard as possible or desirable the opportunity to travel to foreign countries, where the vehicle of communication would be English. However, such trips are envisaged as related to work purposes and being of a temporary character.
- Students seem to perceive themselves as members of a multinational and multicultural European community where the vehicle of communication is English. However, it is worth adding here that in such terms English is conceptualized as a lingua franca, where communication with members of ethnic communities other than one's own is the main objective, and not the native-like

fluency as EFL speakers. For instance, the majority of the students according to the questionnaire do not consider that native-like pronunciation is a must.

- English is inevitably seen as an essential part of students' future professional selves as students seem to associate professional success with EFL proficiency, same as they manifest a high degree of fear of professional failure in case their EFL skills are not on a high level. In addition, students associate EFL fluency to a certain prestige and greater opportunity to earn a better living.
- Respondents clearly manifest that Spanish as their mother tongue occupies the first position of importance before English in all the spheres of their lives except for their future professional life. In their future professional lives, however, English is thought to have a real possibility to operate on the same level as their mother tongue or even become more important than their mother tongue for some periods of time. Thus, for instance, students do not conceive having a relationship with a member of a different nationality and using English as a main vehicle of communication within their future nuclear families.

The post-questionnaire debate task, in turn, has demonstrated that the vast majority of respondents see themselves as having attained their ultimate state of EFL fluency as they have obtained a Cambridge Proficiency Certificate to certify their foreign language command. However, though students generally voice the lack of a defined purpose to continue receiving an intense EFL input as they see their interlanguage to be in its final stage of development, there is a certain sensation of anxiety to experience a slideback in terms of their EFL skills. Needless to say that particularly this fear seems to be a main engine for motivating students to continue with the regular EFL input and practice.

6.5. General Summary of the Chapter and Interpretation of the Results

After studying the results of the exhaustive quantitative and qualitative analyses, as well as the outcomes of the questionnaire on motivation, a general picture is offered, which describes the present state of affairs in terms of subjects of the study and their EFL practice.

First of all, as it has been proved that there is a certain halt or a significant lowering of learning pace in interlanguage development on the higher stages of acquisition, when learners achieve a near-native (according to Cambridge examinations) level of English. To be more particular, the following has been generalized from the results of the practical analyses of the study:

1. The Comparative Analysis of Cambridge exam results has shown :

- a) In the areas of UOE, Reading, Speaking there is a strong tendency to decrease the quality of interlanguage in the period between FCE and CAE in the majority of cases. Students improve but at much slower pace than expected according to their FCE positions. Very little or no development whatsoever happens on the stage between CAE and CPE, where some students even slide back to their initial FCE scores.
- b) Writing – 50% of students obtain equal or slightly lower results in a CAE writing test and the CPE one, which suggests that the development of interlanguage in this area has been maintained at a higher speed than in the other areas of second language acquisition.

2. The qualitative analysis of students' written work has shown:

- a) The area of syntax (namely: Word Order/Sentence Structure) seem to experience a loss of accuracy on the pre - CAE stage compared to the pre-FCE stage and a rise on the pre - CPE stage. This could be an illustration of

widely accepted assumption that syntax is an area prone to stabilization (Patkowski, 1980), as well as it can be an evidence for a Cognitive Restructuring (Zobl, 1980, Slobin, 1999) phase that learners' interlanguage might be facing. What is important to note here that the errors in sentence structure students exhibit are, most probably, L1 induced, which illustrates Slobin's (1996) concept of "thinking for speaking". Such assumption inevitably leads to a rather important estimation of the important role students' L1 plays in the process of their thought formation and information processing, as "thinking for speaking" on an advanced stages of foreign language acquisition demonstrates that, despite English interlanguage is rather developed, it is not used for the primary thinking process and L1 is used instead.

- b) The area of Collocations/Word Choice seems to be prone to massive error concentration, where the pace of interlanguage development tends to become extremely low all through the period starting from FCE to CPE. The data shows that the quality of EFL acquisition decreases steadily starting at 91% on FCE stage to 78% on CAE stage and, finally, to 73% on CPE stage. This negative progression challenges, to a certain extent, the assumption that a 92% accuracy in a linguistic item implies its successful acquisition, proposed by Brown (1973) and Ellis (2005). Another theoretical development challenged in terms of these data is Eubank and Gregg's (1999) claim that lexicon does not tend to be an area where stabilization might occur, since the present study proves the opposite. However, the same scholars suggest that if a potential learner does struggle with new lexicon, it can be induced by the

lack of motivation, which is the concern of the third stage of practical analysis of the present paper.

In an attempt to interpret the findings further, maturational constraints and CPH (Lenneberg, 1967) in particular can call our attention. However, taking in considerations that the students under analysis start receiving an intensive EFL input at the age of 3 in this school and continue following a bilingual English-Spanish school programme until they reach the age of puberty, one might assume that the effects of CPH do not seem to foster their EFL acquisition as the present research shows that basic grammatical mistakes are still surfaced by the students and they still transfer vocabulary items (probably, “transfer to somewhere”, Andersen, 1983) and syntactical structures (probably, “transfer to nowhere”, Kellerman, 1995a) from their mother tongue into English. In other words, the results of the study clearly show that students turn to their L1 system whenever their L2 interlanguage fails to supply a certain item of lexicon and they definitely map L1 sentence formation structures onto their L2 even on the level of Cambridge Proficiency. What is more, as it is dictated by CPH, the students under study had all the opportunity to eliminate the need for such practices during their critical period as the amount of L2 input was very extensive. Nevertheless, they seem to have failed to do so. In this connection, another explanation for the results to motivate the outcome of this research could be of sociolinguistic character. In line with motivation for EFL acquisition, which is treated in a great detail below, we should evoke the theory of cross-linguistic influence introduced by Jared and Kroll (2011) and the Competition Model by Bates and MacWhinney, (1981, 1982, 1987). According to these theories, the subjects of the present research seem to be constantly making practical choices between the two linguistic codes they operate while using only one system of cognitive representations as both of the languages they speak are constantly activated during

school time due to the fact that students tend to use Spanish for their daily communication with each other and English for their communication in their daily classes taught through English. In this vein, it would be quite safe to assume that in an “External L2 setting”, as denominated by Siegel (2003), where learners do not have an opportunity for the daily use of their interlanguage outside the academic environment, the effects of CPH might be weaker than in other social setting, where such an opportunity exists.

Further, it has to be mentioned here that despite the evidence of a certain stabilization of students’ progress (in other words “halt”), no effects of “fossilization” has been proved to exercise their influence onto learner’s interlanguage. To be more particular, the author assumes that in order to be able to provide a secure evidence for such a phenomenon as “fossilization”, it would involve an even lengthier observation of the subjects further in their EFL learner’s practice in order to be completely sure that the areas where this lowering of acquisition speed has been noted would not undergo any future development, as suggested by such scholars as Han (2004). Another reason why speaking of fossilization here would not be reasonable is the character of the findings, which shows that students do not expose particular fossilized errors, as it has been suggested they should in a case of fossilization by Selinker (1979) or Han (2004) (e.g. fossilized non-target like sentence structure patterns or systematic incompliance with a certain grammatical rule). However, the students under study show a certain halt of the pace of interlanguage development in terms of certain domains of interlanguage. Thus, we cannot speak of stabilized or fossilized errors here, but of problematic domains of interlanguage where the speed of acquisition tends to drop on the higher levels of development.

In order to formulate the final outcome of the research, the generalizations from the results of the questionnaire on motivation should also be considered. After having analyzed in detail the data collected in the course of the research, it seems to be clear that both male and female respondents, broadly speaking, share the same characteristics of their future image of themselves. To illustrate, such an image is characterized by a strong national, cultural and linguistic identity as Spanish and English is assigned a role of a communicative tool - a code they aim to master in order to communicate with the “outer” international world, basically for professional purposes. Thus, the respondents of the study appear to share an “international posture” (Yashima, 2002, 2009) in their personal conception of their own EFL practice. They can also be considered as practitioners of the “linguistic investment principle” (Pierce, 1995), as they clearly demonstrate the concept of “investing” into their future L2 Self-image, which is a successful professional who speaks fluent English. Obviously, such an image of oneself is not a pure product of subjects’ imagination, but rather a well-formed ideal representation of a successful individual induced by European Union policies and agenda, as well as our multilingual and globalized reality. In other words, the “sociocultural milieu” (Gardner, 1983; 1985; 1988), where Spanish adolescent students of English find themselves nowadays projects this image onto them as an ideal image to strive for, as an embodiment of social prestige and power. It is important to remember here that the majority of the respondents stated that they did not expect all of their friends to speak English fluently in the future, which illustrates the perception of elitism associated with English as a valuable tool for the future professional success.

Furthermore, English is not seen by the respondents as a possible linguistic alter ego or an alternative system for conceptualizing reality, but as a mere linguistic skill to be used only for a professional facet of their lives. Respondents seem to envisage their future as

English-speaking professionals who travel on business to different countries or even stay for some periods in those countries for work purposes and, of course, use English as a code for communication. However, they do not see themselves as cosmopolitan identities who share their private life and future family life with people from different nationalities where the language of communication would have to be English. These schemata, again, appear to be induced by the society that surrounds the respondents nowadays (some aspects of the EU citizen model + the labour market that dictates its values), as well as by their immediate circle of peers as the majority of respondents, in one way or another, manifested being subjected to a certain degree to peer pressure in terms of L2 proficiency.

As to the Feared L 2 self-image, it only proves the assumptions expressed above, as the respondents tend to associate negative scenarios of their future professional lives with the poor command of English they might have. They also fear to be disregarded by others because of the lack of proficiency in English.

The present analysis has also permitted inferring on the goals the respondents might have in line with their imagined future possible selves. Taking in consideration that the current immediate situation of the respondents is high school students, quite a number of respondents have agreed that apart from the Ideal future L2 selves as long-term motivational guides, the short term motivation to learn English also includes such aspects as good marks in a school report. In other words, respondents see themselves as good students and in order to realize this vision of themselves they try to excel in all the subjects on the school curriculum, including English. This assumption explains the lowering of the pace of acquisition that students exhibit with the time as they fall into the “minimum effort” pattern, where the main goal is not to approximate one’s interlanguage system towards the native linguistic ability, but to obtain a prestigious

tool for international communication officially accepted worldwide, which happens to be represented by the Cambridge Certificate of English. Thus, it is probable that the most challenging areas of target language seem to suffer from a certain halt in interlanguage development as students do not make an effort to improve those areas and prefer to concentrate on the ones they find easier to progress in since the skill-based character of Cambridge examinations allows them to do so and still obtain the general pass grade. In other words, the reason why the subjects of the present study lose the pace of interlanguage acquisition and do not achieve pure native-like performance is the nature of their motivational drive, which does not include the idea of native-like performance as such and is highly practical instead. To illustrate such an assumption, as the results of the questionnaire have shown, the majority of respondents, both male and female, do not regard native pronunciation as an essential prerequisite to proficiency in English and the overwhelming majority of male respondents consider complex grammar and vocabulary of the English language to be necessary only for passing their Cambridge examinations, that is only for fulfilling their short-term goals and to comply with Ought-to L2 selves (Cambridge examination is a right thing to do according to the society respondents find themselves in) or Feared L2 selves (a fear of academic failure), not with their Ideal L2 Selves.

As far as the debate task is concerned, the analysis of students' testimonies shows that students seem to realize that they, as language learners, might be losing control over the development of their interlanguage as they refer to the loss of metalinguistic skills used to monitor their own progress. It can be assumed that students do not conceive themselves as autonomous EFL learners and they rely considerably on teacher's help in terms of shaping their own metacognitive inner discourse since the majority of the

students acknowledged that their performance in English was more interiorized and controlled when they received regular formal input.

Secondly, in terms of motivation one could assume that there are two main motivational factors that might be urging students to persevere with their EFL studies, namely their Feared L2 Self and their Future Ideal L2 self. Furthermore, the Feared L2 self might be the first and the foremost motivational drive at this stage of the students' life as the concept of "losing" one's knowledge acquired to date is vividly present in students' testimonies and it also happens to be the main reason they mention for continuing their EFL studies. According to Dörnyei's (2009) theory of L2 Motivational Selves system, the Feared self exists along with the Ideal Self, and, as the results of the questionnaire show, the students under study clearly frame EFL proficiency into their Ideal L2 Self-images as they associate it with professional success. Thus, we can assume that now, when they have reached an ultimate language proficiency (the way CPE certificate is perceived by them) they realize that they possess an attribute of their Ideal Future Self already in present. That is, students become aware that they have reached their Ideal L2 Self but they have not yet reached their Future Ideal Self. Consequently, it seems only natural that students fear to "lose" a skill they have acquired now but are going to give a full use to only in their future reality. Exactly this fear, one can assume, becomes the motor for their desire to continue EFL tuition as a way of preventing deterioration of the state of their interlanguage. A testimony that could be used to illustrate this assumption is the one given by group 5 in response to the questions 4 and 5 of the debate task: "Carlota will study a bilingual career (*he means: degree*) in English and in Spanish". As it can be seen from the idea quoted above, the speaker chooses to mention that his fellow student has already taken care of the "future" of her English and chose to do a bilingual degree. The subliminal message implied here

might be that Carlota will not have to worry about forgetting her English as she will be using it daily for her studies. Bearing in mind Dörnyei's (2009) theory we could conclude that Carlota plans to incorporate her obtained Ideal L2 self into her immediate future as part of her academic self-image and she will not have to wait until her future life as a fully-qualified professional to give the full use to her CPE state of interlanguage. Thus, Carlota, unlike her other peers, will have a new DMC (Dörnyei: 2013) in terms of her English, which is developing her new Academic L2 self, and she will avoid the activation of the Feared L2 Self as the main EFL motivational driver.

With regards to the students who do not possess the Certificate of Proficiency in English, their main motivation, as it seems obvious from the testimonies, is to obtain one. These students can be described as ones caught in DMC, according to Dörnyei (2013) recent theory, where the final goal is to pass the CPE examination. On the other hand, they also find themselves under the influence of the Feared Self, as they associate not passing an exam, be it an English exam or any other exam, with an academic failure, which is a constitutional part of students' Feared Self- images.

Finally, referring to the whole study, a certain trajectory in terms of motivation can be perceived in the process of students' development as EFL learners during the whole school period. This trajectory could be defined schematically in the following way (Table 20):

Table 20**Motivational Stages of an EFL Learner**

STAGE	DMC GOAL	LONG-TERM GOAL
ONE	CAMBRIDGE FCE	OUGHT TO SELF (good student) IDEAL SELF (good student)
TWO	CAMBRIDGE CAE	OUGHT TO SELF (good student) IDEAL L2 SELF (good student and a successful professional)
TREE	CAMBRIDGE CPE	OUGHT TO SELF (good student) IDEAL L2 SELF (good student and a successful professional)
FOUR	ABSENT/NOT DEFINED	FEARED L2 SELF (fear to “lose” the acquired EFL level) IDEAL L2 SELF (successful professional)

As it can be seen out of the Table 20, the Stage Four of the students’ EFL learning process does not have a clear aim and, thus, does not trigger a DMC. Going back to the initial questions that motivated the research questionnaire and the debate, one can conclude that a certain halt in students’ interlanguage progress appears to be intentional and fully acknowledged by the students themselves. In other words, as their testimonies show, students realize that their English has not improved over the last year of their high school studies or even suffered a setback in some spheres. More than that, the only motivational engine they seem to share is the fear to lose the skill they have already acquired, and not the desire to acquire more. Clearly, students perceive their interlanguage to be fully formed for the utility they have always preconceived for it and they do not see the need or even possibility to improve any further. That is, students

seem to believe that they are already in possession of a level of English that is internationally certified as the highest and this will enable them to be successful professionals in the future, which is what the education aims for, in their opinion. Using Dörnyei's (2009) terms, the halt in students' interlanguage development, or "personal plateau" seems to be only natural for the language learners whose Ideal L2 selves and Ought to Selves have been reached. Concerning motivation, though still present, it is not conducive to further learning as it is seen as a fear to lose the acquired.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings of the study and their interpretations, as well as to offer possible generalization of the findings as far as the EFL learners with the similar characteristics to the subjects of the study are concerned. In addition, the chapter aims to suggest possible educational implications the results of the study might suppose taking in consideration the particular educational establishment employed in the research for data collection. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of the limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for future research in the field of EFL as regarding the phenomena of interlanguage stabilization and ultimate attainment.

7.2. Interpretation of the Findings and their Relation to the Hypotheses

First of all, it has to be stated that the current research has managed to meet its objectives and find proof for the hypotheses exposed in the beginning of the study. For a clearer layout of major conclusions, the hypotheses are represented below and followed by the detailed exposure of the evidences that provide proof for them.

1. There is a certain decrease in the pace of learner language development at the advanced stages of learning practice as compared to the earlier stages and such a decrease is induced mainly by motivational factors.
2. The decrease in the pace of learner interlanguage development cannot be denominated as “stabilization” in the case of the present study since students equalize the official C2 level of EFL to their “ultimate attainment” and thus, to their ultimate and achieved goal.

3. The perception of the ultimate attainment stage in EFL is not compared or equalized to native-like performance in the case of the Spanish secondary school EFL learners under study.

As far as the first hypothesis is concerned, the study has provided a tangible quantitative proof to illustrate a considerable reduction in pace and quality of interlanguage development on the advanced stages of EFL acquisition by offering a comparative longitudinal study of the results of Cambridge examinations. The outcome of this study has shown that the results of the First Certificate in English appeared to be higher than those of Cambridge CAE and CPE in such areas as grammar and vocabulary (Cambridge Use of English paper), reading and speaking. In addition, the analysis of the in-class written work has also shown that students tend to struggle progressively in such areas as lexicon and syntax as they find themselves on the higher level of their EFL studies. These findings are particularly interesting as these two areas have been claimed to be the ones unlikely to be prone to any stagnation at all (Patkowski, 1980; Eubank and Greg, 1999). Moreover, such rather unexpected phenomenon as “thinking for speaking” (Slobin, 1996) has been identified on the CAE and CPE stages of learner’s progress, which demonstrates that students tend to activate their L1 during their L2 practice more often on the advanced stages of their interlanguage development than on the earlier stages. This fact, in turn, signals that students’ metadiscourse and thought formation process as EFL learners is aided by their L1 and they do not feel in total “possession” of their interlanguage. Needless to say, that there are certain previous theoretical developments that comply with this finding, which are, first of all, the cross-linguistic influence phenomenon (Jared and Kroll, 2011) and then, the Competition Model (Bates and MacWhinney, 1981; 1982; 1987). These two theories advocate the

inevitable co-interference between the two linguistic systems in such L2 settings, where both L1 and L2 are equally active.

As to the reasons for the reduction in the pace and quality of interlanguage development on its advanced stages, the study demonstrates certain motivational patterns exhibited by the subjects that appear to induce the halt, which proves the second part of the first hypothesis. To be more particular, the questionnaire employed by the study clearly shows that students undergo four main stages of EFL development in terms of the different motivational drives that fuel their interest towards the acquisition of English. Namely, the first stage coincides with Cambridge Certificate in English as being the main motivational goal for the students; the second stage is directed towards Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English; and the third stage appears to have Cambridge Proficiency in English certificate as the main objective. It is important to add here that though all the three stages of interlanguage development mentioned above are focused mainly on Cambridge examinations as short-term objectives, long-term objectives are also present on these stages. Thus, on the first stage students appear to be motivated by the desire to be perceived as good students by their teachers, peers and families, while on the second and third stages such notion as “ideal future professional self” comes into play as students appear to clearly associate their future professional success and financial wellbeing with high level of EFL proficiency. Such a high level of EFL proficiency, in turn, is perceived by the students to be guaranteed by the diplomas they obtain when passing Cambridge examinations. Thus, the main goal for students in terms of their interlanguage development is related to obtaining the diploma and not really the knowledge itself. Finally, taking in consideration the fact that Cambridge examinations can be passed with a total score of 60% correct answers, students under analysis aim to obtain at least the minimum score to pass the exam and not necessarily a higher result.

This might explain the reduction of the speed and quality of interlanguage development on advanced stages. In other words, students, in their majority, appear to expose a minimum effort attitude towards their EFL studies, where the final goal seems to have a purely practical character. Such an attitude to foreign language acquisition can also be denominated as “investment” (Pierce, 1995; Yashima, 2009).

In order to provide proof for the second and third hypotheses of the study, the last, fourth stage of interlanguage development has to be analyzed in terms of motivation. This stage instates itself after students obtain their CPE certificates. The research has shown that this stage is deprived of any short-term motivational goal as there are no more Cambridge certificates for students to achieve and the only goal that remains is the long-term one, which is associated, as on the previous two stages, to students’ “ideal future professional selves”. Consequently, it is only logical to claim here that such a long-term goal as being a successful user of English in their professional future appears to be too distant and vague for 17 year old high school finishers as they are still facing university studies before they can put their English to the intended use. Thus, the fourth period of interlanguage development can be associated to a certain motivational void as far as the short-term motivational engine is concerned. On a different note, the debate task employed by the study shows that some students are aware of the absence of short-term goal for their interlanguage development and try to remedy this situation by focusing on the maintenance of the achieved EFL level so that it remains high when they arrive to the point of using it for their professional careers. Such motivational drive has been used by the study under the term “feared future self”, or, in other words, an image of what students are afraid to become in case they “lose” their level of EFL proficiency. Needless to say, this motivational engine does not seem to be so effective in promoting further EFL development from a CPE stage onwards, as it is focused mainly on the

preservation of the acquired knowledge and not on the acquisition of the new one. Consequently, the results of the questionnaire and the debate task outlined above show that students' progress in EFL acquisition is paced by Cambridge examinations as main motivators and the ultimate attainment is associated with Cambridge Proficiency in English exam. Moreover, no further development of interlanguage apart from the maintenance of the achieved result is contemplated by the students beyond achieving their final goal. So, the second hypothesis stating that students under analysis cannot be denominated as "stabilized" learners since they consider themselves to have reached the stage of their ultimate attainment can be seen as proved. Moving further, and as far as the third hypothesis of the study is concerned, the tendency to perceive the process of interlanguage development to be successfully finalized on its CPE stage can also be traced by analyzing the character of students' long-term goals, where English is mainly perceived as a useful skill for their future professional lives. The analysis of the questionnaire has demonstrated that students did not perceive English as an alternative form of every-day communication in line with their mother tongue or as an alternative vehicle for thought formation or new knowledge acquisition. According to the results of the study, students clearly divided the spheres of their life where English could be assigned any function from the spheres where their mother tongue played a prevailing role. To illustrate, English appeared to be contemplated as a useful asset in students' professional lives and they also envisaged a possibility to use English together with Spanish for their further academic studies. However, students' exposed reluctance to use only English for such spheres as their future university studies or communication in their private lives, where their mother tongue would have a leading role. In addition, students have also indicated that such factors as native-like pronunciation or perfectly correct grammar cannot be perceived as a must for a modern EFL user. It also has to be

noted here that students singled out not only the fact that English is an important asset for their successful professional future, but also an elite skill and a potent selling point not expected to be possessed by many. These data provides proof for the third hypothesis of the study as, according to the results of the research, students do not equalize their desired EFL ultimate attainment to native-like command of English.

7.3. Generalization of the Results

Now, after offering a summary of the findings of the present research, can one contemplate a possibility of extending these findings on other EFL learners in similar sociolinguistic settings? Taking in consideration the generally accepted idea that present-day society has changed and English has become a global means of communication (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006), as well as keeping in mind that integrative motivation has lost its positions as a motive for acquiring English nowadays (Clement and Kruidenier, 1983), can one assume that the motivational drive for learning English as a foreign language nowadays is associated with acquiring a complementary tool for one's linguistic and communicative abilities, and not with acquiring a second language equal in function to one's mother tongue? As it can be seen from the theoretical background of this study, many researchers (e.g.: Schwartz and Sprouse, 1996, Bialystock, 1994; Zobl, 1980; Han, 2004, 2009, 2013, Slobin, 1999, Patkowski, 1980 e.a..) share the concern of interlanguage being predestined for certain incompleteness, or even "failure" and many near-native speakers surface non-target forms occasionally (Jared and Kroll, 2001). In addition, the present study also proves that the concept of near-nativeness can be synonymized with faulty L2 representation. However, the notion of failure would not be associated with interlanguage if the focus on native-like ultimate attainment was removed. Once again, if we were to suppose that

the majority of modern EFL learners in a “external L2 setting” (Siegel, 2003) are driven by a practical motivational force to obtain a certain communicative tool to be used for international communication in addition to their linguistic abilities obtained in early childhood in the framework of a mother tongue, then the ultimate attainment of an interlanguage would be defined by the fulfillment of such a practical goal. In other words, we would be able then to speak about multiple, not uniform across the body of EFL learners, learner-dependent ultimate attainments. Or, in the case of Europe, where Cambridge examinations appear to be generally accepted as an EFL standard of fluency (EU linguistic policy and Cambridge examinations share the same bases), such an end-state of ultimate attainment would actually be determined by those examinations, and not by a vague idea of native-like performance or near-nativeness.

7.4. Possible Educational Implications

The results of the questionnaire have shown that students seem to contemplate the end-state of their interlanguage development as synonymous to the phase when they obtain the Cambridge Proficiency Certificate. Moreover, the study has also proved that the main motivational engine to acquire English for the students under study is linked in one way or another to their future professional success associated to EFL proficiency. Consequently, a possible educational implication of the findings expressed above could be a two-fold initiative. First of all, it would be beneficial for the students in question to be provided with a clearly defined and challenging goal for the Stage Four of their studies, which is when they are in possession of a CPE certificate. Thus, students would find themselves caught in a new Direct Motivational Current or DMC (Dörnyei: 2013) as their learning trajectory would obtain a new focus. For instance, such a new DMC could be directed at learning any other subject other than EFL on their curriculum

through English. Moreover, such an initiative would help students to shape a new alternative L2 image of themselves as bilingual academic L2 selves, which, hopefully, might last for the rest of their lives since learning is a life-long process. In addition, integrating English into students' everyday academic experience would ensure a certain transition between the "general everyday English" and the "specific academic English", which students are in an acute need of experiencing in order to define their new goals as English language learners and interlanguage owners. This, in turn, would motivate cognitive processes of thought formation and interpretation of reality through a new code, that is, through English. Needless to say, such a process would have a tendency to initiate students into the state of full bilinguals, if not in their everyday interactions as they belong to the entirely Spanish linguistic and cultural context, then at least in their academic lives. In other words, providing students with an opportunity to use English as a tool for new knowledge formation would establish a new clear direction for interlanguage development. More than that, it will also give continuation to the Ideal self-image shaping within the students cognition, where the long-term image of a successful professional who uses English for work purposes will be temporarily substituted by a more short-term image of a successful senior students who use English for their schoolwork. Finally, such measure would give students the feeling of changing the phase in their learning process and stepping up the level on their way to reaching their ideal-selves, instead of having the feeling of having already reached their ultimate goal as to English language learning certified by Cambridge CPE.

Regarding the practical side of the matter, such an initiative could be undertaken by the school under investigation within the framework of bilingual English-Spanish education project launched in the Madrid administrative region in the year 2009-2010 for the state schools. Though this project has affected only primary and secondary obligatory levels

of education, it could easily be given a logical continuation on the phase of high school studies, where a certain number of subjects could be taught through English. Another alternative to integrate English into the academic lives of students as a medium of instruction could be making an International Baccalaureate (IB) in English available to them. Such an option, however, would suppose a greater change for students in terms of the curriculum and studying methods, as well as it might cause difficulties as far as the evaluation system and criteria are concerned due to the great difference between the IB grading system and the system of grading used in Spain.

Secondly, another essential step to take in order to overcome the phase of motivational and developmental stabilization on Stage Four¹⁵ of the interlanguage development would be to modify the “life story” (McAdams: 2001) of the students in the phase of their secondary education by controlling and shaping the process of ideal-self making students undergo. To illustrate, the educational establishment in question defines the goals for its EFL students clearly from Stage One¹⁶ up to Stage Three¹⁷ by insisting on the importance of passing all the Cambridge examinations and by enforcing a policy of students’ streaming according to their results in those examinations. Thus, an image of a successful student is well-defined by the school and projected onto the learners in numerous forms throughout all the stages of secondary education. Consequently, it is only logical that students perceive Stage Four¹⁸ of their learning process as a summit of their effort and the moment to “rest on their laurels”. Needless to say that, in reality, this stage is usually characterized by the general absence of stimulus for further interlanguage development as the clear goals are not defined. Thus, it is the

^{13,14,15,16} Table20. Motivational Stages of an EFL Learner, page 230.

responsibility of the educational establishment to prevent the motivational void of Stage Four¹⁹ and to provide students with the logical continuity of their interlanguage development with clear goals. Such well-defined goals should be projected onto the students all throughout the process of secondary education through a new “life story”, where a successful student should be perceived as the one who passes all the Cambridge examinations successfully. Such a level of success has to be exposed clearly to the students as a firm expectation of the school, which, in turn, would lead to a possibility to enroll on a bilingual Spanish-English course on some stage of higher secondary studies, where certain subjects would be taught through English and where a high level of academic excellence will be expected. Such an image of a successful student should be presented with a certain amount of prestige attached to it, so that it is viewed as attractive and luring both by the students and, more importantly, by such stakeholders as parents, since the results of the questionnaire used in the present study show that parental support, as well as pressure in terms of academic excellence of teenagers are potent motivational forces too.

Finally, as an alternative or additional solution, the “outer” world (Yashima, 2002) could be brought “in” for students by making them enroll on a certain academic course in a foreign country for a lengthy period of time or, alternatively, by starting a regular communication in English with representatives of other cultures. Such a measure would also coincide with students’ visualizations of their future and of the place of English in it, as, according to the results of the questionnaire, they do imagine themselves staying in a foreign country for lengthy periods of time and communicating in English in their professional future. Thus, the experience, which students perceive as a part of their future reality could be brought closer to them and put into practice already now in order

¹⁹ Table20. Motivational Stages of an EFL Learner, page 230.

to provide students with a new motivational force induced by their new reality. However, it must be admitted here that such a measure would demand more dedication on the part of the subjects of the study.

On a different note, the results of the present research could also have more general practical implications for EFL learners in External L2 setting (Siegel, 2003). To be more particular, since the study has demonstrated the plural and highly personal character of learner's ultimate attainment, it would definitely be beneficial for every learner who finds himself on the initial stage of his interlanguage development to identify the clear purposes he wants to use his interlanguage for once the process of acquisition is finalized. This, in turn, would allow educators to determine the possible end state for this particular learner's interlanguage and design the necessary materials to take the learner to his end state in the most adequate, custom-tailored way. Needless to say, this idea has already been exploited by a variety of EFL teaching methods nowadays, generally denominated as English for Special Purposes (ESL). In addition, there is also a wide variety of English courses on the market that claim to be designed to prepare their students for certain official examinations, such as Cambridge EFL examinations, IELTS or TOFEL examinations.

7.5. Limitations of the Study

Among the basic limitations of the study the number and the nature of the students could be mentioned, as well as the basic character of the data. In other words, the number of participants of the study (twenty-two students), though comparatively high for a longitudinal study on interlanguage development, could be larger for better generalization of results. Then, the nature of the students monitored by the study, while homogeneous in itself, does not represent the general tendency of English language

acquisition framework shared by the teenage school students of English in Spain, as the level of the students under study is considerably higher than the average established level of English proficiency among teenagers in Spain (according to the official educational programme of the country). Thus, it would not be appropriate to generalize the results of the study for describing an EFL situation among teenagers in Spanish schools nowadays, but only for describing a certain group of advanced learners. Needless to say, the focus of this study itself bears a limited character as it tackles a certain minority group of teenage advanced and proficient English learners in Spain and the problems they face on a certain stage of their interlanguage development.

Limitations of the study of a more general character are connected to the nature of the data used by the researcher on the stages one and two of the practical analysis, where the results of the Cambridge examinations, as well as the written works of the students were analyzed. To be more particular, Cambridge examinations, though one of the most internationally wide-spread forms of EFL assessment, represent a rather general set of tests. Consequently, despite the fact that these examinations provided the study with all the necessary data for evaluating the progress of students' interlanguage from the prism of the social context and milieu, a custom-tailored test could have been developed by the author of the study to monitor the students' progress, where the same specific language features and skills would be paid a close attention to longitudinally. That, in turn, would have provided the study with more concrete and detailed data.

Finally, in order to obtain a fuller picture of students' interlanguage development, other skills of the target language could have been analyzed, like, for instance, students' oral competence as, according to many researchers (Pienneman, 2003; Crookes, 1989; Tarone, 1983, and others), there tends to be a large discrepancy between the oral and written skills of a language learner.

7.6. Recommendations for Future Research

Taking into consideration the limitations of the study mentioned above in the previous section, future research in the same direction could contemplate a larger group of EFL learners for a longitudinal analysis of interlanguage development. Moreover, it could be a revealing initiative to design a custom-tailored control test to monitor the progress in the development of students' interlanguage at every control stage of the analysis instead of using a standardized Cambridge EFL tests. Given that such a test is designed taking in consideration linguistic areas revealed by the present research as prominent to learning pace stabilization, this measure would allow a researcher to take a more profound look at the exact linguistic features or rules that tend to stabilize on the advanced stages of learner language development. Further, it could also be of interest to conduct a study similar to the present one, but in a different social context. For example, it could be a study conducted in the dominant L2 or in the Institutional L2 (Siegel, 2003), where students have the opportunity to use English outside the classroom on a daily basis. It could be assumed that research of this type might reveal an influence of a different type or intensity that stabilization would exercise on the pace of learner's interlanguage since such variables as motivational forces, as well as the influence of milieu would change.

Another possibly interesting undertaking would be to verify if the halt in the pace of interlanguage development demonstrated by the present study would produce itself in the same proportions and affect the same skill areas in the case of adult EFL learners. Taking into consideration that the results of the study have, to a certain extent, challenged the concepts of maturational constraints such as Lenneberg's (1967) Critical Period Hypothesis, a comparative longitudinal analysis of two experimental groups (one formed of teenage students and another one formed of adult students) could be

conducted to see if both groups are affected by the halt, at what stage of their learning process and in which areas. For such an experiment to take place the conditions should be the following:

1. Students must proceed from the same milieu and belong to the same culture, as well as share the same mother tongue.
2. Both adult and teenage students should belong to the “external L2 setting”, as defined by Siegel (2003).
3. Both teenage and adult students should be at the same pre-FCE EFL level of proficiency in the beginning of the experiment.
4. Teenage students must have been continuously exposed to EFL input since the age of three up to the start of the experiment.
5. Adult students should have started their exposure to EFL input after the age of 12.
6. Both groups should receive the same amount and quality of EFL input.
7. Both groups should be subjected to the same EFL proficiency tests at the same time.

It is the belief of the author of the present study that teenage students and adult students might have the chance of exhibiting the same loss of quality in their interlanguage development throughout the experiment despite the fact that teenage students would have acquired their EFL basis within the time frame of Lenneberg’s CPH and the adult students would consolidate the same base later on in their lives. If the findings of such sort are to be exposed by an empirical investigation, one may safely assume that the effects of CPH are not so prominent in the case of “external L2 setting” (Siegel, 2003) where learners do not find opportunity for an immediate use of their interlanguage within their surrounding society and the perception of the ultimate attainment is shaped

strictly by practical goals assigned to the target language, which might be shared by both adolescents and adults. In other words, it might be proved that such factors as the influence of the milieu or the practical implications of a foreign language within the milieu and a social setting of a learner tend to exercise major influence on the motivation to acquire English in an external L2 setting.

7.7. Concluding Remarks

The nature of learner language has been questioned by scholars to date and the present research is one more attempt to capture its essence. However, this study contemplates ultimate attainment from the point of view of a learner and his personal motivational constraints instead of a certain continuum of development where interlanguage is expected to achieve the level of native proficiency or become proximate or equal to a native-like proficiency. Viewed from such a perspective, ultimate attainment as a state of learner language acquires a strictly individual character defined by every learner in contingency with his motivational constraints to acquire a foreign language. In other words, the nature of ultimate attainment cannot be contemplated as an absolute final destination for all learners to achieve in order to assume that their foreign language studies are successfully concluded, but a strictly individual point within the continuum of learner language development where the quality of interlanguage appears to be sufficient for the use a learner has premeditated at the point of the departure. Such assumption, in turn, questions the notion of stabilization or fossilization of interlanguage, advocated mainly by Selinker (1972), Han (2001; 2004; 2013) as it would associate the “stabilized” or “fossilized” interlanguage with its eminent end-state, suggesting that a learner in question has achieved his objective as to foreign language acquisition and has no motivational drive to continue with his studies. Thus, such a

learner cannot be considered as the one caught in the phase of stabilization, but as the one who has arrived to his intended destination successfully. Put into such a perspective, a process of foreign language acquisition can be viewed as a process of “investment” (Pierce, 1995) that a learner is making towards his pre-meditated goal. This train of thought leads us to assume that learner language, being so dependent on motivational constraints of each particular learner, can hardly be considered a “human language” at all, but a code used for certain concrete communicational goals. This idea is shared by some scholars in the field (Beck, 1998; White, 2003) and also seems to be one of the prominent and unintended findings of the present study. Finally, bearing in mind the fact that ultimate attainment and “personal plateau” (Flynn and O’Neil, 1988) could be synonymous, as well as considering the motivational constraints to be the main factor that shape the nature of ultimate attainment, the practical implication that seems to be evident is the need to identify learner’s pre-meditated end-state and provide him with all the necessary tools to achieve such an end-state, such as, for instance, custom-tailored input and practice. Another implication could also regard the nature of the learner’s pre-meditated end-state itself, where it can be pushed further on the continuum of interlanguage development in case the uses assigned to the target foreign language are altered and upgraded.

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APPENDIX I
ESO 2 Written Data

ESO 2
School Year 2008 - 2009
Written Samples
Evaluation 1, Writing task, A Letter of Application

Task:

Club Organizer Needed!
(Monday and Wednesday Evening Only)

Our language school is looking for a person to help organize a Film Club for students of English. Our film club will meet twice a week to watch a film in English followed by a discussion of the film.

- **Do you have some knowledge of English?**
- **Do you like working with groups of people?**
- **Are you interested in films?**

If you think you would be a suitable person to organize our Film Club then we would like to hear from you. Please send a letter to the school owner saying why you are suitable for the job.

Write your letter of application to the school owner. (Around 120-180 words)

Participant 2

Dear Sir,

I am writing in response to your advertisement which I saw the 10th of November on the notice board. I would like to apply for the position as an organizer at the film club.

I am fourteen years old. I speak Spanish, French and English. I like working in groups very much. I consider myself sociable and hardworking person.

As for why I would like the job, I am very interested in films. I also need some money to pay my studies.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available for interview at your convenience. I have attached my Curriculum Vitae for your interest.

Yours faithfully,

Name Surname

Mark (17/20)

Participant 11

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to your advertisement I saw on my school notice board. I saw it the 20th of November and it offered the position of club organizer.

I study in a bilingual school. We speak Spanish as it is the local language. We also learn English. I have already organized clubs such as theatre or dancing ones. I am interested in film and plays as I would like to be an actress.

I think I would be a suitable person to organize the film club because I consider myself to be joyful, social as well as hardworking.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available for an interview at your convenience. I have attached my Curriculum Vitae for your interest. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Name Surname

Mark (17/20)

Participant 16

Dear Sir,

I am writing in response to the advertisement that appeared last Monday in “The Times”.

I did primary and secondary at BRAINS school and my university studies at Oxford.

I have worked in a primary school as a supplent teacher with children at about six and seven years.

I also gave classes for a week at another school of Madrid to twelve year old boys.

I like children and working with people and this would be a good chance of having fun with them and practicing my English, which I speak fluently from my classes at Brains and Oxford. I like quit a lot watching film, and discussing ideas with other people will be an interesting experience from which I could learn.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be available for interview at your convenience. I have attached my Curriculum Vitae.

Yours faithfully,

Name Surname

Mark(16/20)

Participant 5

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing with regard to your advertisement for part -time club organizer, advertised on the notice board of my school located in Madrid. I would like to apply for one of the positions.

I am a seventeen-year-old student at brains school, where I am studying for my A levels. In my opinion, I am honest as well as hardworking.

Although I have never been working with films, I have been working in my father's shop which sells sweets. So I have experience with working with groups of children or adults. I am specially interested in old English science fiction films. I have been studying 12 years English.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available all evening as well as Saturdays. You have attached my Curriculum Vitae for your convenience.

Yours Faithfully,

Name Surname

Mark (17-20)

Participant 15

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you in response to your advertisement for a club organiser, which I saw in the local newspaper yesterday, 25th of June. I would like to apply for the position helping to organize the Film Club.

I am twenty years old, I have studied in Brains bilingual school, so I have an excellent level of English. I am currently studying in Oxford's university.

I think I am a suitable person for this position, because I have experience working in this kind of job, as I have worked in a similar Film Club last summer. I am also a very sociable and flexible person and I like working in groups and discussing films. As I have mentioned before, I have an excellent level of English.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me, I am available for an interview at your convenience.

I have attached my Curriculum vitae for your interest.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Name Surname

Mark(19/20)

Participant 9

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to the advertisement I saw on the notice board of my local language school. I am applying for the job of club organiser.

I am 18 years old. About my English, I am currently studying for my A levels. Although /I have no direct experience, I have participated in drama clubs and in acting classes. I have some experience in debates too. I enjoy working with people and in team. I am generally considered to be sociable and outgoing.

I am really interested in films because when I attended acting classes, I saw many films to see how they acted. Now, I see many films in my own and talk about them with my friends.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available for interview at your convenience. I have attached my curriculum vitae for your interest.

Look forward to hearing from you soon.

First name only

Mark (16/20)

Participant 13

Dear Mr/Mrs school owner,

I am writing to you in response to your advertisement that appeared on the notice board in my school last week.

I am a 27 year old man, I studied at an English school when I was little and at university I studied film and animation. Apart from English I also speak Spanish and French, I am very hard-working, very sociable and I like to work on teams.

And for the working experience I've worked in Disney, Pixar and Filmx. When I was young my dream was to be a director or a critician and I've also directed some sketches. I love seeing movies and if then we comment the movie with my friends, better.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me, I'm free at evenings. I've attached my C.V.

Yours faithfully,

Name Surname

Mark(10/20)

Participant 20

Dear School owner:

I am writing to you in response for your advertisement in "The Times" the 19th of November, in which you are looking for a club organiser.

I am a seventeen-year-old boy, and I have got a very good level of English and I also like working with groups of people. I am much interested in films, specially science-fiction and historical ones.

I think I would be a suitable person for this job because I speak really perfect English, and because I have experience on this area. I have worked in “The Comedy Film Club” as a speech organiser and in “The Pob Theatre”, organizing the dialogues.

If you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available every afternoon since five to eight o’clock. I have attached my CV to this letter if you need any information, have a look at it please.

Yours faithfully,

Name surname.

Mark(17/20)

Participant 14

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing with regard to the advertisement I saw last week on the notice board of the school. I would like to apply for the Organiser of the Film Club.

I am a seventeen-year-old student in brains bilingual school, where I am currently studying for my Proficiency English exam. I also speak German and French fluently. I have worked in two different videoclubs so I am very interested in films and I know some interesting ones. I consider myself a hard-working, outgoing, friendly and a very sociable person.

I would like the job for practicing my English and for meet new people although I like meeting people. I think I would be the suitable candidate because of my knowledge of English, my sociable and friendly personality and my interest in films.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available for interview at your convenience, I have attached my Curriculum Vitae for your interest.

Yours faithfully,

Name Surname

Mark(19/20)

Participant 8

Dear sir/madam,

I am writing in response to your advertisement for the position of club organiser, which I saw in the notice board of my local language school on the 20th of November.

I am a sixteen-year-old student at Brains School. My mother tongue is Spanish, I speak fluent English and some French. I consider myself a hard-working person and very organized. I am very sociable and I love watching films. The experience I have in this type of job, is the one I acquired working last year as a reading club organiser.

I would like to get the job because I would like to earn some money and improve my English.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available for interview at your convenience. I have attached my curriculum Vitae for your interest.

Yours faithfully,

Name Suranme

Mark (18/20)

Participant 22

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to your advertisement which I saw it on the 20th May. I would like to apply for the Film Club's job on Monday's evenings.

I am thirty-year-old person. I have completed my studies at Oxford University learning English. I consider myself a confident, easy-going, hard-working person.

I would really like to be the chosen person because I am very interested in films and actors, and I would like to work with groups of a big number of people.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available for the interview at your convenience. I have attached my Curriculum Vitae for your interest.

Yours faithfully,
Name Surname
Mark (16/20)

Participant 19

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing with regard to the advertisement I saw on the notice board of my school on the 2nd November, and I would like to apply for the post of club organiser in your Film Club.

I am a twenty year old Spanish student at Cambridge University, where I am currently studying. I have “A” levels in English and have gained some experience in working with children as a teacher’s helper.

The reason for applying for this post is that I would like to combine my studies with this interesting part-time job. I consider myself a sociable, organized and talkative person and I would like to work with these students. I am very interested in films and I have a wide knowledge of them.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available for interview at your convenience. I have attached my Curriculum Vitae for your interest.

Yours faithfully,
Name Surname
Mark (18/20)

Participant 10

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to an advertisement I saw published at the notice board of my local language school. I would like to apply for the position of film club organiser.

I am a seventeen years-of-age and I came from Spain. I have a very sociable and easy-going character, and, although I have no useful experience, I used to organize debates and talks in my high-school, as well as helping young children with their studies in my free time.

Nevertheless, I have recently passed my A-levels in English with an A. I also enjoy working with groups of people, specially if we share interests such as films, because I am mad about them.

I think I could be the best candidate because I have all the clauses you were asking for, and I believe I am very trustworthy person.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available for interview at your convenience. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Name

Mark (17/20)

Evaluation 2

Part 2 FCE Writing

An ESSAY

TASK:

Living in the City vs. Living in the Country

Participant 16

Life in the city vs. life in the countryside.

Lot of people discuss this topic talking about the advantages and disadvantages of living in the city or living in the countryside. Here I am going to talk about it giving my personal opinion which not necessary everybody will agree. So, what is best, living in the country or in the city?

Living in the city you will have more opportunities of getting good jobs in which they will pay better. You will have more acomodations and an easier life. Here you have more hospitals to live healthier, but in the other hand, there is more pollution and stressness.

Living in the country you will have less jobs in which to choose and you won't necessary get good salaries. But here you won't have a stress life. You maybe won't have hospitals but you will have less pollution. Living here is recommended for people who like animals and who do not care much of their acomodations or facilities.

To conclude, I will say that it all depends on the person and the things he wants to do with his life. If the person wants to have much money and to have an important job in a good company, this person will surely live in the city. If you are a person who wants to have a calm life with his family and animals, and you do not need a good job in which to succeed to live happy you will live in the countryside.

Participant 5

Life in the city vs. life in the countryside

Now a days all cities are poluted because of the cars and factories and in the countryside there is the disgusting smell of the pesticides but, is it better to live in the countryside or in a city?

Firstly, living in the city has the advantage that you can go everywhere and by car. As a result there is a lot of polution in the air. Also, you can buy every thing you can imagine. For example, there is internet and nowadays it is the most important thing you can have, because you can do everything with it. Other bad thing is, that there is a lot of noise. Otherwise, living in a city is a good thing.

On the other hand, living in the countryside has the advantage that you don't have to breath the smell of the polluted air. As a consequence, you breathe only fresh air. In contraposition to this, you don't have signal so you can just communicate by normal phones or letter, no mobile phones.

Finally, both have advantages and disadvantages but nowadays our society is built around the city. In my opinion, cities are a better place to live than the countryside because I have been living my hole live in a city.

Participant 10

Life in the city vs. life in the countryside

Living in the countryside or in the city? Quiet and peaceful life in contact with nature or in an industrial city? We will talk about both places and their advantages and disadvantages to help you decide where to live.

Firstly, life in the city is full of facilities. If you want some bread for dinner you just walk into the supermarket and buy it. It is known by many people that if you are looking for a job it is more likely to find one in the city. Also, distances become smaller. If you want to visit a friend you just catch a bus and in a few minutes you will

be sitting in his dining room. However, this way of life has also some disadvantages. The polluted air of the city can be unhealthy if you spend much time in the open-air, even though you have no diseases. On the other hand, life in the countryside may sound very peaceful. Being in contact with nature, breathing healthy clean air and beautiful views are some advantages of living in the countryside. Nevertheless, the truth is that is a hard way of life. For instance, if you want some food you may need to drive to buy some. Or maybe you would prefer owning some land and working as a farmer, growing your own food and having no contact with civilization.

The type of life you choose, it will have its own advantages and disadvantages. It depends on your personality choosing either of the options. In my opinion, life in the city is much easier and comfortable and I would choose it.

Participant 2

Life in the city vs. life in the countryside

Most of the population lives in the city. But not everybody likes it. It depends on your work, your family and, mostly, on the way of live you want to have. Should we live in the city or in the countryside?

On the one hand, life in the countryside could be fun. Usually, you can have a good time playing in the fresh air. However, finding a job is not easy although you can work as a farmer. This way of live is more popular in villages or in places where there isn't much population.

On the other hand, life in the city is exciting. You can go out with your friends to the cinema, bowling or to have dinner in a restaurant. Nevertheless, cities have a huge population. As a consequence, pollution increases although you can move in public transport. The number of people that live in the city is a consequence of numerous jobs you can find in it.

To conclude, living on the countryside or in the city depends on yourself and on the way of live you want to have. I personally believe that life in the city is better nowadays. But we shouldn't forget that the countryside also exists and, maybe, having a holiday in it could be relaxing and helps us to disconnect from our stressful life.

Participant 15

Life in the city vs. life in the countryside.

What is better, life in the city or life in the countryside? This is one of the most debated topics that exists. Nearly everybody has a different opinion. Life in the city is better for some people because in the cities you have more facilities. Nevertheless, there is other people who think just the opposite and say that the best place to live is the countyside.

Living in the city is better for a lot of people because of the facilities you have there. In cities, you have better schools and universities to study, what is an undoubtable advantage. You also have more opportunities to find a job or a house. The negative thing of the cities is that, in general, your way of life is not very healthy. People tend to eat in fast food restaurants because they don't have time enough to prepare their food at home, there is also a lot of stress and pollution.

On the other hand, living in the countryside for most part of the people very hard. You have to get up very early and do a lot of physical work in most of the cases. But you have a healthier way of life. Your food is cooked at home, the air is fresh and you don't get stressed. You also live closer to nature, what is something very satisfactory for some people.

To conclude, whether life in the city is better than life in the countryside or not is something that depends on the person. In my oppinion, the perfect place to live is the city when you are young and the countryside when you are older and want peace.

Participant 8

Life in the city vs. life in the countryside

Is it best to live in the city or to live in the countryside? This is the question that many people ask themselves when they are going to buy their house. A lot of people think that the city is best than the countryside because they only think of the facilities of living in it but it also has its bad things. The country also has its facilities and it's bad things.

On the one hand, living in the city has it's good things, like having public transport, having a lot of shops, etc. But it also has a lot of bad things like there is a lot of pollution in the cities and there are lots of traffic jams.

Living in the countryside it is thought to be more difficult than living in the city because you don't have the same facilities that in the city. However, living in the countryside also has its positive things like there is not as much pollution as in the city and there aren't as much traffic jams as there are in the city.

In conclusion, I think that living in the city is as good as living in the countryside because both of them have their facilities or positive things and also they have bad things.

APPENDIX II
ESO 4 Written Data

ESO 4
Writing Task
A Report Part I CAE

Task

You have returned from the holiday in Sidney, Australia, which combined sightseeing with English classes. You have been asked to write a report about it for the Head of English Department at your school.

Read the advertisement for the holiday and an extract from your diary below. Then using the information appropriately, write a report for the Head of the English department explaining what you thought about the holiday and saying whether or not you would recommend it to others, and why.

Advertisement

GET TO KNOW AUSTRALIA

Guided tours around Sidney
A visit to a famous Sidney Opera
Varied programme of activities
Language tuition
First class hotel accommodation

Diary Extract

Monday Early start! Good breakfast. Splendid tour around the city centre. Very good guide.

Tuesday Not a very efficient teacher. Boring classes. No textbooks.

Wednesday Wonderful shops, no lunch and a very small dinner. A great night at a Sidney Opera.

Thursday All day spent on the beach. No English class this day. No lunch planned by the organization, so we had to spend our own money to buy sandwiches.

Friday A very tiring day! Excellent disco!

Write your **report** using **180-220 words**. You should use your own words as far as possible.

Participant 20

Report about Holiday in Sidney

Introduction

The aim of this report is to encourage young students who would like to hear about a different country to visit Australia, specifically Sidney, a great city where not only you can have great fun, but also learn language.

Activities and Classes

There are excellent advertisement which offer you the possibility to visit big cities such as Sidney, enjoy your time and even learn some language. The first day, we enjoyed a very good breakfast and right away, we were guided in a splendid tour all around the city centre which allowed us to see the most famous monuments and the most emblematic places in Sidney. Not only the views were great, but our guide was very friendly and answered all our questions very kindly. On Tuesday, we started our language classes very excited, but as the time passed, we realised that the lesson was not as great as we thought the teacher was slightly inefficient and we didn't even have books. On the other hand, Wednesday was a gorgeous day. To begin, we went shopping to various well-known shops in Sidney, however there was no lunch organized and the dinner was really small. After this, we went to the Sidney opera, it was an amazing show. On Thursday, we spent all the day on the beach, we had a great time, but lunch was missing again, so we paid some sandwiches with our own money. The last day resulted very tiring after all the week, but we rested comfortably in our first class hotel room. To end the trip, we were invited to a disco party, which was very enjoyable and where we spent a great night.

Recommendations

These are some points I would highlight from our holiday:

- Great accommodation and guides
- Not very effective learning
- Bad with organization

- Good activities

On our trip, we spent a great time, however, there were things that needed a big improvement for future visits. The language classes were not very effective and we didn't really learn anything. Books were missing and the classes were boring. Another thing we disliked, was the lunch and dinner organization, two of the days we had lunch issues and the food amount was really poor. On the other hand, there were many more plus than bad things in the holiday. For example, the hotel accommodation and facilities was really comfortable and the activity organization was marvellous. We had time to visit the city, to go to the opera, and even to go shopping to get some souvenirs.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, this holiday worth it and I would recommend anyone to go, specially young people who are willing to go abroad and learn about different countries and their most significant values.

Participant 2

Introduction

The principal aim of this report is to explain my holiday in Australia in order to recommend it to others as well as improving the trip for next year.

The City

To start with, the tour around the city centre of Sydney was splendid. Information about historical monuments was given in two different languages for everyone to understand. Furthermore, the excursion on Wednesday to the Sydney opera was great and tourists enjoyed the wonderful shops around it which provided a variety of souvenirs at good price.

Language Tuition

As a matter of fact, the English classes included in the programme of activities were boring. People concluded that the teacher was not efficient at all and claimed the necessity of textbooks to help follow the explanations. In addition, classes on Thursday morning were removed due to the fact that we spent the day on the beach, which people did not like very much.

Conclusion

To sum up with, I would like to mention that the hotel accommodation was incredible. The beds were very comfortable and breakfasts were served hot each morning. On the other hand, lunch was not planned by the organization twice, which shown the unhappiness of everyone, and we had to spend our own money to buy sandwiches. For next year, I hope you take in account these recommendations and make sure everything is well organized for each day.

Participant 11

Introduction

The programme affected the holiday of five days in Australia, Sidney. The advertisement explained these would be guided tours around the city, a visit to the famous opera, language tuition and a first class hotel accommodation.

English Tuition

The English learning part of this was quite disappointing as the teacher wasn't really efficient, no textbooks were used, and classes weren't held every day. In spite of this, the classes were avoided by the students as boring and not interesting.

Accommodation and Facilities

At first, the meal seemed to be good, as we were received with a good breakfast, but later all some days the lunch wasn't planned by the organization or it wasn't enough. As a consequence, money had to be wasted to buy food such as sandwiches.

Activities

Sidney's sightseeing was thought to be excellent. Everyone was pleased with the tour and the guide. Also, we were all allowed to go shopping to wonderful shops. Although the most interesting activity was the night at the Sidney opera.

Conclusion

To conclude I must say it was all excellent trip but I wouldn't recommend it to people who seek English learning. People who like sightseeing and don't mind lacking activities all the five days are the indicated ones to join the programme. And so, I personally enjoyed it.

Participant 4

Introduction

The reason for this writing is to explain my experience in Australia and to show my point of view about all what we have done.

Good points of the holiday

To start, what I most enjoyed was the wonderful tour we did around the city centre the first day, we had a great guide. Although I did not have much money, I loved all the shops we went to. We also had a very fun day at the beach and a really amazing night at Sidney opera. The last day, the organization took all the group to the most famous disco there, it was incredible!

Things I did not like

In the other hand, there were a lot of things they could have done better. The worst point of the holiday were the English classes. Our teacher was really boring and she did not know how to manage with so many students. Then, on Thursday, one class was delayed. In addition, although the breakfast was fine one day we had to come up with a very small dinner and on Thursday, the organization forgot to plan the lunch, so we had to pay our food.

Recommendations

In conclusion, I think that the best option for people to learn some English and enjoy the classes, is to change the teacher. In addition they should prepare with better organization, all the excursions in which we have lunch and dinner out.

Participant 6

Get to Know Australia

Introduction

The aim of this report is to inform the head of the English Department about how the trip to Australia went and whether or not it is a recommended activity to make.

Advantages

It can be said that visiting Australia has been very comfortable, because a first class hotel was booked for us and the breakfast served was delicious, the most demanded product was the eggs, which were made in a very special way. In addition tours were very good organized, and the guides had lot of information to share with the tourists, the most enjoyed tour was the night at the Sidney opera, it was espectacular. But not only tours were planned, we were taken by the organization to wonderful shops, and a disco was booked for the last night.

Disadvantages

It can also be said that making this trip has not been as educative as it should, or at least as it said in the advertisement. That occurred because classes were supposed to be held every day, but they were only held two days and there for the teacher was not very efficient and the classes could not be productive because they were given without textbooks.

Even though the breakfast was great, another drawback about the trip is that lunch was supposed to be planned by the organization, but it was never planned and the dinner we were given were too small.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I do not regret making this trip, although it should have been more educative, with more classes. I have had a great time and I have achieved an unique experience. I recommend going to Australia with this organization

Because the tours they plan are great

But, before going, make sure they have modified the advantages made before.

Participant 18

Abroad at Sidney, Australia

Introduction

The aim of this report is to show people who travel that going abroad does not only applies shopping and sightseeing, but also learning and developing your language skills, while you are enjoying your time.

Get to Know Australia

Eventhough Sidney, Australia is a far country from Spain, is a place that everyone should visit one day. The travel agente we went with planned a guided tour around the city centre of Sidney with a native guide, who seemed to know a lot about the Australian history. Moreover, if you have the chance to go to this marvelous place, you must not forget to visit the famous Sidney opera, where every night a different opera is played. Although we went to a first class hotel accommodation, the food was not that excellent, there was a day where we did not have lunch and when we arrived at the hotel, the dinner was small. The only problem about travelling with an organization was that in many occasions the activities planned did not turn out so well. The time we spent the day on the beach was well organized at the beginning but the organization did not planned the lunch, so we had to spend our own money.

Language Classes

On the other hand, travelling not only involves sightseeing, also learning thing about the country you visit and the language they speak. Our organization had a varied programm of activities that did not have very efficient teacher and the classes were boring cause we had no textbooks and had to sit infront of a teacher listening. Language tuition was neither good.

Conclusion

In my opinion, this trip was not very well organized and there were days where we had no lunch planned or English classes, but I must say that the disco was an excellent choice. In the light of this year's experience, next year it would be necessary to make some changes, here are some recommendations:

- hired another organization
- the language classes were fine, but it would be better if they were more didactic,
- and not only visit one place.

Participant 17

Report

Introduction

The principal aim of this report is to explain what I thought about the holiday in Sidney, and give some recommendations.

Guided tours and Activities

Sidney is a perfect city to go sightseeing. This holiday was full of tours and activities, which were surprisingly exciting. At first, a guided tour around Sidney was arranged. We had a splendid time, mostly because of the wonderful guide who came with us. Moreover, the monuments and the museums which we visited were astonishing and the shops were wonderful. In addition to this, we visited the famous Sidney opera, where we had a great night. Moreover, a varied programme of activities was planned: we could go to the beach and relax, practice sports and enjoy the holiday, or go to the disco and have some fun.

Language Tuition

English classes were provided for students in this holiday. Although people enjoyed English, the teacher wasn't efficient and we didn't have textbooks, so they were a bit boring. Moreover, there weren't many English classes, so students didn't learn many English.

Recommendations

The holiday was great, but in my point of view there are some things that must be improved, such as the dinners, which was small, and sometimes we had to buy our own food, and the English classes, which should be expanded.

To conclude, I would recommend this holiday to everyone, because we had a lot of fun, we had first class accommodation, and the activities and tours were highly enjoyed by everyone.

TASK

An international guide book called *A World of Traditions* is being produced, giving details of places in different countries where visitors can learn about traditional ways of life. You have decided to write a report for the guide book. Your report should:

- **describe one particular place in your country**
- **explain what visitors could learn there about traditional ways of life**
- **suggest why these ways of life are an important part of local or national culture**

Write your report using 220-260 words.

Participant 8

Introduction

The aim of this report is to look at the traditional ways of life, particularly at the ones in Andalusia.

Andalusia

Located in the South of Spain and with its hot summer, it is one of the places most visited by tourist all over the year. Andalusia is made up of large cities and small towns. Traditional ways of life are specially kept in the small towns. One example of this is Gerruche. Ten kilometers away from other towns and situated in the shore. Although over the time it has become more modern, it still continues with some of its traditions.

For example, its principal economic activity continues to be fishing. Also, there are not large markets, there are little ones specialised on only one kind of food (fish, fruit, ...)

What visitors should learn about it.

Andalucia has lots of traditions, most of which are really interesting. Visitors should learn about its traditions such as Procesiones in Easter, traditional dances Sevillanas or gastronomy (paella). Its traditional dance (Sevillanas) is known worldwide for its rhythm and steps. Its gastronomy is very rich and it's mediterranean.

Importance in local or national culture

These traditions fascinate people from all over the world and attract a large number of tourists that want to come to Spain and experience these traditions by themselves. This makes up a cultural movement between people of different nationalities. Moreover, these traditions enrich national culture and avoid globalization of only one culture.

Conclusion

Andalucia has got a vast array of traditions that make it very interesting to tourists. I recommend people to visit it.

Formal Transactional Letter

TASK

The Northgate town Planning Department has announced that it intends to build houses on a piece of open land called Northgate Common.

You have been asked by the local residents' committee to write a letter to the planning department in response to the announcement, explaining why you are opposed to the plan. Read the announcement below, on which you have made notes, and write your letter. (120-180 words)

NORTHGATE COMMON

After consultation (*Consulted?When?*) with local residents, the Northgate Town Planning Department hereby announces that planning permission has been granted for a housing project on the area of unused land (*not unused: park for children, sports, walks, etc.*) known as Northgate Common. Work is scheduled to begin in September (*Only 3 months away; should have been told earlier*) of this year.

12 semi-detached private residences (cheap housing for local people?) will over 62% of the common, and the remaining 38% will be developed into private gardens (*why not public gardens?*) for the use of the residents.

Participant 15

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you to express the dissatisfaction of Northgate's residents with the housing project you have planned for next September in the area known as "Northgate Common".

Firstly, the announcement they found in the local newspaper claimed that local residents had been consulted about the plan, something they firmly denied as the area where the building will take place is not "unused land", as the advertisement said, but parkland for playing sports and other activities. To go further, residents weren't told about the project with enough anticipation, as it is taking place in three months time.

Moreover, they find really unnecessary to build cheap houses in this area, as local people has already got their own homes. In relation to this, residents would like to know who are these houses for. To conclude, you plan to develop private gardens in the remaining land, whereas it would be better for the town to have public gardens.

In light of the above mentioned, I would appreciate if you took these complaints into consideration and delayed the construction until they are resolved.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Name surname.

Participant 22

Dear sir/Madam:

I am writing to inform you about the disagreement to your announcement about the construction of new houses on Northgate Common.

To start with, the announcement talked about the construction with local residents. This fact can not be true as not one resident remembered being consulted about the construction. If it really happened, I would like to know when did it occur. Secondly, this announcement was made only 3 months before the work started, when it should have been made at least two months before. Thirdly, it is not true that Northgate Common is unused, as a matter of fact, a number of activities are being held at the moment, such as a concert.

I would like to ask if the 12 semi-detached private residences are considered cheap housings for us local residents. It is believed that only half of these residences will be resided due to the high price. Last but not least, I would like to ask you about the Private gardens. The local residents' comitee think that these gardens should be made public. This is because our children need to have somewhere to play.

I would like to ask you to consider our proposal and to solve out inquiries. I look forward to your response in a near future if possible.

Yours sincerely,

Name Surname.

Participant 8

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to express the local resident's committee's dissatisfaction, towards the Northgate Common project, which was expressed on a consultation that took place on the 5th of November.

First of all, all residents claimed to have been told too late about the start of the project. Due to this, it will not be easy for them to find a place to stay during the construction of the residences.

Moreover, it is said that the 12 semi-detached private residences that are going to be built will be destined for local people. Furthermore, the semi-detached houses are thought to be cheap housing with not satisfactory conditions.

Also, in the committee was said that the residents would prefer public gardens instead of private gardens, which limit neighbourhood life.

To conclude, we would like that you would take our points into considerations and in light of the above, we would like to be given an economic compensation.

Yours faithfully,

The committee of local residents.

Participant 1

Dear Sir or Madam,

First of all, I would like to express my dissatisfaction with the Northgate Town Planning Department because their last announcement affect our community. The Northgate Common has been a place for children to play and have fun, also adults use it to walk and do sports, like jogging.

To begin I would like to question some aspects that are in your announcement. Firstly, in your announcement you say that you make this decision after consulting local residents but no one said that had talked to you in their lives. Moreover, in your announcement you refer to the Northgate Common as an unused land but this information is not totally correct because is used by children and adults to play, jog,...

Furthermore, you should have told us earlier because we not able to react to this change in our everyday life.

In light in this above, the amount to receive a compensation valued on 3 Million euros.

Yours faithfully,

Name Surname

Mark: 16,5/30

Participant 14

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with the announcement of a housing project known as Northgate Common. In this letter, are included the members of the local residents comitee, as they feel extremely disappointed.

First of all, the local residents have not been asked about this project, while in the advertisement is outlined that there has been a local consultation. I would like to know when was this consultation. Not only that, but the work scheduled is due to start in September of this year, so we should have been told of this before. Also, there are going to be build twelve semi-detached private residences.

Finally, it is claimed in the announcement that the project is to be done in an unused area, while in there, is the existence of parks, sport centres or children playing. This is a great area for local residents that is going to be taken off with no permission. Part of this area is to be used as private gardens, which is an annoying idea as those gardens belong to us. We suggest those gardens to be public.

In light of the above mentioned, I hope you stop the project, or if not, take my suggestions into account. I would like to thank you in advance you read into my letter.

I hope hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Name surname

APPENDIX III
BACH 1 Written Data

BACH 1

FORMAL WRITINGS

CPE WRITING PART II

A PROPOSAL TASK

The youth centre in your local area has been given some governmental funding to improve its current facilities. The manager of the youth centre has asked local people to send in proposals as to how they think the funding would be best spent. In your proposal, you should comment on the present facilities, make recommendations for improving them and discuss why these changes would benefit the local community.

Write your proposal. 300-350 words.

PARTICIPANT 6

Improvements and Benefits of the Youth Center

The aim of this proposal is to present ideas on how to develop and improve the existing facilities the youth center provide to my local area. This proposal also includes the various ways the funding can be spend in order to improve the aforementioned current facilities.

Present Facilities

As far as the current facilities concerned the swimming pull is in dreadful condition, the upkeep of the tennis courts is extremely poor, and last but not least, the weekend activities plan includes an insufficient number of activities.

Improvements

Due to the present facilities appointed above, it would be prudent to renovate the swimming pool due to the fact that is too shallow, it would be a good idea to use part of the funding to make the swimming pool deeper.

It would be advisable to improve the tennis courts because the nets are slightly stretched which means that people can not play fluidly, I would strongly recommend to spend some of the funding on the tennis courts as this would allow people to perfect their technique and enjoy playing. Consideration should be given to the weekend activities plan, on the grounds of the poorly variety of activities offered, it would be prudent to investigate ways of extending the activities mentioned above, one way could be making competitions or matches once the current facilities has been improved.

Benefits

Having considered the improvements aforementioned, it would be extremely advisable to have them under consideration because this will allow the youth center to organize swimming competitions and tennis matches, which means the local community profile and revenue would increase, and the youth center would be able to extend their activities.

I hope the ideas this proposal presents are followed because this would give the chance to the local community to be in better conditions and to be well-known.

PARTICIOANT 16

The aim of this proposal is to make some recommendations for improving the present facilities available in the youth center with the money obtained with the funding.

Present Facilities:

The current facilities include a library with quite large variety of books, which is useful for both studying and searching for information, as it has a peaceful atmosphere ideal for students to concentrate. Furthermore, there is a wifi area where computers are available and a small meet-room where students can do cooperative activities without disturbing others.

Recommendations

Having explained the current facilities above, I will make some recommendations which will help to improve them. The computers aforementioned are in dreadful conditions as

well as aged, It would be a goal to score to instal more modernized ones, moreover a digital whiteboard on order for students to do presentations.

On the other hand, a healthy improvement would be building a small gym to introduce students into sports. A cafeteria where to take a break and talk would attract more young people. According to the instalators, there are no free rooms for people to do manual activities such as painting or modelising. Regarding a survey taken by youngsters, most of them demand free rooms where to express themselves in artistic topics.

Benefit of Changes

All of these changes are to improve the youth centre reputation and its atmosphere.

The recommendations mentioned will make youngs interested in healthy activities, according to the construction of the gym, and amongst it, the new computers will be beneficial in their experience in this topic which will be useful to their future lifes, as it is required in most of the jobs.

Having explained all the recommendations I strongly believe they should be taken into consideration as it will raise the profile of the youth center.

Participant 1

The aim of this proposal is to give ideas on how to develop and extend the present facilities. This proposal has been written taking into account both children's and parent's ideas and suggestions.

Present Facilities

Concerning the thema that the proposal is going to be about , it would be useful to know the youth centre's current facilities. The children have one table tennis which is quite outdated and needs a new net, two pool tables that are in good condition, but the ones have disappeared during the last weeks and we also have a tiny café that only serves non-alcoholic drinks.

Improvements

Having given careful consideration to the present facilities it would be recommendable to buy and install a new net because the actual one is broken. It would be also advisable to make an investigation to find the pool ones thief of buy new ones. Regarding the small café it is absolutely disappointing . the fact that the parents of the children can not drink a beer in the café as their children are playing, so it would be very recommendable to offer a wide variety of drinks including alcohol ones.

Extending the Current Facilities

In light of the fact that poker's popularity is catching up in town, it would not be useless to spend some funding on a poker table. Moreover, we could offer tournaments for the children to play in and raise funds.

Regarding the small café it would be advisable to use some of the governmental economic help in a television to watch all the Barcklays Premier League matches as well as the FA Cup ones. This investment would increase revenue because the people that go to watch the matches would easily consume two or more drinks.

Benefits

All these improvements would be beneficial in two aspects: The children would be always controlled and that would make us sure that they aren't doing anything illegal. The other aspect is that we will have some time to be alone with our wives and make excursions. This little time for us would reinforce our relationship.

In conclusion, I would be grateful if you take into account my suggestions on how to administrate the government funding.

TASK

Your college has been given funding to improve its leisure and cultural facilities for students. The college principal has asked people to send in proposals on how the money can be spent. In your proposal comment on the present facilities and make recommendations for improving and extending them.

Write your proposal (300-350 words)

Participant :22

Introduction

This proposal contains the relevant information concerning the investment of the given funding for the improvement and extension of the college's leisure and cultural facilities.

Present Facilities

Even though the college have improved some aspects, such as food's quality or the sports installations, during the two previous years, students continue to think that these changes are not enough. For instance, the cultural and the leisure facilities are the ones that need more improvement. The theatre does not have good illumination, there is not a great variety of costumes and decorations (students had to make their own costumes with their old clothes), there is not a changing room for the performers and most of the seats are broken. In music room, there are not enough instruments for the students, and some of these instruments are broken. Furthermore, the library needs to buy new books and more space as its bookshelves are already full.

Possible Improvements

For the theatre, there should be installed new lightbulbs, new materials for the creation of costumes and decorations, the spectators' seats should be also changed and we should install new speakers. For the music room, we should buy new instruments and repair the broken ones so that all the students could play one. A better isolation of the room could also beneficate both the music class and the other ones beside them.

Possible Extensions

Firstly, a changing room should be built next to the stage, where the performers dress themselves up or wait for the moment of the appearance in the play. Secondly, the music room might be extended. This way, we would avoid having acoustic problems and the students would have more space for themselves. Thirdly, the library should be built separately from the main building to reduce the noise in the library that comes from other classes. More windows should be also built to provide a better illumination to the students. If we build a new library, we would be able to place more bookshelves.

Conclusion

Although not all the students use these facilities, I believe that they are still very important. That is why I would not hesitate to recommend the changes mentioned during all the text.

Participant 21

Introduction

The aim of the following proposal is to discuss the possible uses for the money raised recently by the college. This proposal outlines the present leisure and cultural facilities for students as well as recommendations for improving and extending them.

Current Facilities

Regarding to the cultural facilities, the college is provided with two satisfactory libraries located on the 1st and 2nd floor. Both of them offer people a wide range of book of variated themes such as maths, history, science, etc. Additionally, CDs and DVDs with interesting information are available in those libraries and they can be watched in one of ubiquitous computers which have been installed in the college building. With reference to the leisure facilities near the college there has been set up a pleasant cafeteria, where people can get together or have some refreshment between and after classes. Moreover, a basketball court and a football pitch are at students' disposal in order to have a grateful time doing sports.

Improving Facilities

Looking at the questions of how to improve the present facilities, it would be recommendable to renovate the library of books as some of them are out of date and they can lead to misunderstandings. Despite, books in the library can be borrowed, CDs and DVDs can not, it would be preferable that these CDs and DVDs would be lent by the college. Furthermore, some of the computers in the college do not work and others do not have the possibility to introduce a pen-drive. Thus, it would be a satisfactory answer to change these computers to avoid these problems.

Extending Facilities

Although there is currently a cafeteria, not all students have enough time to cross all the building and to arrive to the cafeteria as it is situated on the east side of the college. Therefore, another cafeteria on the west side of the college would be an acceptable use of the fundings. Some of students would appreciate that the opening hours of the libraries were expanded because the libraries close at 5 p.m. and people usually need to stay in college in order to study for the exams.

Conclusion

To sum up, I have no hesitation in recommending the suggestions as they are practical and economic to the college. They will also increase the quality of the college and they would be a pleasant use of the raised money. I hope this proposal has your serious consideration.

Participant 15

Introduction

The aim of this proposal is to outline the improvements there could be made in our college's leisure and cultural facilities in order to make the most of our college's funding.

Leisure Facilities

Whereas there is an acceptable number of leisure facilities, it is undoubtable that they are in need of renovation. In what concerns sports facilities, our football goals fall down constantly, putting in danger the players'safety. The tennis nets could not be more riddled with holes. And the athletics track gets quite slippery after a rainy day.

Besides sports facilities, we have an utterly small cafeteria, which doesn't offer enough variety of products. As well as a few empty classrooms used for different purposes like the college's band rehearsals.

Improvements of Leisure Facilities

Firstly, the problems with sports facilities have a quite simple solution. –just fixing the football goals to the ground would end up with the danger. Buying new tennis nets would help the students who regularly play. And applying a layer of nonslip paint would solve the drawback of having a slippery athletics track.

Secondly, it might be advisable to enlarge a cafeteria and buy a wider variety of food to sell. Another good idea would be to build an insonorized room for the school band in order to disturb as less as possible the rest of the students.

Cultural Facilities

In addition to the leisure facilities, there is a very reduced number of confined spaces for cultural activities. We have a poor library and a decadent conference room. A good way to improve these facilities would be to add more books to our library, and maybe actualize the encyclopedias we have . Furthermore, buying a decent oudithory would be a delight for both...

Participant 10

Introduction

As requested, I am submitting the following proposal on the present leisure and cultural facilities of our college. Recommendations on how to improve and extend them with the funding our college has received will also be given.

Cultural Facilities

Our college, Wavesworth, is known as one of the college with the highest educative level of the whole country. However, the students very often have to face enourmous difficulties when the time of doing some research for their studies comes. To begin with, our library archive is completely out-of-date and disorganized. It will be enough if you want something from the classics, but if your topic is applied chemistry, forget about finding here what you were looking for. Furthermore, the college certainly lacks new computers, as the current ones are so slow and there are so few of them, that the

time waiting for an empty seat is not worth it. Therefore, I should recommend that the computers are renewed and the room extended in order to win comfort.

Leisure Facilities

What do students do in their free evenings? Unlike most of the people would think, several surveys conducted among students and boarders show that they would preferably join the college free time courses. The only problem is that the courses are already overcrowded. For instance, the dance course which takes place at our dancefloor is a great way over its capacity. I suggest to extend the current dancefloor and provide it with technical means. The means would include the new lights and a much more modern stereo equipment. Added to this, the construction of a room for the college newspaper would be received with great expectancy from the students.

Conclusion

I have no hesitation in firmly recommending the improvements outlined above. The college is in an urgent need of change and therefore I hope you take this proposal very in account. I am at your complete disposal in case you should need me at any level.

Participant 19

Introduction

As requested, I am submitting the following proposal concerning the best uses for the money the college has been provided with in order to improve its leisure and cultural facilities.

Current Situation

It is a fact that present facilities at the college are extremely poor. First of all, the park is too small and does not conform a safe pace for children any more. As regards the library, the amount of space and the obsolete computers constitute major problems. Last but not least, the number and variety of cultural facilities at the college is rather disappointing. Art classes are continuously losing members and the theatre group is very unpopular.

Leisure Facilities

To begin with, it would be a good idea to look into a possibility of renovating the park as children's safety should never be taken for granted. A second area of improvement is the library. The problem with the amount of space could easily be solved by extending the working area. Moreover, were new computers to be bought, students would be able to finish their work earlier. Another inversion to consider would be the introduction of a cafeteria. This would have the additional advantage of providing some extra money to the college.

Cultural Facilities

With regard to cultural facilities, it would be advisable to promote the different facilities in order to make the students get involved. Take, for example, the theatre group which has very few members. Delivering panflets with the dates and schedules of this activity would most assuredly raise its popularity among students. Turning to art classes, the work of many students is limited by the insufficient material and most students are loosing their interest in painting. Therefore, I strongly recommend using some of the funding to acquire new painting materials.

Conclusion

To sum up, leisure and cultural facilities at the college should receive urgent consideration. As outlined above, there are many ways in which the funding could help its improvement. Consequently, the college would be more appealing to students.

Participant 8

Introduction

As requested, I have written a proposal to show some ideas of the ways the money of the fund could be spent. My ideas, as well as a brief summary of the present facilities, are listed below.

Present Facilities

Firstly, I would like to give a brief outlook of the present facilities and their characteristics. Our college counts with: two tennis courts, a basketball court, a football pitch, a running track, a gym and a swimming pool. The tennis courts are hard floor and

are in the exterior, but due to the temperature changes, they have fissures and their nets have holes. The basketball court has its lines rubbed out and you can not see the limits of it. As far the football pitch, it is in a good condition because it is made of artificial turf. The running track and the gym are also in a good condition, but new exercise machines would be needed for the gym. The swimming pool is as well in good conditions, but it does not have Olympic measures.

Improvements and Extensions for Present Facilities

I would personally recommend some improvements in the present facilities. Firstly, the floor of the tennis courts as well as its nets should be changed. Secondly, the lines in the basketball court should be painted again. Furthermore, I would change the artificial turf in the football pitch into grass and I would propose the acquirement of new gym machines. As far as the swimming pool, I would renovate it into Olympic measures.

Conclusion

I have no hesitation in recommending the improvements for the present facilities: change the floor and the tennis nets in the tennis courts, paint the lines in the basketball court and change the turf on the football pitch into grass. Furthermore, I would recommend to buy new exercise machines and to extend the swimming pool measures to Olympic measures. I hope that my ideas meet your approval.

Participant 9

Introduction

The aim of this proposal is to outline suggestions on how to spend the money given to our college in order to improve its leisure and cultural facilities.

Weaknesses to Draw

Leisure facilities in our college are worn out and they suffer from lack of maintenance. The gym is a good place for students to get rid of stress and the swimming pool is also really frequented facility, but both, gym and pool, need to be modernized and well maintained. The cafeteria is often criticized due to its rather unexisting cleaning and inefficient service given. When analyzing cultural facilities, few weaknesses could be

presented, the library extension is small if we bear in mind the building's size, and the students can not benefit from a wide range of cultural activities precisely.

Strong Points

Although the library seems small and disorganized its vast array of books and magazines provide students everything which they might need. The cafeteria, nevermind its state of service, enables students to eat healthy and good quality food for low prices and the music played helps them to relax while eating and chatting with their friends.

Recommendations

Several improvements need to be made to modernize leisure facilities and to provide more cultural facilities and activities. Some of the money should be spent on improving the gym's and pool's state as well as hiring a new cleaning company. In order to improve cultural facilities some suggestions could be given such as: promoting international exchanges, creating a new and bigger library with computers and a higher amount of furniture to enable more students to use it, creating a music room or a dance school and making knowledge contests, with their prizes, to enhance students to participate.

Conclusion

In my opinion, the recommendations and suggestions presented above would make our college a better place for students to develop, culturally, mentally and physically.

Participant 5

Introduction

The purpose of this proposal is to comment on the current cultural and leisure amenities the college has and how they may be improved.

Current Leisure Amenities

At present, the college has a fair amount of leisure facilities for students to use first of all. There is a great variety of courses available that go from chess courses to

photography courses. Furthermore, computer classes are also available for those students who are interested in activities such as programming or softwares.

On the other hand, in order to extend the variety of facilities, the college may be interested in offering painting classes. This could interest students as a way of relaxing after an endless day at the college.

Cultural Facilities

One of the most popular cultural facilities among students is the library, where they can gather round and do homework as well as projects. Moreover, the college uses the gym as a theater for students to take drama classes. Besides all of these amenities, the college also has classes and material that could be used to offer, for example, music classes in the evenings.

Alternative Amenities

Despite all the previously mentioned facilities, I have no hesitation in recommending the building of a restaurant. This would attract students and non-students alike as well as being a profitable amenity to the college. On the other hand, foreign language classes ought to be taken in account because they may become a popular activity as well as the way of improving the college's reputation.

Conclusion

To sum up, the college already offers a great variety of cultural and leisure facilities, such as photography courses or drama classes. Nevertheless, the money for improvements should be spent in either a restaurant, which would be profitable to the college or language classes that may help improve the college reputation.

Participant 20

Introduction

The aim of this report is to discuss the present leisure and cultural facilities and to present a series of new ideas looking forward to the improvement of both leisure and cultural facilities by investing the funding we have been given.

Recent Leisure Facilities

The college students have recently showed their disappointment with the greatly expensive prices of the products available in the snack-bar of the college. As well as this, an other remarkable issue is the absense of a specialized area where the theatre group can practice their performances.

Present Cultural Facilities

Due to the cultural facilities of the college, there is a general argument between the students who often use the library and the sports men of the college. The library students accuse the athletes of making too much noise. The proximity between the gym and the sports area is too small and this is the reason of the arguments.

Ideas for Leisure Facilities

We have made a poll to the students and they have built a variety of interesting ideas. One of the favourite was the reduction of the products from the snack bar by buying cheaper products so the snack bar could sell them with lower prices. The other main idea is the investment of the funds to create a specialized theatre area for this type of performances.

Ideas for Cultural Facilities

According to the great disappointment, the majority of the students have voted to make a great investment in the built of a proper library with a larger quantity of books and somewhere far from the sports area, where students could concentrate without being disturbed.

Conclusion

To sum up with, we are of the opinion that by taking into account some of the ideas provided by the students, they would feel really satisfied and this would mean a totally positive investment of given funds.

Participant 11

Introduction

As requested, I submit this proposal commenting the funding received by the school in order to improve the facilities related to the leisure and culture. This proposal outlines the present facilities and the ways in which they could be improved.

Leisure

Since our school has a public cafeteria in which there is no variety of products, it would be advisable to include some more such as healthy snacks and fruit. Also, the indoor sports facilities are only adapted for football and basketball whilst students prefer practicing other sports. This could be solved installing volleyball nets, buying hockey sticks and even constructing a tennis court. On the other hand, the outdoor facilities should be cleaned and repaired as the basketball's have been damaged by the wind. Apart from this only two goals could be used and there are so many students playing football injuries are inevitable.

Culture

The school's library is only used as a place to study because of the lack of up-to-date novels and other ways of culture such as movies or even magazines. The library would be benefited from bestseller's books and press as the students would become interested in it. Apart from literature, there are no other means of art in the entire school. It would be advisable to place some paintings in the corridors so that art students could observe and comment on them when the authors are studied.

Conclusion

To sum up, although our school's facilities are numerous, the improvements outlined above would make them more attractive and useful. Also the variety of products is a common problem for the cafeteria, the sport's facilities and the library, so it should be solved. Having said this, there may be a need to adopt some facilities and improve in a more extensive way the others as, after all, it is quality not quantity that counts.

APPENDIX IV

Questionnaire on Motivation

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!

NAME (optional)

AGE

SEX

Read the statements below and mark them YES or NO according to what you think.

Please write your answers on the answer sheet provided.

IN THE FUTURE:

1. I see myself doing my university studies in both English and Spanish interchangeably.
2. I see myself doing my university studies only in English.
3. As an adult I see myself as a part of an international group of friends, not only Spanish ones and I will communicate with my international friends in English.
4. I see myself in a relationship with a person from a different culture and our language of communication would be English.
5. I think that if I speak English, boys/girls will find me more fun and cooler and it will be easier for me to be popular.
6. I think that my future husband/wife will speak English well.
7. As an adult I see myself living and working in a foreign country for a long period (e.g. 5 years).
8. As an adult I will travel much for work and I will use English as the language of communication with my workmates.
9. I think that in my future English will be as important as Spanish for my work.
10. I think that in my future English will be as important as Spanish for my private life.
11. I think that in the future all successful people from my generation will speak English very well.
12. I do not think that it is very important to sound exactly as a native speaker when I speak English.
13. I think that it will be very important for my future to write in English as well as I write in Spanish.
14. I think that speaking skills in English are the most important ones for my future work life.
15. I think that such things as grammar (sentence construction, inversions, complicated passives) and formal vocabulary are important only for passing the Cambridge exams, and not for my real future life when I will be using English.

16. I see myself living in a cosmopolitan city, where I can easily meet lots of people from different nationalities and befriend them.
17. As an adult, I will be the one who has no problem to switch from Spanish to English and from English to Spanish at any time.
18. I see myself in the future as a Spanish person who speaks English very well for professional and personal reasons.
19. I see myself as a CITIZEN OF THE WORLD where the differences between nationalities are not so important and the international language is ENGLISH.
20. I think that speaking English is a skill that everyone should have, quite like driving a car or using an Iphone.
21. When I am an adult, all my friends will speak English.
22. I see myself moving to an English speaking country for a long period of time (10 years) and speaking only English both at home and at work there.
23. I feel attracted to British culture very much, I love the music, the cinema, the literature, the mentality. In my adult life I would like to form part of British society.
24. I feel attracted to American culture very much, I love the music, the literature, the cinema, the mentality. In my adult life I would like to form part of American society.
25. In the future I see myself as a student of a Spanish university where all the courses are taught only in Spanish and English is not required to succeed in my studies.
26. In the future I see myself having no international friends, only Spanish ones.
27. In the future I will not have to use English for my professional life.
28. In the future I will not have to use English for my private life.
29. I study English only because it is a subject in the school and my parents want me to.
30. I study English because I think I should speak it well for my future.
31. In the future I will not have to travel to foreign countries for my work.
32. I think it will be enough to have a basic level of English for my future job.
33. I think that my future job will not require a high level of English.
34. I think that if in the future I will have a badly-paid job if my English is poor.
35. I think that if I speak English very badly people will think that I am not clever or successful enough.

NAME (optional).....

AGE

SEX

DATE

YES

NO