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A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS OF  
ENGLISH IN CROATIA

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## **Abstract**

Vision plays an important role in learning in general, which is why many believe that visually impaired learners (VILs) cannot be successful in acquiring a foreign language. It is not uncommon that the VILs themselves feel this way, too, which is why the purpose of this research was to look into how VILs perceive themselves as students of English as an L2. The subjects of this case study were 3 partially sighted and 2 blind high school students enrolled at the *Vinko Bek* Centre for Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired. By using the methods of participant and non-participant observation and sociolinguistic interview, this paper examines how family as a social factor in SLA, social and educational settings in which the VI students grow up and psycholinguistic factors such as aptitude, motivation, learned helplessness and coping mechanisms affect their self-perception and success. The study confirms the initial hypothesis that family members, the VILs' social background and the environment in which they grow up affect their attitudes towards language learning and their success. It also underlines the importance of the psycholinguistic factors in the self-evaluation of the subjects and offers some implications for teachers working with VILs in mainstream schools.

**Key words:** visual impairment, visually impaired learners (VILs), blind learners, partially sighted learners, family, social background, EFL teachers, psycholinguistic factors, motivation, aptitude, learned helplessness, coping mechanisms.

## 1. Introduction

The impact of English has become pervasive not just in Europe, but around the globe – it is a *lingua franca* used by people from all over the world as a means of communication with speakers of another L1. It is by far the world's most studied language as around 743,555,740 speakers use it as their L2 (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/eng>) – it has established itself as a dominant language in essential domains such as education, business and the media and it has become an indispensable part of almost every person's day-to-day life. Children, digital natives who have grown up using technology such as computers and the Internet, are being exposed to it from a very early age – this informal acquisition through exposure gives them good basics and makes them become familiar with the language even before they start their formal education. In Croatia, children officially begin to learn English at the age of six or seven, when they start their primary school. Some, however, start even sooner, as kindergartens offer English language courses to their young students and many language schools organise creative and fun English language workshops for pre-schoolers. Because of this, we seem to take our students' knowledge of English for granted and we sometimes forget that not all students have the same opportunities to learn foreign languages. Such is the case with my respondents, five visually impaired learners (VILs) enrolled at the secondary school department of the *Vinko Bek* Centre for Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired (*Centar za odgoj i obrazovanje Vinko Bek*).

As vision plays an important role in learning in general, as well as in FL learning, many believe that VILs cannot be successful foreign language learners, which is why they are sometimes neglected educationally. However, it has been proven that even VILs can successfully master an FL when the teaching techniques and materials are adequately adapted. (Nikolić 1987: 63) This, of course, implies that the FL learning process in VI and fully sighted (FS) learners differs to a certain extent (Jedynak 2011: 264). Unfortunately, while individual differences in FL learning by FSLs have been thoroughly researched, there are very few studies addressing the topic with various types of disabilities, visual impairment included. Unjustly so – VILs bring a vast and complex array of emotions, beliefs, and types of knowledge to an FL classroom. Although they are more likely to experience negative emotions and emotional states such as anxiety and helplessness, which are detrimental to FL learning, they can also experience positive emotions and emotional states such as autonomy or positive self-concept, which foster learning. (Jedynak 2015: 174)

I have decided to conduct this research mainly for personal reasons – I have had both deaf and blind family members and I have met many other deaf and blind people through them, which is why it was perfectly natural for me to show interest in the subject. Talking to my primary school English teacher, seeing how much effort she put in working with a deaf student and seeing how happy and accepted he felt in the classroom, as well as gathering my own experiences through working with blind students from the Centre made me even more eager to know more about special educational needs (SEN) learners, deaf and blind students in particular, and to make a humble contribution to the already existing research on the topic.

As the aim of my research was to look into the self-perception of my respondents as learners of English, while preparing for and during the course of the interviews I conducted with the students I found that the best way to get a glimpse of this somewhat elusive concept was by focusing on a number of extralinguistic factors that had an impact on their FL learning. Therefore, I decided to look into their families' level of education and occupation, as well as into their attitudes towards language learning, and examine the participants' thoughts on their aptitude for language learning and into their motivation. During the analysis of the interviews, I also came across results indicating *learned helplessness*, which is why I chose to present it as a separate category as well.

## 2. Visual impairment in Croatia

In this chapter, I will give an overview of the basic terminology that will appear in the thesis as well as try to explain the underlying concepts important for fully grasping the meaning of the term *visual impairment*. I will continue by providing statistical data on the visually impaired both on a global scale and in Croatia and conclude by highlighting the importance of foreign language learning for the visually impaired in the EU context. I will also touch upon how the Croatian educational system tackled the presence of special education needs students with visual impairment in the classrooms.

### 2.1. Key terminology and concepts

To better understand what visual impairment is, it is essential to take one step back before defining it and consider how impairment is defined as a concept in its own right. It is also very important to discern the difference between *impairment*, *disability* and *handicap*, terms that are very often used interchangeably but have three different meanings, to comprehend changes in terminology that have appeared in the last several years.

According to WHO's 1980 *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps* (ICIDH-80), an **impairment** is "any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function" (47) – it refers to temporary or permanent disturbances at the organ level and includes not only defects in or loss of a limb, organ and/or other bodily structures, but also defects in or loss of a mental function (*ibid.*). A **disability** is "any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being" (*ibid.* 143) – since it may occur as a result of and is an objectification of an impairment, it reflects disturbances at the level of the whole person (*ibid.*). A **handicap**, in turn, is a "disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or a disability, that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal (depending on age, sex, and social and cultural factors) for that individual" (*ibid.* 183). It represents the socialization of an impairment or disability – it prevents individuals to conform to the expectations or norms of their society (*ibid.*). In the past, terms *visually handicapped* or *disabled people* were widely used to refer to partially sighted or blind people. With regard to how *handicap* and *disability* were defined by WHO, however, these terms have proven not to be appropriate since they postulate that the partially sighted and the blind are incapable of getting involved in society in the same way as normally sighted individuals. This is why in the *International Classification of Functioning and Health*

(ICF) the term *visually impaired* was adopted instead – it suggests that they can indeed participate in society as well as their sighted counterparts if provided with the right aids. (Jedynak 2015: 30)

Although the term *visually impaired* had been used to refer to the *partially sighted* in the past, nowadays it is used as an umbrella term to indicate both *blind* and *partially sighted*. In her monograph, Jedynak introduces one more term – that of *low vision*, which may be interchangeable with the term *partial sightedness* as both terms indicate limited sight. Although, as she proposes, the debate on the accurate definitions of blindness and partial sightedness is still ongoing, she also claims that European Blind Union (EBU) has accepted the definitions set forth by WHO. (Jedynak 2015: 25) According to WHO's website,

a person with **low vision** [or **partial sight**] is one who has impairment of visual functioning even after treatment and/or standard refractive correction, and has a visual acuity<sup>1</sup> of less than 6/18 to light perception, or a visual field less than 10 degrees from the point of fixation, but who uses, or is potentially able to use, vision for the planning and/or execution of a task for which vision is essential (cf. Jedynak 2015: 25-6, emphasis mine).

A partially sighted person can be helped by vision enhancement aids and devices such as magnifiers, large print and adequate illumination (Jedynak 2015: 26, Colenbrander 2002: i). **Blindness**, on the other hand, is defined by WHO as visual acuity of less than 3/60 in the better eye with the best possible correction (cf. Jedynak 2015: 26). According to Colenbrander, blind individuals suffer either from total vision loss or from a condition where they must rely on vision substitution skills (2002: i). Other than the extent of visual impairment, it is important to mention the onset as well – when discussing blindness, we can distinguish between congenital and adventitious blindness. While the former refers to those who were born without vision, the latter refers to those who lost their vision after the age of five. (Jedynak 2015: 29). It is also very important to highlight the frequent incidence of visual impairment (be it blindness or partial sightedness) with additional disabilities (Mills 2004: 152) such as emotional and learning difficulties or physical handicaps (Couper 1996: 6).

Statistics show that, of the 7.33 billion people alive in 2015, an estimated 253 million live with vision impairment – 36 million (of which 56% are female) are blind, 217 million (of which 55% are female) have moderate to severe vision impairment and 188.5 million (of which 54% are female) have mild visual impairment (Bourne, Flaxman, Braithwaite et al.:

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<sup>1</sup> "Visual acuity (VA) refers to the ability to recognize details at the point of fixation (...). It is expressed as an angular measure, usually measured as distance acuity." (ICD-11) In Jedynak's book, as well as in tables proposed by WHO, VA is expressed "in terms of metric notation, e.g. 6/18, which means that an individual can see from 6 meters away what a person with normal eyesight would see from 18 meters away" (Jedynak 2015: 26).



e888). As per Croatia, I looked into data provided by the State Bureau of Statistics for Croatia and by the Croatian National Institute of Public Health for the year 2011<sup>2</sup>, when the last census was taken, and compared them. The data show that, from 4 284 889 inhabitants registered in 2011, an estimated 518 081 (12,1%) people are disabled – 17 665 of them (3,4% of the total number of the disabled) live with vision impairment.

Before proceeding to the next part of this chapter, it is important to identify the abbreviations that will be used throughout the thesis to make the text more coherent and intelligible. I decided to adopt the ones proposed by Jedynek in her monograph – **VILs** stands for visually impaired learners, **BLs** for blind learners and **PSLs** for partially sighted learners (cf. Jedynek 2015: 31).

## **2.2. Foreign language education for the visually impaired**

Nowadays, foreign language learning is considered to be an essential part of every person's educational process and modern-day Europe is not immune to the worldwide tendency to learn and use English extensively (Phillipson 2007: 123). Language and education are no longer the responsibility of individual countries – they have also become policy concerns of the European Union and, as such, one of the EU priorities (*ibid.*, Jedynek 2015: 35). However, it was only in the mid-1990s that the needs of the special educational needs learners (SENs) in the field of FL learning were acknowledged (Jedynek 2015: 36). Before moving on to the policies promoting language learning for VILs, it is important to understand who SENs are – they are those students who require the regular school curriculum to be adapted to their individual abilities affected by their learning difficulties (Bogdanowicz 1997: 146). They include students with emotional and mental health issues (*ibid.*), those with neurological handicaps and those with impairments of vision, hearing or speech (Jedynek 2015: 21).

The goal of current European policies is to promote equal opportunities in education and inclusive strategies, to promote democratic citizenship and social cohesion and to grant mobility of *all* the EU citizens as well as the development of language, digital and

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<sup>2</sup> I retrieved the data on the number of inhabitants from the 2011 census entitled *Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2011. Stanovništvo prema spolu i starosti* [Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011, Population by Sex and Age]. The number of disabled persons and that of visually impaired persons was retrieved from the Croatian National Institute of Public Health 2011 *Izvešće o osobama s invaliditetom u Republici Hrvatskoj* [Report on Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Croatia].

intercultural competences. And, although the development of language competence is very important for all the EU citizens, it seems to be of paramount importance for the VI – it enhances their professional opportunities, helps them to bridge the gap caused by their visual impairment, improves social integration and boosts their self-esteem. (*ibid.* 36-7) This extensive promotion of the equality of education, foreign languages included, by the EU was concurrent with the advent of typhlology of foreign languages – science that deals with teaching the visually impaired (*ibid.* 23).

Research has shown that vision plays an important role in language learning – this implies that the process of language acquisition in VILs differs somewhat from that in their sighted counterparts, especially in terms of language learning strategies used (Jedynak 2011: 264). There are some differences in how languages should be taught to the VI and sighted individuals as well. At this point, it is very important to highlight that, due to different and specific contexts, the educational systems in the EU member states are distinctive (Jedynak 2015: 37) – in the following paragraph, the education of SENLs with visual impairment within the Croatian educational system will be examined and the guidelines for (English) teachers working with VILs prescribed by the Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES) will be touched upon.

Education and Teacher Training Agency's (AZOO) document entitled *Učenci s posebnim obrazovnim potrebama* [Special Educational Needs Students] defines SEN, blindness and partial sightedness and gives guidelines to teachers working with VILs in terms of how to organise teaching methods and working environment. According to the document, teachers should secure appropriate seating and lighting that best suit their VILs needs, give the VILs enough time to complete the tasks, allow the use of handy recorders during lessons and get the VILs engaged. The document also suggests how teachers should express themselves and talk to the students in terms of vocabulary and giving instructions. They are also advised on how to tackle writing tasks with VILs and informed about the materials, tools and supplies their students must use. Finally, they are given information on the methods of demonstration used with VILs. (2006: 5-7) AZOO document on the teaching of English language in Croatian primary schools entitled *Engleski jezik (prvi strani jezik) 1.-8. razred* [English language as the first foreign language for grades 1 to 8] gives very concise tips about the space in which the classes are held, adequate equipment and teaching aids and points to the necessity of the occasional help from a trained expert, i.e. an educational rehabilitator (2006: 10).

### 3. Theoretical framework

#### 3.1. Extralinguistic influences

##### 3.1.1. Family as a social factor in SLA

Many researchers have discussed the considerable influence the environment in which we grow up exerts on our cognitive, social and cultural development – Webster and Roe claim that “every child’s development is shaped and modified by the environments of home, school and wider social contexts” (1998: 189) such as community and societal institutions (Bronfenbrenner 1977: 514). As one would expect, these environments may vary, causing the aspects of the children’s development and adjustment to differ as well (Warren 1994: 251). Language and literacy learning too is not immune to the influence of societal, cultural and historical contexts – being deeply embedded in the social fabric of families and schools and thus determined by and dependent on a multiplex combination of home and school variables, it may differ from child to child (Li 2007: 285). Hence, when examining the factors that might hinder or facilitate the acquisition of a foreign language, it is important to consider the socioeconomic and sociocultural milieu of the learners, i.e. their family background, as well.

There are many different factors that can influence students’ motivation and achievement in school, and their parents’ *social class and socioeconomic status* (SES) are claimed to be among the more important ones by a number of researchers (see, for instance, Gonida and Urdan 2007; Bempechat and Shernoff 2012; White 1982). Sirin defines SES as “an individual’s or a family’s ranking on a hierarchy according to access to or control over some combination of valued commodities such as wealth, power, and social status” (2005: 418) and suggests that “parents’ location in the socioeconomic structure has a strong impact on students’ academic achievement” (*ibid.* 438). And indeed, some researchers believe that the SES of a student’s family is the most powerful predictor of his or her academic achievement, suggesting that the two grow exponentially (Boocock 1972: 32; Welch 1974: 183; Charters 1963: 739-40). Nonetheless, the extent of the influence SES exerts over the upbringing and education of a child is not to be taken as a self-evident fact that should not be subjected to deeper analysis and questioning since the term itself tends to be somewhat misleading, perhaps implying exclusively a family’s financial wealth. Financial capital, however, is not the only factor that determines the quality of children’s family environment and, by extension, their level of educational attainment – there is more to the family’s impact on the academic development of a child (Teachman 1987: 548). Although, as White points out, “everybody

knows' what is meant by SES, a wide variety of variables are used as indicators of SES" (1982: 462). On that account, it is perhaps better to refer to the definition of SES provided by the Michigan State Department of Education which emphasizes its tripartite nature – they believe that students' SES is "a function of three major factors: 1) family income; 2) parents' educational level; and 3) parents' occupation" (1971: 5). Sirin adds to this definition by suggesting that various home resources, such as books, computers and the availability of educational services after school, are to be seen as important factors of family SES background as well (2005: 419).

Although previous research has shown that parents with higher levels of education are more cognitively and intellectually involved in their children's education, their level of education does not influence the degree of behavioural involvement. This supports the claim that less educated parents are involved in their children's education as well, even if in some other ways – working- and middle-class parents alike can place great value on education. It is thus possible to conclude that 'intangible capital' is of great importance as well – parents' attitudes toward learning, the value they place on education, the ways they interact with their children, their expectations, beliefs and involvement also have an important role in the forming of their children's educational attitudes. (Bempechat and Shernoff 2012: 325-9) Schools and other institutions help as well by promoting equal opportunities and providing equalising experiences through education (White 1982: 469). However, the responsibility for the children's educational development does not fall only on the parents' and teachers' shoulders – children play a very important part here, too, since they "actively co-construct their developing understanding of the nature and value of learning and education through their ongoing interactions with their caregivers, teachers, and mentors" (Bempechat and Shernoff 2012: 322). It is, therefore, important to stress the results of White's research – they show that the correlation between SES and academic achievement is positive, but weaker than many people and researchers have thought it to be (1982: 467, 474). Arguably, parents with a higher income and level of education are perhaps more motivated and better able to create learning opportunities and educational resources for their children (Teachman 1987: 549). However, "it is not at all implausible that some low-SES (defined in terms of income, education, and/or occupational level) are very good at creating a home atmosphere that fosters learning (...) whereas other low-SES parents are not" (White 1982: 470).

In the context of this research, it is crucial to consider the children's impairment and the impact it has on their family as well. In many instances, the parents of the children who suffer

from various impairments must make changes to their life routines to create an adequate environment for their children and to provide for their care – these changes often have significant effects on family functioning (Heiman 2002: 170) and, consequently, on how the parents organise and foster learning and academic development of their children. Previous research has shown that parents of children with disabilities experience greater stress and more caregiving and child-rearing challenges and can even suffer from higher levels of parental depression than the parents of children with no impairments (*ibid.*). These variables might influence their ability to control environmental factors and to create a stimulating learning environment which would facilitate the acquisition of cognitive abilities (Warren 1994: 94). This is why, in this context more than in any other, family acceptance is a crucial factor. Families in which the impairment is not fully accepted lead to the development of a negative self-image and low self-efficacy and make the process of socialisation very difficult, whereas those that do accept the impairment and adjust well to it provide a setting in which the VI can thrive. (Murugami 2010: 85; Warren 1994: 260) Parents' involvement, attitudes, expectations, beliefs and support as well as a good use of the children's out-of-school time also play a pivotal role in their VI children's educational development (Warren 1994: 94; Heiman 2002: 169).

### 3.1.2. Psycholinguistic factors

As it was shown in the previous section, although language itself is mostly thought of as the main reason for LLs' success or lack of it, there are other, equally as important, reasons that do not relate to these factors at all but relate to the individuals themselves (Gass, Behney and Plonsky 2013: 431). Indeed, many researchers (and LLs themselves, for that matter) believe that these individual differences, inherent in the learners, can foretell whether or not the learners will be successful in language learning (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 53). Examining the relevant literature (Lightbown and Spada 2006; Gass, Behney and Plonsky 2013; Jedynek 2015 ecc.), it is possible to notice more or less corresponding classifications of these *extralinguistic factors* – most of the authors discuss categories such as age, aptitude, motivation, self-esteem, autonomy and coping mechanisms, just to name a few.

It is important to stress that these variables cannot be directly observed and measured, as they are not independent of each other nor are they idiosyncratic – other than intercorrelating, they may also be influenced by the **social** and **educational settings** in which the learners find themselves (Gass, Behney and Plonsky 2013: 431; Lightbown and Spada 2006: 56). As I have

already discussed the social settings in the previous section, I would like to briefly touch upon the educational ones as well. Nowadays, SEN students in Croatia are being more and more integrated into the mainstream classrooms. However, the fact that many of them are still being placed in special schools arouses fears of segregation and inadequate integration of these learners into society, and denies them exposure to the complete framework of curricula used in mainstream schools (Nikolić 1987: 62). Research has shown that children of average or above average abilities with no other handicap other than visual impairment can benefit greatly from full integration (Hegarty 1993: 180). These integrated classrooms, however, host primarily those VILs whose language competence has not yet reached that of their sighted counterparts – one of the main reasons for this seems to be the unpreparedness and inadequate support of the teachers (Nikolić 1987: 63). Integrated or not, VILs face substantial problems in gaining access to the language curriculum, which is why they need appropriate assistance and support in terms both of human resources and learning aids (Couper 1996: 9).

It is, therefore, obvious that the participants' **visual impairment** is a variable of paramount importance in the context of this research. The following sections will attempt to explore some of the psycholinguistic variables that might have an impact on FL learning in both blind and partially sighted students.

### **3.1.2.1. Aptitude**

Aptitude has been defined as the specific ability for learning new knowledge or new skills (Gass, Behney and Plonsky 2013: 444) which, in the realm of foreign or second language learning, is thought to predict success (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 57). Most models of language aptitude consider *working memory* as one of its most important components (e.g. Lightbown and Spada 2006; Ellis 2001; Miyake and Friedman 1998). This is of great importance when talking about VI learners, since it contrasts the negative view of VILs' potential in FL and suggests that they, indeed, display the same aptitude for FL learning as their sighted counterparts (Jedynak 2011: 269-70; Nikolić 1987: 63). Some, as Nikolić suggests, tend to be even more talented than FS learners (1986: 221-3) – although they are somewhat disadvantaged because they cannot rely on visual input (Jedynak 2011: 269-70), they can capitalise on their ability to concentrate (Sękowska 1974: 45), their oral sensitivity and their exceptional memory (Nikolić 1987: 63). However, this alone may not be enough for a VIL to be successful in acquiring a FL, since not all learners are strong in all of the components of aptitude – there are, for instance, some that may have a remarkable memory

but average or poor abilities in language analysis and vice versa (Skehan 1989, in Lightbown and Spada 2006: 58). Besides, as has already been stated earlier, the interplay of more factors – be they (psycho)linguistic, social or educational – determines the success in language learning or lack thereof.

We can, however, help the VILs use their LL potential to the fullest by using adequate techniques and materials when teaching an FL (Lightbown and Spada 2016: 62). Some researchers suggest matching students with a compatible teaching environment when teaching FLs, as this may lead them to reach higher levels of achievement (*ibid.* 58) – this might be very useful when teaching VILs, particularly in specialised schools and centres. However, as schools in Croatia are still unable to offer such a choice to their students, teachers should make sure their teaching activities vary enough to accommodate learners with different learning styles (aural, kinaesthetic, etc.) and aptitude profiles (*ibid.* 59), since research has shown that learners are more satisfied and successful if instruction matches their learner characteristics (Gass, Behney and Plonsky 2013: 451). Schools must also make sure that the aptitude measures which they are using are accurate and that they will not discourage individuals, especially disadvantaged students, from learning an FL (Gass, Behney and Plonsky 2013: 444).

### **3.1.2.2. Motivation**

Researchers and teachers alike believe that, besides aptitude, motivation is one of the most important factors that influences the rate and success of FL learning. Its exact nature is not very clear – it is a dynamic, complex and multifaceted construct. However, researchers acknowledge its importance in LL – it accounts for differential success in FL learning, and it yields both the primary impetus to start learning an FL and the driving force to maintain the learning process, which often presents itself as long and tiresome. (Gass, Behney and Plonsky 2013: 452-5; Dörnyei 1998: 117) Without sufficient motivation, even learners with extraordinary language skills and aptitude and with access to excellent learning sources cannot fulfil their long-term goals. If the level of motivation is high, on the other hand, learners can overcome whatever deficiencies they might have, be it in their aptitude or in the learning conditions. (Dörnyei 1998: 117) When discussing motivation, it is also very important to highlight its two dimensions – we can distinguish between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation. Intrinsic motivation implies learning an L2 for our inherent interest and

satisfaction that stems from it, whereas extrinsic motivation has more of an instrumental nature as it implies LL for more immediate or practical goals. (Noels 2001: 45-6)

Although it has been thoroughly explored in relation to FS learners, there is a scarcity of research on motivation in VILs (Jedynak 2015: 186). The EBU's document *Good Practice for Improving Language Learning for Visually Impaired Adults* suggests that there are no striking differences between VI and FS people's motivations to take up an FL – as the need for FL competence is increasing, both VI and FS people study languages within the framework of their mainstream school system, and later either want or need to upgrade their skills. When discussing personal motivation, the report identifies their desire to widen the scope of accessible information (through listening to the radio, reading books and surfing on the Internet), their enjoyment of the sound of a particular language, as well as their desire to learn a FL as a hobby or pastime, and their desire to strengthen their capacity for international mobility. As for professional motivation, they may take up an FL in order to be able to serve customers, as a number of jobs open to VI persons (call centre operators, tourism professionals, masseurs, etc.) requires them to be fluent in FLs. They might also want to learn an FL to increase employment choices by improving job qualifications or to increase chances for career advancement. (2010: 6-8) This suggests that VILs do, indeed, recognise the importance of FL learning and, as their FS counterparts, have personal learning goals (Jedynak 2015: 189). Unfortunately, even though some display a very positive attitude and a strong drive towards learning something new (Jedynak 2011: 272), more often than not they tend to display much more pessimistic attitudes when it comes to the command of languages than their sighted counterparts do (Jedynak 2015: 189). One of the reasons for this is because FL learning is a long and sometimes arduous process, especially for VILs, who perhaps have to put in a more conscious and laboured effort into their learning and who are also obliged to fit another curriculum specific to their needs into their daily schedule (Couper 1996: 7). Although mastering an FL may be a way for VILs to raise their self-esteem and self-confidence (Jedynak 2011: 272), those who suffer from a lack of interaction and comprehensible input may feel marginalised, isolated and demotivated (Jedynak 2010: 176) – these emotions may result in negative learning outcomes.

Many researchers have discussed the role of emotions in learning an FL. Krashen calls this impact *the affective filter* and indicates motivation as one of the main categories in which to place the affective variables that impact FL learning. He claims that those learners whose attitudes are not optimal for FL acquisition will not only desire less input but also have a



higher affective filter – this will stop the input they do receive from reaching the part of the brain in charge for language acquisition. Those who have favourable attitudes towards FL learning (i.e. who are motivated), on the other hand, will have a lower affective filter and thus retain more information. (Krashen 1982: 30-1) Having this in mind, it is very important to provide VILs with a stimulating and supportive environment in which they feel comfortable and safe, and where they do not have to worry about being embarrassed (Conroy 2005: 103). The learner’s previous learning experience has a great impact on their motivation as well (Jedynak 2015: 189). All learners filter their learning experience and concentrate on different learning aspects, but because of the negative emotions they might connect to their LL process, VILs may focus more on the unpleasant ones (*ibid.*). Their initial motivation may subside because of some negative factors, most frequently a teacher (Gass, Behney and Plonsky 2013: 459). This may influence the VILs’ decision to abandon a course if they have a possibility to do so – otherwise, they are left with a feeling of frustration and discontent that only keeps growing as time goes by (Jedynak 2015: 188). This is why teachers play an important role in the education of VILs – besides being language models, counsellors, facilitators, organisers and prompters, their primary role should be that of tutors and psychotherapists ready to offer guidance and help, be it linguistic or emotional (Jedynak 2015: 170). Teachers can contribute positively to their students’ motivation by keeping the classroom atmosphere supportive, the content interesting and relevant to the students’ age and level, and the learning goals challenging yet achievable (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 64), all the while fostering their learning autonomy (Dörnyei 1998: 124).

### **3.1.2.3. Learned helplessness and coping mechanisms**

Learners’ identities influence what they can do in classrooms and how they can participate, thus having an impact on how much they can learn (Toohey 2000: 74). VILs’ identities in the classroom are twofold – they self-identify both as FLLs and as VILs. Vygotsky suggests that, although VI children are not directly aware of their impairment at first, some may be very much aware of the difficulties deriving from it – it affects their place in the social sphere and all the social functions of daily life (cited in Rieber and Carton 1987: 35). Their identification as VILs can thus lead to their isolation and limit them from participation in some of the activities happening in their classroom (Toohey 2000: 74). Although these identities and VILs’ self-perception may change over time, it is important to bear in mind that “classrooms are organised to provide occasions upon which some children look more and some less able, and judgements are made which become social facts about

individual children” (Toohey 2000: 77). This may cause them to suffer from what Alfred Adler labels as the ‘inferiority complex’ (cited in Rieber and Carton 1987: 35). And, since this inferiority complex results from VILs’ diminished position due to their impairment, it correlates with the so-called ‘handicap compensation’ in the way that their impairment (or handicap, as Adler and Vygotsky define it) evokes compensation through the feeling of inferiority it generates (Rieber and Carton 1987: 35). This leads to the development of *learned helplessness* and avoidance patterns in LL. Learned helplessness and depression are typically experienced by learners who believe negative situations are permanent, who blame themselves for their poor performance and believe they are incapable of doing anything right. However, even those individuals who do not attribute failure to their inherent inability to succeed but are more self-confident and believe their lack of success is caused by external factors tend to display higher levels of learned helplessness and depression. Both groups of learners tend to develop an unrelenting feeling of failure, which leads to their loss of motivation to put in effort. (Jedynak 2015: 195)

VILs learning an FL must deal with more challenges than their sighted counterparts, and many successfully develop a coping mechanism that helps them counter learned helplessness. The concept of *coping mechanism* is, in fact, a crucial factor in accounting for differences in the achievements of FL learners – even more so if they suffer from visual impairment. (*ibid.*) To protect themselves against learned helplessness, they either set *mastery/task* or *performance/ego* goals. The former focus on intrinsic reasons for FL learning and are more interested in the task itself – the focus on the task reduces the risk of failure to the maximum as their egos are not dependent on their success. The latter, on the other hand, focus more on the extrinsic reasons for FL learning and perform the task to boost their self-esteem and egos. This focus, however, makes them more anxious and discourages them from further learning if confronted with the possibility of failure as it changes their self-concept and deals a blow to their ego. It appears that the performance/ego and avoidance goals are more common in VILs than in their sighted counterparts – since they may experience a wide range of negative feelings, they are more prone to developing the feeling of learned helplessness after failing in order to protect their self-worth. (*ibid.* 196)

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Case study

For the purposes of my research, I decided to conduct a case study. I opted for the sociolinguistic interview as my key research strategy, but I also decided to include elements of other research methods – participant and non-participant observation. Before discussing these strategies, however, I will say something more about what a case study is.

To begin with, it is important to stress that case study is not a *method*, but a *tradition* of conducting research. A case study is an approach in which researchers focus their attention to the particular and unique – its aim is to deepen our knowledge about and understanding of a person, group and/or process we assume to be unique. (Casanave 2010: 66-7)

It is essential that we have a complete understanding of the context our case is embedded in – without it, we are unable to correctly interpret our findings (*ibid.* 67). We can prepare by reflecting on our beliefs and understandings of the chosen topic and context and by reviewing the literature, both about the research problem and about how to conduct our research (Harbon & Shen 2010: 275). We can study people in their own homes and environments they are comfortable in – this will increase the chances of observing characteristic behaviour (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 181). Before we start collecting data, however, it is advisable to conduct some initial observation to become even more familiar with our participants and our area of interest. We must keep in mind that we are working with real people – we should be very thoughtful and professional while approaching them and we should think about how we will cope if they cannot or will not do what we expect them to. Another thing to consider while setting up a case study is that it can be very risky to rely on just one person for obtaining information – their character, disabilities, beliefs and feelings can at times be overwhelming. (*ibid.* 182)

Case studies very often require mixed methods approach, which is why they can be time-consuming (Casanave 2010: 67). In a case study, we can collect data observing, but it is possible to obtain information in other ways as well (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 179) – combining research methods can increase the validity of our study and help us draw conclusions (Dörnyei 2007: 186). Although my research relied on the sociolinguistic interview as its key method, it was precisely for this reason I found the observation I conducted for my practicum to be another extremely valuable source of information. In the following sections, I will address the two methods – namely, observation and sociolinguistic

interview – I used in greater depth, as well as provide a detailed account on how I carried them out.

## **4.2. Observation**

As many researchers have reported, observation has become a very common and valued way of collecting information, especially in the field of education (e.g. Kawulich 2005; Dörnyei 2007). It can be defined as a “systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts” (Marshall & Rossman 1989: 79) which enables researchers to collect data not only by observing, but also by participating in activities of an interest group in its natural setting (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011: 2).

The first step we need to take while preparing for observation, as well as for sociolinguistic fieldwork of any kind, is to set the hypothesis (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 8), consider what we are expecting to observe and what questions our research can provide answers to (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011: 111). Although it is essential to be sure of what we are looking for, i.e. what phenomenon we are looking into (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 180), it is important to stress that research questions do not necessarily need to be specific and precise for observation to successfully take place – it is also possible to come up with less focused research questions and use observation to help direct further research (Dörnyei & Csizér 2005: 66). After setting the hypothesis and establishing research questions, we need to choose the informants accordingly (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 11) – normally, we would opt for participants who are representative of our interest group and who we can make generalizations about (*ibid.* 180; DeWalt & DeWalt 2011: 111). However, even though the choice of a specific group of informants can be theoretically motivated, sometimes that choice is based on more practical grounds – access (Dörnyei & Csizér 2005: 66). It is also important to note that, since we might need a lot of background information on each of the participants, it would be sensible to focus on smaller groups in order to avoid collecting a large quantity of data that is difficult to manage (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 179). Before we start observing, we must inform our participants on the purpose and the nature of our research and get their consent (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 180). When conducting research in schools, it is equally as important to obtain permission from principals, teachers and parents (*ibid.*; Kawulich 2005: 12). Another ethical responsibility we have towards the participants is keeping their confidentiality, both in our field notes and in the final write-up – we should describe

individuals in ways that other participants, teachers and acquaintances cannot identify them (Kawulich 2005: 11).

The extent to which researchers will participate in the study affects both the quality and the quantity of data collected (*ibid.* 8), which is why we have to carefully consider how to structure our observation, as well as to decide on observation methods that are going to be used. There are different ways in which one can organise observation – for the purpose of this research I opted for the ‘participant’ versus ‘non-participant observation’ dichotomy. In participant observation, researchers are involved in the activities they are observing. In non-participant observation, as the name itself suggests, researchers do not take part of the observed process, but observe and take notes as quietly and inconspicuously as possible. (Harbon & Shen 2010: 277; Dörnyei & Csizér 2005: 67) Both observation arrangements will be dealt with separately and in greater detail in the following sections of the thesis. Another important thing we have to think about at this stage is the recording equipment – what, if any, are we going to use? Observation can be carried out either by using a pen and some paper and taking field notes (Harbon & Shen 2010: 277), or by making audio and/or video recordings of the group we wish to observe. Before selecting the recording equipment, however, we should think about how the chosen equipment and its positioning will affect the quality and exhaustiveness of the collected data. (Dörnyei & Csizér 2005: 67) Finally, it is important to keep in mind that other researchers should be able to apply our instrument when replicating our study in order to get the same types of findings (Harbon & Shen 2010: 278).

We should be wary of the impact our presence (or the presence of recording equipment) will have on the behaviour of our interest group (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 180). This is why, in order to avoid the negative impact of the so called ‘observer effect’ (Dörnyei 2007: 190), establishing rapport with the interest group is of paramount importance for the success of our research. Trust is built by hanging out with participants (Bernard 2006: 368) – talking to them informally (*ibid.* 211), participating in their daily activities (*ibid.* 436) and making them feel comfortable in your presence. The success of our study lies in one simple axiom – we should approach our interest group open-mindedly and with a non-judgmental attitude, being prepared for surprises and unexpected findings, showing genuine interest in and respect for the participants, all the while being prepared to make mistakes and being aware they can be overcome by careful observation and listening (DeWalt & DeWalt 1998: 266-7). In building rapport with our participants, it is also very important to keep in mind that one hand washes

the other – we should offer the participants something in return for sharing a part of their lives with us (Kawulich 2005: 13).

Having all this in mind, I first thought about what I wanted to look into and set my research questions. To get a better understanding of the topic, I decided to do some initial reading – I wanted to become more informed about the common types and characteristics of visual impairment, as well as on visual impairment in the context of language learning. I then started my teaching practicum at the *Vinko Bek* Centre for Education and Rehabilitation, where I had the opportunity to observe and work with blind and partially sighted high school students. Before going into the classroom for the first part of the practicum, I met up with my practicum instructor at the university and my supervising professor at the Centre to prepare myself and get as much information about the school, lessons, students and their needs as possible. I also discussed the modalities of conducting my teaching practice with the supervising professor – we decided on doing 5 hours of classroom observation and 10 hours of active teaching (non-participant observation followed by participant observation).

#### **4.2.1. Classroom observation (non-participant observation)**

As defined by Gebhard and Oprandy, classroom observation is a "non-judgmental description of classroom events that can be analysed and given interpretation" (1999: 35). Classroom research projects usually aim at determining and better understanding the roles different participants play within the FL classroom setting and the ways in which different types of teaching can impact FL learning, as well as enable us to single out factors that support or hinder uptake (Lightbown 2000: 438) – and they make good use of observation methods in doing so. Observation helps us not only to understand how the system is organized and how group members communicate with each other, but also to establish and develop relationships with our informants, making them feel comfortable in our presence. What's more, it represents a springboard for further research, acting as a valuable source of data and topics to be addressed and discussed in the later stages of the study. (Schensul & LeCompte 2013: 83-4) It is precisely for these reasons that I have decided to make use of the materials accumulated during my practicum and consider this initial observation an integral part of my research.

Before beginning to collect data, it is advisable to become familiar with the setting (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault 2015: 55) and the characteristics of the group we are interested in. The next step is determining how to conduct observation and capture data – the primary

way of doing so is by taking field notes (Kawulich 2005: 21). They can contain (exhaustive) descriptions of participants, events and activities, and are taken in real time, as fast as the observer can write (Harbon & Shen 2010: 277). Good field notes should contain exact quotes when possible, pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality, and they should include relevant background information about events or individuals. Observation notes should describe events chronologically, clearly discerning our thoughts and hypotheses from what we have actually observed. Finally, we should also record the date, time and place, as well as our name on each set of notes. (Schensul & LeCompte 2013: 109-10) There are some points we should consider and be aware of while observing and taking field notes. First of all, we are at risk of feeling overwhelmed by the amount of details to observe and record (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011: 88). This makes it hard for us to concentrate and remember everything that is happening, which is why we should limit the time spent in the field, ideally to an hour per session (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault 2015: 56). It is also advisable to keep shifting our focus from a wide- to a narrow-angle perspective and vice-versa – we should try focusing on a specific person or activity, and then return to get an overview of the general situation (*ibid.* 80). Our ability to focus is characterised by constant alternations of bursts of attention and periods of distraction and inattention – the key is to capitalise on the former (Wolcott 2005: 90-1).

There are some limitations to this method that must be acknowledged. First of all, we should be aware that we cannot possibly observe *everything* – we can only make notes of what we have been exposed to at one point in time (Harbon & Shen 2010: 281). The conclusions we come to in the process are speculative and, at best, suggestive. To be taken into consideration is also the phenomenon of the outside observer – our presence can prompt the participants to act differently (be it intentionally or not) and hinder us from obtaining a real view of them and of the situation under observation. (*ibid.* 280)

For this stage of my research, I based the choice of my participants on access – based on my schedule and my supervisor’s availability, I followed him to 5 of his lessons with two different second grades and one third grade. No special permission to observe was required for teaching practicums. Prior to entering the classroom, I decided how I would conduct my observation – I decided to take exhaustive field notes, not bringing any recording equipment with me. At the beginning of each lesson, I made notes about the date and time, as well as about the class and the classroom – I wrote down which class I was observing and how many students were there, making sure I also included their gender and level of visual impairment. I

also focused on the seating arrangement in the classroom and on the characteristics of the classroom itself.

I decided I would describe events chronologically in my field notes. To get the best and the most accurate description possible, I opted for the time sampling observation scheme, in which a category is recorded at a fixed interval (Dörnyei 2007: 180) – I took notes every 5 minutes to avoid feeling overwhelmed and to be able to focus better on what was happening in the classroom. Other than focusing on the activities, strategies and topics, I chose to make notes about nonverbal language used in teaching, teacher wait time and turn-taking, type of feedback the teacher was giving the students, ratio of the mother tongue and the FL used while communicating, as well as of the observable students' language skills. This much detail proved to be extremely useful to me – I decided to use the information obtained at this stage both in preparing for my teaching practice and in preparing for the interview.

#### **4.2.2. Teaching practice (participant observation)**

To address the problem of the inability to detect some less easily observable elements and processes while conducting classroom research, we can resort to participant observation. There are two main advantages of this practice – it enhances not only the quality of obtained data, but also the quality of data analysis since it leads to us (completely) understanding the situation we are observing. It is, therefore, considered to be both a method for collecting data and a tool for interpreting obtained information. (DeWalt & DeWalt 1998: 264) A downside to participant observation is that it can be defined as a schizophrenic activity – we must participate in the activities, but not to the extent that we become too engaged to observe and analyse what is happening (Merriam 2009: 126).

When it comes to collecting data, we can choose the modality that suits us most – we can record, take notes or do a write-up after observing (*ibid.* 128). We can organise data in the form of diary entries and resort to them as sources of information – other than writing about what we see in the field, we can also include information about our thoughts and feelings during observation (Harbon & Shen 2010: 276). We should reflect on what we are putting in our notes, how detailed our entries are and how much attention we are paying to our personal experience while doing the write-up. It is also important to review our entries to keep our observations focused and to keep us on track. (Wolcott 2005: 90-1) Since elaborate entries also provide a link between our experiences and the way we communicate them to others,



including reflections about ourselves, our mood, reactions and thoughts in our notes is of great importance (*ibid.* 93).

To minimise the potential observer effect and to make them feel comfortable enough to participate in the sociolinguistic interview I was to conduct, I started building rapport with the students by chatting and hanging out with them even after the initial (non-participant) observation period ended. As agreed with the supervising professor, I did my teaching practice and, by extension, conducted sociolinguistic interviews with two students I chose among the ones he suggested. Both students were female and partially sighted – student 1 (S1) was a second-grader who needed to use textbooks printed in Braille as well as a Braille to take notes, and student 2 (S2) was a third-grader who needed to use large print textbooks and who was able to take notes using pens and paper. S1 struggled with English, whereas S2 was very good at it. I chose them primarily because they were the first ones I had managed to establish positive rapport with. I also believed they would provide me with valuable information on how two VILs with different levels of impairment and knowledge cope with language learning.

Since I decided to record the sessions, my students' parents (one of the subjects was underage at the time the study was conducted) or the students themselves were asked to sign the informed consent sheet which applied both to these sessions and to the sociolinguistic interview I would conduct later on. The sheet, based on the forms available on the companion site for Tagliamonte (2006), explained the students' rights and stated that the recording would be used for research purposes only and would not be passed on to third parties.

As suggested by the students themselves, the lessons were taught in their respective classrooms in the afternoon hours, after their lunch break. To make the situation less formal, we dressed casually and always had something to eat and drink with us. The recording was carried out using a handy recorder which was placed approximately 40 centimetres away from the students. I did 6 individual lessons with each of them. Each lesson lasted approximately 45 minutes, during which we not only practised the lessons they had previously covered during their regular lessons and studied for tests but also covered some extra topics based on their interests, wishes and needs.

One criterion for practicum assessment was keeping a journal, so I decided to make detailed entries I could make use of while conducting research. Before each lesson, I prepared the materials and wrote an entry on how I chose them and what I expected to achieve. I

decided to refrain from taking notes during the lesson and do a detailed write-up as soon as I got home. I described the lessons in detail – I wrote down what we did, which strategies I used and how the students reacted to the materials and topics being covered. I also made notes on the difficulties they had and the mistakes they made, as well as on my reactions and approach to them. I made sure to include my feelings, impressions, reactions and thoughts in the journal, as well as entries on what and how to prepare for the next session.

Having finished the sessions and the write-up, I transferred the recordings to my laptop and listened to them carefully to make sure I got everything right, adding or correcting notes when necessary. I carefully analysed my journal to make sure I had not overlooked important details, submitted it to the supervising professor and used it, together with the feedback I got from my supervising professor and the field notes from the previously conducted non-participant observation, as a starting point for coming up with modules for the sociolinguistic interview.

### **4.3. Sociolinguistic interview**

The sociolinguistic interview is a very widely used method of eliciting samples of speech data that allows researchers to avoid working with focus groups and questionnaires – instead, it permits them to gain privileged, somewhat intimate, access to a person and to collect detailed information by interviewing few informants (Edley & Litosseliti 2010: 156; Llamas 2007: 15; Wray & Bloomer 2012: 175). Its main goal is to obtain as spontaneous and casual speech sample as possible using a question-and-answer technique (Llamas 2007: 15; Llamas, Mullany & Stockwell 2007: 229) and encouraging the informants to talk about their personal experiences (Garner 2007: 45). It has been shown that interviews are exceptionally useful for obtaining new information about and different perspectives on a certain topic, as well as for reinforcing existing knowledge about it. They allow researchers to enquire into the informants' shared understandings of their everyday life, as well as to acquire information on their informants' views, beliefs, attitudes, motivations and responses on a certain topic – they help shed light on *why* people feel and think the way they do. They also help researchers brainstorm and gather ideas, as well as establish rapport with the informants. On top of that, they enable researchers to successfully explore controversial issues, as well as some sensitive topics. (Litosseliti 2003: 18) It is precisely for these reasons that I have chosen the sociolinguistic interview as my key research method.

While preparing for sociolinguistic interview, it is crucial to remember that it must have a firm theoretical basis and that it must be thoroughly planned out (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook 2007: 19, 51; Wray & Bloomer 2012: 173). Since we have to deal with a substantial quantity of data when conducting one, it is recommendable to do a small scale study and thus limit the number of participants (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 166). Following our hypothesis and research questions, we can make a decision on whom to include in our study in advance. We need to select our informants carefully – they need to meet criteria set by the hypothesis, be compatible amongst themselves and, what is perhaps most important, be representative of the community we choose to study. It is, however, important to bear in mind that the last criterion is not easy to achieve – we need to be aware of the risk that our informants may not always be truly representative of their group. (*ibid.*) Once we find our participants, we need to provide very clear and unambiguous information on the purpose and nature of our research and obtain their consent in writing. This is achieved by giving the informants an informed consent sheet, with which we inform the participants of their rights, agree to preserve their anonymity and make sure that they understand what is expected of them and are indeed willing to participate in our research project. (*ibid.* 184-5) Another important thing to think about prior to conducting research is the equipment – if we want our recording session and, by extension, our research to be successful, it is crucial to have a good audio-/video-recorder that will enable us to record a high quality signal, transcribe and subsequently analyse the material (Labov 1984: 33, Schilling-Estes 2007: 183-4). To obtain good sound quality, we should set our equipment in a suitable position, try it out in advance to make sure it records everything the informants say, even if they lower their voices, and monitor it throughout the interview (Schilling Estes 2007: 172; Wray & Bloomer 2012: 175; Labov 1984: 51).

The goal of sociolinguistic interview is to record 1-2 hours of speech from each informant (Labov 1984: 32). In order to do so, we need to prepare and plan our interviews in advance – we need to come up with a list of questions (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 173) that are simple and unambiguous and are there for a good reason (*ibid.* 171). The sociolinguistic interview is structured around modules, i.e. groups of questions focusing on particular topics (Labov 1984: 33, Llamas 2007: 15) that are combined into a conversational network (Labov 1984: 34). The modules should open with general questions and then move on to more precise and focused ones, and the transition between them should be smooth – we should be able to link the transitional questions to more than just one module (*ibid.*). Although our job as interviewers is to initiate conversation, we should not insist on a predetermined order of topics if we see the

conversation is moving in another direction but actively participate in the conversation by following our informants' interests and encouraging them to expand on the topic they moved on to instead (*ibid.* 36-7). This so-called *tangential shifting*, i.e. shifting away from the topic initiated by the interviewer, and the additional material that the informants produce are signs of a successfully conducted sociolinguistic interview (*ibid.* 37-8). Other than the content, the form of questions is very important, too – open questions (*why, when, how, what...*) have proven to be very effective because they allow us to record how people speak when they are not being observed (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 167; Labov 1984: 30) and it gives the informants the chance to talk at length, thus granting us access to speech that is as spontaneous and natural as possible (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 167; Sunderland 2010: 14).

However, our participants may fall victims of the observer's paradox – their awareness of us studying them can cause anxiety and have a detrimental effect on their linguistic behaviour and production (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 12). Although it cannot be solved completely (Labov 1984: 30), its adverse effects can be mitigated in a number of ways. Making the speakers talk about things they are familiar and comfortable with, stressing that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions we ask and allowing the participants to know the content of the interview (Wray and Bloomer 2012: 176; Labov 2006: 90; Llamas 2007: 16) all play an important role in making the informants feel more comfortable. We should also consider if who we are influences the informants in some way (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 174) – to make our participants feel more comfortable, we should be dressed casually when conducting the interview (Starčević 2016: 10) and use the colloquial format of questions (Labov 1984: 33). We should put ourselves in a position of lower authority, so that the information flows to, and not from, us (*ibid.* 40) – we can achieve this by asking very short questions (*ibid.* 34), showing interest in and appreciation for what the informants are telling us and giving them enough time to finish their ideas (*ibid.* 40). Prior to conducting the interview, we could also ask our participants to use their everyday language when answering our questions to get them to relax even more (Starčević 2016: 9-10).

To make sure we obtain the best data possible in the most unobtrusive way we can, it is advisable to run a pilot study, which will help us identify potential problems and fix them before we start (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 12). After the interviews are over, we need to transcribe and analyse the data (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 183) – if we are not completely satisfied with what we obtained during the first interview, we can schedule a follow-up interview to address all the omissions (Labov 1984: 41). Once we are content with the results,

we have to do the write-up, making sure we keep our informants' names, data and recordings confidential (Wray & Bloomer 2012: 185).

The previous stages of my research have allowed me to prepare extensively for conducting sociolinguistic interviews. I already had consent from two participants I worked with in the stage of participant observation, and I found three more students (2 males and 1 female – 2 were blind and 1 was partially sighted) who were willing to participate in the last stage of my project. The students/their parents were asked to sign the informed consent sheet informing them of their rights and stating that the obtained data and the recordings will be used for research purposes only and will not be passed on to third parties. It is important to stress that I read the consent sheet out loud to the FB students, whereas the PB students were able to read it on their own.

After obtaining consent from all five of my informants, I came up with 20 modules, each containing a minimum of 5 questions (see Appendix). I modelled them on Labov's (1973-77) sociolinguistic interview modules, modifying the topics so that they suit the purpose of my study as well as my informants' interests. Given the somewhat delicate nature of my research and the fact that I had never conducted an interview with informants as young as these were, I decided to run a pilot study to make sure I fix all the potential problems before I start. It proved to be a good idea – it led me to realise that my informants' attention span might be a lot shorter than I assumed it would be, making 20 modules too much for them to process. After carefully analysing my modules, I decided on the most important ones and simply decided to skip the rest while conducting the interview. Another problem that had surfaced during my pilot study was the length of questions asked – although I had started off by asking very short and, to my mind, clear questions, I realised the students would need additional explanations. This somewhat compromised the expected ratio of interviewer and interviewee talking time, but could not be avoided in any of the cases.

As was the case with the lessons, we conducted the lessons in my informants' classrooms in the afternoon hours. At that time, we were already very comfortable in each other's presence and could talk openly. However, to feel even more comfortable and to make the situation less formal, we came to the interview dressed casually. The participants were instructed to talk like they usually do in their everyday communication. I also offered to show them the modules, assured them nobody but me would listen to their recordings and tried to ask questions without consulting my notes all the time. I interviewed one participant at a time, recording each session with a handy recorder placed 30-40 centimetres away from the

informant. Each recording lasted somewhere between an hour and 1.5 hours. During the interview, I noticed there were a lot of tangents that were not in any way relevant to the topic of my research – to get the conversation back on track, I sometimes needed to make a very obvious transition between questions and topics. A lot of tangential shifting had a very negative effect on the informants' attention – all five of them got so tired by the end of the interview that I had to schedule one follow-up session as soon as I was done with the first interview just to discuss the last module.

After the interviews (and the first follow-ups) were done, I did a very detailed transcription of the recordings using a HQ headset and Express Scribe Transcription Software, a free software that allowed me to manipulate the recording (pause, play, speed up, slow down) merely by using predetermined keyboard shortcuts. While going through the transcribed material, I thought some parts needed further clarification, so I came up with some more follow-up questions and scheduled another, this time very short, meeting with some of my participants. I did a transcription of their answers as well and started an exhaustive analysis of the completed interviews.

## 5. Results and discussion

### 5.1. Participants' linguistic biographies

As mentioned earlier, the participants in the study included 5 students (3 females, 2 males) who are visually impaired and who are enrolled at the *Vinko Bek* Centre for Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired where they both study and live. They were asked questions about their origins and schooling and were asked to assess their own language skills in the languages they are studying (on the scale from 1 to 5). It is important to stress that the information about their visual impairment was obtained through the interview and might thus be incomplete – a full, official medical report was not requested neither from the students nor from the school. The following is a description of the students at the time the study was conducted:

**Student 1 (S1)** was 17 years old and was in the second grade of secondary school, studying to become a business secretary. She was born in a city in eastern Croatia, where she attended primary school and received her education in Croatian. She continued her education at the *Vinko Bek* Centre in Zagreb, where she moved when she was 15 or 16 years old. She had been studying English since the first grade of primary school, and she took up German as her second foreign language when she started secondary school. At the time when the study was conducted, her level of proficiency was rather low and she had to struggle to get a passing grade. During the interview, I found that she assessed her knowledge of both languages as poor (see Figure 1 for English) and that she preferred English over German as it 'sounded nicer'. I also learned she preferred Croatian in her everyday life, especially when it came to music and TV – she almost never listened to foreign language music (she used a translating tool to translate the lyrics if she did) and would always set Croatian subtitles when watching a show or a film. When searching the Internet, she would always opt for Croatian websites and she had Croatian as the default language on all of her social network applications. She did not like reading in general, and she avoided reading English books.

SKILL/LANGUAGE	Croatian	English
<i>speaking</i>	5	2
<i>listening</i>	5	2
<i>reading</i>	5	3
<i>writing</i>	5	2

Figure 1. S1 self-assessment table

She had strabismus or the misalignment of the eyes (Gunton, Wasserman and DeBenedictis 2015: 393), nystagmus, which is defined as an "involuntary oscillation of one or both eyes about one or more axes" (Abadi 2002: 231), and she had been suffering from optic nerve damage since her birth. She was said to have 2% of residual vision on both of her eyes, indicating that she was legally blind, but she did not agree with the diagnosis since she claimed to be able to recognise people's silhouettes from a certain distance, read large print, see objects and larger pictures, use her phone and laptop (holding her head close to the screen) and move around without assistance. She, however, relied on Braille as her primary literacy mode, used a Braille typewriter (Brailleur) to take notes and had textbooks printed in Braille.

**Student 2 (S2)** was 17 years old and was in the third grade of secondary school, studying to become a business secretary. She was from a small village near Zagreb, where she went to primary school and received her education in Croatian. She, too, continued her education at the *Vinko Bek* Centre in Zagreb at the age of 15. She had been studying English since kindergarten. During her primary school education, she took up French but gave it up soon because she found it difficult and did not feel motivated to study it any longer. At the time when the study was conducted, she was studying German as her second FL but, just like S1, claimed to prefer English because 'it had a nicer sound to it'. Her level of proficiency in English was rather high – she was a very good or excellent student throughout her schooling. And indeed, unlike other participants, she rightfully assessed her knowledge of English as good, very good and excellent (see Figure 2) and had more contact with English in her everyday life through music, TV shows and films – she loved listening to songs in English (in Spanish, too – she tried to translate them using a translating tool) and she even watched some TV shows with no subtitles on. Other than in Croatian, she also browsed websites in English and she had changed her language settings back to English on Facebook. Although she only



read mandatory school books, she expressed the desire to try and read a book in English as well.

SKILL/LANGUAGE	Croatian	English
<i>speaking</i>	5	3
<i>listening</i>	5	4
<i>reading</i>	5	5
<i>writing</i>	5	5

Figure 2. S2 self-assessment table

She had been partially blind since birth, with 10 or 15% of residual vision on both eyes. She used the remaining sight rather effectively – although she had to hold her head closer to the screen while using her phone or laptop, she was able to recognise silhouettes from a certain distance, write, look at pictures, watch TV and move around without assistance. At school she used large print textbooks and materials, and had no need for materials in Braille.

**Student 3 (S3)** was 18 years old and, as S2, he too was in the third grade of secondary school, studying to become a business secretary. He was from a small village near Zagreb, where he started primary school. Upon finishing the sixth grade, he transferred to the *Vinko Bek* Centre, where he completed his primary school education and started going to secondary school. He had been studying English since the first grade of primary school, and he claimed that he had been exposed to it even sooner through cartoons and TV. That, however, had not affected his self-assessment in a positive way – he rated his knowledge of the language as insufficient to good (see Figure 3). While looking at Figure 3, it is also interesting to notice his evaluation of Croatian, his L1 – as a speaker of a local dialect, he believed his production in the standard language was somewhat inferior to the one in his dialect. He was studying German as his second FL at the Centre, but claimed he would rather be studying Italian instead of both English and German although he acknowledged the importance of the two languages. As S1, he had a very low level of proficiency in English, and had to exert himself to satisfy the minimum pass requirements. He preferred Croatian in everyday life as well – he would always opt for Croatian websites when searching the Internet, the language of all his social network profiles and mobile applications was set to Croatian and he listened exclusively to Croatian and Serbian music. He occasionally watched British and American

TV shows, but he relied on subtitles to understand the meaning of the utterances. He disliked reading, partly because of blurred vision, and he never read books in English.

SKILL/LANGUAGE	Croatian	English
<i>speaking</i>	3	-2
<i>listening</i>	5	1
<i>reading</i>	5	3
<i>writing</i>	3/4	2

Figure 3. S3 self-assessment table

He wore glasses until the end of the sixth grade, but had no major problems with his sight. However, his sight began deteriorating and he had 35% of residual vision on one eye and 15% on the other at the time the study was conducted. He was able to move around unassisted, write, play a musical instrument with no difficulties and could recognise people from a certain distance. At school, he used large print textbooks and materials and had no need for materials in Braille.

**Student 4 (S4)** was 18 years old and attended the second grade of secondary school, studying to become a telephone operator. He was from a small village near Zagreb, where he finished the first four grades of primary school. He then moved to Zagreb and continued his primary school education at the *Vinko Bek* Centre, where he also started his training programme for telephone operators. He had been studying English since the first grade of primary school – nonetheless, as some of the other participants, he had a very basic level of proficiency and was struggling to get a passing grade at the time the study was conducted. He assessed his knowledge of English as very poor to insufficient (see Figure 4). It is important to highlight how he assessed his reading and writing skills in Croatian, as well – since he was blind, he considered he performed poorly in these two activities. He took up German as his second FL when he got to secondary school – he claimed to prefer English over it because ‘it had less contractions than German when writing in Braille’. I learned he wanted to start learning Italian when he was in primary school but was advised not to do so by his parents. He did not follow TV or radio shows in English and was not using any social networks. He disliked reading but liked listening to audio books – however, he had never tried listening to one in English because he was afraid he would not understand it. As is the case with most

participants, he listened exclusively to music in Croatian or Serbian and his favourite genre was turbo folk.

SKILL/LANGUAGE	Croatian	English
<i>speaking</i>	4	2
<i>listening</i>	5	2
<i>reading</i>	3	2
<i>writing</i>	3	1

Figure 4. S4 self-assessment table

He was congenitally blind and needed to use the probing cane (i.e. the white cane) to move around. He did not report having any other impairments or difficulties, nor did he mention his (in)ability to detect light. He used Braille as his primary literacy mode – at school he had to have textbooks and other materials printed in Braille and use a Braille to take notes.

**Student 5 (S5)** was 17 years old and attended the second grade of secondary school, studying to become a business secretary. She was born in a small village near Zagreb, where she grew up and went to primary school until her sixth grade – after that, the students (herself included) had to transfer to a branch school nearby to complete their primary school education. She enrolled at a grammar school but dropped out after a year there because she was unable to keep up with the program and then she came to the *Vinko Bek* Centre. She had been studying English since the first grade of primary school. However, her level of proficiency was low and she had to work hard to get a passing grade. Based on her self-assessment sheet, she believed her language skills to be poor (see Figure 5). She took up Italian as her second FL during her year at the grammar school, but she switched to German when she started studying at the Centre – she claimed to prefer Italian over both English and German because of the way it sounded. She set Croatian as the default language on her phone, so her screen reading software and messaging applications were set to Croatian as well. She did not follow any foreign language TV or radio programmes – being blind, she was unable to follow subtitles and was not interested in listening to what she could not understand. She tried to listen to shows her family would watch but she soon gave it up because she was unable to grasp the meaning. She disliked reading and listening to audio books, and claimed she would

never attempt to listen to one in English. When it comes to music, she only listened to Croatian artists and disliked foreign language music because she did not understand the lyrics.

SKILL/LANGUAGE	Croatian	English
<i>speaking</i>	4	2
<i>listening</i>	5	2
<i>reading</i>	5	2
<i>writing</i>	4	3

Figure 5. S5 self-assessment table

She was congenitally blind but had light perception and used the probing cane to move around. Other than blindness, she suffered from hearing impairment on her right ear, which is why she had to wear a hearing aid. She had also suffered from anxiety attacks, but claimed the symptoms had subsided. She used Braille as her primary literacy mode, had her textbooks and all the necessary materials printed in Braille and needed to use a Brailier to take notes. Sometimes she used a Pronto!, a portable Braille notetaker, instead of a Brailier.

## 5.2. Extralinguistic influences

### 5.2.1. Family as a social factor in SLA

Since, as I have already mentioned, the environment in which the students grow up shapes their social, cognitive and cultural development in a number of ways (cf. Webster and Roe 1998: 189; Bronfenbrenner 1977: 514; Warren 1994: 251; Li 2007: 285), I have decided to look into the ways in which my respondents' families and their socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds might have influenced their academic success or, more specifically, their second language acquisition. In the analysis, I have focused on the following factors: 1) origin, education and occupation of family members; 2) languages spoken in the family and their attitudes towards them; and 3) family help and support in SLA, considering, at the same time, the degree of my participants' impairment.

**S1's parents** are both from the same city in eastern Croatia. They completed their primary and secondary education, but never proceeded to obtain a higher education. Her mother works as a salesperson at a store in her hometown and her father works in Germany as a bus driver. Both parents studied English during their primary and secondary education and

they use it in their everyday lives – her mother uses it to communicate with tourists that visit her store, and her father has to use it in his everyday communication, since, as she claims, his level of English is higher than that of German. When asked if her parents had ever encouraged her to take up a foreign language, she replied that they suggested only English, although they never really insisted on it:

- Nije da me nisu poticali, rekli su da trebam učiti al nije sad da su se nametali, da su došli i stavili knjigu pred mene, ono...

Even so, she claimed it was important to her parents that she studied English because they saw it as a ‘principal language’ that ‘everybody speaks’ and that she can use to communicate anywhere she goes:

- Pa zato što je engleski... mmm, glavni jezik i njega svi znaju. Di god da dođem mogu se sporazumjeti s engleskim.

This really may be the reason why they decided to become involved in her language education when she was younger. As she reports, her father occasionally helped her study vocabulary in primary school – this resulted in her getting good grades and feeling good about herself. She, however, stopped relying on her parents for help once she got to secondary school, but reported studying mainly on her own or, every so often, with a group of friends and with volunteers or rehabilitators/assistants from the Centre. During the interview, we discussed other languages as well and she added that, her disinterest for other languages put aside, her parents had never suggested taking up an L3, although she did not provide an explanation.

**S2’s parents** are from a city near Zagreb. As S1’s parents, they too completed their primary and secondary education but never went on to study at the university. Her mother works as a caregiver at a nursing home and her father, as she says, ‘does a bit of everything’ – he works as a carrier, a farmer etc. She also has an older sister and a younger brother – her sister graduated from a secondary school of economics and is currently unemployed, and her brother goes to primary school. Her mother and siblings studied English and her father studied German throughout their schooling – she claims her mother still uses it when she helps her brother study or revise for tests. Her dad, on the other hand, has no opportunity to speak German, which is why he never uses it anymore. Both of her parents had suggested taking up German as an L2 or L3 before she started secondary school, but she claims they could not talk her into it. Still, she did express a desire to study French and her parents supported her decision to both enrol in and to quit the course when she realised she did not like it as much as she thought she would. It is important to her parents that she should study languages,

especially English, because she wants to leave the country and move to Iceland – however, her mother is a bit more supportive than her father when it comes to moving abroad:

- Da, izrazila sam želju da idem na Island, tamo da radim, da se odselim i to me podržava mama... tata baš i ne.

She claims to have a great relationship with her parents – other than being very supportive, they were very much involved in her education when she was in primary school, although, as she claims, she was a very independent learner. Her mom helped her revise for English exams, both oral and written, and both of her parents helped her with the materials she got at school – her primary school teacher never adjusted the materials to her needs (larger font) so her parents had to step in:

- Pa... na primjer ona [her teacher] je trebala ono, sve to... prilagodit meni al uopće nije tak da sam sama sebi morala prilagodit, i mama i tata su mi morali to...

At secondary school, she became even more independent – she could not rely on her parents' help anymore since she had to leave her home to live at the Centre. She reports not even needing help – in fact, it was her who provided it for other, struggling students.

As is the case with S2, both of **S3's parents** are from the same city near Zagreb. They, too, finished their primary and secondary education and never enrolled at the university. His father is a doorman and his mother sketches and produces piping clamps. He also has an older brother, who handles truck loading and unloading for a living, and a sister-in-law who graduated from a secondary school of economics but has never pursued higher education. His parents divorced when he was very young and he has spent most of his life with his grandparents and his brother. That could be the reason why, when I asked him about the languages spoken in his family, he only told me what languages *they* spoke, making no mention of his parents' language skills. He claims that his brother speaks English well and that his sister-in-law speaks it 'perfectly' – she uses it more than his brother does as she works as a bartender. His grandparents, on the other hand, have little to no knowledge of English – they both know some German and his grandma also knows a bit of Russian. He reports his grandma learned some English while helping his brother and him with their homework. When I asked him if it was important to his family that he should study English, he gave me a somewhat vague answer – after stating that it was important to them that he should study for all of the subjects, he took a moment to reflect and added that, yes, his English was important to them as well. He then reiterated his statement, trying to sound more persuasive, although he was later unable to explain *why* it mattered to them:

- Pa njima je važno da sve učim. A za engleski baš... a ono, pa važno im je. Pa kak ne, pa važno im je.
- Zašto? A nikad mi nisu rekli baš ono engleski moraš znati i to. Važno im je, normalno...

His family believes studying might ‘come in very handy’, which is why they keep telling him to try his best. It could be said, however, that they are not actively involved in his education – they sometimes played English cartoons for him when he was a pre-schooler and his grandma helped him with his homework as much as she could when he was in primary school, but he was left to his own devices for most of his out-of-school language learning experience. That seems to be the case when it comes to his secondary school education, too – he says he never studies when he goes back home over the weekend, but does all his studying at the Centre where he can ask his professor, friends, or assistants for help.

**S4’s mother** is from a town near Zagreb and his **father** is from a village nearby. The data I obtained about their education is, unfortunately, not complete – although he is positive both of his parents finished primary school, he is unsure about whether or not they obtained secondary education as well. What he is sure of, however, is that neither of the two pursued higher education. His mother is a housewife who occasionally helps a local farmer out during the fruit harvesting season and his father repairs freight wagons in Zagreb. He also has a brother who graduated from a vocational school and is now working as a boiler operator at a sawmill. When I asked him about his family members’ knowledge of English, he said that his mother had it as a primary school subject for four years but that she did not remember much and that his brother also had it as a subject during his schooling. As we discussed foreign language learning, I asked him whether his parents had encouraged him to take up an additional English course or an L3 course – he said he wanted to take up Italian when he was in his third grade of primary school, but his parents did not allow it since ‘he was too young’. He added they never suggested other languages because they believed English was hard enough for him:

- Nisu me poticali... mis, nisu me ovak poticali... re... ono, njima je ono čim se ja složim, to tak je. Ovoga... sad, kak sam veći, a ovoga... inače, mislim... nisu oni inače kad sam krenuo u tu srednju, kad su znali da bi morao učiti njemački, njima je to bilo onak jer sam imao problema s engleskim i u osnovnoj pa onda sad još dva strana jezika... Nije im baš bilo ono... al na kraju je ipak to nekak sjelo, ono...

As he is congenitally blind, it is highly probable his condition affected their attitude towards language learning and their decisions as far as taking up other foreign languages was concerned – they were afraid he would not be able to cope with one, let alone more, foreign

languages in combination with other school subjects and after-school obligations he had at the Centre. He states that, although it is somewhat important to his parents that he should learn English, a good grade is, after all, the most important goal to be achieved:

- Mmm, ono... a onako, i je. Al nije im to tolko, ono. Njima je bitno da ja prođem s dobrom ocjenom i to je to. Nije im tolko važno sad...

It is possible to ascribe their stance toward and beliefs about language learning to their own low proficiency in English and to their attitude toward his impairment – they believed English was not an indispensable skill which he, as a blind child, had to master. This, however, does not mean he did not get any help with English before arriving at the Centre – although his parents' low proficiency prevented them from helping him with his English homework and studying, his brother was able to do so during the first four years of primary school. His parents, however, did their best to facilitate his learning during his years in primary school by helping him transfer to Braille all the materials his teacher gave him in print. Technicalities, as he states, have still remained the main thing they deal with when they discuss school – their conversation revolves around, for instance, orientation classes and schedule. They never talk about his (foreign language) lessons, which is why he has to rely on his school colleagues, teachers and volunteers/assistants for help.

**S5's mother** is from Bosnia, and her **father** is from a small village in the Zadar county. Both of her parents completed primary and secondary education, but they did not continue their education. Her mother works as a nurse at a hospital and her father works as a glazier. She also has two older sisters and an older brother – the older of the two sisters works as a nurse with their mother, the younger one works as a beautician and her brother is a seasonal worker. When we discussed her family members' mastery of foreign languages, English in particular, she reported her parents had little to no knowledge of English or any other foreign languages. Her siblings, on the other hand, knew English and the oldest sister also knew some German – they mastered the languages at school and by watching TV shows and films. She claims she never wanted to take up an (extra) FL and, to my question about whether or not her parents had encouraged her to do so, she replied somewhat tentatively. I asked her this question twice throughout the interview, and in both instances she was very quick to underline the fact that her parents insisted on her taking up various activities when 'she already had enough obligations even without language learning':

- Pa znali su ali... ja većinom imam ono, hrpu obaveza, pretrpana sam sa svačim tako da ono... baš neam vremena... uvijek sam u gužvi nekoj.



- Da... i ne samo za strane jezike, bilo šta, uvijek ono nekako nameću ja bi da ti još ovo, ja bi da ti još ono a... meni je dosta mojih obaveza.

She believes it is important for her parents that she should study English because of her future, although she feels that they sometimes exaggerate:

- Pa... mislim da je radi moje neke budućnosti, ja znam da oni to ne govore zbog sebe ali opet... ono. Nekad pretjeraju.

They say it is a ‘world language’ and is therefore important, but they also stress that it is important to be aware of one’s own limitations and capabilities:

- Pa kažu, ono, to ti je svjetski jezik, to moraš znat, al opet ono... kolko ti ide... Opet treba, treba malo vidjet i mogućnosti, ne moš sad ić... ti možeš ovo ti možeš ono, ako ti nešto ne ide treba biti realan.

As is the case with S4 and his parents, it is possible to ascribe the stance of S5’s parents to how they feel about her impairment, too – even though they try to be supportive and motivate her to study English, this statement implies that they feel anxiety, worry and perhaps resignation in relation to LL as well. This seems to have exerted a negative impact on her own attitude towards language learning since, throughout the interview, she tried to justify herself and her low proficiency in English by claiming that she had ‘a bunch of other obligations and that she simply did not have time’ for FLL. Her parents’ concern and low proficiency had not, however, had a negative impact on their involvement in her education – although they were not able to help her with homework and studying at all times, they did their best to get her a classroom assistant and organise remedial classes she could attend once she enrolled at the grammar school. Their involvement subsided once she got to the Centre and there she either studied on her own or with her friends, teachers and volunteers or assistants.

It goes without saying that children from different sociocultural backgrounds may have different talents, aspirations and, consequently, different levels of success. However, taking into consideration the data obtained for this research, a correlation between families’ socioeconomic and sociocultural status and their children’s motivation and success is evident. Although there is no precise and universally accepted definition of what it is, this analysis confirms that SES, as defined by the Michigan State Department of Education (1971), does indeed play an important role in the children’s academic achievement. All the participants come from blue-collar families whose members have lower levels of formal education and whose incomes, as one might assume, are not substantial – it can be argued that the family members’ education, jobs and income contribute to how they develop their ‘intangible capital’ (cf. 4.1.1.) and to how they shape their home environment, consequently influencing the

participants' attitudes and academic achievements. These factors also affect their possibility (and willingness) to invest in various home resources and additional educational services (cf. Sirin 2005). Indeed, previous research has shown that parents with higher income and level of education seem to be more willing and able to foster their children's education (cf. Teachman 1987).

At this point, it may be worth reminding that students 1, 3, 4 and 5 were performing below proficiency at the time the study was conducted (cf. 6.1.) – the interview has shown that most of the families had not invested in additional materials or in creating additional opportunities such as language courses, tutoring, etc. (with the exception of S5's family, who tried to organise remedial lessons for her) to help their children, although they tried to help as much as they could. Additionally, even though the families displayed (somewhat) favourable attitudes towards language learning, it seems that they had not given their children adequate incentives which would motivate them towards mastering an FL – they perceived English as just another school subject that their children have to pass. However, data obtained from S2 paint a different picture – they show that some lower SES families are very good at creating a motivating home atmosphere that fosters learning (cf. Bempechat and Shernoff 2012; White 1982). Indeed, the interview has shown that S2's parents highly valued her language education and, as the other students' parents, did their best to help her, even though they were not very proficient themselves. They invested in her education – they provided her with opportunities to study not only English, but other foreign languages as well, they motivated her and they accepted and supported her decisions about language learning ever since she was a child. During the interviews, I learned that her parents were also the only ones who gave her the opportunity to put what she had learned into practice by travelling – she was the only one who spent her winter holidays abroad, skiing. This, too, must have had a positive impact on her self-esteem and her motivation to continue studying languages.

Looking at the results, it is possible to observe another important factor – the connection between the participants' impairment and their parents' reaction to language learning. The blind students' parents have displayed a more negative stance towards language learning than the parents of their partially blind colleagues – they seem to be more worried, anxious and unsure of their children's language learning capacity (cf. Heiman 2002; Warren 1994). It can be argued that this leads to them being less able to create a stimulating setting in which their VI children can develop and advance (cf. Murugami 2010; Warren 1994). The parents' level of involvement is also a factor that influences the student's success (cf.

Bempechat and Shernoff 2012), especially taking their impairments into consideration – the analysis has shown some of the participants performed better while they were living with their parents. Since the Centre functions as a boarding school, the involvement of the parents decreased significantly and the students needed to take responsibility for their own learning, which lead to a decrease in most of the participants’ success.

A conclusion that can therefore be drawn from the analysis is that, although it is perhaps not the most important variable, in correlation with the families’ attitude towards their children’s impairment, SES does indeed exert great influence on the participants’ motivation and success.

## **5.2.2. Psycholinguistic factors**

### **5.2.2.1. Aptitude**

The analysis of the interview transcripts has shown that most of the participants (more precisely, 4 out of 5) have a very low opinion on their language skills – claims such as ‘I do not really know English’, ‘I am very bad at it’, ‘I was not satisfied with my knowledge when I started secondary school’ and ‘I am not satisfied with my current level of knowledge’ seem to be dominant in almost all the interviews. For instance, even though she claimed she had made progress since she started secondary school, **S1** said that she was still very much unsatisfied with her knowledge of English. When asked about the usefulness and appropriateness of the textbook lessons, she replied that they were indeed useful as *some* had managed to learn the language using them, thus implying that she was not among the successful ones:

- Pa sigurno da jesu jer neki su naučili engleski tako.

She also considered herself unable to understand recordings or instructions given in English – she claimed the latter should be given to those students who are more capable and whose levels of knowledge are higher to make them even more proficient, indicating that she did not consider herself capable enough.

**S3** was even more critical of himself and his schoolmates – he believed to be hopelessly untalented, and he said that most of his male schoolmates were doing even worse, saying that they ‘sucked’:

- Pa u ovom društvu našem samo ova N. zna engleski. A s drugima se ja ni ne družim. Ja mis da samo ona... da, ovo su svi tu još gori od mene. Ne, I. čak nekaj zna. Al mi dečki smo baš ono... za engleski...

- Pa tam [*at the Centre*] smo svi bili trube za engleski u osnovnoj.

He was unsatisfied with his level of knowledge when he enrolled at secondary school and he claimed he had not made any progress ever since. He used very negative and depreciatory terms to describe himself as an English language learner – he said he was ‘a zero’, implying that he was utterly untalented, and he declared himself as ‘backward’. It seems that, to his mind, proficiency in English was unattainable:

- [Lekcije su bile] baš prilagođene za... ono, da se po redu uči, da se... od najlakšeg prema najtežem. Samo kaj sam ja zaostal.
- I oni misle da bum odmah ja to naučil, a ja sam baš ono... za engleski nula. (...) A ne al verovatno bu tak i ostalo, ne znam.

As S1, he felt very uncomfortable with receiving instructions or listening to materials in English because he believed to be unable to understand most of what had been said.

S4 claimed that his English language skills were extremely poor when he started secondary school, but that he had improved a bit since. Nonetheless, in a few instances he underlined the fact that ‘he did not know English all that well’ and that he was unable to memorise what he would learn at school:

- Samo što je kod mene problem što to meni brzo isp... a većinom kod nas, barem kod cijelog razreda, nama to zna isparit iz glave dost brzo.

He also stressed the fact that he could not understand instructions delivered in English or English recordings because ‘he did not have the knack for it’.

When asked about her knowledge of English prior to starting secondary school, S5 was not very secure and convinced while answering the question. She said that she did not really know how to describe it – she did know ‘*something*, even if [she] was not good at it’. She was also very unsure about whether or not she had made any progress since she started studying at the Centre. When I asked her if she had ever wanted to take up another language, she said no and went on to say that she ‘was not a language expert’. She continued answering in the same tone throughout the interview, saying that she ‘admits not being good at English’ and that neither she nor her classmates were ‘professionals who know English’:

- Pa, ja sam ustvari, ni... ja, ja baš nisam dobra u engleskom, ja priznam. (...) Jer niko u razredu od nas baš nije... neki profesionalni da zna engleski...

She said she felt overwhelmed by the languages she learned at school, which is why she would never take up another one. She seemed very insecure throughout the interview, which

was reflected in her stuttering and whispering every time she said she was not good at English. She felt that teachers were supposed to pay more attention to those students who were not good at it, and not just dismiss them:

- A mislin... Trebala se samo malo više posvetiti nama kojima engleski ne ide. Jer ona će reći sve je u redu a ustvari to baš tako i nije.

As the other participants, she also said she was unable to understand instructions in English and she disliked listening to recordings and shows in English because she claimed she was unable to follow or understand anything being said.

**S2**, however, had a different opinion about her language aptitude. Although she claimed she was not very satisfied with her knowledge at the beginning of secondary school, she very proudly asserted she was now ‘good at it’ as she had learned a lot since she enrolled. She also helped her friends prepare for the exams, and she said she felt very good after they got good grades as ‘it was her doing’ – this implies she, indeed, believed in being very competent:

- Jednom je ovaj dobio pet, prvo odgovaranje je dobio pet i ono onak... to sam ja napravila, hehe.

As opposed to the other respondents, she wanted to receive instruction in English as she believed it would help her learn more. She also had a very interesting remark on the educational setting they found themselves in – she said she felt like she was not making any progress and that she was missing out on new input because the rest of the class was at a lower level than she was. She, therefore, believed organising language classrooms according to the level at which the students were was a much better idea (cf. Lightbown and Spada 2016). **S1** seconded this claim, adding that this setting should not be limited to secondary schools, but that it should be present in primary schools as well.

When asked directly about their talent for language learning, all the participants stated ‘they were not talented’ – **S2** said she believed to be good at it simply because she had been studying it for 12 years. To some of them (**S1**, **S3** and **S5**), talent was ‘the most important factor in learning a foreign language’ – **S5** explained her standing by saying that ‘you would not be able to do much if you were not talented’ and later on explicitly stated she did not believe a person could master an FL if he or she was not talented:

- Pa ja mis da tu nema, ovaj... jednostavno ti moraš imat u sebi to nešto, taj nekakav talent za jezike i ti, ako si dobar, ako to tebi ulazi u uho, onda si super, a ako ti ovako slušaš a ništa ne razumiješ... to ti je ono, ko da nisi ništa...

She went on to say that ‘blind people in general were not talented for FL learning’ and that ‘language teachers lacked understanding’:

- Ne znam, mislim da... jednostavno moraš imat talent za to i da... ja ne kažem da nema slijepih ljudi kojima ide engleski ali većini ljudi to ne ide i to bi se trebalo prihvatit na neki način. Ne kažem da bi se to sad trebalo zapostavit i da se slijepi ljude ne bi trebalo pitat iz engleskog i da na treba ništa radit, to ne. Al da bi se trebalo nako malo razumijevanja i... na neki način... progledat kroz prste u nekim stvarima. Jer mi ne možemo pratit tako kako prate ljudi koji vide.

I found this particularly interesting as she was very convinced in what she was saying, believing it to be the absolute truth. However, since S4, who is also congenitally blind, countered her statement by saying that blind students could do everything they set their minds to if they tried and since it has been proven that blind people can display the same aptitude for FL learning as FS learners (cf. Jedynak 2011; Nikolić 1987; Sękowska 1974), I interpreted her statement as an attempt to justify her own lack of success in acquiring an FL.

It was also interesting for me to note that, even though all the students were unsatisfied with how much they knew, only S1 and S2 were aware of the possibility to improve their level of knowledge and even believed in their ability to do so. The others seemed resigned – they did not believe they could improve nor had they tried to prove themselves wrong. During my stay at the Centre, I had indeed observed that, with the exception of S2, my respondents’ language skills were below average for their age and level of education. However, I had also noticed how they managed to compensate by putting other skills in play – even though during the interview some claimed they could not retain information very well, I noticed they were in fact very good at it if they focused and had the opportunity to practice and use what they had learned (cf. Jedynak 2011; Nikolić 1987). Some of them explicitly stated what they believed to be their strong points – S3, for instance, believed he was very good at pronouncing words correctly and he ascribed this ability to his having an ear for music, while S5 pointed out her ability to memorise information. Unfortunately, this did not seem enough for them to be successful in acquiring English at the time the study was conducted as they lacked the basics as well as the essential experience of learning how to learn a foreign language (cf. Skehan 1989, in Lightbown and Spada 2006).

Their judgements of their individual aptitudes stem from their experiences as language learners. FL learning is a gradual process that can easily be described using the metaphor of concentric circles – we add another circle to the ‘collection’ with every year of our education. This implies that continuity and constant building on what we already know leads to

successful acquisition. To be able to do so, however, it is important to have a good knowledge of the basics – in this early stage of LL, it is important that learners should be taught in adequate learning conditions and that they receive all the support they need, taking into consideration the level of their impairment. The success in this first phase of language learning will, by extension, cause them to have a more positive judgement of their aptitude, despite their objective success or lack thereof. They need to feel successful in order to be able to foster a positive attitude towards themselves and their abilities. Since my respondents were secondary school students with a very negative view on their abilities and language learning aptitude, I believe their poor self-assessment stemmed from their language learning experience in total – it led me to conclude they had not received adequate instruction and support when they were at the very beginning of their linguistic journey.

### **5.2.2.2. Motivation**

As it was with aptitude, 4 out of 5 participants seem to have very low motivation for language learning as well. The analysis has shown that extrinsic motivation is more dominant and prevalent in (almost) all of the participants, whereas reports of intrinsic motivation emerged in only a few instances.

As we could see from her linguistic biography (cf. 6.1.), **S1** had never felt the urge to take up a foreign language on her own. She started studying English in primary school and later took up German as an obligatory subject once she got to secondary school. Observing her classroom and doing individual lessons with her, I noticed she did not pay much attention to English and she was not very keen on attaining high levels of competence, although she more or less actively participated in the lessons and tried to prepare for exams as best as she could. Even though she claimed not to be particularly motivated, she said she ‘was [in the classroom] to learn something’ – that is why she never felt shy and always asked her teachers to explain things she could not understand and she asked them to help her with the materials she could not see very well:

- Pa zašto ne bi mogla pitat. Pa tu sam da naučim. (...) A oni kad ne uvećaju, onda im kažem da sjedne kraj mene i da mi to pročita. Pa mislim, šta da radim ja sad? (...) Ja to moram radit ko i svi i gotovo i onda sjednu i pročitaju, šta će.

When asked about whether or not she wanted to continue learning English even after secondary school, she replied that she would take up a language course ‘if necessary’. I asked

her to elaborate, and her statement indicated she was mostly extrinsically motivated – she said she would need the language mainly for work:

- Pa... bit će mi potreban sigurno (...) u inostranstvu i u poslu. (...) U poslovnom svijetu sam korisnija ako znam engleski.

She also said she would ‘get a boost in motivation’ every time she got a good grade at school. She did offer intrinsic reasons for learning the language as well – she stated she would have liked not having to read the subtitles of the shows she had been following and said she felt good about herself every time she learned something new. She, however, felt learning and actively using the language were sometimes very exhausting, which is what caused her to feel demotivated at times. Indeed, if we go back to her linguistic biography, we can see that her lack of motivation was reflected in the avoidance of English in her everyday life – she preferred everything to be in Croatian.

**S2**, on the other hand, was more curious and motivated when it came to languages – her linguistic biography (cf. 6.1.) shows she enjoyed learning foreign languages and being exposed to them. She claimed to be a very ambitious student and she was an achiever, which is why she was worried language learning at the university level would be hard:

- Pa zato što sam jako ambiciozna i imam velika očekivanja od sebe i... i želim nešto postić, a... ne znam. Vidjet ćemo. A možda će biti dobro.

Later on through the interview, however, she seemed more optimistic about her future success and more confident in her skills. During my observation period and during individual lessons with her, I noticed she participated actively in discussions, kept notes and rehearsed the words she mispronounced – she even told me what she wanted to work more on during our individual sessions. Her classmates’ lack of motivation seemed to upset her but it did not negatively affect her own motivation – she only said she regretted that their teacher had to use Croatian most of the time because of them, as she found receiving instruction in English positively challenging and enjoyable:

- Ono kad si ti bila na satu, on je došao i počeo odjedanput na engleskom pričat, meni je to bilo toliko smiješno... onak, šta je s vama profesore? I onda tak priča, priča, i onda sam ga baš morala pozorno slušat da svatim šta on priča i to je baš bilo super. Mogo bi tako i češće. Znači sve, sve, sve pričat na engleskom.

She said she would definitely continue studying English after finishing secondary school, although the intensity would vary according to her needs – she said she would study it intensively if her working place required it (she mentioned she would try going abroad for



work), otherwise she would occasionally look up a word and continue listening to music and reading in English:

- Pa ne znam, ovisi čime ću se baviti. Ak ću se ja sad baviti nečim... što... u čemu je potreban engleski, onda intenzivno. Ako nije, onda ovako tu i tamo nešto pogledam... koju... tekst, riječi negdje i tako.

She said she would not like to take up a language course, as she did not find formal instruction very stimulating. Other factors which indicated she was extrinsically motivated were her grades, as she said they were what encouraged her the most during her studies, and commendation from her professors. When I explicitly asked what motivated her, however, her answer was simply 'herself' – this and the fact that she would like to improve her skills to be able to travel abroad for leisure are the factors that imply intrinsic motivation.

**S3** did not seem particularly motivated for studying English at school – he was satisfied with the lowest passing grade and did the bare minimum to pass the course (cf. 6.1.) as he knew he did not need more to enrol at a university:

- Jer recimo, za fakultet imamo izravan upis. Tak da ono, i ak mislim ić na fakultet, meni su samo dvojke dovoljne. A ovak za školu, bitno mi je da prođe. Sad s kolko...

He did say he wished he was better at it, but he expressed a lack of willpower necessary to start studying – he said 'he could not get himself to move' towards improvement. He reported being a bit 'jealous' of his friends who knew English and who could sing along to songs in English, repeating that he wanted to learn it but lacked the impetus to do so. Other peoples' knowledge and success were seemingly the factors that motivated him the most – he looked at them with admiration and he hoped someone might look at him that way:

- Motivacija mi je to kad vidim nekog da zna engleski da se ono... kad ja njega ponosno gledam... mislim ono, wow on zna engleski, vani ga je neko nekaj pital i onda je znal i odgovorit... e tak bu možda neko mene gledal.

I would therefore say that, unlike other respondents, he was mainly intrinsically motivated – he wanted to work on himself and become a more complete person. Learning language for work was not a priority for him as he did not know where he would end up working or if he would work at all. He said he felt demotivated by his own lack of success – he perceived language learning as a 'waste of time', but was aware things could get better if he dedicated more time and focus to it:

- Demotivirajuće? Pa to kaj mislim da je to po meni... za mene je to gubitak vremena jer mi baš ne ide, no. A možda ono... a mislim, gubitak vremena, to je možda vura

vremena na tjedan... To moje učenje engleskog, al... Da je na dan bilo bi bolje. A to je učenje ono... idem sad tu ovo naučit pročitati i prevest. I onda neko drugi preveđe, ja to napišem sa strane i to učim. Ne učim ono sad... idem sest da vidim malo ono... kak se kaj... ono, gramatika i to. Ne da samo čitam neg da čitam i objašnjenja, zakaj to ide... ta riječ ide tu, zakaj ova ispred nje i to. To nikad nisam učil, zato ni ne znam...

It is evident that he never 'learned how to learn' a language, which might have had a detrimental impact on his motivation, leading to him never mastering the language. It is also possible that he lacked motivation because he never got to study Italian, a language he liked more than the other two he had to study at school.

**S4** explicitly stated he was not very motivated for learning English and, as we could see when discussing aptitude, he was not even convinced in his ability to master it. Even though I did not notice he did not really participate but would only check for spelling from time to time. He, on the other hand, claimed he did try – however, he said it very shyly, as if he himself was not very convinced of what he was saying. He reported never feeling the need to ask for additional materials or explanations and he never showed incentive to do something on his own – for instance, he said he never wanted to listen to audio books in English. As was the case with S1, his lack of motivation was also manifested in avoiding content in English in everyday life. As with most of the participants, his motivation for learning the language was primarily extrinsic – although he said he needed it for everyday life, he stressed the need to know it for work:

- (...) engleski nam treba inače u svakodnevnom životu. Jer... recimo, ako radite negdje na nekoj recepciji hotela, morate znat barem sigurno engleski recimo.
- A zato... am, što su recimo na računalu... dost toga na engleskom. Što, ako idete radit u inozemstvo, morate znat jezik jer kako ćete drugačije, znači... ne znam. Ako radite kao turistički vodič, morate znati engleski. Ako radite negdje, znači idete na more radit, morate znat ipak engleski... Znači sezonski rad, mislim dolaze turisti, morate znat engleski, jel... mislim, to je ovak ključni jezik.

In the attempt to find out if he was at least a bit intrinsically motivated, I asked him if there was anything else that would drive him to learn the language but he almost exclusively talked about job opportunities – he listed good grades as the only other factor. I believe he felt demotivated because of the inaccessibility of the materials in Braille and the time he had to put in studying and organising his own study materials.

Analysing the data obtained through observation and interviews, I noticed **S5** was not very motivated to learn English, either. She had been learning it since the beginning of

primary school, but had never felt interested in taking up extra lessons or additional materials to study on her own. When I asked her why, she became very apologetic and tried to justify herself by saying she did not have enough time, as she was ‘always in some kind of rush’. She was satisfied with her level of motivation and with how much she tried, and said her success varied depending on the day:

- Ja za sebe mislim da se trudim dovoljno. A ovisi kako koji dan, recimo, nekad kad baš nisam, recimo baš danas nisam nešto bila, nisam baš nešto bila raspoložena. Nekako mi je dan započeo, nisam baš nešto bila. Mislim, to se vidi, to se vidi, al... ovako... Mislim da je ok.

She, too, was more extrinsically motivated for learning the language – she believed it was important to know it as many people spoke it:

- Svaki jezik je važan, mislim... engleski sad momentalno da zato jer... se... puno ljudi njim služi, pa zato mislim da je važan. (...) Htjela bi ga znat da se mogu sporazumijevat sa... tom većinom ljudi.

She also mentioned it was important knowing it for work, but she only reported what her teacher had told her without indicating she thought the same:

- Pa eto, recimo, sad mi kaže profesorica, moja razrednica na poslu, poslovni tajnik... dva strana jezika da se trebaju znat. Ak ti neko dođe, ak te neko nazove, trebaš znat.

At some point, I felt she was giving me the answers she thought I wanted to hear – she said making progress ‘made her feel good, motivated her, boosted her self-esteem *and so on*’:

- Paaaa... ako, recimo, svatim to nešto, onda se dobro osjećam. (...) to mi... I to i motivira me na neki način, i samopouzdanje mi onda raste i tako.

These three statements could be interpreted as the indicators of her lack of motivation – it seemed to me she was somewhat ashamed of it, which is why she chose to present me with these (generic) factors and tried to make them seem personal.

As they were not very motivated for learning English and had a somewhat negative attitude towards it, it seems that all the participants except for S2 had a high affective filter which caused the uptake to be very weak – S2’s results indicate that motivation is indeed linked with success following a lowered affective filter.

#### **5.2.2.2.1. School environment**

I was curious about what might have had a significant impact on their motivation or lack thereof and, other than their visual impairment and the setting they grew up in, I found that

the educational setting in which the participants received their instruction was a very important factor as well. As shown in the participants' linguistic biography, they had to change schools and move away from their families – whereas some did not find it very stressful and demotivating, some found it very hard and reported it had a very negative impact on their motivation.

**S1** seemed to be demotivated by the profile of the other students at the Centre. She said she liked to spend time only with S2, S3 and a couple of other students because they seemed '*normal*' – the others did not 'sit well with her':

- A sa većinom se ne slažem al ovaj... imamo tu neku svoju grupicu, nas pet šest i onda ono, nas pet šest se druži a ovi ostali tamo nisu... (...) Pa zato što je ona [S2] jedina cura koja mi odgovara po karakteru i s njom jedino mogu... Ona mi je nekako naj... da tako kažem... normalnija. Ove druge, mislim... ne leže mi, ne pašu mi.

When I asked her about her choice of the adjective '*normal*', she mentioned one of her classmates who had to make weekly visits to the Psychiatric Hospital for Children and Youth – it seemed to me that she did not find that environment particularly motivating:

- Pa ja bi bolje neko društvo, iskreno, nije mi baš društvo neko al... Šta ja znam... Pa ova jedna cura ide u Kukuljevićevu na preglede, a ova druga eto, ona je... s njom se ajde može još i popričat al ona je nekako... ak se s njom ne slažeš, onda... uzalud ti sve. Tak da, nije mi nešto baš... bajno.

She also said she was not very happy with the Centre in general because it did not offer many courses, but she resignedly said it was 'her best option' as it was easier and the teachers were used to working with VILs.

**S3** had just started having difficulties with his vision when he transferred to the Centre. He reported being very enthusiastic about the idea of student housing, but was deeply disappointed by the small number of the students. As S1, he was confused by the profile of some learners and felt very lonely at the beginning. He did not have company because he felt 'everybody was strange' – other than being visually impaired, a lot of them had additional difficulties:

- A ne ja... zatvoril sam se u sobu, samo muziku slušo i tako. A nisam imo koga za društvo kad mi je to sve bilo čudno. Taj Mh..., mislim svi su imali još neke... ono... poremećaje. Većina njih. Bil je taj Mi... jedino, možda bute i njega znali. Mislim da ne, zapravo, on je bolestan sad, ima tumor neki ja mislim... tako. Sa mnom ide u razred al je on pal jedan razred.

The fact that he had never interacted with VI people before arriving at the Centre had probably affected his initial motivation as well:

- On je bil jedini tak normalan, i taj Mh..., a meni je bilo teško kad je Mh... slijep. Ja nisam nikad prije toga videl slepu osobu. Mislim, videl sam ovak na cesti i to al nisam nekaj da sam ono pričō s njom il... kajznam, nekaj, igro nogo... mis kak bu mogo... mis, nikak nisam mogo s njim ono. Mogo sam sam pričat s njim. I to je bilo... čudno mi je malo. A i žal mi ga je bilo dosta. On je bil jedini slijep ja mislim... kaj je u školu baš išo tam. Oni svi ostali su sam na rehabilitaciji bili.

As he had just started coping with his impairment and getting used to it, it was very hard for him to accept his new environment – he perceived himself as a healthy adolescent and the new surroundings and the situation he found himself in had a very negative impact on his motivation:

- Pa teško, čak sam... izgubil sam volju za sve moguće bil. Al to me je držalo kakvih godinu dana baš. Baš ono, bil sam u depri, kak se... i svirat nis... svirat sam prestal.

During our interview, we kept going back to music and to playing gigs and I understood how important music was to him – hearing him say that he stopped playing was a very strong indicator of how hard it must have been for him.

**S4**'s separation from his parents seemed to a significant role in his loss of motivation – he only looked forward to the weekends, as that was when he could return home to them:

- Bio mi je šok ogromni zato šta sam se odvojio od roditelja. Roditelje sam samo viđao vikendom, ne preko tjedna, što je za mene bio ogromni šok, znači... stvarno mi je to teško palo nekako. Inače dok sam bio kod bake na praznicima i dok sam bio na završnom tjednu za četvrtaše, nikad nikakvih problema... ali kad sam bio tu... nekako, jednostavno mi nije... inače od petog do osmog mi nije baš bilo u Nazorovoj neš lijepo, a kak sam došo tu, prvi razred mi se nije sviđao jer sam se nekako... prepao da mi ne... da ne bude isto sve ko i tu ali je u drugom razredu... mogu reć da sam se pred kraj jako... da mi se ustvari počelo jako sviđati i da uopće nemam tolko... neam tolko ono da živim samo za petak nego živim i za druge dane, živim za svaki dan... prije sam recimo živio samo za petak da idem kući i to mi je bilo... nekako sve ono... ne znam, ko da... to je bilo jednostavno ko da sad vi dobijete nešto šta... šta ste od uvijek željeli, znači meni je to bilo... a sad tu nekako to tako i nije i nije mi da jedva čekam petak.

He said he did not feel comfortable when he first got to his school, as other children teased and bullied him:

- Mmm, a ono... iskušavali su me, provocirali... znalo je bit tu svega i svačega, maltretirali su me znali, tak da nije... nagovarali na svakakve gluposti, a ja sam bio jako tad povodljiv i... pa sam i ja onda znao nadrljati... tak da baš i nije bilo nešto ugodno.

It seems to me that the combination of the two factors had a very big impact on his drive to focus and learn. As soon as he found the company that suited him and started feeling more comfortable in his new environment, he started feeling a bit more motivated.

S5 claimed she had a hard time adapting to new environments, which is why she did not like the transition from primary to secondary school, especially because she first enrolled at a grammar school and later transferred to the Centre. She said she wanted to enrol at a vocational school and become a physical therapist or a masseuse but, considering the good grades she got during her last two years of primary school, she was curious to see how she would do in a grammar school. She said ‘her fears became true’ once she got there – she was discouraged both by the curriculum, which she found too difficult, and by the teachers there:

- A možete mislit kakav je gimnazijski program dok ja koja baš kemiju znam, ja sam znala dobit negativnu ocjenu iz testa, recimo, i tako. Tako da je zapravo gimnazija teška.

After what she described as a ‘traumatic experience’ in the grammar school she attended, she transferred to the Centre and she was not very happy about it, either – she said she was not interested in what the Centre had to offer and found the transition to be very hard. She was, however, not afraid when she started attending lessons at the Centre as she knew the programme would not be as challenging considering ‘what kind of people the Centre hosts’:

- A mislim... teško mi je to sve tako palo, palo mi je teško zato šta... bilo mi je žao. Ja sam prvo upisala gimnaziju zato šta sam prošla pet sedmi i osmi razred. S pet sam prošla i... htjela sam probat. Opća gimnazija. Htjela sam probat da vidim šta je to. Onda sam tako... a, mislim, ja sam htjela inače strukovnu neku školu upisat, tipa fizioterapija, emmm... nešto sa... rukama bilo šta da se radi ali nisam mogla. A ova zanimanja, iskreno, baš me i ne zanimaju.
- Pa onda [kad se prebacivala u Centar] me bilo već manje strah zato jer znam da ne može ništa bit teže od gimnazije. A ovdje već se zna s kakvim ljudima se radi, tako da...

Unfortunately, she was not demotivated only by the programme and by the other students – once again, she reported being demotivated by the teachers who ‘lacked understanding’:

- Zato šta em ne zanimaju me ta zanimanja i... znam većinom, naravno, čast izuzetcima, ja ne kažem da su svi ljudi ovde loši, ali jako ih puno ima koji nemaju uopće razumijevanja za nas. Po mom mišljenju.

This sequence of bad experiences in two completely different schools played a very big part in her loss of motivation – it seemed as if she had given up completely after being frustrated and disappointed both in the regular school and in the Centre. Talking to her, I noticed she believed that teachers, more than the curricula and schools themselves, were the key factor that had irreversibly affected her motivation. This, however, might also be interpreted as a face-saving attempt to justify her lack of motivation and to preserve her self-worth.

### 5.2.2.2. Teachers

The role of teachers is very important in language learning, even more so in classrooms consisting of VILs (cf. Jedynak 2015) – for some students, they represent their first contact with the foreign language and culture ever and, as such, can immensely affect their students' motivation. As my respondents changed schools often, I wanted to find out if (and how) their motivation changed with each teacher and what traits a teacher should have in order to keep the students interested in the subject.

**S1** stressed the necessity of permanence and continuity – she had changed a lot of language teachers and found it to have a negative effect on her progress and motivation. When I asked her to elaborate, she said that the teachers changed often and they were mostly very young and inexperienced when it came to working with VILs – they did not know her vision was impaired and consequently did not know how to approach her and adapt their teaching styles to her needs, which is why she did not learn as much as her classmates:

- Pa zato što... kako sam ja... tad sam imala osam godina, osam, devet godina, i svaki put dođe novi nastavnik i to sve neki mladi. I onda oni nemaju pojma da ja slabije vidim, nemaju pojma znači da trebaju govorit na ploču kad pišu, nemaju pojma ništa... a ja nisam znala reć kad sam bila mala... i onda... su ovi svi naučili nešto, a ja sam ono... ostala tako da... da nisam tolko ko oni naučila. I zato mi je bio problem.

This, consequently, led to the drop in her motivation. She believed 'the subject was as good as the teacher teaching it', and she felt demotivated when she had teachers she did not like. She said there were more teachers who let her down and who did not rise to her expectations than those who did – as she felt those teachers did not know how to work with VILs, did not set challenging learning goals for her and were doing their job just for the sake of doing it, she started feeling very indifferent both towards them and towards the subject they were teaching. However, everything changed when she finally got her last teacher Alex, who she described as nice, fun and interesting. She felt he was trying hard to teach them something, which, in turn, motivated her to study and prepare well for her exams.

**S2** did not like her primary school teacher because she felt she did not have a knack for teaching VI children. This, S2 said, was particularly evident when she handed out the teaching materials – she never adapted any of them to S2's needs. She also disliked her first secondary school teacher, as they 'only read and did not learn anything' with him. Being talented for languages, however, she never let these things bother her and affect her

motivation. As all the other respondents, she liked Alex very much – she said he was great because he was very talkative, motivated and relaxed:

- A ovaj profesor je odličan. Super je za priču, super je da nešto naučiš... super nauči čovjeka, motivira čovjeka za učenje, baš je dobar.

She felt he was a great teacher who tried hard to motivate his students, which is why she enjoyed being in his classroom and studying English.

As opposed to S1, **S3** did not believe changing teachers often had any impact on his knowledge and motivation ‘as they all had a very similar program’. However, he found the teachers ‘working only to get paid’ very demotivating, which is why he loved Alex a lot. He described Alex as a very ‘chill, outgoing and interesting person’ and appreciated his selfless help – he said students could ask him anything anytime and that he would gladly help them:

- Pa ja bi voljelo ono da moram k njemu otić nasamo. Mislim... i mogu al ne mogu se pokrenut nikak. A mogu, stvarno je ono dobar profesor ovak... i onom G., dečku kaj je selo do mojeg, njemu dost ovak... ko instrukcije... a ne naplaćuje mu niš. Ono, pomaže mu malo to da nauči. Za svakodnevni život.

When I asked him how Alex motivated him, he mentioned the stories Alex told them about his journeys and private life – the examples he gave them of language use were what S3 admired and what made him want to master the language:

- Pa oni... pa recimo taj Štef mene motivira ne da ono ajde M, ajde to bit će ti ovak ovak, neg ono kad... on priča sve to kak je on ono, zgubi se negde u Engleskoj, mis u Engleskoj... bilo di da je, zgubil sam se i sad... na putovanju nekom. I kaj ste napravili? Pital sam čoveka, ono, al na engleskom. I onda ono... mislim se kak je dobro znat engleski i to mi je najveća motivacija.

These real-world examples helped S3 to understand the importance of the language and made learning more meaningful for him, which he seemed to appreciate a lot. As I have already mentioned, he saw his teacher as a role model – he wished that, one day, somebody would admire him as he admired his teacher.

And, while **S4** did not have much to say about if and how his teachers motivated him (he only commended Alex because ‘he managed to teach them something’), **S5** provided me with a lot of valuable information on the subject. She claimed she never really felt her teachers motivated her – some did not want to dedicate a bit more of their time to her, and some simply did not know how to. She felt most of her teachers were incapable of teaching her and explaining new things to her because she was ‘different’ – she said they dedicated



most of their time and energy to other students. She reported being happy with her first primary school teacher, but claimed the second one 'was not really good' because she had favourites and because she did not offer extra lessons to those who needed them. That teacher also told her that 'English is not her forte', that 'she does not like it, which is why she does not want to learn it':

- Ta u osmom baš i nije bila nešto. Ona je baš, ona je imala svoje miljenike, ajmo to tako reć. Pa je onda ona imala onako par svojih koje voli pa ono... onda mi, nama kojima ne ide... to je bilo, baš nas nije... isto, jedva smo za tu dopunsku dogovorili, da mama nije pitala ne bi nikad ni uzela jedan termin da imamo dopunsku ona i ja. A onda je isto tako, svašta je bilo... ona je znala reć, ono... engleski tebi ne ide, ti njega ne voliš, ti njega ne želiš učit. A ona nije shvaćala da drugo je ako neko nešto uči i ne ide mu, a ako neko uopće se ne trudi. Jer je bilo takvih u mom razredu, a ona to baš... mislim da nije to baš uzela u obzir.

That same teacher accused her of keeping the text under her desk and reading it while she was presenting, simply because she could not see her hands – as she found all of these things very hurtful, it could be said that this helped shaping a negative attitude towards learning the language. Her grammar school English teacher did not help, either – S5 felt she did not have understanding for her and her difficulties. S5 did not like the fact that she used English most of the time and that she required the students to do the same – she never translated anything for her and she barely offered additional tuition to her. S5 felt she should have dedicated herself a bit more to teaching and explaining the content to her and said she should have been more understanding. She even blames her for not making any progress:

- (...) ona vidi da tu napretka nema. A to bi ona trebala, ona je trebala... tu... mislim, to, ona je kriva šta nema napretka jer ona je trebala tu malo više volje, nekako, meni se posvetit. Ja ne kažem sad da je trebala, da sam ja trebala imat nešto posebno, neki... ali ipak... ja to mogu negirat, al ja sam drukčija od ostalih. I ona je trebala, trebala je imat razumijevanja za mene. Ne kažem zato što sam to ja, neg inače, za bilo koje slijepo dijete, slijepu osobu treba imat razumijevanja.

She was very hurt by what that teacher said at the end of the school year – as she was not making any progress, the teacher said 'her volunteering days are done' and she failed her:

- Ona vam je meni samo davala kopije iz knjige i radne bilježnice, ona meni nije držala dopunsku kao jednom tjedno... naravno negdje u drugom polugodištu mi je počela držat, dok smo se mama i ja izborile za to, i onda mi je pred kraj godine rekla 'ja ću sa današnjim satom završit svoj volonterski rad jer vidim da tu nema nikakvog napretka'.

When I asked how she felt after that, she replied she cried a lot because she had put in so much effort and it did not pay off:

- Nemojte pitat. Plakala sam ko kišna godina zato jer... bilo mi je žao. Mislim da sam velik trud uložila u tu gimnaziju a da mi se nije isplatio. Matematika i engleski. Tako da... ono. Teško

mi padne kad uložim nekakav trud a to se ne isplati. I to mi se dogodilo više puta tako da, onda sam se slomila na neki način... ono. Prošla sam u životu dosta toga, sad bi tu mogla pričat povijest al dobro.

I could tell she still felt very hurt by all of this – every time she discussed grammar school, her voice would start shaking and she would start whispering, it felt as if she was about to cry. When I asked her about the Centre, she said she had very high expectations but remained disillusioned in the end. Again, she said teachers should be more understanding of blind students and made an interesting remark – she felt that teachers working with FS children were more tolerant and sympathetic than those working with VI children. She was not very satisfied with her first teacher, as he was extremely lenient. She, however, liked Alex a lot and she really appreciated his approach – he tried hard to teach them something, he always gave them a lot of examples, he was very patient, fun and relaxed. She had a number of traumatic experiences with her teachers and he was the only one who had managed to make the classroom experience enjoyable for her. And, even though she said nothing really motivated her any more, I could tell she was trying hard to get the passing grade because she liked and respected Alex.

It is possible to notice that the answers varied from participant to participant, but they all agreed on one thing – the teacher they had at the moment the study was conducted was the one who managed to motivate even the least driven students.

### **5.2.2.3. Learned helplessness and coping mechanisms**

While talking to my participants, I noticed a striking difference between them – I observed that, unlike PB respondents, B respondents displayed symptoms of learned helplessness. I believe the reason for this may be found in the fact that the PB students identify themselves more as FLLs than as VILs, especially considering the onset and the gravity of their impairment – besides having more difficulties in finding appropriate studying materials and support, B students tend to display symptoms of learned helplessness more than their PB colleagues because it is harder for them to integrate in the classroom and because of the way they feel their parents, teachers and colleagues treat them.

**S1** had problems with her sight since her birth, but she had always perceived herself as a ‘normal kid’ and had no problems asking for help when she needed it. Just as **S1**, **S2** was born with visual impairment, but she never let it get in her way – despite the impairment, she believed she was not any different from her classmates and her ambition and motivation

helped her achieve great results. **S3** started having more serious problems with his sight when he was a bit older, meaning that he had spent more than half of his life not being ‘labelled’ as a VIL – this is why he never believed his impairment affected his success and his place in the social sphere. These students were very communicative and outgoing by nature and their lives were very similar to those of their FS colleagues since they socialised, took language courses and played instruments – they did everything their FS friends did, which also indicates their parents were not overprotective of them. I believe that this is why they were able to avoid suffering from the ‘inferiority complex’ (cf. Rieber and Carton 1987), learn how to take responsibility for their own success or failure and, consequently, avoid developing learned helplessness.

**S4** and **S5**, on the other hand, were more introverted, shy and insecure. During the interviews, I noticed the occurrence of the symptoms of learned helplessness in both and decided to look into them. In the case of **S4**, it seems that his parents had a crucial role in the developing of learned helplessness – they were overprotective of him and had not granted him enough autonomy when he was younger. This is best visible when discussing FL learning – they had not allowed him to take up Italian when he was in the third grade as ‘he was too young’ and they were scared that it would be too much as ‘English was hard enough already’:

- U trećem razredu sam htio na nekakav talijanski ali... moji mi nisu dozvolili jer... sam još bio jako mlad i...

I believe his family’s overprotectiveness is the reason why he adopted the pattern of behaviour which he maintained even as an adolescent and simply decided ‘he was not good enough’ or ‘smart enough’ because he was VI and never bothered trying to be more ambitious. The classroom setting and the teachers, who catered for the FB students’ needs and did not know how to work with him, might have contributed to the development of learned helplessness – until he got to the Centre, he was the only blind student in his classroom and this must have had an impact on his self-confidence, as it made him slower than his FS peers in completing the tasks and prevented him from participating in some of the classroom activities (cf. Rieber and Carton 1987; Toohey 2000). School and classroom settings were almost certainly what triggered **S5** and made her develop the feeling of learned helplessness – she believed she was not good at the language, but she mostly blamed her teacher for failing to teach her. She was not content with how much she had learned during her schooling – the reason for her discontent was the fact that she was a B student in primary school, but she failed the subject when she got to grammar school:

- Hah... a teško je to reći. Zato šta, recimo... ma ja mislim da, mislim to ovisi kako ljudima ide engleski. Neko kome to ide lakše je više zadovoljan, a neko kome to ide teže je manje zadovoljan. Ja više ne nego da zato jer sam onda došla u gimnaziju, ja sam imala 4 iz engleskog, a u gimnaziji sam pala.

Because of the trauma she suffered in the grammar school, her perception of herself as a VIL grew stronger, she became more sensitive and isolated herself from the rest of her peers, blaming her teacher for her lack of success. This feeling of being misunderstood by her teacher had appeared even before, in the last grade of primary school – these two unpleasant experiences led her to simply give up on studying. She developed the feeling of failure which grew to become learned helplessness – it seems it was easier for her to blame the external factors for her perpetual lack of success than to do something about it as trying would imply failing and failing would result in feeling even less successful and further hurting her self-image. She, therefore, created a comfort zone called learned helplessness and decided she would not step out of it, as it was the only way she could protect her self-worth.

I came to believe that this lack of motivation, following their lack of success, led to developing the feeling of learned helplessness – they started believing that they were simply not good enough or smart enough, that they were not talented for learning English and that they would never master it, which is why they learned to settle for less and gave up trying.

## 6. Conclusions and implications for future teaching practices

The purpose of this research was to look into how VILs perceive themselves as students of English by using the methods of participant and non-participant observation and sociolinguistic interview. The obtained results are very interesting and they reflect the somewhat multifaceted nature of this research – other than bringing us an account of the VILs' educational journey and the various elements that affect their success, they portray how the learners *feel* about the school system and, most importantly, about themselves as learners of English.

As one focus of my study was on the social and educational background of my respondents and their families, I was able to confirm my initial hypothesis that the family members and the environment in which the students grow up really do affect their attitudes towards language learning and, subsequently, their success. It can be concluded that the parents' occupation and level of education, their active participation in all aspects of their children's lives, their attitudes towards school and their beliefs and convictions all play a crucial role in their children's academic development, their motivation and appetite for learning – families who do not value education and FL learning as much as some other families do and who do not participate actively in their children's education often set an example and transfer their attitudes towards (language) learning to their children. This study also underscores the fact that parents' attitudes towards their children's schooling and language learning are affected by the level of the children's impairment. Even though making generalisations based on such a small number of cases is not desirable, it seems that parents of blind children are afraid that their children are not able to cope with the curriculum – their attitudes exert a negative impact on the learners' beliefs about and stances on language learning. Finally, although it is not the most important factor, families' socioeconomic status does, after all, play an important role in their children's education as most parents with a lower SES may not be able to provide additional, non-mandatory, language-learning opportunities for their children – these would include getting audio books or extra reading materials in large print or Braille, traveling or, simply, enrolling their child in an extracurricular language course. Family is, however, not the only factor that can influence students' success – when discussing VILs' social background, it is also important to mention that those VILs who grow up in rural or small town communities often do not have the same educational opportunities as their peers who are born and raised in bigger cities, both in terms

of their teachers' preparedness to work with VI students and in terms of the availability of additional opportunities for learning the language.

Another important conclusion I have arrived at is that most of my respondents believe an innate talent for languages to be the only possible ingredient for success in language learning, especially considering their impairment. Few of them are aware of the ways in which to turn their 'weaknesses' into their strengths – they do not seem to be aware of the fact that sight is not the most important factor in language learning and that they can capitalise on their exceptional memory and on their aural and oral sensitivity. Their belief that they do not have what it takes to become a successful language learner and that they cannot learn a language if they are not talented seems to have a detrimental effect on their motivation and, consequently, success, as their affective level rises and their uptake minimises. From their interviews I have found that it is precisely because of the above-mentioned reasons that they develop learned helplessness and give up trying – they wish to preserve their already fragile self-concept, which may be further put at risk by the trial and error system.

Finally, it is important to underline the role of the school environment in the students' educational process – changing schools and studying at a boarding school with other VILs can cause the learners to feel demotivated and isolated and it can have serious consequences for their motivation and success. Other than the school environment, the teachers seem to play a crucial role in the success of VILs or lack thereof. The study has shown that many teachers are not well versed in working with VILs – they seem to lack the adequate education and training necessary for working with VILs, which exerts an extremely negative influence on the students' motivation and leads to the conclusion that not all teachers receive adequate support from rehabilitators and other (para)professionals. Early intervention, combined with experienced teachers (or even those teachers who lack experience but are willing to accept and help the VILs in their classrooms the best as they can) and adequate materials can, indeed, make a difference and help VILs develop a more favourable attitude towards FL learning. If these requirements are not met and if the families do not intervene by providing VILs with additional opportunities that make FL learning enjoyable, VILs' motivation to master a foreign language becomes very low and, in most cases, purely extrinsic.

An important question that arose once I completed my field work was the following – *how can schools and teachers help these students thrive?* I came up with a list of suggestions that are based both on previous literature on the subject and on my personal experience with VILs. Schools should:

- Provide teachers with a digital platform and encourage them to exchange their experiences, examples of good practice, and advice.
- Offer adequate support and training courses for teachers working with VILs. Teachers should be given adequate training in how to work with VILs – they would benefit greatly from a hands-on, practical demonstration of how to work with SEN students by rehabilitators and other paraprofessionals. Thus, the “interdisciplinary cooperation between research institutes, professional associations, schools and other bodies specialising in FL learning/teaching to VILs” (Jedynak 2015: 63) is crucial.
- Schools should also try to collaborate more closely with the local Croatian Blind Union branches to ensure their VILs’ needs are catered for – this is especially important in smaller communities, as children there have fewer opportunities to get additional help and support and could find it more difficult to integrate.
- Finally, schools should do their best to keep their VILs from getting lost in the system.

Teachers, on the other hand, should:

- Be aware of what vision deficit is, how to approach VILs and how to create and work with specific materials (Jedynak 2015: 70).
- Be aware of the fact that students with different levels of impairment require different types of approach as they have varying needs in the classroom (*ibid.*).
- Try to educate themselves and be familiar with the literature on typhlology. While working with VILs, I found articles by Nikolić and Jedynak, as well as Jedynak’s monograph, very useful. I would also recommend the publication entitled *Foreign Language Learning for the Visually Impaired in the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece: Problems and Suggestions* by Sofia Christidou and the publications by the foundation Institute of Regional Development in Cracow (FRSE, as cited in Jedynak 2015), even though they are written in Polish. Finally, it is crucial for Croatian teachers to become acquainted with NOK (*Nacionalni okvirni kurikulum*) and with the AZOO’s documents *Učenici s posebnim obrazovnim potrebama* and *Engleski jezik (prvi strani jezik) 1.-8. razred*.
- Teach VILs how to learn and help them become independent, autonomous learners.

- Pay attention to the needs of their VILs and make them feel comfortable and relaxed in the classroom.

As for practical tips that teachers should implement in their teaching methodology, I would like to stress the following:

- When talking to VILs, teachers cannot rely on their body language – they should make sure the students can hear them well and speak calmly, slowly and clearly instead.
- When writing on a blackboard/whiteboard, teachers should pronounce the words they are writing down clearly and loudly, so that the VILs can follow and take notes. It is also a good idea to spell some of the more difficult words out, so that all students (and not just VILs) can check their spelling.
- Teachers should make sure they are using concepts familiar to their VILs and be careful when giving instructions – they need to be as clear, precise and short as possible (example: use *in front of you*, *next to you* etc. instead of *here* and *there*)
- Teachers should not be afraid to use words (literally or metaphorically) related to vision such as *look* and *see*.
- When describing a drawing or a photo, teachers should first describe it globally, in its entirety and then focus on details.
- Teachers should help to create a positive and supportive atmosphere in the classroom and keep in mind VILs can participate in all of the classroom activities, one way or the other.
- Although all four skills should be represented in the classroom, my research has shown that it is not really the case. Listening, considered by many experts to be the most important skill for VILs, turned out to be the most problematic skill – teachers should get their students to listen more and to use the skills learned in their classrooms in their everyday lives (while watching/listening to TV, listening to the radio...). They should encourage their VILs to make real-life use of what they learn in their classrooms!
- Writing tasks for VILs should not differ from those given to FSLs and they should not be spared from writing – VILs can copy, fill in, write dictations and essays as well. When correcting these tasks, teachers should apply the same rules they always do. This way, VILs develop their spelling and grammatical correctness, the ability to structure and organise texts and practice their handwriting.



- When correcting PB students' written tasks, teachers should keep in mind their handwriting is somewhat specific – it may come off as 'clumsy' as the letters may be poorly formed and cross the writing line. Depending on the level of their impairment, PB students may be somewhat slower than their sighted counterparts when writing, which is also something teachers should take into consideration.
- Reading tasks can sometimes be tiring for the VILs, which is why teachers should secure adequate materials for their students. When it comes to PB students, it is important to remember that there is no universal font size and shape that suits all PB students – the teachers should look into their students' individual needs and adapt the materials accordingly, paying attention not only to font size and spacing but also to the quality of the paper the text is printed on. As for B students, it is important to keep in mind that the number of their Braille textbook pages does not always correspond to those of the printed books, which is why they may need more time to find the text/task. It would be good if the teachers could work with their VILs and come up with a strategy that would make the page-finding process easier for the students. Teachers should also be patient and give VILs more time to manage.
- Teachers should sometimes allow VILs (especially those who have not yet mastered writing in Braille) to record their lessons, to make participating and learning easier.
- Finally, teachers should pay attention to how their students feel – they should make short breaks if they see their students (both VILs and FSLs, for that matter) have lost their focus and are tired.

This research has managed to reflect on a very, very small segment of VILs' education, but I believe it makes for a good springboard for any future research of the topic. It would be good to conduct a longitudinal study and look into what other factors affect VILs' motivation and what causes their anxiety. Furthermore, it would be interesting to look into how they explain what is happening around them by trying to attribute cause to various events, i.e. to focus on their locus of control. Since this study was conducted with students from the Centre, it would be very interesting to follow it up with research focusing on VILs in mainstream schools. Finally, it would be good to interview teachers working in mainstream schools as well as those working in specialised centres. It would be extremely useful to hear their side of the story as well, as it may (unrightfully) appear they mistreat VILs and do not

want to work with them – it would be good to find out how they prepare for working with VILs and how they feel about it, which difficulties they have to struggle with and how they solve them. Considering the scarcity of materials on the topic, one cannot help but conclude that there is still a lot to be learned and done – collaborating, sharing experiences, constant learning and developing teaching practices and, most importantly, keeping an open mind and an open heart can certainly help and speed this process up and make language learning a positive and motivating experience not just for VILs, but for their FS classmates as well.

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## 8. Appendices

### APPENDIX 1 – MODULES<sup>3</sup>

#### I. DEMOGRAPHY

1. Kako se zoveš?
2. Kad si rođen/a?
3. Gdje si rođen/a?
  - i. Jesi li cijeli život živio/živjela tu ili si se selio/selila?
    - a. [Ako se selio/la] Zašto si se selio/la?
    - b. [Ako se selio/la] Gdje ti se najviše sviđalo?
    - c. Možeš li mi opisati život u svom rodnom mjestu?
      - 1) Što ti se sviđa, a što ne?
  - ii. [U svom rodnom mjestu] Živiš li u kući ili u stanu?
    - a. Možeš li mi opisati taj stan/tu kuću?
4. Odakle su ti roditelji?
  - i. Kako se zovu?
  - ii. Koliko godina imaju?
  - iii. Čime se bave?
  - iv. Gdje su sada?
5. Kako se zvala tvoja osnovna škola?
  - i. U koju srednju školu ideš?
  - ii. Kako si odlučio/la koji smjer upisati?
  - iii. Što tvoja obitelj misli o tvom preseljenju?

#### II. FAMILY

1. Možeš li mi nabrojati članove tvoje uže obitelji?
  - i. [Ako ima braću/sestre] Čime se bave tvoji braća/sestre?
  - ii. Možeš li mi opisati članove obitelji, kakvi su?
2. Kako se slažeš s članovima obitelji?
  - i. Jesu li ti roditelji strogi?
  - ii. Jesu li strpljivi?
  - iii. Jesu li postojali trenutci kad ih ne bi poslušao/la?
    - a. [Ako da] Što bi se onda dogodilo?
3. Možeš li otvoreno pričati s roditeljima?
  - i. O čemu da?
  - ii. O čemu ne?
    - a. Zašto?
  - iii. A o problemima/prijateljima/željama?
4. Podržava li te obitelj u tvojim odlukama i izborima?
  - i. Pričaš li s njima o školi?
  - ii. Jesi li ikad izrazio/la želju dodatno učiti strani jezik?
    - a. [Ako da] Kako su tvoji roditelji reagirali?
      - 1) Kako si se ti osjećao/la?
    - b. [Ako da] Jesu li ti ikad organizirali privatne instrukcije?
    - c. [Ako ne] Jesu li te ikad poticali da učiš neki strani jezik?

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<sup>3</sup> I crossed out the modules I skipped during the interview.

- 1) Zašto?
5. Jesu li tvoji ukućani učili engleski?
  - i. [Ako da] Koliko dugo?
  - ii. [Ako da] Koriste li ga u svakodnevnom životu?
    - a. Gdje i kako?
  - iii. [Ako da] Jesu li ti ikad pomagali sa zadaćom i učenjem?
  - iv. [Ako ne] Zašto misliš da nisu?
  - v. Je li im (bilo) važno da ti učiš engleski?
    - a. Zašto?

### III. FRIENDS (hometown)

[S kim se najčešće družiš kad si doma?]

1. Imaš li najboljeg prijatelja/prijateljicu?
  - i. Odakle je?
  - ii. Kako ste se upoznali?
  - iii. Možeš li mi reći nešto o njemu/njoj?
  - iv. Što radite kad ste skupa?
  - v. O čemu najčešće pričate?
2. Kako si upoznao/la ostale prijatelje?
  - i. Što najčešće radite kad ste zajedno?
3. Ima li u tom društvu još prijatelja koji imaju poteškoća s vidom?
  - i. [Ako da] Primijetiš li ikakvu razliku u druženju sa slabovidnim prijateljima i s prijateljima koji nemaju takvih poteškoća?
    - a. Ima li uopće razlike za tebe? Zašto?
    - ii. [Ako ne] Kako se osjećaš u svom društvu?
4. O čemu najčešće pričate?
  - i. Pričate li ikad o školi?
    - a. [Ako da] O čemu?
    - b. Obratiš li im se ikad za pomoć ako ti treba nešto za školu?
      - 1) Pitaš li ih ikad za pomoć s engleskim?
      - 2) Motiviraju li te/Jesu li te motivirali da ga učiš?
    - c. Uče li oni engleski (i dalje)?
      - 1) Misliš li da su 'zagrijani' za učenje?
        - i. Što misliš, zašto?
      - 2) Motiviraju li te/Jesu li te motivirali da ga učiš?
5. Družiš li se još s prijateljima iz razreda iz osnovne škole?
  - i. U kakvim si odnosima bio/bila s njima?
  - ii. U kakvim ste sad odnosima?

### IV. PEERS (Zagreb, Vinko Bek)

[Ako se preselio/la u Zagreb - je li bilo teško preseliti se?]

1. Ima li u centru još ljudi iz tvog kraja?
  - i. [Ako da i ako ne] Jesi li na početku osjećao/la potrebu družiti se s nekim iz tvog kraja?
2. Koga si prvo upoznao/la kad si došao/la u centar?
  - i. Zašto misliš da si se prijateljio/la baš s njim/njom?
  - ii. Družite li se jednako često i sada?

3. S kim iz centra ti se najdraže družiti?
  - i. Zašto?
  - ii. Ako se ne radi o prvoj osobi koju si upoznao/la, kada ste se upoznali?
  - iii. Što radite kad ste skupa?
4. Kako se slažeš s ostalima u centru?
  - i. Što misliš o njima?
5. Pomažete li si međusobno?
  - i. Učite li nekad skupa?

## V. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

[S koliko si godina krenuo/la u osnovnu školu?]

1. U koju školu si išao/la?
  - i. Jesi li bio/bila uzbuđen/na?
  - ii. Je li ti se sviđalo?
  - iii. Kakva su bila druga djeca?
2. Možeš li mi opisati svoju školu?
  - i. Je li tvoj razred uvijek bio u istoj učionici ili ste se morali seliti po školi?
  - ii. Sjećaš li se koja su sve pomagala učitelji koristili u nastavi - računalo, CD player...?
3. Jesi li ti imao/la neko svoje pomagalo koje si koristio/la?
  - a. [Za FB] Jesi li imao/la knjige na brajici i/ili pisaću mašinu?
  - b. [Za VI] Jesi li imao/la knjige s uvećanim tiskom?
4. Kakva bi bila tvoja idealna škola?
5. Koji ti je bio omiljen predmet a koji predmet si najmanje volio/voljela?
  - i. Kad si počeo/la učiti engleski?
    - a. Koliko ste ga često imali?

## VI. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - ENGLISH CLASSROOM

1. Što biste radili na satu engleskog?
  - i. Kako bi vam nastava izgledala?
  - ii. Jeste li više slušali, čitali, pisali ili pričali?
    - a. Što ti je bilo najlakše? Zašto?
  - iii. Koja ti je bila najdraža aktivnost?
2. Sjećaš li se kakve ste sve materijale koristili u nastavi engleskog (udžbenik, radnu bilježnicu...)?
  - i. Što misliš o lekcijama koje ste obrađivali, misliš li da su bile dobre i korisne?
  - ii. Što bi promijenio/la u nastavi engleskog u osnovnoj školi da možeš?
    - a. Kakav bi bio tvoj idealan sat engleskog?
3. Kako si ti pratio/la na satu?
  - i. Bi li ti profesor/ica pomagao/la?
    - a. [Ako da] Na koji način?
    - b. [Ako ne] Zašto misliš da je bilo tako?
  - ii. Jesi li imao nekakvu drugu pomoć na nastavi?
  - iii. Koja pomagala je koristio/la tvoj/a profesor/ica engleskog?
    - a. Jesi li ti bio/bila zadovoljan/na opremom?
    - b. Koliko je često koristio/la ta pomagala?
    - c. Jesi li imao/la dojam da ti pomažu u učenju i praćenju nastave?

4. Je li ti ikad itko u školi pokazao na koje načine bi ti bilo lakše učiti engleski?
  - i. [Ako da] Jesu li ti bili korisni?
  - ii. [Ako ne] Zašto misliš da nije?
  - iii. Što ti misliš, što bi ti pomoglo?
  - iv. Misliš li da se načini na koje si ti učio/la razlikuju od načina na koje je ostatak razreda učio?
    - a. [Ako da] Kako si se zbog toga osjećao/la?
    - v. Je li tvoje prijatelje ikada zanimalo kako učiš jezik?
5. Jesu li ti tvoji prijatelji pomagali za vrijeme engleskog?
  - i. [Ako da] Kako?
  - ii. [Ako ne] Zašto misliš?
  - iii. Kako si se osjećao/la na satu engleskog s njima?
    - a. Jesi li ikad osjećao/la neugodu?
      - 1) [Ako da] U kakvim situacijama?

## VII. HIGH SCHOOL

1. Kakva očekivanja si imao/la od srednje škole?
  - i. Jesu li se ispunila?
  - ii. Je li te bilo strah doći tu?
  - iii. Je li ti bilo drago upisati baš ovu školu? Zašto?
2. Misliš li da si imao/la dovoljno znanja kad si upisao/la srednju školu?
  - i. Zašto?
  - ii. Jesi li na početku bio/bila zadovoljan/na svojim znanjem jezika?
  - iii. [Za FB i jako VI] Jesi li znao/la čitati brajicu prije nego si došao/la u centar?
    - a. [Ako ne] Je li ti bilo teško naučiti je?
    - b. Jesi li tokom svog školovanja sreo/la nekog tko nema problema s vidom ali zna brajicu?
      - 1) [Ako da] Što to tebi znači?
      - 2) [Ako da] Što misliš, zbog čega su oni naučili čitati brajicu?
    - c. Postoji li razlika između brajice na hrvatskom i engleskom jeziku?
      - 1) Kako ti je pisati i čitati na engleskom?
3. Koji si smjer upisao/la?
  - i. Jesi li zadovoljan/na?
4. Koje sve predmete imaš?
  - i. Što radite na stručnim predmetima?
  - ii. Jesi li zadovoljan/na programom?
5. Možeš li mi opisati kako ti izgleda prosječan dan u školi?

## VIII. HIGH SCHOOL - ENGLISH CLASSROOM

1. Što radite na satu engleskog?
  - i. Koliko ga često imate?
  - ii. Kako vam izgleda sat?
  - iii. Što misliš o gradivu koje obrađujete?
  - iv. Sviđa li ti se kako je nastava organizirana? Zašto?
  - v. Imaš li najdražu aktivnost?
  - vi. Misliš li da si jezično napredovao/la od početka srednje?
  - vii. Da možeš, što bi promijenio/la?
2. Jesi li zadovoljan/na udžbenicima i opremom koju imaš na raspolaganju?

- a. Zašto?
  - b. Kako bi se mogli poboljšati/promijeniti?
- 3. Što misliš o svojim kolegama iz razreda?
  - i. Kako ti je biti na nastavi s njima?
    - a. Koja lijepa sjećanja ćeš ponijeti iz razreda?
    - b. Jesi li imao/la kakvo ružno iskustvo?
- 4. Kakva je atmosfera na nastavi engleskog?
  - a. Osjećaš li se ikad neugodno na satu?
    - 1) [Ako da] Kada?
  - ii. Bojiš li se pričati na engleskom u razredu?
    - a. [Ako da] Zašto?
  - iii. Kako se osjećaš kad pogriješiš?
    - a. Misliš li da te tvoji prijatelji iz razreda osuđuju?
    - b. Osuđuješ li ti njih kada oni pogriješe?
  - iv. Misliš li da netko od vas ima prednost u učenju jezika? Zašto?
    - a. Kako se ti zbog toga osjećaš?
- 5. Misliš li da su tvoja škola i razred dobra sredina za učenje jezika?
  - i. Što kao razred mislite o učenju stranog jezika, je li vam bitno?
    - a. Zašto?
  - ii. Misliš li da se kao razred trudite dovoljno ili bi se skupa trebali više potruditi na nastavi jezika?
    - a. Zašto?

#### **IX. TEACHERS (elementary and high school)**

- 1. Jesi li ikad imao/la omiljenog/u profesora/icu?
  - i. [Ako da] Zašto ti se sviđao/la?
  - ii. [Ako ne] Zašto ne?
- 2. Što misliš da dobar nastavnik jezika treba imati?
  - i. Jesu li tvoji nastavnici ispunili tvoja očekivanja?
  - ii. Zašto?
  - iii. Možeš li usporediti svoje profesore engleskog iz osnovne i srednje škole?
  - iv. Misliš li da su tvoji profesori engleskog (bili) dovoljno sposobni pomoći ti i naučiti te nečemu?
    - a. Zašto?
- 3. Misliš li da se tvoji profesori jezika iz osnovne i srednje škole trude pomoći ti?
  - i. Jesu li ti davali/daju li ti razumljive upute?
    - a. Na kojem jeziku?
      - 1) Je li ti se to sviđalo ili bi da je bilo drugačije? Kako drugačije?
    - b. Što radiš ako ne razumiješ uputu?
      - 1) U osnovnoj školi?
      - 2) Kako se osjećaš / bi se osjećao/la u takvim situacijama?
  - ii. Kako bi te u osnovnoj ispitivali gradivo, a kako u srednjoj?
    - a. Kako bi se ti spremao/la na ispitivanje?
  - iii. Je li ti profesor/ica u osnovnoj ili srednjoj školi ikad ponudila dodatnu pomoć, jedan na jedan?
    - a. [Ako da] Kako bi se osjećao/la u takvim situacijama? Zašto?
    - b. [Ako da] Koliko često?

- 1) Je li ti bilo korisno?
- c. [Ako ne] Što misliš, zašto?
  - 1) Misliš li da bi tako bolje shvatio/la gradivo?
- iv. [Za FB] Je li ti ikad profesor/ica opisivao/la neku sliku iz udžbenika za vrijeme nastave?
  - a. [Ako da] Kako si se osjećao/la zbog toga?
    - 1) Što misliš, što su drugi mislili?
    - 2) Bi li je opisao/la na engleskom ili na hrvatskom?
  - b. [Ako ne] Kako si se osjećao/la zbog toga?
- v. Kako se prema tebi odnose (i kako su se odnosili) u razrednim raspravama o nekoj temi ili pri izvršavanju nekog zadatka?
  - a. Je li se itko trudio prilagoditi zadatak da i ti možeš sudjelovati?
    - 1) Kako si se ti tada osjećao/la?
  - b. Jesi li se ti trudio/la sudjelovati?
    - 1) Zašto?
  - c. Je li tvoj/a profesor/ica ikada sam/a napravio/la materijale i donio/donijela ti ih?
    - 1) [Ako da] Jesu li ti se sviđali, jesi li mogao/la lakše pratiti?
      - i. Zašto?
    - 2) [Ako ne] Zašto misliš?
  - d. Jesi li ti ikad izrazio/la želju za dodatnim materijalima?
    - 1) [Ako da] Kakvim?
      - i. Kako je tvoj/a nastavnik/ca reagirala na to?
    - 2) [Ako ne] Zašto?
4. Je li te tvoj/a profesor/ica ikad motivirao/la i ohrabrivao/la u radu i učenju jezika?
  - i. [Ako da] Na koji način?
  - ii. [Ako ne] Zašto misliš?
5. Kako su profesori/ce jezika u osnovnoj i srednjoj reagirali/le na tvoje greške?
  - i. Kako si se ti tad osjećao/la?
  - ii. A kako bi ti reagirao/la kad bi oni pogriješili ili kada ne bi nešto znali?

## **X. — FEAR**

1. Čega te najviše (bilo) strah?
2. Postoje li (još kakve) situacije kojih se bojiš?
  - i. Jesi li se ikad našao/la u jednoj? Što se dogodilo?
  - ii. Kako si se osjećao/la nakon toga?
  - iii. Kako se sad osjećaš oko toga?
3. Osjećaš li ikada strah u školi?
  - i. Na nastavi engleskog?
  - ii. [Ako da] Zašto? Kako se ponašaš u takvim situacijama?
4. Misliš li da su tvoji strahovi (vezani za učenje jezika) iracionalni?
  - i. Poželiš li ikad da se ne bojiš?
  - ii. Znaš li nekog tko se ne boji situacija kojih je tebe strah?
    - a. [Ako da] Kakva je ta osoba inače?
      - 1) Bi li volio/voljela biti više kao on/ona?
5. Priznaš li lako da se bojiš nečega?
  - i. Ako nekad osjećaš strah na nastavi engleskog, misliš li da tvoj/a profesor/ica to zna?

## ~~XI. SWEARING~~

1. Psuješ li?
  - i. Koliko često?
2. Što misliš, čemu služe psovke?
  - i. U kojim situacijama psuješ?
    - a. Kad si ljut/a? Nervozan/na? Uzbuđen/na?
  - ii. Koje psovke najčešće koristiš? Zašto?
3. Kako se osjećaš dok psuješ?
  - i. A nakon?
  - ii. Koristiš li psovke u pisanoj komunikaciji?
    - a. [Ako ne] Zašto?
4. Što misliš o osobama koje psuju?
  - i. A što misliš da druge osobe misle o tebi kad psuješ?
5. Psuješ li ikad na engleskom? Zašto?

## ~~XII. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & HOBBIES~~

1. Smatraš li da je slobodno vrijeme važno? Zašto?
  - i. Misliš li da je bitno baviti se nečim osim škole? Zašto?
2. Što ti radiš u slobodno vrijeme?
  - i. Misliš li da ga imaš dosta?
  - ii. Provođiš li ga sam/sama ili u društvu? Zašto?
3. Kako se najbolje opuštaš?
4. Baviš li se kakvim sportom?
  - i. [Ako ne] Vježbaš li?
  - ii. [Ako da] Kojim?
  - iii. [Ako da i ako ne] Kojim bi se (još) sportom htio/htjela baviti?
  - iv. Jesi li u izviđačima?
5. A baviš li se nečim kreativnim?
  - i. Sviraš li neki instrument? Pjevaš li?
  - ii. Glumiš li?
  - iii. Slikaš li?
  - iv. Jesi li ikad pokušao/la izraditi nešto od gline?
  - v. Pišeš li poeziju ili priče?
  - vi. Voliš li recitirati poeziju?
  - vii. Jesi li sudjelovao/la u kakvoj priredbi?

## ~~XIII. MULTIMEDIA & CULTURE~~

1. Jesi li ikad bio/la na kakvoj izložbi?
  - i. [Ako da] Na kakvoj?
  - ii. [Ako ne] Bi li volio/voljela otići?
2. A u kazalištu?
3. Voliš li slušati glazbu?
  - i. Što više slušaš, domaće ili strano?
  - ii. Tko ti je najdraži pjevač?
4. [Za VI] Pratiš li serije ili filmove? // [Za FB] Pratiš li ikad što ima na televiziji?
  - i. [Za VI] Kakve filmove/serije voliš?
  - ii. [Za FB] Što najčešće pratiš?



5. A voliš li knjige? // [Za VI i FB] Slušaš li audio-knjige?
  - i. [Ako čita/slušala] Imaš li neku knjigu ili pjesmu koju posebno voliš?
  - ii. [Ako čita/slušala] Čitaš/slušala li ikad išta na engleskom?
  - iii. [Ako ne čita/slušala] Bi li htio/htjela čitati/slušati nešto na engleskom?
  - iv. O kojoj temi bi najviše čitao/la ili slušao/la?

#### **XIV. SCHOOL PRACTICE**

1. Jesi li dosad bio/bila na praksi?
  - i. [Ako da] Gdje?
  - ii. [Ako ne] Znaš li gdje ćeš ići?
2. Koliko je trajala? // Koliko će trajati?
  - i. Koliko si često morao/la ići tamo? // Koliko ćeš često morati ići tamo?
3. Koja su bila tvoja zaduženja? // Koja će biti tvoja zaduženja?
  - i. Što si sve morao/la znati? // Što sve moraš znati za praksu?
  - ii. A što su ostali radili?
  - iii. Misliš li da si imao/la puno posla? // Misliš li da ćeš imati puno posla?
4. Kako si se snašao/la? // Misliš li da ćeš se snaći?
  - i. Je li bilo teško? // Misliš li da će biti teško?
5. Jesi li se slagao/la sa svojim kolegama? // Misliš li da ćeš se slagati sa svojim kolegama?

#### **XV. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE/WORK**

1. U srednjoj si školi, za koliko ćeš biti gotov/a?
2. Znaš li već što bi htio/htjela kad maturiraš?
  - i. Bi li htio/htjela ići na fakultet?
    - a. [Ako da] Koji?
    - b. [Ako ne] Zašto?
    - c. Što misliš, kako bi ti bilo na fakultetu?
  - ii. A bi li se upisao/la na neko visoko učilište ili na neki tečaj?
  - iii. Što misliš, što bi sve morao/la znati za taj posao?
3. Bi li nastavio/la učiti engleski nakon završetka školovanja?
  - i. Zašto?
4. Gdje bi volio/voljela živjeti? Zašto?
  - i. Bi li ti se sviđalo živjeti u inozemstvu?
    - a. Misliš li da bi ti tamo bilo bolje?
5. Gdje bi volio/voljela raditi? Zašto?

#### **XVI. TRAVEL**

1. Jesi li ikad igdje putovao/la?
  - i. Gdje i s kim?
2. Kako provodiš vrijeme na putovanju?
  - i. Ideš li u muzeje...?
3. Možeš li mi opisati svoj idealan odmor?
  - i. Gdje bi išao/la i što bi radio/la?
  - ii. Koliko bi trajao?
  - iii. S kim bi išao/la?
4. Bi li htio/htjela ići u inozemstvo?
  - i. [Ako da] Koje zemlje bi htio/htjela posjetiti?

- a. Zašto?
- ii. [Ako ne] Zašto?
- 5. Što misliš, kako bi se snašao/la u inozemstvu?
  - i. Kako bi komunicirao/la?

## **XVII. CHILDHOOD & GAMES**

1. Koja ti je najljepša uspomena iz djetinjstva? A najgora?
2. Što si najviše volio/voljela raditi kao mali/mala?
  - i. Jesi li se igrao/la s drugom djecom?
    - a. Jesi li to volio/voljela?
      - 1) [Ako ne] Zašto?
3. Čega bi se najčešće igrao/la?
4. Jesu li ti roditelji prije spavanja čitali priče?
  - i. Sjećaš li se koje?
  - ii. Jesi li imao/imala omiljenu priču?
5. Sjećaš li se što se u kući slušalo i što je najčešće bilo na TVu?
  - i. [Za FB] Jesi li ti nekako pratio/la program?
  - ii. [Za VI] Jesi li gledao/la crtiće?
    - a. [Ako da] Koji ti je bio omiljeni crtić?
  - iii. Jeste li imali satelit/MaxTv...?
    - a. [Ako da] Jesu li ti roditelji pratili program na stranim kanalima?
    - b. Jesu li ti roditelji često pratili program na nekom stranom jeziku?
      - 1) Jesi li ikad pokušao/la pratiti?

## **XVIII. TECHNOLOGY & SOCIAL NETWORKS**

1. Koristiš li računalo i mobitel?
  - i. [Za FB] Imaš li poseban mobitel?
  - ii. Za što najčešće koristiš mobitel?
  - iii. A računalo?
2. Ideš li (često) na Internet?
  - i. Što tamo radiš?
3. Koristiš li Facebook?
  - i. [Ako da] Na kojem jeziku?
  - ii. [Ako da] Za što ga najčešće koristiš?
  - iii. [Ako da] Voliš li memeove? Razumiješ li ih sve?
  - iv. [Ako ne] Zašto?
4. Koristiš li još kakve društvene mreže?
  - i. [Ako da] Na kojem su jeziku?
  - ii. [Ako da] S kim najviše komuniciraš?
  - iii. [Ako da] Pratiš li koga? Poznate ličnosti?
  - iv. [Ako da] Naiđeš li na puno objava na stranom jeziku?
5. Koristiš li WhatsApp, Viber i slično?
  - i. [Ako da] Koliko često?
  - ii. [Ako da] Na kojem jeziku?
  - iii. [Ako ne] Zašto ne?

## **XIX. LANGUAGE AWARENESS**

1. Misliš li da si pričljiva osoba?

- i. A tvoja obitelj i prijatelji?
  - ii. Jesi li bio/bila znatizeljno dijete?
2. Misliš li da se neki ljudi lakše izražavaju od drugih?
  - i. U koju skupinu bi svrstao/la sebe?
  - ii. Je li ti se lakše izražavati usmeno ili pismeno? Zašto?
3. Dogodi li ti se nekad da riječima ne možeš izraziti što bi htio/htjela?
  - a. [Ako da] Zašto misliš da se to događa?
  - b. [Ako da] Što radiš u tim trenucima?
4. Jesi li kao mali/mala slušao/la ili čitao/la puno priča?
  - i. Misliš li da to ima veze s lakoćom izražavanja?
  - ii. [Za FB] Koliko bogatim rječnikom su ti roditelji opisivali stvari?
    - a. Je li ti to pomagalo lakše predočiti ih?
    - b. Misliš li da je to razvijalo tvoj rječnik i da si se lakše i bolje izražavao/la?
  - iii. Koliko su ti riječi važne?
5. Misliš li da netko tko puno priča na hrvatskom i bogato se izražava lakše uči jezike općenito?

## XX. ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1. Misliš li da imaš talent za učenje stranih jezika?
  - i. Koje strane jezike znaš?
    - a. [Ako zna više] Koji ti je draži? Zašto?
    - b. [Ako zna samo engleski] Bi li radije učio/la neki drugi jezik umjesto engleskog?
2. Što misliš o engleskom jeziku?
  - i. Je li težak? Zašto?
  - ii. Što ti se sviđa, a što ne? Zašto?
  - iii. Što ti stvara najviše problema dok učiš?
  - iv. Koliko varijanti engleskog poznaješ?
    - a. Koja ti se najviše sviđa? Zašto?
3. Misliš li da je engleski važan u životu?
  - i. Zašto?
  - ii. Zašto ga (ne) želiš naučiti?
  - iii. Gdje bi ga se sve moglo koristiti?
  - iv. Gdje bi ga ti mogao/la koristiti?
4. Misliš li da znanje engleskog utječe na samopouzdanje ljudi?
  - i. A tvoje?
  - ii. Što misliš o svom engleskom? Misliš li da je dobar?
    - a. Misliš li da se možeš poboljšati? Kako?
  - iii. Kako se osjećaš dok ga pričaš?
    - a. Neugodno? Dobro? Pametno?
  - iv. Kako se osjećaš kad ovladaš nekim novim gradivom i kad napreduješ? Zašto?
  - v. Je li ti poznata izreka "Onoliko vrijediš koliko jezika znaš"?
    - a. Kako bi je ti objasnio/la?
    - b. Slažeš li se s njom?
    - c. Misliš li da više vrijediš ako znaš engleski?
  - vi. [Za FB] Utječe li znanje brajice na i engleskom i hrvatskom na tvoje samopouzdanje? Kako?

- vii. Što te najviše motivira dok učiš jezik?
  - a. A demotivira?
- 5. Što ti je najvažnije kad učiš engleski?
  - i. Misliš li da je naglasak jako važan?
  - ii. Misliš li da je važno naučiti pričati kao izvorni govornici?
    - a. Slušaš li ikad intervjue s poznatim sportašima/pjevačima/... na engleskom?
      - 1) [Ako da] Što misliš o njihovom engleskom?

## APPENDIX 2 – CONSENT FORMS

### SUGLASNOST ZA SUDJELOVANJE U ISTRAŽIVANJU

Ja, \_\_\_\_\_, suglasan sam da moje dijete, \_\_\_\_\_, sudjeluje u sociolingvističkom istraživačkom projektu koji provodi studentica **Franka Palada** u sklopu diplomskog rada.

Razumijem da će moje dijete u sklopu projekta sudjelovati u razgovoru čiji će se zvučni zapis snimati, a teme razgovora odnosit će se i na njegov/njezin privatni život, njegove/njezine poglede i stavove o engleskom jeziku i učenju istog te na njegove/njezine dojmove o stavovima koje okolina ima o njemu/njoj kao učeniku/ci stranog jezika.

Razumijem da će intervju trajati otprilike sat vremena ili koliko moje dijete to bude željelo. Razumijem da moje dijete nije ni na koji način obavezano sudjelovati u intervjuu i da može odbiti odgovoriti na bilo koja pitanja, da može u bilo kojem trenutku prekinuti intervju ili u bilo kojem trenutku prekinuti svoje sudjelovanje u projektu. Razumijem da se niti njegovo/njezino ime niti njegova/njezina adresa neće navesti ni u kojem izvješću ili prezentaciji koja će proizići iz projekta. Razumijem da će samo istraživač i predmetni nastavnik imati pristup osobnim podacima koji budu prikupljeni tijekom projekta te da će i oni morati čuvati povjerljivost svih osobnih podataka.

Razumijem da ni moje dijete ni ja nećemo imati izravne koristi od ovog projekta. Također razumijem da će prikupljene informacije možda pomoći istraživaču i drugim stručnjacima da bolje razumiju odnos između učenika engleskog jezika s oštećenim vidom i društva. Razumijem da moje dijete i ja možemo dobiti informacije o rezultatima ovog projekta tako da kontaktiramo istraživača ili mentora. Razumijem informacije koje sam pročitao/la i pristajem na sudjelovanje. Dobio/la sam vlastiti primjerak ove suglasnosti za sudjelovanje u istraživanju.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Potpis

\_\_\_\_\_  
Datum

Ako imate bilo kakva pitanja ili dvojbe u vezi s ovim projektom, molimo Vas da kontaktirate mentora:

**dr. sc. Anđel Starčević**, poslijedoktorand  
Odsjek za anglistiku, Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
Ivana Lučića 3, 10 000 Zagreb  
telefon: + 385 (0)1 \*\*\*\* \*\*  
e-pošta: [astarcev@ffzg.hr](mailto:astarcev@ffzg.hr)

ili studenticu koja provodi istraživanje:

**Franka Palada**  
Odsjek za anglistiku, Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
Ivana Lučića 3, 10 000 Zagreb  
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e-pošta: [franka.palada@gmail.com](mailto:franka.palada@gmail.com)

## SUGLASNOST ZA SUDJELOVANJE U ISTRAŽIVANJU

Ja, \_\_\_\_\_, pristajem na sudjelovanje u sociolingvističkom istraživačkom projektu koji provodi studentica **Franka Palada** u sklopu diplomskog rada.

Razumijem da ću u sklopu projekta sudjelovati u razgovoru čiji će se zvučni zapis snimati, a teme razgovora odnosit će se i na moj privatni život, moje poglede i stavove o engleskom jeziku i učenju istog te na moje dojmove o stavovima koje okolina ima o meni kao učeniku/ci stranog jezika.

Razumijem da će intervju trajati otprilike sat vremena ili koliko ja to budem želio/željela. Razumijem da ni na koji način nisam obavezan/na sudjelovati u intervjuu i da mogu odbiti odgovoriti na bilo koja pitanja, da mogu u bilo kojem trenutku prekinuti intervju ili u bilo kojem trenutku prekinuti svoje sudjelovanje u projektu. Razumijem da se niti moje ime niti moja adresa neće navesti ni u kojem izvješću ili prezentaciji koja će proizići iz projekta. Razumijem da će samo istraživač i predmetni nastavnik imati pristup osobnim podacima koji budu prikupljeni tijekom projekta te da će i oni morati čuvati povjerljivost svih osobnih podataka.

Razumijem da neću imati izravne koristi od ovog projekta. Također razumijem da će prikupljene informacije možda pomoći istraživaču i drugim stručnjacima da bolje razumiju odnos između učenika engleskog jezika s oštećenim vidom i društva. Razumijem da mogu dobiti informacije o rezultatima ovog projekta tako da kontaktiram istraživača ili mentora. Razumijem informacije koje sam pročitao/la i pristajem na sudjelovanje. Dobio/la sam vlastiti primjerak ove suglasnosti za sudjelovanje u istraživanju.

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Potpis

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Datum

Ako imate bilo kakva pitanja ili dvojbe u vezi s ovim projektom, molimo Vas da kontaktirate mentora:

**dr. sc. Anđel Starčević**, poslijedoktorand  
Odsjek za anglistiku, Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
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## SUGLASNOST ZA SUDJELOVANJE U ISTRAŽIVANJU

Ja, \_\_\_\_\_, suglasan sam da moje dijete, \_\_\_\_\_, sudjeluje u sociolingvističkom istraživačkom projektu koji provodi studentica **Franka Palada** u sklopu diplomskog rada.

Razumijem da će moje dijete u sklopu projekta sudjelovati u razgovoru čiji će se zvučni zapis snimati, a teme razgovora odnosit će se i na njegov/njezin privatni život, njegove/njezine poglede i stavove o engleskom jeziku i učenju istog te na njegove/njezine dojmove o stavovima koje okolina ima o njemu/njoj kao učeniku/ci stranog jezika.

Razumijem da će intervju trajati otprilike sat vremena ili koliko moje dijete to bude željelo. Razumijem da moje dijete nije ni na koji način obavezano sudjelovati u intervjuu i da može odbiti odgovoriti na bilo koja pitanja, da može u bilo kojem trenutku prekinuti intervju ili u bilo kojem trenutku prekinuti svoje sudjelovanje u projektu.

Razumijem da će moje dijete u sklopu studentske prakse sudjelovati u deset sati individualne nastave čiji će se zvučni zapis snimati. Također razumijem da moje dijete i ja možemo odbiti snimanje u bilo kojem trenutku.

Razumijem da se niti njegovo/njezino ime niti njegova/njezina adresa neće navesti ni u kojem izvješću ili prezentaciji koja će proizići iz projekta. Razumijem da će samo istraživač i predmetni nastavnik imati pristup osobnim podacima koji budu prikupljeni tijekom projekta te da će i oni morati čuvati povjerljivost svih osobnih podataka.

Razumijem da ni moje dijete ni ja nećemo imati izravne koristi od ovog projekta. Također razumijem da će prikupljene informacije možda pomoći istraživaču i drugim stručnjacima da bolje razumiju odnos između učenika engleskog jezika s oštećenim vidom i društva. Razumijem da moje dijete i ja možemo dobiti informacije o rezultatima ovog projekta tako da kontaktiramo istraživača ili mentora. Razumijem informacije koje sam pročitao/la i pristajem na sudjelovanje. Dobio/la sam vlastiti primjerak ove suglasnosti za sudjelovanje u istraživanju.

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Potpis

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Datum

Ako imate bilo kakva pitanja ili dvojbe u vezi s ovim projektom, molimo Vas da kontaktirate mentora:

**dr. sc. Anđel Starčević**, poslijedoktorand  
Odsjek za anglistiku, Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
Ivana Lučića 3, 10 000 Zagreb  
telefon: + 385 (0)1 \*\*\*\* \*\*  
e-pošta: [astarcev@ffzg.hr](mailto:astarcev@ffzg.hr)

ili studenticu koja provodi istraživanje:

**Franka Palada**  
Odsjek za anglistiku, Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
Ivana Lučića 3, 10 000 Zagreb  
telefon: +385 (0)98 \*\*\* \*\*  
e-pošta: [franka.palada@gmail.com](mailto:franka.palada@gmail.com)

## SUGLASNOST ZA SUDJELOVANJE U ISTRAŽIVANJU

Ja, \_\_\_\_\_, pristajem na sudjelovanje u sociolingvističkom istraživačkom projektu koji provodi studentica **Franka Palada** u sklopu diplomskog rada.

Razumijem da ću u sklopu projekta sudjelovati u razgovoru čiji će se zvučni zapis snimati, a teme razgovora odnosit će se i na moj privatni život, moje poglede i stavove o engleskom jeziku i učenju istog te na moje dojmove o stavovima koje okolina ima o meni kao učeniku/ci stranog jezika.

Razumijem da će intervju trajati otprilike sat vremena ili koliko ja to budem želio/željela. Razumijem da ni na koji način nisam obavezan/na sudjelovati u intervjuu i da mogu odbiti odgovoriti na bilo koja pitanja, da mogu u bilo kojem trenutku prekinuti intervju ili u bilo kojem trenutku prekinuti svoje sudjelovanje u projektu.

Razumijem da ću u sklopu studentske prakse sudjelovati u deset sati individualne nastave čiji će se zvučni zapis snimati. Također razumijem da mogu odbiti snimanje u bilo kojem trenutku.

Razumijem da se niti moje ime niti moja adresa neće navesti ni u kojem izvješću ili prezentaciji koja će proizići iz projekta. Razumijem da će samo istraživač i predmetni nastavnik imati pristup osobnim podacima koji budu prikupljeni tijekom projekta te da će i oni morati čuvati povjerljivost svih osobnih podataka.

Razumijem da neću imati izravne koristi od ovog projekta. Također razumijem da će prikupljene informacije možda pomoći istraživaču i drugim stručnjacima da bolje razumiju odnos između učenika engleskog jezika s oštećenim vidom i društva. Razumijem da mogu dobiti informacije o rezultatima ovog projekta tako da kontaktiram istraživača ili mentora. Razumijem informacije koje sam pročitao/la i pristajem na sudjelovanje. Dobio/la sam vlastiti primjerak ove suglasnosti za sudjelovanje u istraživanju.

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Potpis

Datum

Ako imate bilo kakva pitanja ili dvojbe u vezi s ovim projektom, molimo Vas da kontaktirate mentora:

**dr. sc. Anđel Starčević**, poslijedoktorand  
Odsjek za anglistiku, Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
Ivana Lučića 3, 10 000 Zagreb  
telefon: + 385 (0)1 \*\*\*\* \*\*  
e-pošta: [astarcev@ffzg.hr](mailto:astarcev@ffzg.hr)

ili studenticu koja provodi istraživanje:

**Franka Palada**  
Odsjek za anglistiku, Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
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**APPENDIX 3 – LINGUISTIC BIOGRAPHY SELF-ASSESSMENT SHEET**

**Linguistic biography**

Name and surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SKILL/LANGUAGE	Croatian	English
<i>speaking</i>		
<i>listening</i>		
<i>reading</i>		
<i>writing</i>		

Do you speak any other languages?

YES      NO

If yes, which ones?

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