University of Zagreb
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of English (TEFL Section)
Department of Pedagogy

VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Graduation thesis

Student: Janja Kopačević

Supervisor: Associate Professor Renata Geld

Co-supervisor: Assistant Professor Iva Ivanković

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STAVOVI SLIJEPIH I SLABOVIDNIH UČENIKA O VAŽNOSTI UČENJA ENGLESKOG KAO STRANOG JEZIKA

Diplomski rad

Studentica: Janja Kopačević

Mentorica: dr. sc. Renata Geld, doc.

Sumentorica: dr. sc. Iva Ivanković, doc.

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Examining Committee:

Stela Letica Krevelj, PhD, postdoc.

Assistant Professor Iva Ivanković

Associate Professor Renata Geld, PhD

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Abstract

English as a foreign language is a compulsory school subject for all learners across the European Union, including the special needs students. One such group are the visually impaired students. For visually impaired people, learning English might be challenging due to many obstacles they have to overcome because of their lack of vision, yet it can be extremely beneficial. Foreign languages open different possibilities for their future and the visually impaired students see language as one of the most important tools for finding their way around the world. The aim of this thesis was to study the attitudes of 29 visually impaired high school learners towards English as a foreign language, all of whom are students of the Center for Education and Rehabilitation Vinko Bek in Zagreb. The instrument used to investigate their attitudes was a semi-structured interview the results of which were then discussed according to the five research questions. The results have shown that the participants find English very useful because of its status as a *lingua franca.* They believe that they will use English in their future employment, however, most of them declare having limited knowledge of the English language. Furthermore, they expressed they enjoy their English lessons, but have many ideas on how to improve them and adapt them to their needs and desires. Most importantly, they feel completely alienated from everyday English and have very little knowledge about native speakers of English and their culture.

Key words: visual impairment, learners, blind, partially sighted, English, attitudes, teaching

Introduction

Today, English is the most widely spoken foreign language in the world. It has now become a compulsory subject in most schools of the European Union. Most people have access to it, yet not everyone achieves native-like proficiency in it. The reasons for this are various – someone's aptitude, motivation, teaching conditions, attitudes etc. Attitudes are regarded as a settled way of thinking or feeling about something. If a person has a positive or a negative attitude towards something, it influences their engagement in it. Therefore, having a positive attitude towards English as a foreign language is important for the acquisition of English. Individual's attitudes change over time, and they certainly vary from one person to the other.

What do visually impaired people think about the English language? This question raised a number of other questions for the author and resulted in the following study. In Croatia, visually impaired people rarely become independent enough to live alone. Therefore, they often get sheltered employment, while many of them remain unemployed even later in life. Their attitudes towards education in general, and foreign languages in particular, has not been studied much, and this was the reason why the author chose to investigate this topic. We investigated the attitudes towards English as a foreign language among 29 visually impaired learners by means of semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the interviews offered insight into the participants' attitudes toward the English language in general, their English lessons and teaching materials and methods, the importance of English for their future and attitudes toward native speakers of English language.

In the first part of the thesis, a theoretical background is introduced in order to delineate the previous research done on the topic and to define the terminology regarding visual impairment in language learners, which is often confused and used incorrectly. After this, the study is presented and the findings are discussed. Finally, some conclusions and implications for future teaching of English language to visually impaired learners are considered.

Theoretical background and previous research

Visual impairment

In recent years, the number of visually impaired learners has noticeably increased and European education systems are obliged to provide education for these learners (Jedynak, 2015). According to the World Health Organization[1], around 1.3 billion people around the globe live with some form of visual impairment. With regards to distance vision, 188.5 million people have mild vision impairment, 217 million have moderate to severe vision impairment, and 36 million people are blind. The leading causes of vision impairment are uncorrected refractive errors and cataracts and approximately 80% of all vision impairment globally is considered to be avoidable. Nevertheless, worldwide public health is improving every day, and the percentage of visually impaired people is decreasing on a daily basis.

Blindness is by many considered to be the total absence of visual sensations. Most people believe that blind people only see a black void and nothing else. Nevertheless, there are many definitions and types of blindness that can be found in this spectrum. Only a small percentage of blind people are actually completely blind, while most of them can 'see' some sort of light, or at least sense the direction of that light (Dunlea, 1989). There is still no one single definition of blindness, which leads to different categorizations and beliefs about it.

Firstly, it is necessary to define the terms *blind, partially sighted* and *visually impaired learners* to properly differentiate between them. According to the European Blind Union (EBU) *Policy of Statement on Low Vision* from 2003, there are three types of definitions related to visual impairment, namely medical, functional and legal (Jedynak, 2015, p. 24). In the past, the term *visually impaired* was used to refer to those who are now called *partially sighted*, and nowadays it is used as an umbrella term to denote both *blind* and *partially sighted* (p. 25). In medical definitions, there also exists the term *low vision.* This term stands for a significantly reduced vision, where a person's performance is affected by such low vision, but it can still be used, and there is also a possibility of vision training. Their vision is lower than normal, but a person can use low vision devices such as large print, magnifiers and illumination to help them cope with everyday

[1] This information was found on World Health Organization official website (https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment) and accessed June 6, 2019.

duties (p. 26). Medically speaking, people with low vision have a partial sight even after treatment, an acuity of less than 6/18 to light perception, or a visual field of less than 10 degrees from the point of fixation, but they still use, or are able to use vision for planning or execution of a task (Jedynak, 2015, p. 26). Low vision occurs due to ophthalmologic and neurological disorders. According to World Health Organization[2], *blindness* is defined as a medical condition in which visual acuity is less than 3/60 in the better eye with the best possible correction. This happens due to physiological or neurological factors.

Furthermore, The International Classification of Diseases 10[3], also known as the ICD-10 distinguishes four levels of visual function: *normal vision, moderate visual impairment, severe visual impairment* and *blindness*. In this classification, *moderate* and *severe visual impairment* are equal to the term *low vision.* Sometimes medical definitions tend to exclude certain groups or devalue the number of their deficiencies, or abilities, which has led to the new, functionality-based definition of *low vision*. Here, *partially sighted person* is defined as a person for whom reduced vision affects one or several of the following activities: 1) reading and writing, 2) orientation and mobility, 3) daily life activities, 4) communication and 5) maintenance of any visual task (EBU Policy Statement, 2003, p. 9, as cited in Jedynak, 2015, p. 27). *Blindness* is here also shown on a continuum. Jedynak explains that *blindness* refers to severe visual impairment with residual vision or a lack of vision with remaining light perception, while *total blindness* has complete lack of form and visual light perception and this is clinically known as NLP, short for no light perception. Furthermore, Jedynak points out that it is obvious there is a need to distinguish between *legal blindness* which provides people with government assistance such as financial benefits and services, and *functional blindness* which leaves one unable to perform daily functions independently.

In this research, the term *visually impaired* will be used as an umbrella term to cover all of the aforementioned gradients of vision deficiency. Definitions of visual impairment are broad and different, and the short introduction above proved that it is important to include both medical and social parameters when defining visual impairments, so as not to exclude certain groups. Their

[2] This information was found on World Health Organization official website and accessed June 5, 2019. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment

[3] This information was found on World Health Organization official website and accessed June 5, 2019. https://icd.who.int/browse10/2010/en#/H54

ability to do daily tasks is as important as their medical diagnosis when deciding on what type of education is appropriate for a learner. A crucial distinction between visually impaired learners necessary to consider when preparing teaching materials is the one between partially sighted groups and totally blind groups. Partially sighted learners can still read when they use magnifiers or other innovative technologies, while totally blind groups cannot read and do not have any sight, which makes their daily activities much different (Jedynak, 2015). Furthermore, the onset of impairment should also be taken into consideration when preparing teaching methodology and daily activities for visually impaired learners. Congenitally blind people are born without vision, while adventitiously blind people lose their vision after the age of five (p. 29). Their early vision helps them to grasp some objects and achieve better results in education and life in general. Congenital blindness is usually diagnosed only when the infant is four to five months old (Dunlea, 1989, p. 9).

Visual information is seen as crucial in the development of social, cognitive and linguistic structures. Furthermore, vision is most often thought to be the "underlying mechanism that guides the process of language acquisition" (Dunlea, 1989, p. 4). But, how do blind people acquire language, being left without vision? They must rely on other information from the environment available to them. Vision enables us to maintain a coherent concept of our environment and to grasp large amounts of information at the same time. Blind people do not have this advantage, and they have to sequentially retrieve information from their surroundings. They use their tactual, auditory and kinesthetic experiences to form a conception of the world (p. 10). Most (or at least the most reliable) information are acquired through tactual contact with the environment. Furthermore, Bigelow (2005) believes that language becomes blind children's most useful tool for deciphering the external world.

Visual impairments and education

It was not until the mid-1990s that European foreign language policy started taking into consideration the needs of special education needs learners and advancing their education (Jedynak, 2015). Many international documents require equal rights for all, such as *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), *The Convention against Discrimination in Education* (1960), *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), *The Convention on the Protection and*

Promotion of Diversity in Cultural Expressions (2005*), The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2006) and many others (as cited in Jedynak, 2015, p. 39). According to these documents, every child has the right to education, the right to equality and the right to be an equal part of society.

In the past, these students had a subordinate role in the society and were often seen as disabled who could not function as everyone else does. According to the groundbreaking work by Jedynak, these times have passed, and the era of equality and inclusion brought forward their equal rights to education. Visually impaired people only gained their right to education in the close of the 18th century, when it was recognized in France (p. 45). Many blind students now enroll in mainstream education. Moreover, the year 2003 was marked as the European year of people with disabilities, and this started many discussions on the topic of visually impaired learners. It resulted in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, published in 2006, which helped to improve all aspects of their education. Most SEN pupils in European countries nowadays have Individual Educational Programmes, which means that they enroll a mainstream school, but have adapted curricula which enable them to follow the regular program (p. 44).

Special education needs learners are nowadays integrated into mainstream schools. Their education requires specific teaching techniques and modifications to usual school practices and this job usually falls on teachers. The spectrum of special education needs learners is very wide and includes "the gifted, the mentally challenged, the emotionally disturbed, those with impairments of vision, hearing or speech and those with orthopedic and neurological handicaps" (Majewski, 1983, as cited in Jedynak, 2015, p. 21). According to the *Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training – ET 2020*[4], there are three broad cross-national categories of special education needs students, based on their perceived difficulties in education. They are the following: "the disabilities category (pupils with clear organic reasons for their difficulties in education, such as learners with vision impairments), the difficulties category (pupils who have emotional and behavioral difficulties or specific difficulties in learning) and the disadvantaged category (pupils who need additional resources to compensate for problems caused by cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds". Therefore, the term special education

[4] This information was found on official European Union Law website (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN) and accessed June 6, 2019.

needs is wider than terms such as disability, which was formerly used, because it includes learners' emotional, behavioral and social difficulties.

Nevertheless, different countries have different definitions and categorizations for special education learners, which makes cross-comparisons between countries very difficult and sometimes inaccurate. Some countries distinguish only one or two categories of special needs learners, while others define more than ten of them (Jedynak, 2015). Even the terms used for such learners have drastically changed throughout the years (from *idiot, moron, educationally sub-normal, mentally deficient etc. to socially accepted terms such as SEN learners*), which shows that the society has become more emphatic and accepting towards everyone. The emphasis has been shifted from their deficiencies and disabilities to their educational needs, and curricula are now organized in such a way that they enable these students the most appropriate education they can get.

The aim of education in general, according to Jedynak, is to help such learners develop their understanding of surrounding environment and achieve as much independence as it is possible. Nowadays, most schools are inclusive, which means that they enable all learners learning together, no matter what their difficulties or differences are. Jedynak (pp. 41-42) gives further guides to organizing education for SEN learners: schools should respond to each learners' needs individually and accommodate different styles and rates of learning, curricula should as well be adapted to special education needs learners (they should not have a different curriculum, as only some adaptations are necessary to enable success) and provide them with opportunities to develop their different abilities and interests. Furthermore, their assessment should be based on their abilities and progress, they should have technology assistance and be prepared for adult life after education.

Although the time of segregation of visually impaired people has passed and they can live their lives as fully sighted people do, many of them are still in a worse situation than the general population (p. 91). In the Central and Eastern European countries, including Croatia, most visually impaired people are only offered sheltered employment in special workshops, they get disability pensions, are generally unemployed, have low job qualifications and, what is more, the employers are full of prejudiced attitudes towards them. Moreover, Jedynak posits that the legislation is poor and the economy is moving forward very slowly, which does not help their current situation. Therefore, it might be easy to predict that many young visually impaired people do not become

independent in their lives and that they do not have great life goals which they wish to achieve. Considering such low job prospects, some of them might not find education or foreign language learning important.

Many researchers have tried, and seem to have proven that visually impaired people tend to be cognitively weaker than their sighted peers. The problem with these results is that they compare pupils of the same age, but they do not have the same environment and education conditions, which thus leads to different results. Once there will be an intelligence test specifically designed for visually impaired people, such comparisons may be legit. Some studies observed that visually impaired learners achieve the same goals as their peers do, only some time later (p. 100). Such is the study by Samuel P. Hayes who was one of the pioneers in objectively researching the intelligence of visually impaired people by using intelligence tests. He found that visually impaired learners are poorer on such tests until the age of ten and a half, while this poor performance does not seem to exist or is significantly lower in older age. Of course, one should consider that there are individual differences which have to be taken into account when considering such studies (Stančić, 1991). Stančić names few possible reasons behind their poorer performance: the lack of vision, poorer performance on abstract tests, they are less proficient in sensory discrimination tests, neglect, small number of social contacts and experiences, sensory and cultural deprivation etc.

Jedynak (2005) states that, when it comes to socio-emotional development, visually impaired learners have more difficulties in communication and interaction than their sighted peers have. Difficulties also appear in play situations, whereas emotion expression and recognition do not seem to have been impacted by visual impairments. Research proves that vision is important for the process of human bonding, play and emotional expression (p. 112). These findings are important for teachers, especially language teachers. Jedynak believes that when teaching social behavior, teachers need to describe in detail what is acceptable, make students aware of their body and facial movements and the results they can have on their interlocutors, which can be extremely important in foreign language teaching.

Visual impairments and foreign language learning

It is only since 1990s that foreign language learning and teaching of visually impaired learners became a prominent area of education (Jedynak, 2015). European Union issued many policies related to foreign language learning and all of them are related to promoting equal opportunities in education and inclusive strategies, democratic citizenship and social cohesion, linguistic diversity, mobility of all the EU citizens, development of language, digital and intercultural competences and lifelong learning (p. 36). Foreign languages are not important for sighted students only, but for special education learners too.

Blind people cannot observe the facial expressions and other muscular movements of their interlocutors, and that is why they solely depend on acoustic imitation. Thus, speech development is extremely important for them (Dunlea, 1989). Furthermore, as Nikolic observes (1987), visual impairments do not obstruct the process of language learning because one does not learn a language by seeing it, but by the sense of hearing it. Language is very important in their lives because it is one way of maintaining contact with their surroundings and people in their environment.

Congenitally blind people have more troubles acquiring first language and developing speech than adventitiously blind people do (Jedynak, 2015). As it is with sighted learners, the first language experiences have an impact on foreign language learning in visually impaired learners, too. Therefore, one must understand basic principles underlying first language acquisition (p. 93). In comparison with their sighted peers, visually impaired children mostly associate meanings with their own activities, i.e. they largely depend on action and relational words. What is more, visually impaired children do not delay in the age when first words are spoken or in their growth of early vocabulary in comparison with sighted children (Bigelow, 2005). However, there are some differences in comparison with their sighted counterparts. Visually impaired children use action words almost exclusively to refer to their own movements, and they also fail to show the kind of creativity when it comes to idiosyncratic inventions that are found in sighted children (Dunlea, 1989, p. 50).

Nevertheless, Jedynak (2015) observed that visually impaired learners sometimes are delayed when it comes to their final achievements in a language. Besides this, their motivation and reasons for studying a foreign language vary from their peers', which can be one of the causes of differing

results. Their success in foreign language depends on tailoring language education provision, language teachers and visually impaired learners' individual traits (pp. 93-94). When it comes to learners' individual traits, teachers should consider pupils' self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, learner autonomy, coping competence, attribution and locus of control (p. 94).

"One of the "golden rules" of teaching is that the more senses one engages, the better and quicker is the process of learning" was the statement that the blind professor Nikolic used to highlight the difficulties that visually impaired people face when learning foreign languages (Couper, 2007, p. 6). As it has already been mentioned, learning a foreign language is always beneficial in some way, and should not be excluded from anyone's education. A foreign language curriculum is now compulsory for all special needs students within the European Union (Jedynak, 2015). Therefore, there is a great need for advances in *typhloeducation* (education for blind and partially sighted learners) and *foreign language typhlometodology* (foreign language teaching and learning in the setting of visual impaired learners) (p. 13).

The differences in defining visually impaired learners across countries make it impossible to maintain coherent statistics that one could use to determine the exact number or to measure and compare success of foreign language learners who are visually impaired. Furthermore, knowledge of a foreign language is one of eight basic competencies that all European citizens should acquire. Blind and visually impaired learners are no exception, in fact, they need foreign languages to gain insight into other cultures and opportunities to meet new people. Learning a language other than their mother tongue is as important for them as it is for any other human being (p. 14). Jedynak goes on to conclude that foreign languages reduce the gap between visually impaired learners' lack of sight and their environment (p. 37). Since language and communication are one way of interpreting the world, foreign languages allow them to increase their professional opportunities and integrate into the society more easily (p. 15). Also, studies have shown that language learning positively influences visually impaired learners' social integration, and consequently their self-esteem (p. 37).

There are also many organizations, such as the World Blind Union, European Blind Union or the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment who consistently work on improving the accessibility of education to visually impaired learners, as well as language learning (p. 15). Nevertheless, there are few blind learners who master a foreign language. Only a small

number of pupils achieve impressive results in final secondary school exams, and they rarely continue their education at university. Out of those who do, only few complete the studies and get their diplomas (p. 16). Since language is connected to cognitive, motor and socio-emotional development, it is obvious that it is also affected by a lack of vision (p. 113). For visually impaired learners, learning something in a foreign language requires as much direct and tangible experience as it is possible. Jedynak explains that knowledge starts by identifying types of objects or settings, understanding that there are terms that describe these objects and finally understanding the terms for describing the relationships between objects. This process is much easier for sighted children. Consequently, visually impaired learners cannot learn as fast as their counterparts can. It takes longer for them to grasp physical properties of objects such as shape, size and movement, something that is readily available for sighted children (p. 113).

According to Jedynak (2015), all learners should be given a holistic education – "one that develops not only their intellect, but also helps them grow emotionally, creatively and spiritually, enabling them to become more fully rounded human beings" (p. 144). Therefore, language teaching to visually impaired learners is not only developing their language skills, but also helping them to get a sense of achievement, to enjoy learning languages, communicating with others etc.

McColl, in her book *Modern Languages for All* (2000) concludes that all learners can learn a foreign language, no matter what their abilities are. Teachers look at what learners can achieve in their first language, and adjust their foreign language learning according to their potential (Jedynak, 2015). When it comes to visually impaired learners, they have often been labelled as not competent enough in their first language, and many people did not see the reason why they should learn a foreign language. Although some visually impaired learners do perform lower than their sighted peers, they undoubtedly gain many benefits from foreign language learning. Nikolic states (1987, p. 63) that those visually impaired learners who seem to have not reached the linguistic standards of their sighted peers have been found primarily in integrated classrooms, and their lack of success is probably the result of inadequate support and encouragement from teachers. Thus, labelling cannot be justified at all. Furthermore, foreign language not only helps them to integrate into society, but by learning it, they also gain skills such as attention, listening, responding and communicating. Therefore, their sometimes modest achievements in foreign languages are not as important as their personal experience and development of such features.

Some authors, such as Nikolic (1987) claim that visually impaired people have aural sensitivity and intense memory that are greater than those in sighted people. Nevertheless, many other authors claim that visually impaired people do not have greater senses, but that they only know how to use them more efficiently. For example, Nikolic (1986, p. 223) observed that "well-trained ears do not necessarily equate with success in language studies". Furthermore, many visually impaired learners achieve greater results in foreign languages than their sighted peers do (Jedynak, 2015). However, a number of disadvantages in education and environment usually lead to their poor foreign language performances. To achieve foreign language proficiency, language education should be tailored to the visually impaired learners needs through the application of special didactic devices, language material adaptation and development of individualized plans. Also, language teachers should be properly trained in terms of awareness of specific visually impaired learners' needs and application of appropriate teaching methods. Lastly, but not least important, visually impaired learner's affectivity should be given more attention (p. 157).

Foreign language teaching, or second language acquisition in blind learners is a field that has not been studied much throughout history. Nevertheless, the studies (such as Araluce, 2005; Krzeszowski, 2001; Dorstet, 1963; Nikolic, 1987 etc.) that have been conducted show that a lack of vision does not necessarily bring low foreign language skills (p. 15).

Jedynak gives some prescriptions on how to organize foreign language classrooms for visually impaired students. Their books and materials should be in an accessible format (Braille, large print or audio). Other than that, they should be included in non-curricular school activities, socialize with other learners with visual impairment and sighted children and share experiences with them (p. 46). Their school should be equipped with special technology and equipment that is accessible to them (screen readers, Braille printers, scanners, voice output reading machines etc.) and it should provide visually impaired students with the curricula that is offered for the sighted peers, with minor modifications made to adequately satisfy their needs. Teachers have a great role in this – they should be trained specifically to work with visually impaired learners and to adjust the education to their needs. A small number of research studies concerned themselves with teacher's influence on learner's foreign language success. Nevertheless, a teacher plays a key role in the language learning process – they are a language model, a counselor and a facilitator (p. 170). When it comes to visually impaired learners, according to Jedynak, their teacher is also "an organizer, an

assessor, a resource, a prompter, a controller, a tutor, a psychotherapist etc". A teacher should be communicative, know how to solve problems, individualize education to the students' needs, and also understand the type of visual impairment a student deals with in order to know how to structure their education. Adapting instructional materials might also benefit students' attitudes towards foreign languages. Aikin Araluce (2005, as cited in Jedynak, 2015, p. 154) claims that instructional materials which contain tactile motivational work to promote the same goal as the visual stimuli found in the textbooks designed for sighted children and that they have an impact on children's academic achievements and their attitudes toward foreign language learning. Furthermore, it develops a child's creativity and self-expression. Wright (1995) maintains that storytelling is recommended to children, as it develops a positive attitude towards learning a foreign language, and at the same time it encourages fluency and develops creativity.

Affective factors in foreign language learning

The ultimate goal of education is to enable pupils to independently function as members of society (Jedynak, 2015). Apart from many other skills which learners acquire during their schooling, foreign language proves to be extremely important in today's globalized world. Foreign language teaching and learning saw a massive boost after World War II. Before the War, people mostly learned foreign languages in naturalistic settings or in elite schools reserved for richer parts of the society (p. 35). With the founding of the European Union (EU), knowledge of a foreign language began to be seen as a valuable competence and became one of the EU priorities for education policies. The main aim of teaching foreign languages is to promote intercultural communication and competence in learners, autonomy and reflection. Early research in SLA only connected cognitive factors to the mental processes involved in language acquisition to predict foreign language success, but nowadays it is widely accepted that affective factors play a great role in acquiring a language.

It is commonly thought that second language achievement is mediated by two basic types of components: the cognitive (intelligence, language aptitude and cognitive learning strategies) and the affective component (attitudes, motivation, personality traits, language anxiety, learning strategies that involve emotional involvement) (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1995, p. 257). Attitudes and motivation cannot be directly observed but they can be inferred from the learner's behavior.

Studies on affective factors have been conducted for many years now and their importance is becoming more apparent. However, their repercussion is not yet felt in schools and many teachers neglect individual differences of learners when teaching (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998, p. 7). It was during the 1990s when the research on attitudes and motivation for learning foreign languages appeared.

Nowadays, most studies use Robert Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition. It consists of four main parts: previous factors, individual differences, the context in which the language is being acquired and the results of learning (Gardner, 1985). All these elements have an effect on second language acquisition, either directly or indirectly. Individual factors can be differences in learning, and they are usually divided into cognitive and affective factors. Cognitive factors include intelligence, language abilities, learning strategies, while affective factors are emotional characteristics of a child which determine his/her reaction to the situation of second language acquisition. The most important affective factors are attitudes, motivation and fear of language (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998, p. 12). According to Mihaljević Djigunović, attitudes are directly connected to motivation and they influence it. Attitudes can cause motivation to be changed. Gardner believes that all these elements, excluding attitudes, influence the learning process in a formal learning environment. He does not think that attitudes are connected and believes that motivation and success can overpower them. Furthermore, Krashen's monitor model includes both attitudes and motivation. While Gardner believes they encourage the learner to act, Krashen believes they serve to ease the process of information gathering (Krashen, 1981). Gardner's model was founded on Lambert's model, but they are very different. Lambert sees the cause and effect relationship between attitudes and language knowledge, while Gardner implies that motivation is more important in this process and proves his beliefs with empirical data (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998, p. 14).

A common belief was that attitudes and motivation are the most important factors for language learning, but more contemporary scholars think different. Mihaljević Djigunović (1998) believes that cognitive factors are not the only ones that influence the language learning process and points out the prominence of affective factors in both formal and informal contexts of language learning. Schumann (1975) asserts that cognitive factors could not exist without affective factors, i.e. that they empower them.

The most common approaches and instruments of studying affective factors come from psychology. They are mostly questionnaires, sociometric instruments, matched guise technique, learning diaries, directed introspection, thinking out loud and self-observation, psychology tests etc. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998). However, Mihaljević Djigunović claims that the validity of such instruments is often questioned due to the consciousness of being examined, as well as the honesty of the examinee.

An attitude is often defined as "an acquired and relatively stable relation towards people and objects that a person comes in contact with" (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998, p. 21). They are considered to be a base on which motivation for learning is founded, and they are, therefore, extremely important in education. Attitudes change throughout life, based on a context in which a person finds themselves. An attitude consists of three components: affective, behavioral and cognitive (Rajecki, 1990). According to Rajecki, the affective component represents the evaluative aspect of an attitude and it evaluates the value of everything, whether it is good or bad. The behavioral aspect is the person's intention to act, while the cognitive component consists of information, facts and knowledge that have to do with the object of an attitude (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998, p. 21).

In foreign language classrooms, students often have a negative attitude towards some aspects of learning which leads to a lack of motivation for learning. Studies have shown that a negative attitude can be affected by changing the cognitive component of an attitude. When a cognitive component is changed, it leads to the change of the affective and behavioral components. Moreover, cognitive components are most often the focus of researchers due to their accessibility, i.e. they are more accessible than affective components (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998). The collision between the attitudes about learning and students' expectations and actual learning activities they experience in schools leads to many difficulties (Mihaljević, 1991, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998, p. 22). Horwitz (1987) also thinks that students' attitudes towards education can strongly affect their end result and success. Gaining insight into attitudes might benefit language learning process because teachers can use that information to adapt their teaching techniques and materials. Mihaljević Djigunović holds that positive attitude towards the language that is being learned is the foundation for developing motivation for learning.

Lambert and Gardner (Gardner, 1985) in their studies on attitudes and motivation for learning English and French as a second language differ between few groups of attitudes connected to motivation for learning. These are attitudes towards the society and the nation in which the language is spoken, attitudes towards the language learning classroom, learning languages and language teacher, basic attitudes which concern the overall curiosity for foreign language learning and some individual characteristics such as ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, Machiavelism, anomie and the need to succeed. Their groups of attitudes was also used to construct the instrument for this thesis. Gardner and Lambert believe that attitudes towards native speakers of a language are the most important ones for motivation, while other authors (such as Dornyei, 2015) believe that these attitudes are not important for motivation for foreign language learning. It has been commonly accepted that a learner's achievement in learning a second language is related to their motivation to learn that language, which in turn is related to a number of their attitudinal characteristics. Contradicting Gardner and Lambert, Mihaljević Djigunović concluded that attitudes towards foreign language learning in general and English in particular, as well as towards the self as a language learner, the teacher and the teaching strategies are the most important ones (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998, p. 59).

Attitudes toward and motivation for foreign languages are globally an underresearched field. In Croatia, Mihaljević Djigunović conducted a longitudinal project in which she found that there are highly positive initial attitudes towards foreign language learning and that they can remain very positive under favorable conditions (p. 261). Compared to other languages (such as German), learners of English are more likely to have positive attitudes, to aim at higher learning goals and are more successful in learning, Nikolov concludes in his 2007 study (p. 262).

Mihaljević Djigunović and Bagarić carried out a study on Croatian learners to get an insight into attitudes and motivation for learning English and German at the end of primary secondary education. Their results have shown a negative trend when it came to German, while English language had much more positive attitudes. The authors explain this by the fact that English is slowly gaining the status of a second language in Croatia and that it has lately been considered the language of international communication. Its increasing presence in the media and the linguistic landscape certainly impacted learners' attitudes. Furthermore, Dornyei (2015) suggests that such attitudes and motivation might stem from the wish to become a globalized world citizen. What is

more, out-of-class exposure to English enables learners to acquire the language unconsciously. Other than this, such exposure benefits the motivation to produce language and leads to a feeling of success, which is often seen as one of the most significant factors that lead to positive attitudes towards a foreign language (Bagarić, 2003, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, Bagarić, 2007, p. 275). When it comes to learners' attitudes about the teaching process, the results show that learners appreciate oral communication and that they are aware of the importance of language output. Nevertheless, they think that they have to learn words and texts that are of no use for them and that they do not produce comprehensible output (p. 277). Didović Baranac, Falkoni-Mjehović and Vidak conducted a research and found that there is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes towards learning English when sex is taken as a variable (Didović Baranac, Falkoni-Mjehović, Vidak, 2016). As the possible reason for this result, which is in contrast with most worldwide scholars researching the same topic, authors name the outside exposure to English language (movies, internet, music etc.) which is equal for each sex. The results were the same when age was taken as a variable, and the reason for such results might be the fact that everyone starts learning English at the same age and continues to do so until the end of their formal education (p. 22).

Most participants in Mihaljević Djigunović's 1998 research believe that having a vast knowledge of vocabulary is the most important feature of language learning, yet many give prominence to grammar. Nevertheless, giving prominence to grammar is considered to be connected to the fact that most participants wanted to have a solid knowledge of English language, and they believe that grammar is necessary for that. The results also show that participants are strongly instrumentally motivated, i.e. they learn English to be able to integrate in the society and to make contacts with those who learned English as a foreign language as well, rather than with native speakers. Consequently, they believe that knowing the culture of a native speaker of English language is not crucial in learning languages. They are mostly interested in English as an instrument for international communication, and as such it does not belong to any of the cultures. It is necessary to highlight that participants were the students of a first year of political science and journalism university programs, and their attitudes might differ from other social groups. Mihaljević (1991, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998, p. 131) found that elementary school pupils in Croatia want to learn English because they find it nice, interesting, logical etc. What is more, pupils unanimously decided that they like foreign language education and such positive attitudes were

confirmed in a study conducted three years later. This study proved that pupils' attitudes were positive, and that they became even more positive after some years have passed, which is contrary to Lambert and Klineberg's findings (1967) that only children after the age of ten are effectively ready to study foreign languages. Nevertheless, Mihaljević Djigunović proved that even children who are seven years old find foreign languages and their native speakers interesting (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998). The NFER study on the teaching of French in primary schools in England and Wales (Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen & Hargreaves, 1974) pointed out that early starters declared more favorable attitudes towards speaking French than those who began at the usual age of eleven. Vilke (1979, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2012, p. 31) pointed out that an early starter acquires a wider cultural outlook and develops greater tolerance towards other people, thus leading to greater international understanding than later starters have. Similar studies in Croatia also found that an early start is beneficial to the development of positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language and creating a strong and lasting motivation in learners that would make success in foreign language learning possible (p. 31). Furthermore, Mihaljević Djigunović in her study found that the extent to which young beginners may be acquainted with the foreign language culture seems to be dependent on the exposure they get to the foreign language and culture, through mass media and the like (p. 51).

Mihaljević Djigunović in her 2007 research conducted on 2137 participants concluded that high school students have a more positive attitude towards foreign language learning than elementary school students. Most authors agree that attitude and affective factors generally are the most important factors in predicting the learner's success in high school learners, while the same is not the case with elementary school foreign language learners (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007). In her study, Tokić found that Croatian learners have a positive attitude towards English language and culture. Learners are very aware of the need to develop cultural knowledge and awareness (Tokić, 2016). There is also a correlation between positive attitudes and a final grade in English. Students who have higher grades, also have a more positive attitude towards the English language and culture. Students who love English language and culture love to communicate in English, listen to music and watch movies in English and are more successful in their English classes (p. 202).

In her study on attitudes towards the teacher, Mihaljević (1991-1992) used a semantic differential scales developed by Gardner, Smythe & Smythe (1974), based on four measures: evaluation of the

English teacher, rapport, competence and inspiration. Her results show that significant effects for grades in English were obtained on all four measures, though there was a marginally significant effect for inspiration (p. 150). This points to a connection between achievement and attitudes towards the teacher. Mihaljević Djigunović believes this happens due to the perceived teacher's qualities which lead to learners' perception of language classes as meaningful, important and of high quality, or because the learner is successful in their learning, they perceive their teacher as competent, inspiring, good, etc.. Significant interactions between sex and age on the measures for teacher rapport and inspiration are not only of great interest but may also be very instructive. Furthermore, secondary school students did not seem to perceive teachers as inspirational, which may be due to very large classes which are not well equipped.

When it comes to recent studies on the topic of motivation, and consequently attitudes, Dörnyei's work seems to dominate the literature. He divides the history of motivation research into three phases: 1) the social psychological period (1959-1990) characterized by the work of Gardner and Lambert, 2) the cognitive-situated period (during the 1990s) characterized by work drawing on cognitive theories in educational psychology, and 3) the process-oriented period (from 2000s onwards) characterized by an interest in motivational change, initiated by the work of Dörnyei, Ushioda and their colleagues (Dörnyei, 2015, p. 66).

Gardner (1976) and his colleagues were the first to note that students' attitudes toward a specific language group are bound to influence how successful they will be in incorporating the aspects of that language. They believed that second languages are important in order to mediate between different ethnolinguistic communities, and saw this as the motivational factor to learn languages. Gardner's model posits that language achievement is influenced by integrative motivation, language aptitude and a number of other factors. Integrative motivation includes integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation (p. 51). Dörnyei (2015) holds several things and terms in his theory unclear and misleading (such as the double use of integrativeness or motivation). Gardner (1976) came up with The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), a multi-componential motivation questionnaire which has been shown to have good psychometric properties. It is seen as an advanced statistical data processing technique which set high research standards in the area. Yet, Dörnyei (2015, p. 71) criticizes his stability and unwillingness to change his theory over time according to the dramatic changes that took place in motivation research in

the 1980s. Because of the pervasive use of the battery of tests practically all subsequent models on the same topic followed his suit. Dörnyei believes that the three subscales defining the motivation subcomponent overlap at the item level of the AMTB, which leads to high intercorrelation between these scales.

Interesting studies such as that by Nikolov (2001, as cited in Dörnyei, 2015, p. 75) state that sometimes positive attitudes toward a second language can be overridden by learners' situation-specific motives such as classroom methodology, assessment, focus on form or rote-learning. A study by Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt and Shohamy (2001) pointed out that the best predictor of the intention to continue studying a language was the quality of the teaching program, even when the attitudes towards that language community were negative. In relation to Gardner's theory, Noels and his colleagues came up with the self-determination theory. They propose a larger motivation construct made up of three interrelated substrates: "intrinsic reasons (inherent in the language learning process, whether it is fun, engaging, challenging etc.), extrinsic reasons (external and internalized pressures, Gardner's instrumental orientation can be equated with this) and integrative reasons (relates to positive contact with the second language group and perhaps identification with that group)" (Noels, Pelletier, Clement, Vallerand, 2000, p. 60).

Dörnyei argues that one should adopt a process-oriented approach when researching motivation and attitudes, because they change throughout one's life, and even during a single class (Dörnyei, 2015). Many different studies (such as Dörnyei & Otto, 1998) have found that, when studying motivational evolution, it really does change and is not stable. Useful in the motivational studies are the concepts of possible selfs and the ideal self. When one imagines their future actions and desires, one feels inclined to work towards that goal (p. 95). Dörnyei connects the concept of integrativeness (which consists of attitudes towards the L2 speakers/community and instrumentality) with the 'self' framework. If one's ideal self is associated with the mastery of a second language, one has an integrative disposition. This is connected to the attitudes toward that language's speakers/community, because they are the closest parallels to the idealized L2 speaking self. Therefore, the more positive attitudes one has about L2 speakers, the more he will work toward the goal (p. 96). Due to all the previously mentioned information, Dörnyei suggests replacing the term integrativeness with the term Ideal L2 self. It does not conflict with Gardner's theory, rather, it expands on it.

Dörnyei highlights the importance of individual differences in all types of research concerning humans. He defines individual differences as anything that is stable and marks a person as a distinct and unique human being, relating to enduring personal characteristics (p. 3). Such differences result in different learning styles and rates, as well as subsequent strengths and weaknesses in the ultimate attainment of a language. Rather than just seeing them as negative, individual factors are an interesting field of research and are considered to be the most consistent predictor of second language learning success. Individual differences in language learning have been a featured research topic since the 1960s. They included language aptitude, language learning motivation, learning strategies, learning styles etc. The most important features of individual differences according to Dörnyei are personality, ability/aptitude and motivation (p. 4). He also mentions temperament and mood, learning styles, language learning strategies and the self-regulatory capacity that underlies the strategy use. Motivation is one of the most important individual difference variables that affects language learning success. It is the driving force to sustain the learning process and the impetus to initiate it in the first place (p. 72). Without motivation, even individuals who are extremely capable cannot accomplish their goals.

Other learner characteristics that are important to mention are anxiety, creativity, willingness to communicate, self-esteem and learner beliefs (p. 170). Anxiety can be both beneficial/facilitating and inhibitory/debilitating. Also, there is a trait and state anxiety, where trait means that it is a stable predisposition, while state anxiety is the transient experience of it (p. 177). Horwitz et al. (1986) found that foreign language anxiety is not connected to general trait-anxiety and that it is a relatively independent factor. A construct called willingness to communicate captures the phenomenon where individuals display consistent tendencies in their predisposition toward or away from communication, given the choice (p. 180). Self-esteem is often seen as the most pervasive aspect of any human behavior and its importance is reflected in many human contexts. It is closely related to the notion of self-confidence; both share a common emphasis on an individual's beliefs about his or her attributes and abilities as a person. Yet, self-esteem is the evaluative quality of the self-image or self-concept and it refers to an individual’s overall evaluation or appraisal of themselves, whether they like themselves or not (p. 183). The way people think about themselves has an influence on the way they conduct, as well as on their motivation and their attitudes. Therefore, it is important in SLA. It is most commonly connected to student achievement, i.e. students with high self-esteem are more likely to succeed in learning because

they have a clearer sense of direction regarding their priorities and goals (p. 184). Learner beliefs are difficult to conceive as enduring, trait-like factors. They constantly change throughout life. The main difference between attitudes and learner beliefs is that the latter have a stronger factual support, whereas the former are more deeply embedded in people's minds and people around them (p. 188). Dörnyei argues that past research on the topic proved that learner beliefs affect the way they master the L2. Dörnyei concludes that when studying individual differences, one should take into account the context in which studying takes place.

Affective factors in foreign language learning of visually impaired learners

It was in the 1970's when researchers began to study affective factors in foreign language learning, yet nowadays very few studies concern visually impaired learners' affective factors and its correlation to foreign language success (Jedynak, 2015). What is more, the research that had been done was usually conducted with children and adults, rarely with adolescent persons (p. 210). Yet, adolescence is a particularly interesting period of life and affective factors of adolescents are an interesting field to investigate. They are extremely important because the way pupils feel about language is correlated with their final results and knowledge of a language (p. 17). Even though many teachers know this fact, they still often prefer cognitive factors when teaching.

Majewski, according to Jedynak, observed that blind people usually have low self-esteem, a lack of motivation, a lack of psychological adaptation to their disability and high anxiety (p. 18). This is greater in adventitiously blind people. All of this has a great effect on foreign language acquisition – they often block input from a language acquisition device or do not have positive attitudes that would maintain their motivation for language learning, which leads to external locus of control, and therefore failure in language learning. This is why teachers often use external motivation factors with blind learners, as they do not feel motivated enough to acquire a foreign language. The reason for this might also be the lack of research on the topic and thus poor education of teachers for internally motivating their learners.

The European Blind Union carried out a two-year project *Pedagogy and Language Learning for Blind and Partially Sighted Adults in Europe*. They studied adults' motivation to study foreign languages and the results have shown that their reasons are not remarkably different from their sighted peers (p. 67). Most adults learn foreign languages as a part of their obligatory education and their reasons for taking up foreign languages are either personal or professional. Teachers

should adjust their teaching process to the needs of visually impaired learners, and this does not only mean their physical needs but also their motivation, attitudes and their final usage of language.

Affective factors are always important in education. Their importance is even greater when it comes to visually impaired learners who bring many challenges to foreign language classrooms, due to their deficiency (p. 173). Positive emotions benefit language learning, while negative emotions inhibit it. Krashen mentioned this in his Affective Filter Hypothesis, explaining that motivation and positive attitudes lead to greater success in learning (1981, p. 22)

While there is a great deal of studies on affective factors and foreign language learning, there is a scarce number of them which cover the population of visually impaired learners. Visually impaired learners feel negative emotions such as fear, shame, self-doubt and guilt in a language classroom more often than their sighted counterparts, as a consequence of their vision deficit or loss, and these negative emotional states sometimes inhibit language learning (Jedynak, 2015, p. 174). Nevertheless, Jedynak posits that some of them feel positive emotions such as high motivation, autonomy and empathy or positive self-concept when learning foreign languages. The following factors are the most important ones that have an impact on foreign language learning: self-esteem, self-efficacy, anxiety, empathy, motivation, attribution and locus of control, coping competence and learned helplessness and autonomy (p. 173). All of these are emotions which students bring to classrooms and teachers should know how to interpret and use them.

Self-esteem, according to Williams and Burden (1997, as cited in Jedynak, 2015, p. 174) is the "totality of a complex and dynamic system of learned beliefs which each individual holds to be true about his or her personal existence and which give consistency to personality". In other words, it is the way we think and feel about ourselves. People can have high or low self-esteem. Obviously, being a visually impaired person brings different feelings about oneself when compared to sighted people. The way a person feels about themselves has a great impact on what they will achieve in life. Provided that children feel loved and have accepted their visual impairment, they can develop positive self-concepts. Families are the most important others in this context and it is their duty to accept and value the individual as s/he is, in order for the individual to have high self-esteem (p. 176). Some research claim that parents of low-vision children show less understanding of the impairment than the parents of fully blind children (Bateman, 1962, as cited in Jedynak, 2015). Therefore, low-vision children tend to have lower self-esteem and a more

negative perception of themselves, and they often express feelings of isolation and unjust fault (Sacks, 1996, according to Jedynak, 2015). Some recent research studies such as Huure et al.'s study from 1999 prove that there are no differences in the self-esteem of partially sighted and fully blind learners, which might stem from contemporary inclusion and increased awareness of visual impairment by families and the society in general (p. 177).

Self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs about their "capabilities to complete tasks and reach goals within a specific domain" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). This feeling strongly affects all areas of human endeavor, especially foreign language learning. Findings on self-efficacy in visually impaired learners differ. It is believed that families, teachers, peers and objects around a person affect their self-efficacy. As with self-esteem, families who do not accept visually impaired children lead to their negative self-image and low self-efficacy (Jedynak, 2015, p. 180). Also, if the family or school curriculum are too inflexible and do the job instead of a learner, it leads to their negative beliefs about themselves. It is important to develop trust between people and to encourage visually impaired learners to learn languages. Poor academic performance does not lead to societal problems or isolation, and this is something that all learners should know.

Anxiety is nowadays often mentioned. It is usually related to feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension or worry (Scovel, 1978, p. 134). Learning a foreign language is a demanding task for everyone, and it often produces anxiety in visually impaired learners. It is important to stress that not all anxiety is negative. There is harmful and helpful anxiety, where helpful anxiety creates the conditions which facilitate the learning process (Jedynak, 2015, p. 181). Many factors lead to anxiety in classrooms, such as incompetent teachers, lack of specialized equipment, lack of adequate programming and timing, lack of necessary resources to facilitate learning, lack of policies, lack of support systems etc. (Lieberman et al., 2002). Learners also feel anxious before and during tests. Anxiety in visually impaired learners is the result of their vision loss. Contrary to the results connected to self-esteem, persons with poorer vision are more likely to manifest psychological distress such as anxiety (Jedynak, 2015, p. 183). Therefore, Jedynak suggests that teachers make language learning conducive for visually impaired learners, adopt ICT, have flexible programs and adequate resources.

There are not many studies that explore the motivation of visually impaired learners learning foreign languages. Motivation has been considered a broad term and, therefore, people use it as an

excuse for almost any task they perform – whether they are successful, or not. Indeed, motivation is multidimensional. It relates to self-efficacy and many believe that it is an umbrella term which refers to cognition, affect, motivated behavior, a personality trait, some kind of process, inner force or power, attitudinal complex, set of beliefs, stimulus appraisal, mental energy etc. (Jedynak, 2015, p. 185). Almost everyone agrees that without motivation, success in a foreign language is unlikely. When it comes to adult learners, they are mostly intrinsically motivated because no one forces them to learn new languages. Younger learners are sometimes instrumentally motivated, as they learn languages either to please parents or they have to learn them as a part of their mainstream education. Furthermore, Jedynak (2010, as cited in Jedynak, 2015, p. 188) reports that many visually impaired learners struggle with learned helplessness and lack of self-worth which leads to them not having enough motivation for studying languages. Jedynak believes that the fact that their Braille foreign language books are very big, heavy and unattractive also lowers their motivation for learning foreign languages. Moreover, they have an insufficient amount of autonomy and are very dependent on their environment, which hinders motivation, as well as does incomprehensible input provided by teachers.

Although many visually impaired learners display pessimistic attitudes towards possible perspectives of using foreign languages in their future, they do recognize its importance. The problem is that, according to the European Blind Union[5], the average unemployment rate of visually impaired learners of working age is over 75 percent, and they are not likely to use foreign languages in their future. There are various ways that teachers can motivate visually impaired learners. They should use adequate teaching methods and techniques which compensate for non-verbal communication, introduce techniques based on auditory, olfactory or tactile modes that are available to visually impaired learners, focus more on pronunciation and intonation, use recorded sounds of some actions (e.g. opening a door), introduce cultural aspects (literature, history, arts, music…) etc. (Jedynak, 2015, p. 189). Also, teachers should not neglect reading and writing skills with visually impaired learners. They should be treated as their counterparts, which means they have to acquire these skills, too. Jedynak believes that the same conditions are also a motivational factor for visually impaired learners. Teachers should provide comprehensible input and meaningful interaction in language classrooms, create relationships between peers by providing

[5] This information was found on official website of European Blind Union (http://www.euroblind.org/about-blindness-and-partial-sight/facts-and-figures) and accessed June 6, 2019.

positive feedback, building self-esteem in unmotivated students, provide easily achievable goals, carefully select materials and tasks to avoid unnecessary stress, allocate sufficient time to complete tasks, introduce ICT tools etc. (p. 190). According to Jedynak, nothing motivates a learner more than meeting another visually impaired learner who achieved success in foreign language learning. It is important to mention that not all advice is suitable for all children. Teachers should take into consideration the type of visual impairment and student's individual needs and attitudes in order to create the best suitable course for the student.

Jedynak (2015) in her study observed that visually impaired learners did not believe they could reach high skills in foreign languages and that they did not think that competence in English would help them to integrate with the sighted community or to find a job in the future. According to Jedynak, teachers also revealed that the students with visual impairments were not happily engaged in classroom activities, that they had low motivation and poor academic achievement. Nevertheless, studies proved that visually impaired learners have "excellent memory and supreme auditory abilities" that make them good language learners (p. 217). Yet, she concluded that these predispositions are often neglected, due to various reasons. Sometimes, the reason is that teachers put too much emphasis on their cognitive growth, and not enough emphasis on emotional aspects of education.

Jedynak (2015) found that visually impaired learners experienced the feeling of helplessness while learning a foreign language. The most common sources of helplessness are "limitations related to visual impairment, fear of mistreatment, lack of acceptance from the fully sighted community, and family problems" (p. 247). Jedynak also examined sources of helplessness in foreign language learning and found that they find "lack of language competence and the English Braille, lack of supportive services for learners with visual impairment, lack of adaptive language resources and making realistic and unrealistic comparisons to learners with minor vision deficits" as the most common sources of helplessness. This, in turn, influenced their English attainments and resulted in their low motivation to study English. Furthermore, some participants of this study showed unsatisfaction with their courses and felt neglected because it sometimes took more than two months to get their course books in a large print or Braille. They also felt ashamed when they performed poorer than their peers, which was also one of the reasons why they did not feel motivated to study English (p. 248). There were also examples of children whose parents taught

them not to feel sorry about themselves and who travel a lot, and therefore see the purpose of learning English, and are also very good at it. Such students find coping strategies helpful – they find English interesting because of cartoons or songs in English, they learn it to please their parents and make them proud etc. These reasons are enough for them to be motivated for foreign language learning. Some learners state that they use Internet as a source of English. They learn slang words, nasty words, informal language and other interesting parts of a language that are not taught in formal education. Therefore, they feel more motivated to speak English and build self-confidence for language which language classrooms rarely obtain (p. 252). Moreover, many participants of the study stated that they want to achieve great things in life, get a job and they saw English as beneficial to their goals. Many of them also thank their parents for their independence. This independence is often shifted to language learning, and such children know how to organize their own language learning and their free time well. Participants with multiple disabilities are less likely to be motivated to learn English. In this study, one boy had a visual impairment and a hearing deterioration which led him to believe he will not work after graduation, and therefore English is of no use for him.

3. Study

Aims

Due to English slowly but surely gaining the status of a second language in Croatia, as well as in most of the world, its importance as *lingua franca* is indubitable. Our linguistic landscape is filled with English and most people are becoming accustomed to their everyday exposure to English, at least in some way. Visually impaired people cannot see the same amount of information in English around them as sighted people see. Therefore, it might be assumed that their perception of English is different than those of their sighted peers. Consequently, they might have different attitudes towards English as a foreign language. Thus, this exploratory study aimed at answering the following questions:

1) What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards English as a language?
2) What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards their English language lessons?
3) What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards native speakers of English language and their culture?
4) What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards the importance of English for their future?
5) What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards the teaching materials and methods employed at their school?

According to these research questions, the following hypotheses have been put forward:

H1: Visually impaired learners have positive attitudes towards English as a language.

H2: Visually impaired learners have positive attitudes towards their English language lessons.

H3: Visually impaired learners have positive attitudes towards native speakers of English language and their culture.

H4: Visually impaired learners consider English language important for their future.

H5: Visually impaired learners consider teaching materials and methods uninteresting.

Methodology and procedure

In order to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and needs of the visually impaired learners in English language teaching, a qualitative approach was found to be the most suitable for this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 high school students from the Center for Education and Rehabilitation Vinko Bek, a specialized institution for visually impaired people. All participants were either blind or partially sighted and they spanned from first to fourth grade of high school. First, the consent was obtained from the school principal to conduct interviews on the school premises with their students. In order to select and structure the interview questions[6], the author reviewed the literature and previous research on the same or similar topics. In addition to that, a focus group was carried out with two blind and two partially sighted high school students. The participants answered general questions about the English language learning and teaching, which helped to create the instrument and create an overall picture of their attitudes. Afterwards, one of the teachers of English language, the head of the high school department of that school, arranged the time of the interviews. All the participants were presented with a short description of the study aims and methodology and were informed that their participation was voluntary and that the results would be presented anonymously. The interviews were carried out by the author of this work in April 2019 in a quiet office of the school. Each lasted approximately 15 minutes. They were audio-recorded and transcribed prior to data analysis[7]. After transcribing the interviews and categorizing the answers into several different categories, a detailed analysis was conducted.

Instrument

As it was aforementioned, the semi-structured interview was created after the literature review and the focus group had been carried out. It consisted of 21 open-ended questions organized in five categories, according to the five research questions. The first category, *VIL's attitudes towards English as a language*, elicited information on the participants' general attitudes and opinions about English – whether they liked the language at all or not, whether they liked to learn it and use it etc. The second category, *VIL's attitudes towards English lessons,* obtained answers which helped to understand what VIL thought about their English lessons. The third category,

[6] An example of interview questions can be found in appendices.
[7] One example of such interview is transcribed and can be found in appendices.

VIL's attitudes towards the importance of English for their future, brought out their opinions on their future need for English, if there is any – whether they thought they will need it at work etc. The fourth category, *VIL's attitudes towards teaching materials and methods*, investigated their perception of their teaching materials – whether they found them useful, interesting, boring, if they had a need to change it etc. Finally, the last category, *VIL's attitudes towards native speakers of English language and their culture*, examined their perception of Americans, British people, Australians etc. and how much VIL knew about their culture. An open-ended format of an interview was selected to gain a more in-depth discussion and enable participants to freely express their opinions and attitudes. The questions were mostly general, but the interviewer asked to explain each of the answers. The interviewer asked follow-up questions until the answer was fully clear (*Can you explain? Can you give me an example? What do you mean by…?)*. The semi-structured interview allowed the author to change the order of the questions when it was necessary or to skip certain questions. In the end, the participants were asked to provide basic biodata – their age, class, languages they speak, visual impairment etc. The interview was conducted in the Croatian language.

Participants

The participants were high school students of Center for Education and Rehabilitation Vinko Bek, a specialized institution for visually impaired people. All the participants were either blind or partially sighted and they ranged from first to fourth grade of high school. They were from 15 to 20 years old. They also attended different school programs - they were either business secretaries, telephone operators or administrators. Most of them were not from Zagreb, where their school is located, but came from different parts of Croatia and lived in a student dormitory that is in the same building as the school itself. There were 14 female (4 blind and 10 partially sighted) and 15 male (4 blind and 11 partially sighted) participants. All of them had a vision deficit since birth. Some of them had English as their second language, while some had German. Nevertheless, all the participants preferred English over German. Yet, most of them believed that their English abilities were low and that they did not know the language as well as they should, when compared to their sighted peers. None of them have ever travelled to a country where English was an official language.

Results

The results are presented in line with the predetermined categories according to the research questions. Each category has answers divided into subcategories, based on who provided the answer - a blind/partially sighted participant, male/female and the class they attend. Certain themes are repeated in more than one category, depending on the participants' answers. The interview was conducted in the Croatian language and the participants' answers have been translated into English for the purpose of the research.

1. What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards English as a language?

The first category provides information on visually impaired learners' perception of English as a language in general. They were asked what they thought about the language, whether they liked to learn it, use it, where they find the opportunities to use it and whether they saw a difference between English in school and outside of school.

We established that the answers were mostly the same, no matter what group the participant belonged to – blind/partially sighted, male/female, according to age factor etc. Twenty-four out of twenty-nine visually impaired learners stated that they liked English as a language, often emphasizing its importance as a *lingua franca*. Five of them expressed great fondness towards English language. Twenty-four of them considered it a nice language and thought that it was important to know English.

(1) "…*English is very good. Almost the entire world speaks it, understands it and therefore it is necessary to communicate with foreigners and to be able to speak in different countries…".*

(2) "…*it's the most beautiful language in the world, I love it and it is not hard to learn English…"*

(3) *"...I think that it is the best language in the world. At least for me, it is fairly easy to learn it and I like English...."*

(4) "I think English language is interesting. The grammar is extremely interesting. I am very good at English and that is why I like English…".

Nevertheless, the remaining five participants claimed that they did not like English. Their negativity towards English mostly stemmed from their perception of their own competence in English. Yet, there was one participant who claimed that he was bad at English, but considered it

a nice language. All five of them expressed that they did not think they were good in English, at least not as good as they think their sighted peers were. Two of them claimed that their primary school teachers did not encourage them to learn English much, which is why they have difficulties with English in high school.

(5) "*I don't like English because I am not good at it",*

(6) *"...I am not good at languages in general, therefore I also don't like English. But it is not because of English itself, I just generally do not like foreign languages...*"

(7) "*I am not good at it, but I like the language, I find it interesting*".

(8) "*My primary school English teacher did not force me to learn English, that is why I have lost interest in it and I am not good at it*".

When it comes to learning English, 16/29 of participants stated that they liked learning English because they find it interesting. Yet, the other thirteen participants said that they do not like learning English because of different reasons. The most common answer was that they did not like learning at all, not a single subject in school, therefore they also did not like learning English, while there were few who stated that they did not like learning it because they are not good at English.

(9) "*Because it is hard"*

(10) "*I rarely find something interesting"*

(11) *"It's not that it is an ugly language, it isn't like German, but I just do not like learning it"*

(12) "*I do not like learning at all, and that is why I do not like learning English, too".*

An interesting finding showed that 15/29 students used it in their daily conversations with friends, but only certain phrases or slang words, while others never used it outside of school. Ten participants said they used it on internet to chat with friends or play video games, that they listened to music in English or watched movies, but this was definitely not a dominant answer. Most participants, 19/29 said they rarely used English online or watched movies in English. Ten of them only listened to Croatian music and had no interest in music in English language. The remaining nine said they sometimes watched movies or TV series in English, but that it did not happen often. Blind participants did not find watching movies with voice over interesting and they found this being an obstacle for them and their English abilities. Overall, 15/29 students said they only used English outside of school when it was necessary – when a stranger stopped them in the street or

when they had to use it on computer. Only seven participants used it outside of school because they wanted to, as in joking with friends. Therefore, their encounters with English mostly happened only in school.

(13) "*I don't like to use it. I never use it outside of classroom, not even with my friends or online, and I also do not listen to English music*"

(14) *"I love using English. I use it when I'm joking around with my friends, I say something in English, jokes and so on"*

(15) *"I use it online and in everyday conversations with my friends. We do not talk much in English, but we use some phrases, slang etc."*

(16) "*I do not like using it. Except on some video games, I do not use it at all. I do not watch English movies or listen to English music"*

(17) "*If I need to use it, then I do use it. It happens on the street, when a stranger stops me and asks me something, but it is usually something short. I never use it with my friends or online*".

Yet, 20/29 participants thought there was a difference between English they used and learned in and outside of school. Nevertheless, those nine participants who did not use it outside school thought that there was no difference between them at all.

(18) "*English in movies is faster, and we speak slower in class. I prefer English in school because it is easier."*

(19) "*English in school is more formal, but I like both of them"*

(20) "*We learn British English in school and I listen to British songs, so there is no difference between them*".

2. What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards their English language lessons?

Without exception, all participants consider English language an important part of their school curriculum. They believe that it is extremely important to learn English because it is a *lingua franca*.

(21) "*It is an international language, and wherever you are you can find your way around if you know English"*

(22) *"If people do not know English today, they are illiterate. Everything is in English, especially computers*".

When asked whether they were looking forward to English lessons, the answers were divided. Surprisingly, the female partially sighted group of participants had the largest percentage (4/10) of negative answers. They stated that they were not looking forward to English lessons because they were not good at English language.

(23) "*I do not find English lessons bad, but I am bored because it is in English, and I mostly do not understand anything in English"*

(24) "*I do not find English lessons interesting"*.

Five negative answers were found in other categories, too. Yet, positive answers predominated (19/29).

The participants' answers showed that partially sighted male students were dominantly not nervous when they had to speak in English.

(27) "*No, I am never nervous when I have to talk, I am pretty communicative",*

(28) *"I was nervous before, but now that I know English better, I am not nervous. The more I know, the less nervous I am",*

(29) *"No, not at all, I am mostly pretty confident in English "*.

Other categories were somehow fairly divided – half of the participants feel nervous, mostly because they are not sufficiently good enough in English to communicate. Twelve participants feel they would be less nervous if they had more knowledge of English and if someone helped them to practice communicating in English more. Yet, there were two participants who explicitly stated that they refuse communicating in English outside of school because they are very bad at it and do not think they are able to do it.

(30) "*I am afraid because I do not have the knowledge that I should have, because I have not practiced enough, and I am afraid that I will say something wrong"*

(31) "*I find talking in English hard and that is why I am nervous"*.

(32) "*I do not want to speak in English, I would not know how to respond to a question because I would not understand a question. Nothing can help me here because I do not have a talent for languages"*.

Almost all participants (25/29) claimed that they were satisfied with their English lessons and how they were planned.

(33) "*I think it is great, the teacher explains everything to us and adjusts it to our needs. I think we do everything exactly the way we are supposed to, everything is balanced*".

There was one, partially sighted male participant from first grade who considers their English lessons boring.

(34) "*It is boring because we take a textbook and go through it. We could instead do some other things, making posters, using workbooks, some materials that are not from a textbook, maybe*".

When asked what they would change, 14/29 participants expressed no need for changing anything. Yet, after some follow-up questions five of them stated that they were writing too much, and that they found this exhausting. Nevertheless, while some (2/29) stated they think they were reading too much, others (5/29) would like to read more. Some (5/29) said they would like to do grammar less, and others (5/29) said they would like to do more grammar. Similarly, some (3/29) found their working tempo too slow, while for others (4/29) it was too fast.

Most participants (22/29) claimed that they enjoyed activities in the English classroom. Eleven of them stated that they preferred reading texts and translating them. Ten participants found grammar exhausting and said they did not think it was extremely important for them.

(43) "*I enjoy them because we learn something new and we also have fun*"

(44) "*I find it great when we read a text and then translate it, I learn most from such activities"*

(45) *"I like texts in our textbook, I would like to do more of them*".

(46) "*I would minimize grammar – it is important, but not as much as we do it*"

(47) "*I would only like to learn new vocabulary, I do not like learning grammar at all and I think it is useless*".

Still, there were some participants (7/29) who did not enjoy their English classroom activities and had many ideas how to change it. The younger students were less critical of their lessons.

(48) "*I would include some movies, more talking, interesting topics, listening"*

(49) "*We could listen to music in English or watch movies because I do not like watching them now because I do not understand the language"*

(50) *"I would make it more fun – introduce quizzes, group works, presentations, articles from newspapers or internet*".

3. **What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards native speakers of English language and their culture?**

Surprisingly, 19/29 participants expressed that they did not want more native speakers of English language in Croatia for various reasons. Mainly, they believed that anyone who comes to Croatia ought to know Croatian language, i.e. they should adapt to Croatian culture rather than vice versa.

(51) "*If they are in Croatia, they have to speak Croatian"*

(52) *"I think there are plenty of English people in Croatia, I hear them in trams, I do not think there is need for more of them*"

(53) *"Croatian language is Croatian language. Croats are Croats, we are here, we do not need strangers. It is good if they come as tourists, but they shouldn't stay here".*

Many participants (11/29) simply fear their need to communicate in English and bringing more native speakers of English in Croatia would probably augment their need to do so.

(54) "*If they come to Croatia, Croatian language will be lost and I do not want that, people use too much of English nowadays, anyways"*

(55) "*I would not want to speak to foreigners in English*".

(56) " *It's ok if they are in Croatia, but they have to learn Croatian language".*

Older participants were more open towards native speakers of English language.

(57) "*I think it would benefit us because people would have to speak in English and they would learn it better",*

(58) "*I like hearing people speaking in English and I would like to hear it more*"

(59) "*Hearing native speakers speak English would make us learn the pronunciation better*".

Predominantly (15/29), participants did not think native speakers of English language differ from Croats. They stated that native speakers of English language and Croats are the same, except according to some individual differences, which do not stem from language differences.

(60) "*Except that they have a different language, they are not different from us, they behave the same as we do"*

(61) "*I do not think they behave differently, people are people*".

Yet, fourteen participants saw differences, especially blind male participants who emphasized these differences very much. There were some answers that were extremely surprising (and even incorrect).

(62) "*I think British people are very polite, they are always happy to help, and Croats are not"*

(63) *"They eat different food and dress differently, they are also more outgoing and open than Croats*"

(64) "*American people are vegetarians. They mainly eat vegetables, while we Croats eat meat and everything else*".

Further questions proved that almost all participants knew very little about English native speakers' cultures. Male participants knew a lot more than female participants (9/16 male participants mentioned some customs, opposite to only 6/13 female answers), both in blind and partially sighted groups. They mainly talked about English sports, still only seven participants knew something about sports in Great Britain or USA. Most answers included common stereotypes about British/American culture.

(65) "*I like their apple pie, American food is great"*

(66) *"Americans love hockey and basketball, while British people love football. British people also drive on the left side of the road. I like to watch Premier League",*

(67) "*British people have St. Patrick's day, 5'o clock tea, English breakfast. I like the culture of drinking tea every day, and I definitely know more about British than American people"*

(68) *"They drink tea, mostly with milk*".

It was obvious from their answers that they knew some facts about British/American food and sports, but were not familiar with their other customs. The number of participants who claimed that they were not familiar at all with their culture was large – eighteen participants claimed that they did not know anything about them, and could only remember certain things when they were asked direct follow-up guestions.

(69) "*I do not know anything about their culture, I have never heard anything about it*".

Also, ten of them said that they did not listen to English music or watched English movies. Even if they claimed that they did sometimes, they said it happens rarely and that they preferred Croatian music and movies.

4. What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards the importance of English for their future?

All participants, except one partially sighted male participant, considered English important for their future. Their reasons were various – some of them were planning to be English teachers, many were planning to move out of Croatia (mostly to Germany), they wanted to be able to communicate with foreigners etc. Most participants (23/29) asserted that they would probably use English in their future workplace. There was an obvious difference between blind and partially sighted participants' answers in this category – it seemed that blind participants still did not think about their future jobs or possibilities, while partially sighted participants have given it some thought.

(70) "*I am a telephone operator so if a foreigner calls me, I have to communicate in English*"

(71) "*The computers are all in English, as well as manuals and everything, and I will definitely use those in my job*"

(72) "*The employer will employ someone who knows English rather than someone who does not, it is an advantage when searching for a job".*

Blind participants, both male and female, often claimed they still have not thought about their future work places and did not see where they could use English.

(73) "*I do not know that now because I do not think about it"*

(74) *"I do not know, maybe for communicating with strangers, but I do not know how I would use that at my work place"*

(75) *"It will not help me at my work place because I do not know English. I will probably need it, but I do not know it and therefore I will not use it"*.

A more general question – what learning English enables them to do in life – generated many different answers. All participants saw some kind of benefit they gain by learning English.

(76) "*You simply broaden your knowledge of languages, you know how to communicate with many people"*

(77) *"You can find a job easier"*

(78) *"I can use English to help around my house by knowing how to read manuals for all the equipment"*

(79) *"I can use English online, on the internet, playing video games, reading articles etc."*

(80) *"I can find my way around an unknown country"*

(81) *"I can move out of Croatia"*

(82) *"Watching movies without subtitles"*.

5. **What attitudes do visually impaired learners have towards the teaching materials and methods for learning English?**

All participants, except for two partially sighted male participants (from first and second grade) considered their English lessons interesting.

(83) "*It is interesting because we learn new things, joke around"*

(84)*"The texts are interesting and our teacher explains well, also we joke around"*

(85)*"We always do some new things, learn about other cultures*".

As it can be predicted, when it comes to grammar or vocabulary, the opinions are divided – seven participants claimed that they preferred learning grammar, while four of them preferred vocabulary. The rest either did not find anything interesting or could not decide what they preferred. Seven out of twenty-nine participants loved learning new vocabulary and think grammar

is not as important. Even though participants found their English lessons interesting, ten of them expressed their dissatisfaction with the lesson dynamics. They think that they repeated activities too often, always did the same type of activities or tasks and that learning was not made fun.

(86) "*It is not dynamic because everything happens too slowly – it is monotonous"*

(87) *"We always do the same things – our teacher arrives, he immediately tells us what page we should open, and we go through 5-6 lessons during one or two classes and that is it".*

Twelve participants asserted that they would like to engage in different kinds of activities, such as reading texts that are not from their textbook, watching movies, listening to music in English, having discussions about a certain topic, oral presentations prepared by students etc.

(88) "*I would omit some texts and include more interesting and current texts"*

(89) *"It would be great if we did something that was not in the textbook. Our textbook is from 2005, there isn't anything in it that happened in the last fourteen years and that is not interesting"*

(90) *"I would change some topics, but there are still things that are interesting and nice to hear. Everything is OK; but I would not mind some changes and doing something outside textbooks".*

Yet, there were also twelve participants who would not like to change anything and found their current learning situation satisfying.

(91) "*I like our tempo because we got used to it and it works for us"*

(92)*"We do everything the way we are supposed to"*.

Teaching materials in this school are completely adapted to the students' needs – everyone has textbooks with large print or Braille, depending on their need. Some students have a regular textbook, while a few of them asserted that they can read a regular print, but they had to use a large print because everyone in class does. That is why some of them express dissatisfaction with their books.

(93) "*My book is too big, it gets on my nerves, I do not need such a large print and it is too heavy*".

Many of them claim that their elementary school materials were not adapted to their needs, as well as that the teachers in elementary schools did not try to make their learning process easier, and that

is why they think they are now weak in English language skills. In this school, they also have computers with voice-overs and some students use their computers in classrooms to type everything. Blind participants were not very critical of their learning materials – they found them interesting and they would not change much. One thing that they mentioned is the number of pages in textbooks. Their teacher uses a regular textbook and tells them to open a certain page, but it takes them a lot of time to find the same topic in their Braille/large print textbook and they would like to change this. Partially sighted participants, both male and female, found many things that they would like to change in their learning materials.

(94) "*I would like to have less text, more pictures and practicing"*

(95) "*There is too much grammar in our materials, I would like to learn the vocabulary more".*

Five students mentioned that their textbooks are from 2005 and that they are outdated, to say the least. Thirteen participants expressed the need to change their textbooks, or introduce some materials that are not from textbooks – such as articles from the internet, magazines that they could read and discuss in groups, listening to songs in English or watching movies, playing quizzes and different games etc. They would also like their teacher to print out handouts so that they could write less and focus more on other activities in the classroom.

Yet again, there are students (12/29) who would not like to change any of these things and found their current learning materials satisfactory. When asked what topics they would like to learn about, the opinions were again divided, as it is normal for such a big group of participants. Fifteen participants liked learning about other cultures, mainly British and American culture.

(96) "*I like learning about different accents, life in Australia, South America, deserts, some presidents, historical people that are real, not invented like in our textbooks"*

(97) *"I like reading about Starbucks, Apple, Chinese Wall and such things that I have not heard about before"*

(98) *"I like learning about new people – Roman Abramovich etc."*

(99) *"Learning about other cultures and their customs is interesting"*.

Most of them (17/29) did not like learning grammar.

(100) "*I am definitely not good in grammar and I hate learning grammar, I prefer reading texts and doing tasks connected to it"*

(101) *"The most boring topics are Present perfect or modal verbs*".

Many (17/29) expressed the need for more contemporary texts, closer to their needs and interests, such as music, movies, celebrities, food etc. They did not like learning about people in textbooks who are ordinary, and only invented for the sake of the textbooks. Participants also expressed the desire to listen to more texts, practice their pronunciation and oral communication, rather than reading so many texts or practicing grammar. They were mostly (19/29) happy with the methods that their teacher used and would not change much. Still, there were some suggestions, since ten participants were not happy with the methods.

(102) "*I would like to be examined orally, I do not like written tests because the teacher cannot help you then"*

(103) *"We should use newer textbooks"*

(104) *"I think we get grades too often and that once a month would be enough"*

(105) *"I would like to have discussions on a certain contemporary topic"*

(106) *"I would like our teacher to explain everything better, not just to rush through lessons and skip our questions*".

It was interesting that one participant expressed the desire to join some extra-curricular activities in English, such as some classes after school where they would learn what they want and have more fun than in regular lessons. This participant claimed that they never had the chance to join such activities. Again, these answers all came from partially sighted learners, while blind participants were not so critical and did not see the need to change the teaching methods.

Discussion

The current situation in Croatia is such that visually impaired people are mostly offered sheltered employment or are generally unemployed, corresponding with Jedynak's claim about the situation in Central and Eastern European countries (Jedynak, 2015, p. 91). Therefore, it is no

wonder that people predict their attitudes towards foreign languages, or education in general, are somewhat less positive than their sighed peers' attitudes. Nevertheless, the results show that visually impaired learners consider foreign languages very important. Similar to what Nikolic observed in his study (1987, p. 63), the participants of this study also see English as one way of maintaining contact with their surroundings and people in their environment. Most participants emphasize the importance of English as a *lingua franca*, a world language that is crucial in contemporary society. Yet, their unanimous and almost completely identical answers make one think about their real attitudes. Their answers seem to be learned by heart, not honest. It might be that their school teachers emphasize the importance of English language, and that the participants feel the urge to comply with such an opinion. Furthermore, participants' self-assessment of their English language skills shows that they do not rank their knowledge or skillfulness high on the continuum. Despite their positive attitudes and fondness of English, only few participants state that they are good in English. Jedynak observed that in the early learning stages, visually impaired learners tend to lag behind in comparison to their counterparts without vision deficits (2015, p. 93), yet the literature on the topic shows that they catch up to their peers after the age of ten. This study proves that visually impaired learners believe that they are not as proficient in English as their peers are, even though they have passed the age of ten. Reasons for this may be various, but participants often blame their elementary school teachers for going unnoticed in English classrooms and not having sufficient support in education. Since foreign language curriculum is now compulsory for all special needs students within the European Union, at all levels of education (p. 15), teachers should be prepared to adapt their teaching methods and materials to children with different disabilities, including visual impairments.

Nikolic states (1987, p. 63) that those visually impaired learners who seem to have not reached the linguistic standards of their sighted peers have been found primarily in integrated classrooms, and their lack of success is probably the result of inadequate support from and encouragement by teachers, which corresponds to participants' suggestions about what the reason for their weaker results might be. This study shows that even the smallest inconveniences in elementary school can lead to negative attitudes towards a language or losing the motivation for learning that language. Their lower results are also probably affected by the lack of vision. Jedynak observed that for visually impaired learners, learning something in a foreign language requires as much direct and tangible experience as is possible, and learners often do not learn properly. Consequently, they

cannot learn as fast as their sighted peers and it takes longer for them to grasp certain concepts in a foreign language (Jedynak, 2015, p. 113). Most students say they rarely use English online, watch movies or listen to music in English. Many of them only listen to Croatian music and have no interest in media in English. Therefore, schools should encourage learners to use the advantages of such media in order to improve their knowledge of English. Nevertheless, proficiency in a foreign language does not have to be the ultimate goal. Jedynak claims that visually impaired learners' modest achievements in foreign languages are not as important as their personal experience and development, such as new linguistic competence, knowledge about language, creativity and intercultural understanding (p. 60).

What is more, blind and partially sighted learners need foreign languages to gain insight into other cultures and have opportunities to meet new people (p. 14). Nevertheless, it seems that participants of this study, despite learning English between nine and twelve years, have very little knowledge about different cultures. Mainly, participants do not want to meet native speakers of English language or have them in Croatia. They fear the need to communicate in English outside of the classroom. Yet, they believe that, besides the language, native speakers of English are not different from Croatian people. When asked about some cultural differences and habits of e.g. Americans, the British, Australians etc., their knowledge was severely fragmented and stereotypical. One thing that they often mentioned was that British people drink tea, and at times it seemed that it was the only thing they knew about them. Furthermore, they mentioned that British people drive on the left side of the road, that they have a Queen, that it rains a lot in England, that British people are very polite and similar stereotypical opinions. Only a few participants rarely watch movies or listen to music or news in English. They are in fact completely alienated from these cultures and other than what they have learned in school, most of them do not know anything. Still, it seems that their classroom time is rarely aimed at learning about cultural differences. Lambert and Gardner (Gardner, 1985) found that the attitudes towards the society and the nation in which the language is spoken, as well as the attitudes towards the language learning classroom, learning languages and language teacher and basic attitudes are connected with the overall curiosity for foreign languages. Some other authors, such as Dornyei (2015) would not agree and believe that a learner's achievement is connected to many other factors and attitudinal characteristics, other than attitudes towards the native speakers of a language. In her study, Mihaljević Djigunović concluded that attitudes towards foreign language learning in general and English in particular, as well as towards

the self as a language learner, the teacher and the teaching strategies are the most important ones (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998, p. 59). The author of this study believes that participants do not have negative attitudes towards native speakers of English language, but that they simply do not have enough knowledge about their lives to be able to compare it to Croatian standards and customs. Furthermore, such scarce knowledge of their culture cannot be clearly correlated or seen as a cause and effect relationship for maintaining or losing motivation for learning English language. One should definitely consider including more cultural topics into English classrooms at this school.

As it was already mentioned, languages are a way of gaining insight into the world for visually impaired learners. Furthermore, they also allow them to increase their professional opportunities and integrate into the society more easily (Jedynak, 2015, p. 15). Similarly, all participants, except one partially sighted male participant, consider English important for their future. Their reasons for learning English are various – some of them plan to be English teachers, many plan to move out of Croatia (mostly to Germany), where they want to be able to communicate with foreigners etc. Most participants assert that they will probably use English in their future work place. As Jedynak stated, mastering a foreign language opens more job and mobility prospects to visually impaired people (p. 67). There is an obvious difference between blind and partially sighted participants' answers in this category – it seems that blind participants still do not think about their future jobs or possibilities, while partially sighted participants have given it some thought. They believe that they will use English in their work place and that knowing English will be an advantage when they will be looking for a job. Other than their job, some participants find different usages of English in their everyday life – reading newspapers in English, manuals for different equipment, using English online, on the internet, in video games, watching movies without subtitles or voice-overs etc. As Jedynak observed, knowing a foreign language allows a visually impaired person to cross boundaries and access different opportunities and cultures (p. 56). Participants mostly find that there is some kind of advantage they are getting by learning English, no matter what their attitude towards it or their proficiency in English is.

As it was aforementioned, all participants consider English an important part of their school curriculum because it is an international language that is used everywhere in the world for different purposes. Still, their interest for the English language, as well as their self-assessment of their

proficiency shows that their knowledge of English does not correspond with their attitude towards its importance. Their unanimous decision that it is an international language and that it is very useful in business and tourism proves that this kind of opinion is learned, not acquired autonomously or gradually. Most students look forward to their English lessons. Most negative answers connected to English lessons stem from the fact that students do not enjoy English lessons simply because they are not good in English. Their lack of proficiency also makes many participants nervous when they have to speak in English. The most stressful situations are the ones when they are being examined. Yet, they prefer being graded orally because they get support from their teachers this way more than they do in written exams. Participants do not find anything helpful when they are nervous because the nervousness stems from a lack of knowledge – they believe that they would not be nervous if they knew the language better than they do. Still, there are participants who do not find such situations stressful and like to engage in conversations in English, especially with their friends and in informal situations. Almost all participants claim that they are satisfied with their English lessons and how they are planned and organized. Their answers show a lack of critical thinking about their education, because some follow-up questions provided the author with some ideas for change. Some participants want to write less, because they find writing tiring. While some want more grammar, others would completely abandon grammar in classroom. Predominantly, students love learning new vocabulary and think grammar is not as important. Yet, many of them have interesting ideas on how to improve their classroom experience: they would like to have newer textbooks, use authentic materials such as newspaper articles, internet articles, songs, movies, listening tasks, introducing group work, presentations, quizzes etc. Many expressed discontent with their English lessons because they never do anything that is not in their textbook. A teacher should be communicative, know how to solve problems, individualize education to the students' needs, and also understand the type of visual impairment a student deals with in order to know how to structure their education (Jedynak, 2015, p. 170). Most participants believe that their teacher has all these qualities, while others would disagree. Such differing opinions are considered normal. Jedynak believes that to achieve foreign language proficiency, teachers should tailor the classroom according to the visually impaired learners' needs – use special didactic devices, language material adaptation and development of individualized plans. Furthermore, they should be properly trained before they start working with visually impaired learners and give them enough attention and support to master the tasks (p. 157). Even

though participants find their English lessons interesting, most of them express their dissatisfaction with lesson dynamics. This is connected to the materials they use – most participants believe that newer textbooks or authentic materials would benefit the lesson. Adapting instructional materials also might benefit students' perception towards foreign languages (Araluce, 2005, as cited in Jedynak, 2015). Even though the materials are adapted to their needs, they are not adapted to their interests – they would like to include contemporary topics, celebrities, important people, immigrant crisis, terrorist attacks and similar topics in their lessons. Participants are also aware that their knowledge of cultural topics is very scarce, and they often mention that they like learning about different cultures. Furthermore, they often stress the importance of speaking in English, e.g. having discussions about different topics, oral presentations, quizzes etc., which they have never had before in their English classroom. An interesting finding is that some participants are interested in joining extra-curricular activities in English, yet the school does not offer them. Again, these answers predominantly come from partially sighted learners, while blind participants are not so critical and do not see the need to change the methods of teaching.

Conclusions and implications for teaching

Attitudes towards English as a foreign language are certainly very important in teaching. Negative attitudes lead to a lack of motivation and consequently lower proficiency in a certain language. Therefore, it is important to maintain positive attitudes in learners. Previous research shows that attitudes can be changed and that they are not fixed. Therefore, studying attitudes of visually impaired learners towards English as a foreign language is an important topic.

Visually impaired learners who participated in this study find English to be extremely important in the contemporary, global society and believe that its importance will grow even greater. Yet, their unanimous answers lead one to think that their attitude towards its importance are learned, not acquired autonomously. Moreover, their self-assessment of their English language skills is very low – only few of them believe they are good in English. Despite their positive attitudes towards English, they still did not achieve proficiency in English, and they list various reasons for this, most often the neglect of elementary school English teachers. Foreign language education is now compulsory in all countries within the European Union and, therefore, teachers need to adapt their teaching methods and materials to children with special needs. When it comes to visually

impaired learners, teachers should know what visual impairments are and how to approach people with visual impairments. Teachers should be aware that there are students with different levels of visual impairments, and that each one of them requires a different type of approach, according to their needs. Moreover, teachers should be educated in typhlometodology and learn how to create and work with specific materials designed for learners with visual impairments. The participants of this study declare that they find reading and writing tiring, which is in accordance with previous research, and teachers should take this into consideration when balancing the four skills in the classroom. What is more, both the literature and this study show that participants want to use more listening in the classroom and learn the real-life use of English, rather than the formal version of English. When it comes to the school level, schools should encourage teachers to exchange ideas between themselves and offer adequate support and training courses for teachers working with visually impaired learners. They would benefit the most from practical demonstrations of teaching methods and materials that visually impaired learners use and like.

Most participants of this study claim they rarely use English outside of the classroom. Few of them watch movies or listen to music in English, while a slightly larger number declared that they sometimes speak in English to their friends when joking or online. Still, a frightening percent of participants has no contact with English outside of school, which leads to their lack of knowledge about native speakers of English and their cultures. Most participants listen exclusively to Croatian music and have no interest in media which is in English. Moreover, such isolation from everyday English might add to one's weaker results in English proficiency. One could argue that proficiency in English does not have to be the ultimate goal of education, yet knowing basic information about different cultures is general knowledge that each individual should acquire. Their teachers should devote more classroom time to cultural topics.

All participants find English an important part of school curricula and beneficial for their future workplace or work prospects. Still, blind learners tend not to think about their future workplaces and the use of English in it as much as partially sighted learners do. It might be advantageous to get blind learners thinking about such subjects in order to increase their positive outlook towards English language, and therefore their final results in it. The participants' attitudes towards English gradually become more positive.

Participants find teaching materials mostly interesting, but few of them see the need for change. They use textbooks from 2005 and many expressed the desire to use newer textbooks. Other than that, all participants agreed that they never do anything that is not in the textbook, and many wish to do so. They propose different games, quizzes, oral presentations, discussions, articles from the internet or newspapers etc. to be added to their lessons. Furthermore, many of them want to use authentic materials and themes that are closer to young people, such as reading about celebrities, music, movies etc. rather than typical textbook texts about food and unknown people. When it comes to teaching methods, most participants are happy with the way they are being taught. Some of the ideas were to include more group works and oral presentations in the classroom. Most of them find their lessons interesting, but not dynamic and wish to include different activities that would entertain them more. Lastly, they show the need and desire to join extra-curricular activities in English after school, such as remedial or additional teaching of English for those who need or want it.

Going back to the initial hypotheses, one can say that some of them are verified, while others are not. Visually impaired learners indeed have positive attitudes towards English as a language, as it was assumed. Furthermore, they consider English language important for their future, although the validity of this claim might need to be further investigated. When it comes to their English language lessons, some of them have positive attitudes, while some do not, however, positive attitudes still do prevail. The author assumed that visually impaired learners will have positive attitudes towards native speakers of English language and their culture, yet the study shows that many participants have negative attitudes toward them and that most participants completely lack the knowledge about their cultures, which leads to them not having any kind of attitudes towards them. Contrary to the initial hypothesis that visually impaired learners consider teaching materials and methods uninteresting, the participants declared that they find them interesting, but not dynamic enough. They propose different ideas on how to improve their English lessons and materials.

Limitations of the study

Conducting face-to-face interviews is always challenging. Participants might not feel secure enough to freely express their opinions and be completely honest. Therefore, their answers

might not be the reflection of their true opinions and attitudes. Moreover, due to a small number of participants in this study, it is difficult to generalize the results to the population of visually impaired learners. One could argue that their attitudes towards English as a foreign language stem from the organization of their school and that visually impaired learners from different schools or environment would have opposing, or just different, attitudes. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to conduct a study with the identical instrument on sighted learners and compare the results to see how much visually impaired learners differ from their peers.

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5. Appendices

Interview

Stavovi prema engleskom jeziku općenito

1) Što misliš o engleskom jeziku? Zašto to misliš?
2) Voliš li učiti engleski jezik? Zašto?
3) Voliš li koristiti engleski jezik? Gdje ga koristiš? Imaš li prilike za to?
4) Je li ti draži engleski jezik u školi ili engleski koji čuješ kod kuće (na TV, u glazbi itd.)? Zašto? Koja je razlika u njima?

Stavovi prema nastavi engleskog jezika

1) Smatraš li engleski jezik važnim dijelom školskog programa? Zašto?
2) Raduješ li se nastavi engleskog jezika? Zašto?
3) Jesi li nervozan/nervozna kad moraš govoriti na engleskom jeziku? Zašto? Što ti olakšava/otežava govorenje na engleskom jeziku?
4) Što misliš o nastavi engleskog jezika? Čega na nastavi ima previše/premalo?
5) Što misliš o profesoru engleskog jezika?
6) Uživaš li na aktivnostima na nastavi engleskog jezika? U kojim aktivnostima uživaš? Što ti je najdraže? Kako bi, prema tebi, izgledala nastava koja bi bila savršena?

Stavovi prema izvornim govornicima i kulturi engleskog jezika

1) Bi li volio/voljela da u Hrvatskoj ima više ljudi kojima je engleski jezik materinji jezik? Zašto?
2) Kako zamišljaš ljude kojima je engleski jezik materinji jezik? Jesu li oni drugačiji od Hrvata? Po čemu su drugačiji/slični?
3) Koliko znaš o običajima i navikama ljudi kojima je engleski jezik materinji jezik? O kome najviše znaš (Amerikanci, Englezi, Australci…)? Što ti se posebno sviđa od njihove kulture (glazba, sport…)? Zašto?

Stavovi o važnosti engleskog jezika za budućnost učenika

1) Smatraš li engleski jezik važnim za svoju budućnost? Zašto?
2) Hoće li ti engleski jezik koristiti za budući posao ili mogućnosti pronalaska budućeg posla? Kako ti engleski jezik u tome može koristiti?
3) Što ti učenje engleskog jezika omogućava u životu? Na koji način?

Stavovi prema nastavnim materijalima i metodama

1) Je li ti nastava engleskog jezika dinamična/zanimljiva? Zašto?
2) Jesu li materijali na nastavi prilagođeni tvojim potrebama? Na koji način?
3) Jesu li materijali koje koristite na nastavi engleskog jezika zanimljivi? Da možeš bilo što učiniti, što bi ti promijenio/promijenila kod nastavnih materijala konkretno?
4) Zašto smatraš da su materijali zanimljivi/dosadni? Koje su ti teme najzanimljivije/najdosadnije? Koja ti je tema ostala u sjećanju kao najzanimljivija?
5) Jesu li metode koje koristite na nastavi engleskog jezika zanimljive? Da možeš bilo što učiniti, što bi ti promijenio/promijenila kod nastavnih metoda konkretno?

<u>Opći podaci o ispitaniku</u>

1. Dob:
2. Spol: M Ž
3. Razred:
4. Ostatak vida: Slijep/a Slabovidan/slabovidna
5. Gubitak vida: Od rođenja Kasnije u životu
6. Od koje godine života učiš engleski jezik?
7. Govoriš li tečno koji drugi jezik osim hrvatskog? DA NE
   Ako da, koji? _____
8. Jesi li ikada bio/bila u nekoj zemlji u kojoj se govori engleski jezik? DA NE
   Ako da, gdje? _____
   Koliko dugo? _____

An example of an interview – transcribed

I: Što misliš o engleskom jeziku? Zašto to misliš?

P: Mislim da je jezik jako koristan zato jer… najprepoznatljiviji jezik na svijetu, svi ga pričaju, mislim da je zato koristan. Meni se sviđa jezik.

I: Učiš li ga više jer ti se sviđa ili ti je koristan?

P: Jer mi se sviđa.

I: Voliš li učiti engleski jezik?

P: Da, volim učiti engleski jezik.

I: Zašto?

P: Ne znam, jer mi je lagan. Neke stvari mi nisu lagane i onda to ne volim učiti, a ono šta mi je zanimljivo i šta volim, to volim učiti, imam motivaciju, a to je engleski.

I: Voliš li koristiti engleski jezik?

P: Volim.

I: Gdje ga koristiš? Imaš li prilike za to?

P: Bilo gdje. Na internetu, svakodnevno ovako govorim jezik.

I: Misliš ovako s prijateljima?

P: Dobro, ne pričamo baš na engleskom jeziku, ali ono, neke fraze, slangove i tako.

I: Je li ti draži engleski jezik u školi ili engleski koji čuješ kod kuće (na TV, u glazbi itd.)?

P: Takav razgovorni.

I: Zašto? Koja je razlika u njima?

P: Ovaj u školi je kao formalniji, što se uči gramatika, konverzacija i to. Ovo razgovorno je… neće ti nitko ništa reći ako nešto krivo kažeš, skuže što si htio reći.

I: Smatraš li engleski jezik važnim dijelom školskog programa?

P: Pa, da. Ovisi npr. za koju struku je važan. Npr. moje zanimanje je poslovni tajnik, logično da je važan, ja ću doći u kontakt sa strankama koje možda neće biti iz Hrvatske nego iz Njemačke i od bilo kuda. Neće znati hrvatski, a vjerojatno će znati engleski, pa se mogu tako sporazumjeti s njima.

I: Raduješ li se nastavi engleskog jezika?

P: Pa, da.

I: Zašto?

P: Zato jer naš profesor bomba odradi nastavu i bude zabavno i interaktivno.

I: Jesi li možda nervozan kad moraš govoriti na engleskom jeziku?

P: Iskreno, da. Malo da, zato jer, kak da to kažem… Bojim se da ću nešto krivo reći ili da ću se krivo izraziti i to.

I: Zašto si onda nervozan? Zašto se bojiš?

P: Mislim, ne bojim se, ali nisam toliko samouvjeren kao u hrvatskom, materinjem jeziku. Logično.

I: Što ti onda olakšava kad moraš govoriti na engleskom jeziku?

P: Sjetim se neke riječi. Ništ mi ne olakšava, nego… nekad se ne mogu sjetiti neke riječi, ali mi dođe za dvije-tri sekunde pa ju onda kažem.

I: A zbog čega ti je recimo nekad teže pričati, a nekad lakše?

P: Možda zbog nekih velikih riječi. Ne velikih po dužini nego kao velikih, težih riječi.

I: Što misliš o vašoj nastavi engleskog jezika?

P: Mislite kako profesor vodi sat ili?

I: Općenito, kako se tebi sviđa vaša nastava.

P: Mislim da je dobro isplanirana, ali da presporo radimo, step by step. Nije sad… ne znam kako da to kažem. Presporo ide jednostavno proces s lekcijama. Ja bih malo ubrzao tempo.

I: Čega na nastavi ima previse?

P: Previše? Previše… ne mislim da ničega ima previse, mislim da je izbalansirano okej. Gramatika, vokabular, konverzacija i tako.

I: A što se tiče čitanja, pisanja, govora…?

P: Možda nekad prevagne gramatika u odnosu na vokabular, neki sat možda vokabular nad gramatikom. Ovisi. Mislim da je u redu.

I: Aha. A misliš li da nečeg ima premalo? Jel bi ti htio da se nečeg radi više?

P: Možda povijest engleskog jezika. Ono, povijest općenito, kako se jezik razvijao i tako, da.

I: Dobro, razumijem.

I: Uživaš li na aktivnostima na nastavi engleskog jezika?

P: Da. Uživam. Zato jer svatko dobije svoj dio kolača, kako da to kažem, svatko dobi priliku sudjelovati koliko profesor misli da je to dobro za njega. Ne znam kako da to drugačije kažem.

I: U kojim aktivnostima uživaš? Što ti je najdraže?

P: Konverzacija. Čitanje tekstova i gramatika su dosadni.

I: Okej. A kad bi ti radio nastavu engleskog jezika i da možeš bilo što napraviti kako ti želiš, kako bi izgledala savršena nastava engleskog jezika?

P: Uh. To što sam rekao, npr. Hm. Hm. Ako npr. Ja radim nastavu kao prof., i vokabular i gramatika i ono. U primjeru ove škole, mi nemamo npr. Dodatnu niti dopunsku nastavu engleskog jezika. Za neke učenike koji bi htjeli znati više ili kaj ja znam, naučiti nešto više, da imaju dodatnu nastavu, a za učenike koji znaju manje da ima dopunska nastava i da nauče to. A na našoj nastavi ne bih ništa mijenjao, sve je OK.

I:Bi li ti volio da u Hrvatskoj ima više ljudi kojima je engleski jezik materinji jezik?

P: Da im je to glavni jezik mislite?

I: Da, npr. Amerikanaca, Australaca, Britanaca…

P: Ne. Ima njih dovoljno.

I: Kako zamišljaš ljude kojima je engleski jezik materinji jezik?

P: Pa, ne želim sad reći nikakve stereotipe, ali ono, šta ja znam, ljudi ko ljudi. Mislim, sto ljudi, sto ćudi.

I: Misliš li da su oni drugačiji od nas Hrvata?

P: Pa, normalno, da. Normalno da jesu, to su druge nacije.

I: Po čemu su recimo drugačiji?

P: Eto, recimo, Amerikanci po iskrenosti, Britanci po vladi, oni imaju kraljicu, mi imamo predsjednicu.

I: A koliko znaš recimo o običajima i navikama njihovima? Recimo kakva je njihova kultura, ponašanje, stil života…?

P: Ma, Amerikanci su izmišljena država, to ništa, Amerikanci ne postoje kao narod. Mislim, to je moje mišljenje, onak, doslovno nisu, izgubili su taj neki svoj, vode se samo po trendovima. I oni izmišljaju trendove, ipak je to Amerika.

I: A Britanci?

P: Oni ipak imaju nešto svoje, tu nekakvu kulturu ponašanja i taj neki stav, žele sve što je drugačije od Amerikanaca i nas.

I: Jel ti možda pratiš nešto od njihove kulture? Gledaš filmove, slušaš glazbu, pratiš sport…?

P: Iz američke glazbu, a iz britanske sport pratim, Premier liga i tako.

I: A što ti se posebno sviđa od te sve kulture?

P: Od britanske kulture mi se najviše sviđa nogomet, ako to spada pod kulturu, sport općenito, i glazba. A od američke, šta ja znam, isto glazba.

I: Znači slušaš stranu glazbu?

P: Da.

I: Više nego domaću?

P: Pa, da. Da. Ajmo reć da da.

I: Smatraš li engleski jezik važnim za svoju budućnost?

P: Da. Primarno zbog posla i zbog budućeg života, ako se preselim negdje izvan Hrvatske, logično da će mi engleski biti potreban prije nego što naučim jezik zemlje u kojoj sam.

I: A kako bi ti engleski mogao pomoći u poslu?

P: U komuniciranju s drugim ljudima, u slanju mailova nekim stranim osobama, kompanijama i tako.

I: Misliš da ti je poznavanje engleskog jezika prednost kod zapošljavanja?

P: Mislim da da.

I: Što ti učenje engleskog jezika omogućava u životu?

P: Bolje snalaženje u svijetu. Mislim, bolju tu neku orijentaciju i da znam što se oko mene dešava, praćenje vijesti i kaj ja znam.

I: Je li ti nastava engleskog jezika dinamična i zanimljiva?

P: Pa, dinamična sigurno po meni nije.

I: Zašto nije?

P: Zato jer presporo ide sve to, monotono je nekako. A jel zabavno, pa je, ono, je.

I: A jesu li ti materijali na nastavi prilagođeni tvojim potrebama?

P: Da, svi imamo uvećani tisak, sve je prilagođeno.

I: I kakvi su ti ti materijali koje koristite?

P: Pa, korisni su. Udžbenici su uvećani, radne bilježnice su uvećane.

I: Jesu ti teški za nositi?

P: Nisu, ja pola tog ostavim u školi tako da nosim samo laptop u školu.

I: A jesu ti zanimljivi udžbenici?

P: Pa, po mom ukusu nisu zanimljivi, ali ono. Da se radit s njima.

I: Zašto tebi nisu zanimljivi?

P: Imaju neke teme koje mene ne zanimaju. Dosadno mi je kad… radili smo prošli put ono o nekim piramidama. Ne znam što smo radili. Općenito, nije mi zanimljiva gramatika. Ni jedan tekst do sad mi nije bio baš zanimljiv. A najzanimljivi su mi o stilu života Britanaca, Amerikanaca, jer sve čitamo samo stereotipe.

I: Znači ti bi htio više znati o tome pa da nemaš stereotipe?

P: Da, da. Ono, to je doslovno… propaganda čista, samo navode ljude da misle isto kak i svi, generaliziraju cijeli narod, stave ih u jedan šešir.

I: Da ti možeš onda promijeniti nastavne materijale, kako bi ih ti promijenio?

P: Više vokabulara, više stvari koje će mi fakat biti potrebne u životu, a manje past simple, present i to.

I: A koje to smatraš da će ti biti potrebne?

P: Uh nemam pojma, stvarno ne znam. Hm. Šta će mi bit potrebno? Više da učimo s udžbenicima razgovorni stil govorenja, a manje formalni.

I: A što se tiče metoda koje koristite na nastavi, jesu ti te metode zanimljive ili bi ti nešto radio na drugi način?

P: Mislim da bi se trebali udžbenici ažurirati. Da bi, iz koje je godine ovo… 2005. Koristiti neke novije. Stari su. Htio bih suvremenije teme.

I: Koje bi ti recimo teme ubacio?

P: Neke aktualne teme o čemu se dugo priča, npr. Predsjednički izbori u Americi, neke price o kraljici u Engleskoj.

I: Možda onda ne bi bili iz udžbenike?

P: Možda da, zašto ne.

I: Imate li kada takvo nešto?

P: Ne, nikad profesor posebno ne pripremi nešto, a ja bih to fakat volio.

Opći podaci o ispitaniku

1. Dob: 17

2. Spol: **M** Ž

3. Razred: 2.

4. Ostatak vida: Slijep/a **Slabovidan**/slabovidna

5. Gubitak vida: **Od rođenja** Kasnije u životu

6. Od koje godine života učiš engleski jezik? 7.

7. Govoriš li tečno koji drugi jezik osim hrvatskog? **DA** NE

Ako da, koji? engleski

8. Jesi li ikada bio/bila u nekoj zemlji u kojoj se govori engleski jezik? DA **NE**

Ako da, gdje? _____

Koliko dugo? _____

Sažetak

Engleski kao strani jezik je obavezan školski predmet za sve učenike diljem Europske Unije, uključujući učenike s posebnim potrebama. Jedni od tih učenika su i učenici s oštećenjem vida. Učenje engleskog jezika za učenike s oštećenjem vida ponekad je izazovno zbog mnogih prepreka na koje nailaze i koje moraju prijeći, ali je također i veoma korisno. Strani jezici otvaraju brojne mogućnosti za budućnost tih učenika i oni vide jezik kao jedan od alata kojim se orijentiraju po svijetu. Cilj ovog rada bio je istražiti stavove 29 srednjoškolskih učenika Centra za obrazovanje "Vinko Bek" prema engleskom kao stranom jeziku. Instrument koji se koristio je polu-strukturirani intervju, čiji su rezultati analizirani prema pet istraživačkih pitanja. Rezultati pokazuju kako ispitanici engleski jezik smatraju vrlo korisnim zbog njegovog statusa svjetskog jezika. Oni vjeruju da će koristiti engleski jezik na svom budućem poslu, ali većina njih smatra da slabo poznaje engleski jezik. Nadalje, sviđa im se njihova nastava engleskog jezika, ali imaju mnogo ideja kako bi ju mogli poboljšati i prilagoditi njihovim potrebama i željama. Najvažnije, oni su gotovo u potpunosti izolirani od svakodnevnog engleskog jezika i jako malo znaju o izvornim govornicima engleskog jezika i njihovoj kulturi.

Ključne riječi: oštećenje vida, učenici, slijepi, slabovidni, engleski jezik, stavovi, poučavanje