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**THE MOTIVATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING OF STUDENTS  
WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN THE EIGHT GRADE OF  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH SPECIAL CURRICULUM**

Summary of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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## **THE ISSUES RAISED**

Foreign language skills have become increasingly important in the twenty-first century. In 1988 the ministers of education of the European Community agreed that a key factor of becoming a European citizen is the acquisition of foreign languages. The European Commission made a commitment to the teaching of foreign languages to children with disabilities. Every child living in the European Union has a right to learn foreign languages, regardless of their disabilities and regardless of studying in a school of general education or special education (European Comission, 2005).

One of the requirements of Hungary's entry to the European Union was that its educational system is conformed to the European system of norms (Menus, 2000). Our legislation now firmly protects the rights of people with disabilities against discrimination at work or in society at large. Our measures aiming at the realisation of equality of opportunity in education (equality of opportunity act, public education act, principles of the education of students with disabilities in schools) confirm the right of every student to learn, thus of every child with special educational needs, including the right to learn foreign languages. In line of the above changes in educational policies in Hungary and the European Union, since the academic year 2015-16 it has become mandatory to teach foreign languages to children with mild intellectual disabilities in the seventh and eighth grades of schools of special education in Hungary too.

Teaching foreign languages to students with mild intellectual disabilities is a new challenge to practising teachers, but it is also an area of language pedagogy on which very little research has been done (Coşkun Abdullah, 2013; Pokrivčáková, 2013a; Meggyesné and Lesznyák, 2014a; Meggyesné and Lesznyák, 2014b). The motivational characteristics of students with mild intellectual disabilities to learn foreign languages have not been described so far. According to the public education act (Act CXC in 2011), a special educator with an advanced level language exam or a language teacher may teach foreign languages to this group of students. Regarding their qualifications, only 45 per cent of the teachers comply with the requirements of the law (Meggyesné, 2018b). Moreover, the teachers with less experience are usually in charge of language teaching. However, there is a significant difference between the experience of foreign language teachers gained by teaching students with mild intellectual disabilities and the foreign language learning motivation of the students ( $F(3,190) = 5,764$ ,  $p = 0,001$ ). The foreign language learning motivation of the groups of teachers with 5 to 10 years of experience is significantly higher than of the groups of colleagues with less than 5 years of experience ( $p=, 000$ ) (Meggyesné, 2018b). The problem that special educators are unfamiliar with the methodology of foreign language teaching and language teachers are unfamiliar with the methodology of special education of students with mild intellectual disabilities is yet to be resolved.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The early studies on the relationship of intellectual disabilities and learning motivation describe a low level of motivation of children with intellectual disabilities (Harter and Zigler, 1974; Switzky, 1997; Mesterházi, 1998). The turning away from learning can be explained by the children's repeated experiences of failure and the low interest in learning (Harter and Zigler, 1974; Switzky, 1997). According to Harter and Ziegler (1974), students with

intellectual disabilities have a lower level of motivation in learning new tasks than their peers of typical development. They are more likely to attribute their successes to external factors and their failures to internal reasons (Chan and Koegh, 1974). At the same time, they are less likely to believe that the inconstant factors behind success can be changed. External feedbacks play a major role in their learning motivation. In teaching and learning we can rely less on their metacognition, as children with intellectual disabilities have no positive awareness of their own knowledge and abilities. The limited self-awareness results in the unreliable functioning of certain components of learning motivation (Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007). The latest recent research does not support the earlier views on the motivational deficit, as in some cases the results of empirical research found the motivational level of students with intellectual disabilities similar to the level of children with typical development, or in some learning motives it was found higher (Cuskelly and Gilmore, 2014; Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007).

The information gathered on motivation can vary according to the means of data gathering (Cuskelly and Gilmore, 2014). The studies based on structured exercises generally show no difference between the motivation of students with intellectual disabilities and the motivation of children without intellectual disabilities who match them in mental age. This, however, does not mean that they have no motivational problems in their everyday life situations (Cuskelly and Gilmore, 2014). The reports of parents and teachers describe a lower motivation of children with intellectual disabilities (Gilmore and Cuskelly, 2011; Zigler et al., 2002; Cuskelly and Gilmore, 2014). The differences are probably due to the fact that parents and teachers compare the motivation of their children or students to the motivation of children with typical development of the same age, while in the studies the motivation of children with intellectual disabilities is compared to the motivation of children of the same mental age. Another explanation can be that the parents and teachers in general schools seldom see the students with intellectual disabilities doing tasks that are appropriately difficult for them. Motivation is higher if doing the task is an optimal challenge to the child. According to Bybee and Zigler, after providing the experience of successful learning and doing tasks, there is no difference between the motivations of students with intellectual disabilities and those of typical development (Bybee and Zigler, 1998). Krisztián Józsa and Margit Fazekasné Fenyvesi examined the learning motivations of students of typical development and those with learning disabilities (with mild intellectual disabilities) according to seven motives (acquisition motive, acquisition joy, interest in learning in school, needs of security, attachment to the teacher, the influence of schoolmates, parental motivation) (Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007).

Their results suggest that children with mild intellectual disabilities feel more motivated than their peers without disabilities. In their case, the social motives of learning are definitely stronger. They require recognition and confirmation more than their peers without disabilities. Their attachment to the teacher is stronger, which can be regarded as a major motivational factor. They also regard the motivational power of their parents and classmates stronger than their peers without disabilities. Their social dependence and their sense of security remain strong also in the upper grades of school, while this motive decreases with age among students without disabilities. The acquisition motive of students with learning disabilities (with mild intellectual disabilities) is low in lower primary school, but it gradually gets

stronger with further schooling. This tendency is in contrast to that of students with typical development, where a decrease of this motive can be noted (Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007).

Language teachers often use the term “motivation” when characterising successful or unsuccessful students. This reflects their conviction that the enthusiasm, commitment and endurance of students are key factors of success or failure in the course of long and boring language learning. In most cases, adequately motivated students are able to learn a foreign language regardless of their linguistic abilities, while students with good abilities who are not motivated enough will not be so persistent as to reach a useful level of language skills (Hadfield and Dörnyei, 2013).

The currently accepted, most up-to-date theory of foreign language motivation is the “*second language motivational self-system*” theory, put into a process-oriented stage, or taken and extended into the socio-dynamic stage of the present (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). However, the theoretical background of our study is not based on this up-to-date motivational theory of second language acquisition, as the above-mentioned theoretical framework cannot be applied to the students with mild intellectual disabilities, because of the different development of their cognitive and metacognitive abilities. The theoretical background of our study is Zoltán Dörnyei’s three-component model (Dörnyei, 1994), based on the large-scale classroom study in Hungary by Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994). The model includes three levels: the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level. The levels correspond to the components of second or foreign language learning and reflect the three different aspects of language: the social dimension, the personal dimension and the educational dimension (Dörnyei, 1994).

## **OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of the dissertation is primarily the examination of the foreign language learning motivation of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students with mild intellectual disabilities. In keeping with the research methodological trend characteristic of the population, the study compares the results of students with mild intellectual disabilities to the foreign language learning motivation of 8th grade students with typical development. The further aim of the dissertation is that the research results on the foreign language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities offer help for the practising language teachers and special educators, and by integrating them into the training of special educators, to extend the knowledge of special education students leaving the programme.

Very few information is available for language teachers and special educators on foreign language teaching of students with mild intellectual disabilities either in the Hungarian or in the international literature. This dissertation also attempts to fill in this gap. Because of the above mentioned factors, when making the hypotheses, we could little rely on literature closely focusing on our topic; therefore we made hypotheses drawing on the research results of foreign language learning motivation of students with typical development, on the characteristics of the psychological functions of the student population with mild intellectual disabilities, and on the Hungarian literature on the research on their learning motivation (Krisztián Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007), adding hypotheses based on our own

practical experiences. The hypotheses of the research, its data gathering methods, and the methodology of data analyses are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The hypotheses of the dissertation, its data gathering methods, and the methodology of data analysis

Group of hypotheses	Hypotheses	Data gathering methods	Methodology of data analysis
<b>Comparison of the foreign language learning motivation of students with typical development and 8th grade students with mild intellectual disabilities</b>	The foreign language learning motivation of 8th grade students with mild intellectual disabilities lags behind the foreign language learning motivation of students without disabilities in both German and English	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities Questionnaire of 76 items for students without disabilities	Independent sample t-test Welch d-test
	We assume that there is no significant difference between the foreign language learning motivation of students without disabilities having learnt the language for a year and the foreign language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities Questionnaire of 76 items for students without disabilities	Independent sample t-test
	There is a difference between the self-evaluation of students of typical development and the self-evaluation of students with mild intellectual disabilities. The self-evaluation of students with mild intellectual disabilities is expected to be higher.	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities Questionnaire of 76 items for students without disabilities	Independent sample t-test
	There is a significant correlation between the points of foreign language learning motivation scored by teachers and the self-evaluation of students. The foreign language learning motivation of students with typical development is evaluated higher by teachers than that of students with mild intellectual disabilities.	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities Questionnaire of 76 items for students without disabilities Questionnaire of 76 items for teachers	Pearson correlation analysis Independent sample t-test Paired sample t-test
	We assume that the choice of language affects the foreign language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities. It is expected that the foreign language learning motivation of students learning German will be higher.	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities	Independent sample t-test Welch d-test
	a) We assume that there is a difference in the sub-dimensions of foreign language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities learning English and German. b) We assume that there is a correlation between the different	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities	Independent sample t-test Pearson correlation analysis Spearman correlation

	scales of the motivational components of the two foreign languages.		analysis
	We assume that students with mild intellectual disabilities evaluate their foreign language learning motivation higher than the teachers.	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities  Questionnaire of 76 items for the teachers of students with mild intellectual disabilities	Paired sample t-test
	a) We assume that there is a significant difference between the English and German foreign language anxiety of students with mild intellectual disabilities.  b) We assume that there is a significant difference between the foreign language anxiety of boys and girls with mild intellectual disabilities.	Questionnaire of 76 items for boys and girls with mild intellectual disabilities	Descriptive statistics  Independent pattern t-test  Pearson correlation analysis  Spearman correlation analysis
	We assume that foreign language anxiety is less typical of students with mild intellectual disabilities having a higher foreign language confidence, and their foreign language motivation is also higher.	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities	Descriptive statistics  Paired sample t-test  Pearson correlation analysis
<b>Foreign language learning motivation of 8th grade students with mild intellectual disabilities</b>	We assume that students with mild intellectual disabilities learning German are more confident, they have a higher foreign language confidence, and there is a difference between the confidence of boys and girls.  We assume that there is no correlation between the educational background of parents and the foreign language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities.	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities learning English and German  Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities  Questionnaire of 40 items for parents	Independent sample t-test  Spearman correlation analysis
	We assume that there is a significant correlation between the educational background of the mother and the foreign language learning motivation of students.	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities  Questionnaire of 40 items for parents	Variance analysis of one point (ANOVA)  Post hoc tests
	We assume that there is no correlation between the language skills of parents and the foreign language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities.	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities  Questionnaire of 40 items for parents	Pearson correlation analysis
	We assume that there is a correlation between the milieu dimension and the foreign	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities	Pearson correlation analysis

	language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities.		
<b>Foreign language learning motivation of 8th grade students with mild intellectual disabilities</b>	We assume that in case of a positive correlation between the milieu and the foreign language learning motivation, the results of students and their parents show a positive correlation, and there is no significant difference between them.	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities  Questionnaire of 40 items for parents	Pearson correlation analysis  Paired sample t-test
	We assume that there is a significant correlation between the milieu and the student subscales of foreign language learning confidence	Questionnaire of 76 items for students with mild intellectual disabilities	Pearson correlation analysis  To determine the strength of the variables of the 2nd group of hypotheses: Linear regression analysis

## METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

The research method of the studies on the learning motivation of students without disabilities is the questionnaire study, as a lot of data can be gathered in a short time with this method (Józsa, 2007). The questionnaire method, with some “clearing of obstacles”, can also be applied to students with mild intellectual disabilities (Köböl és Vidákovich, 2015). To prepare our questionnaire, we took the assessing instrument by Zoltán Dörnyei and Richard Clément (2001) as our basis. When adapting the questionnaire, we took into account the difficulties that can be found in the self-expression of students with mild intellectual disabilities. We simplified the statements of the original questionnaire, and we rephrased some. We paid particular attention to the fact that negative statements are more difficult to understand for students with intellectual disabilities. Some negative statements were left in the adapted version, but we translated them in the analysis. Due to the consequences of the differences in the contents of general and special education, following the Hungarian research methods of learning motivation (Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007), we omitted the items that would have meant an unknown situation for students with intellectual disabilities, or they may not have been able to make a distinction between the situations. The main points of the mental clearing of the student questionnaires were the phrasing of the statements (using simple words, simple phrasing of the sentences, logical arrangement of information, editing the outlook and form), and the instruments of visual aids.

Our questionnaire assessed sixteen subscales (integrativity, instrumental orientation, traveling orientation, knowledge orientation, friendship orientation, sociocultural orientation, motivational intensity, attitude toward English language skills, need of performance, group cohesion, milieu, language confidence, foreign language anxiety, evaluation of class activities, evaluation of the English teacher, evaluation of the English lesson). The language learning attitudes were assessed by the attitudes describing language learning at school,

language learning confidence, and the language learning milieu (the views of parents and friends on the importance of language learning). The most important information concerning the students was the language they learnt. This part contained the other questions related to the background of language learning too.

Our set of questionnaires consisted of questionnaires for students, teachers and parents. The questionnaire for students assessed the foreign language learning motivation of 8th grade students with mild intellectual disabilities and students with typical development in a three-grade Likert scale concerning English and German languages. Teachers had to fill in a questionnaire about all their students. Due to the inadequate self-awareness and self-evaluation of students, in the study of the group of students with mild intellectual disabilities it is an accepted research method to supplement the self-evaluation of students with the evaluation of the teachers about the students, and to compare them. In the questionnaires for teachers the extent of agreement had to be marked in a five-grade Likert scale. (In the analysis we counted percentage points in every questionnaire, so that the results can be compared.)

The questionnaire for parents contained the above mentioned sixteen subscales, but with a reduced number of items. It contained 40 items in total. At the beginning of the questionnaire we asked the parents about their foreign language skills. Students with mild intellectual disabilities often live in a low sociocultural environment; it is not uncommon that their parents are functionally illiterate or are themselves adults with mild intellectual disabilities (Ziegler, 1967), therefore we also made filling in the questionnaire for parents easier by reducing the Likert-scale, where the extent of agreement had to be marked, to three grades.

The reliability figures given by the authors of the original questionnaire (Clement, Dörnyei and Noels, 1994) were adequate ( $\alpha=0.62-0.86$ ), showing a high figure of reliability in the sub-patterns of our study (students without disabilities:  $\alpha=0.79-0.82$ ; students with mild intellectual disabilities:  $\alpha=0.81-0.85$ ).

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE**

The sample of the group with mild intellectual disabilities consisted of 195 persons, 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from 20 institutions with a uniform special educational methodology in the country (EGYMI). These were selected from the list of members of the *National EGYMI Association*. The point of selection into the sample was whether the tasks of the institutions included the education of students with mild intellectual disabilities.

In the preparation of the survey we asked 56 EGYMI institutions to cooperate, from which eventually 20 institutions participated in the study. The low willingness to cooperate can be explained by the novelty of the study and the limited number of available professionals.

After clearing the data, all students with mild intellectual disabilities in our sample had code BNO F70, thus the sample can be regarded as homogenous from the psychological criterion of mild intellectual disabilities.

The aim of our empirical research was primarily the examination of the foreign language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities, and the comparison of the foreign language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities and students with typical development. In keeping with our objectives, we arranged two student research samples.

**Table 2.** Distribution of the research sample according to sex and types of institution

	Sample of students with mild intellectual disabilities	Sample of students without disabilities	Total	Frequency (%)
<b>Male</b>	128	123	251	56
<b>Female</b>	67	132	199	44
<b>Total</b>	195	255	450	100

The samples of the teachers and the parents were naturally comprised by the teachers teaching the foreign language to the students of the survey, and the parents of the students.

**Table 3.** Distribution of the sample of parents

	Sample of parents of students with mild intellectual disabilities	Sample of parents of students without disabilities
<b>Frequency in the sample of students (persons)</b>	122	204
<b>Frequency in the sample of students (%)</b>	62%	80 %

**Table 4.** Distribution of the sample of teachers

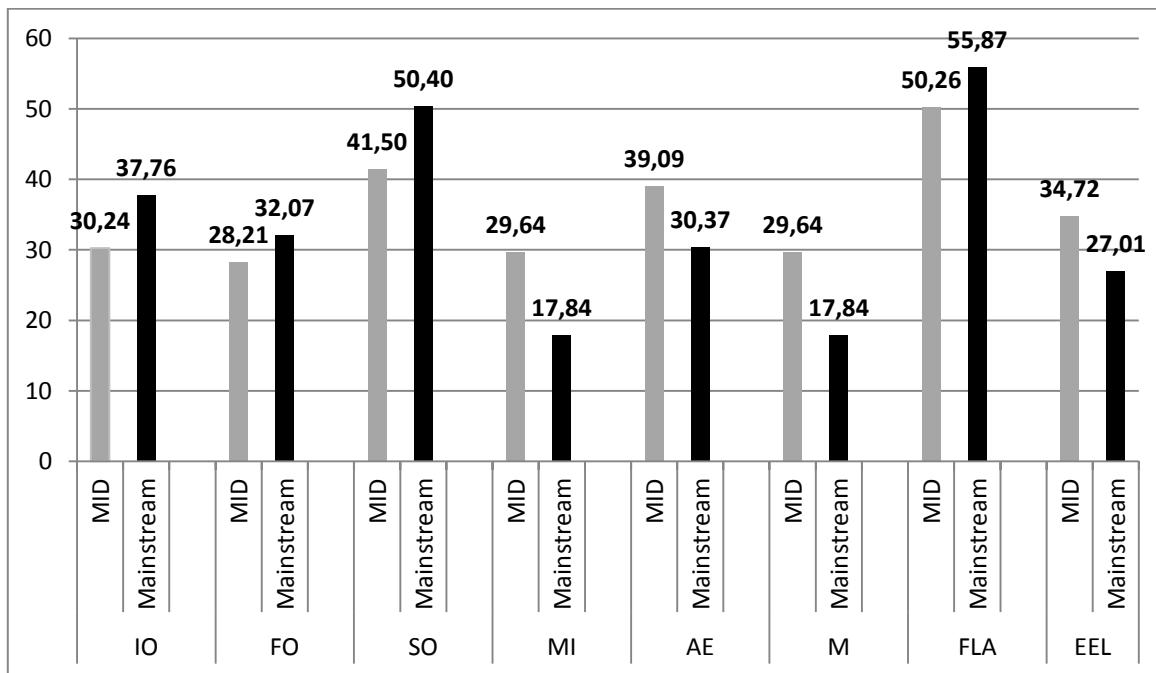
	Evaluations given about students with mild intellectual disabilities	Evaluations given about students without disabilities
<b>Frequency (persons)</b>	195	254
<b>Frequency (%)</b>	100%	99%

One of the questionnaires of the teachers of students without disabilities could not be evaluated.

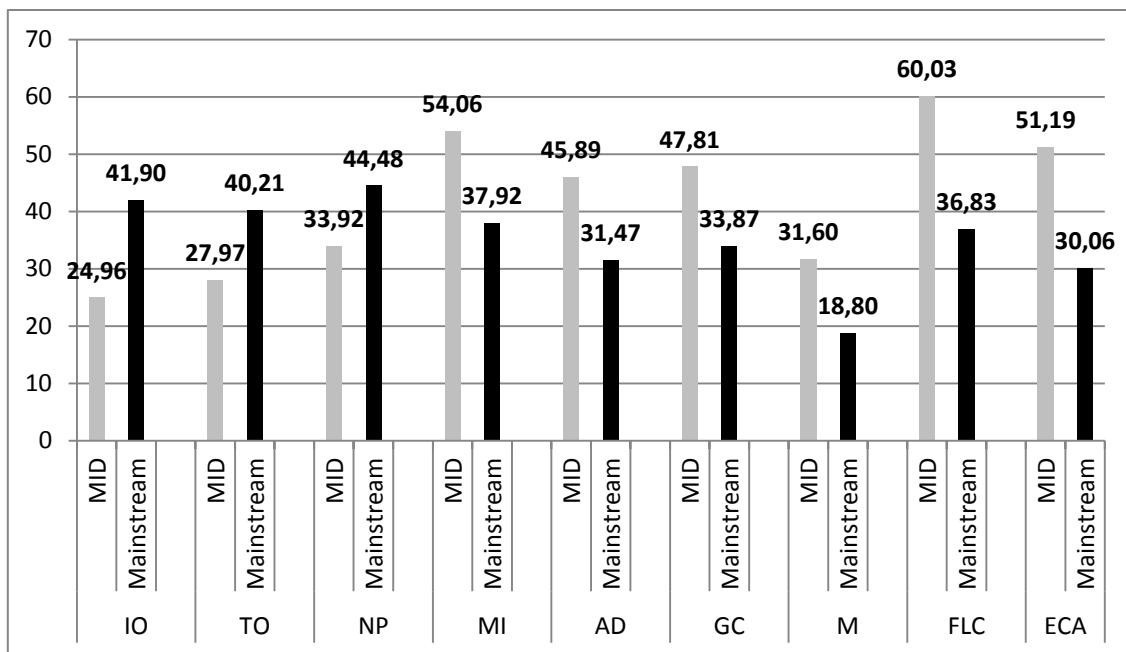
## RESULTS

*In the first group of hypotheses we made hypotheses about the comparison of the foreign language learning motivation of students with typical development and 8th grade students with mild intellectual disabilities.*

H1: Our results show that there is no difference in the average foreign language learning motivation between students with mild intellectual disabilities and students with typical development, either in our whole sample ( $p=0,085$ ), or in the sub-samples of students learning English ( $p=0,205$ ), or students learning German ( $p=0,116$ ). However, in the subscales, there is a statistical difference in several dimensions between the sub-samples of students without disabilities and students with mild intellectual disabilities. Figures 1 and 2 show clearly the differences between the averages of the sub-samples.



**Fig. 1**  
*Difference between the subscales of English language motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities and students with typical development.*



*Fig. 2*  
*Difference between the subscales of German language motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities and students with typical development.*

Our results correspond to the results of the study by Krisztián Józsa and Margit Fazekasné Fenyvesi, which suggests that the learning motivation of students with learning disabilities (with mild intellectual disabilities) is not lower than that of their peers without disabilities, but in the learning motives (in the components of the learning motivation) the research results showed differences (Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007).

The differences between the subscales support the earlier research reports that in case of 8th grade students without disabilities, the figures of orientation dimensions are the highest among the components of foreign language learning motivation (Nikolov, 2003; Péter-Szarka, 2007). The figures show that with regard to English language, the percentage points of instrumental, sociocultural and friendship orientation are significantly higher than those of the students with mild intellectual disabilities. With regard to English language, the percentage points of instrumental orientation, traveling orientation and knowledge orientation proved to be significantly higher than those of the students with mild intellectual disabilities. Students with mild intellectual disabilities have less anxiety in English lessons, and in German lessons their confidence is higher than that of children without disabilities. Their attitude toward the language is higher in both languages.

H2: Many of the students with mild intellectual disabilities show a major (several years of) developmental delay in several areas compared to their peers without disabilities (Gordosné, 1995; Mesterházi, 2001; Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007; Taylor et al., 2005; Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2006a, 2006b; Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2009; Macher, 2007; Szabó, 2014). For this reason, we compared their language motivation to that of the significantly younger students who have learnt the foreign language for a year.

Our research results suggest that there is a difference between the foreign language motivation of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students with mild intellectual disabilities and those students without disabilities

who have learnt the foreign language for a year ( $t(312)=-2,123 p=0,035$ ). The foreign language learning motivation of students with mild intellectual disabilities is significantly higher than that of the younger students who have also learnt the foreign language for a year.

H3: The self-evaluation and expectations concerning the performance in school are determined by the evaluation of the teacher and the comparisons to the peers (Körössy, 2009). Examining the foreign language learning motivation of students with learning disabilities (with mild intellectual disabilities), Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi found that students with mild intellectual disabilities evaluate their own learning motivation higher than their peers without disabilities (Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007). Our results do not correspond to those of the mentioned study by Józsa and Fazekasné (Józsa and Fazekasné Fenyvesi, 2007). In case of foreign language learning motivation students with mild intellectual disabilities do not evaluate their foreign language learning motivation higher than their peers with typical development ( $t(448)=1,726 p=0,085$ ). Regarding the learnt languages, we did not find a difference in the self-evaluations of the students either (English:  $t(337)=1,271 p=0,205$ ; German:  $t(109)=1,584 p=0,116$ ).

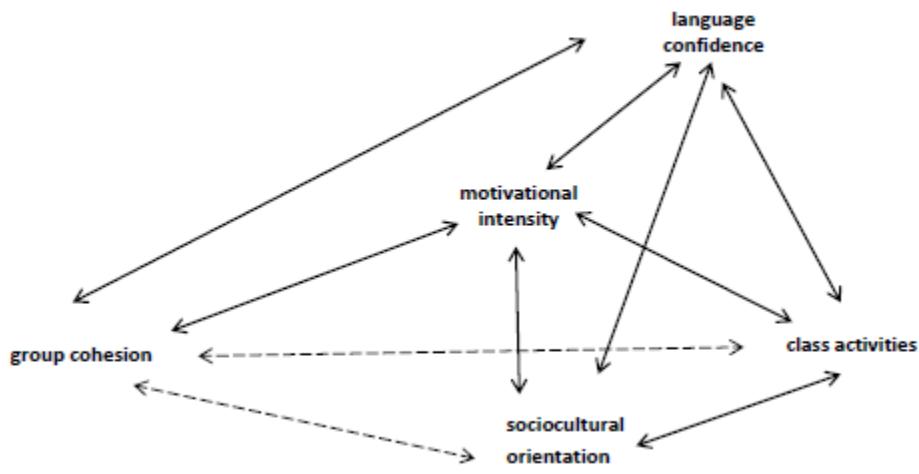
H4: There is a strong correlation between the evaluation of the teachers and the self-evaluation of the students, therefore positive feedback from the teacher results in positive self-evaluation of the students, while a series of negative evaluations results in negative self-evaluation of the students (Burns, 1982). A significant correlation can be found between the evaluations of the teachers and the students both in case of students with mild intellectual disabilities ( $r=-0,203, p=0,005$ ) and students with typical development ( $r=-0,392, p=0,000$ ). However, the direction of the correlation is negative in both groups, that is, students and teachers think about learning motivation in a contrary direction. Teachers see the students without disabilities more motivated in the foreign language lessons than the students with mild intellectual disabilities ( $t(447)=-9,947 p=0,000$ ). An unexpected result is that comparing the evaluations of teachers and students, teachers see more motivated their students in both samples than students see themselves (students without disabilities:  $t(253)=-17,967 p=0,000$ ; MID:  $t(194)=-5,500 p=0,000$ ). This result is worth further consideration whether the self-evaluation of students with mild intellectual disabilities is indeed less realistic than that of their peers without disabilities, as the self-evaluation of students without disabilities is also significantly lower than their characterisation by their teachers.

*The second group of hypotheses makes assumptions about the foreign language learning motivation of 8th grade students with mild intellectual disabilities.*

H5: According to the results of our study, a basic point of the choice of language in the institutions of special education is whether the learning of the chosen language can be continued in the vocational school, or what the actual qualification of the professional available for foreign language teaching is. This latter one suggests a situation of necessity, as neither the students nor the parents have a free choice. They have to learn the language the teaching of which the headmasters can find a professional for. In the total sample, there is no difference between the foreign language motivation of students learning English and German

(Welch ( $d(87,34, 1)=-1,385, p=0,17$ ). Regarding the sexes, however, the motivation of the girls with mild intellectual disabilities learning English is significantly higher than of the boys ( $t(151)=-2,327, p=0,021$ ). The motivational average of the two languages concerning the boys shows a difference ( $126=2,106, p=,021$ ). The motivational average of the boys learning German is higher than of the boys learning English. There is no difference concerning the girls (Welch ( $d(65,1)=1,496, p=0,144$ ).

H6: In the motivational subscales, the students with mild intellectual disabilities learning German are more motivated regarding sociocultural orientation, group cohesion, motivational intensity, language confidence and classroom activities than those learning English. We found a significant, medium strong correlation in a positive direction between these dimensions (except group cohesion).



**Fig. 3.**  
The correlational relationships of the motivational subscales of the two languages showing a significant difference in English language motivation

In the sample of students with mild intellectual disabilities learning English, the motivational intensity has a medium strong correlation with language confidence, classroom activities, sociocultural orientation and group cohesion. The correlation is medium strong between sociocultural orientation and language confidence, and classroom activities. Language confidence also shows a medium strong correlation to classroom activities and group cohesion.

H7: We expected that students with mild intellectual disabilities evaluate their learning motivation higher than the teachers, but our results were different. In the foreign language learning motivation students evaluate their motivation significantly lower than the teachers ( $t(194)=-5,500, p=0,00$ ), thus the self-evaluation of students is less favourable than what

teachers think about the motivation of the students. In the sub-sample of the students learning English we had the same results ( $t(152)=-5,829, p=0,000$ ). In the sub-sample of the students with mild intellectual disabilities learning German there is no difference between the evaluations of students and teachers ( $t(41)=-0,404, p=0,688$ ), thus students and teachers see the German language motivation of students in the same way.

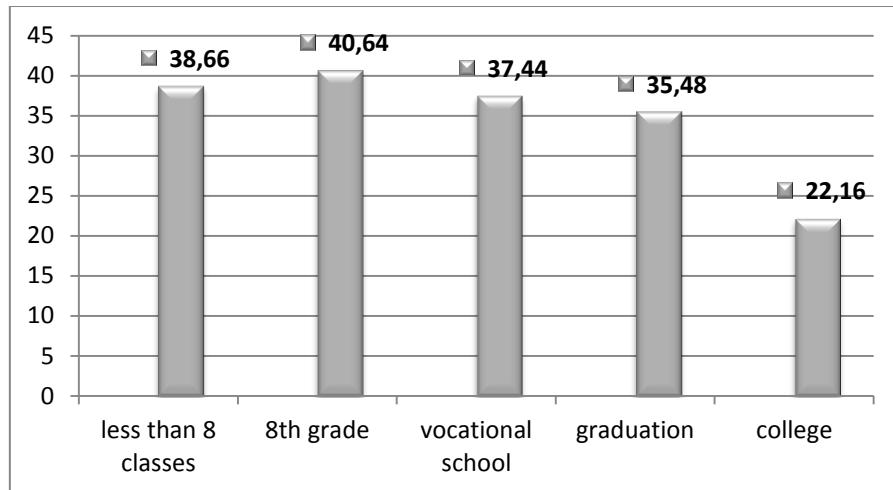
H8: Foreign language anxiety can generate a lot of problems in language learning, in retaining and recalling the learnt material (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). We found in the total sample of students with mild intellectual disabilities, as well as in the English sub-sample and in the sub-sample of students learning German, that they are most afraid of the same three things in foreign language communication: communication with native speakers, not understanding the speech, and mistakes made in speech. There is no significant difference in the extent of anxiety in English and German language learning ( $t(193)=0,390, p=0,697$ ). We found a positive correlation between language anxiety and group cohesion in both languages (English:  $r=0,343, p=0,000$ ; German:  $(rs=0,431, p= 0,004)$ ). Thus a good atmosphere in the group increases the confidence of the students. The anxiety of girls with mild intellectual disabilities is higher than that of boys ( $t(193)=-2,237, p=0,026$ ). This result corresponds to the research results of Öveges and Csizér, who had the same results in the study of students without disabilities (Öveges and Csizér, 2018). Among the students learning English, also the anxiety of girls was higher.

H9: The language confidence of students with mild intellectual disabilities is significantly higher than it is evaluated by their parents. Regarding foreign language anxiety, there is no significant difference between the evaluations of students and teachers ( $t(194)=-1,156, p=0,249$ ). According to the results of correlation analyses, language confidence does not increase with the decrease of anxiety according to the evaluations of either by teachers or students (teachers:  $(r= 0,262, p=0,00)$ ; students:  $(r= 0,203, p=0,05)$ ). Language confidence does not increase with the decrease of anxiety according to the evaluations of either by teachers or students. It can be concluded according to the evaluations of both teachers ( $r= 0,762, p=0,00$ ) and students ( $r= 0,639, p=0,00$ ) that there is a medium significant correlation between confidence and foreign language motivation.

H10: Based on reports in the literature, it can be assumed that the structure of German language better fits the cognitive characteristics of students with mild intellectual disabilities. As foreign language motivation shows a strong correlation to foreign language confidence, we expected that the foreign language confidence of students learning German would also be higher. Our results correspond to the findings of Öveges and Csizér (2018). The average of foreign language confidence is also different in our sample regarding English and German languages ( $t(193)=-2,197, p=0,029$ ). In case of students with mild intellectual disabilities, the students learning German are more confident than those learning English. Regarding the sexes, there is no difference in foreign language confidence either in the English ( $t(151)=-1,625, p=0,106$ ) or the German ( $t(40)=0,937, p=0,354$ ) sub-sample.

H11-12: We found a weak but definite correlation in the negative direction between the qualification of the mother and the foreign language motivation of the child ( $(rs(153)=-0,244,$

$p = 0,02$ ). The negative correlation can be explained probably by the excessive expectations of performance, which often characterises the highly qualified parents of children with mild intellectual disabilities (Szabóné, 2003). A higher qualification of the father is paired by a higher qualification of the mother ( $r_s(133) = -0,163$ ,  $p = 0,058$ ). The foreign language motivation of the children of mothers with a college degree proved to be lower ( $F(5,149) = 3,215$ ,  $p=0,009$ ).



**Fig. 4**  
Percentages of foreign language motivation according to the qualification of the mothers.

Those students have the highest foreign language motivation whose mothers have an elementary school certificate. No correlation can be found between the foreign language skills of parents and the foreign language motivation of the children ( $r=0,023 p=0,803$ ).

H13-16. The values of the milieu dimension show how important the views of parents and friends are for the students on the importance of foreign language learning. We found a strong correlation in the positive direction between foreign language motivation and milieu ( $r=0,652$ ,  $p=0,000$ ), thus a supporting milieu corresponds to a higher foreign language motivation also among students with mild intellectual disabilities. Comparing the evaluations of parents and students, we found a positive correlation ( $r=0,373 p=0,00$ ); at the same time, parents believe that their or the friends' views play a bigger role in the foreign language motivation of their children than the students think ( $t(121)=- 5,793 p=0,000$ ). We found a weak-moderate significant correlation in the positive direction between language confidence and milieu dimensions ( $r=0,358 p=0,000$ ), from which we conclude that the support of the parents and friends of the students have a positive effect on the language confidence of the students. Among the variables examined in the second group of hypotheses (*foreign language anxiety*, *foreign language confidence*, *milieu*, *group cohesion*), based on the results of regression analysis, milieu contributes most to foreign language motivation. Multiplying the figure in column four ( $r \cdot \beta$ ) of Table 5 by 100, we get the percentage rate of the variance of the given variable.

**Table 5.** Regression analysis of foreign language motivation as a dependent variable.

Dependent variable - Foreign language motivation					
Independent variable	r	$\beta$	$r \cdot \beta$	t- value	significance (p)
<i>Foreign lang. confidence</i>	0,639	0,214	0,136	9,247	0,000
<i>Milieu</i>	0,652	0,330	0,215	10,493	0,000
<i>Group cohesion</i>	0,349	0,122	0,042	4,890	0,000

### LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The involvement of the institutions into the research was difficult; though as for the size of our sample, the number of data can be regarded as reliable. The low level of willingness to cooperate can be explained by the novelty of the research topic and the limited number of available professionals. Although foreign language teaching has been mandatory in the institutions of special education since September 2015, several EGYMI institutions we approached replied that due to the lack of professionals, they had not started foreign language teaching, thus their students had no experience of foreign language learning.

The foreign languages taught in the institutions of special education completely correspond to the rates in the institutions of general education. Therefore the sub-sample of students with mild intellectual disabilities learning German is less than a quarter of those learning English.

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