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Motivating SEN learners' through FL education
An analytical approach

Abstract

The article focuses on the influence of motivation on the work of SEN students. In this paper, the researchers discuss various motivating methods that may be applied when teaching English to Special Education Needs (SEN) students. In our work, we focus on four SEN student types commonly observed in people's inclusion classrooms: those with vision problems, these discovered as being dyslexic, those with hearing problems, and those observed to have various forms of speech impediments and make an attempt to find out how each of them is being motivated to proceed in their educational activities. The research follows the results of a questionnaire for the teachers working with such students and analyzing the problems indicated by them.

Keywords: teaching/learning English, SEN students, motivation, motivational activities, inclusion classrooms

1. Introduction

The article discusses the topic of L_2 motivation language teachers teaching students with special educational needs (SEN) can exert on their students. The research results presented in it tend to underline our thesis that every teacher needs to elaborate on his/her own forms of behavior that may appear useful when working with impaired students. It is important that the teachers should

understand that the process of motivating such students is long and time-consuming process that needs to be adjusted for every student, only after their (mostly individual) forms of understanding of the world have been accepted and approved of by the L_2 teachers.

This process of adjustment and acceptance of the learner's understanding of the local environment does not only expect the teachers to accept the learner's uniqueness, but also the creation of their own motivation to help them search for (and find) the ways that should let them become effective enough during their work. Remembering that every student needs a different motivation, that could liberate their enthusiasm and willingness to work with the lesson contents, L_2 teachers should be able to organize the whole process of message transfer that a given lesson contains in the way that could invite their SEN learners to participate in the L_2 lessons and to gain as much knowledge from them as possible. This is why the main theses of the research presented in this paper were whether (1) the L_2 teachers are aware of the tasks facing them when designing language lessons to SEN learners; and (2) whether the learners themselves, when appropriately motivated, can make use of such lessons.

2. Literature review

There are very many definitions of the notion of motivation. *The Cambridge English Dictionary* (1995) defines motivation as "enthusiasm for doing something or the need or reason for doing something." A similar, slightly technical approached definition of motivation can be found in the book by Gardner (2010) who perceives motivation as a union of desire and effort. Brophy (2002, p. 17) defines motivation as "a theoretical construct that explains attitudes, personal direction, setting goals and the timing required to do it." The idea is that students set goals and spend time achieving them if they are motivated by themselves or their teachers. Thus, motivation pertains to "[...] students' subjective experiences, mainly students' intention to get involved in the lesson and learning process" (Brophy, 2002, p. 17). One has to remember that the motivation of SEN students can be defined as being almost the same as that of regular students; i.e., they also want to achieve some earlier set goals and experience the feeling of success afterward.

The approaches presented above are in some way related to the Needs Theory offered by Maslow (2016, pp. 115), which claims that basically people are directed by their needs, which can be congenital, universal, or taught by the environment in which they have grown. According to Maslow (p. 116) such needs to make a hierarchy; every human being has his or her need,s which should be grouped and fulfilled in the correct order that lets them find and attempt to

complete next-level needs. This is where the basics of the idea of motivation can be found. Currently, it is believed that Maslow's studies are essential for all those who want to become good teachers.

One of the important issues proposed by Maslow is a division of needs into lower order and higher-order ones; this approach assumes that until we do not satisfy our lower needs, we would not even think about our higher needs. However, some experts, such as Neher (1991), criticize that point of view and claim that there are students who willingly deprive themselves of sleep and forget about their tiredness and personal problems when they need to prepare for a test they have to sit for the next day. Thus, according to Neher (1991), our needs to depend on us and our willingness, not on our brain. This approach brings us into a long list created by Ford (1992) which consists of 24 goals split into 6 categories: (1) emotions (entertainment, calmness, happiness, nice bodily sensations, physical well-being); (2) cognition: (curiosity satisfaction, maintaining self-esteem, practicing mental creation); (3) subjective harmony: (integrity, transcendentalism); (4) subordinate social relations to our own interests: (experience of one's individuality, self-determination, superiority, receipt of good deeds); (5) integration through social relations: (membership, social duties, righteousness, sharing goods with other people) and (6) becoming task-oriented: (championship, originality, being organized).

At the same time, Kryk (2007, p. 14) sees motivation as a result of a number of conscious convictions and/or beliefs, "[...] partially influenced by the earliest situations connected with the achievement and features of the closer environment," and Kupaj & Krysa (2015, p. 15) observe that — mostly because motivation is a deeply internal process — every student is able to discover and approve of some specific (both verbal and non-verbal) reasons that could give birth to their motivation. What is more, the two kinds of reasons to help grow the students' motivation can be found both inside and outside the students' environment. According to the authors (p. 61), non-verbal forms of communication received from teachers are more effective than those of the verbal type. Such non-verbal forms of motivation, commonly observed in the classroom can be transferred by means of: (1) eye contact; (2) facial expression; (3) gestures; (4) body posture; (5) physical appearance; and/or (6) distance from others (Kupaj & Krysa, 2015, p. 62). As teachers' work is performed under the watchful eyes of their students, SEN students included, they have to remember that practically everything they do in the classroom will be read out by the students as the activities promoting and/or suppressing motivation. Some of those non-verbal activities can be more motivating than a thousand or so verbal requests and/or invitations to activate motivation within the students.

Different scholars propose different motivation promoting activities and/or forms of behavior that should help them develop their second/foreign language.

Kubiak (2003) suggests arranging the periods of time when the children are addressed by their mother tongue and those when the target language is used. According to the author, the golden rule (p. 39) is that when at home, we speak the first language, whereas when outside it, the second language is used.

Evidently, Kubiak's propositions are based on the theory developed by Deci & Ryan (1991), which claims that if people are motivated to achieve something, they will make a goal and try harder to do almost everything to get it. In some cases, such motivation can be propelled by the people themselves who are able to find enough strength to self-control themselves; however, as the authors observe, situations where the source of motivation is placed outside the learners are much more common. Such activities remain the products of motivation created by the people who are placed outside, what allows them to control the whole performance (this is why one can talk about internal and external forms of motivation). According to this theory, our social environment favors internal motivation when it fulfills three congenital psychological needs: (1) competences (i.e., improving the ability to manipulate and control the environment); (2) autonomy (i.e., self-deciding what to do and how to do it) and (3) inclusion (closely connected with the notion of affiliation). In other words, any human is motivated to feel connected with other people in his or her environment, be effective with that group of people, and be permitted to take initiative. It is the third variant observed by Deci & Ryan (1991) that performs particular functions in the process of school motivation; students become knowledgeable when they have been instructed by others how to perform an activity and when they have practiced performing it themselves.

Csikszentmihalyi (1993) offered an elaboration of the main aspects of the theory proposed by Deci & Ryan (1991, p. 22) when he discussed the assumptions of his approach, embracing the main aspects of human motivation. Briefly speaking, people can be positively motivated towards performing an activity, when they believe in themselves and their possible final success. Such a belief results in easier concentration on the task an immediate loss of worries as to their final success. When they have been positively challenged, they usually awaken their ambition and try to complete the task; when, additionally, they have been brought into appropriate motivation-friendly conditions, they find genuine pleasure in their activities and are able to spend long hours on the task. This theory, called the theory of effusion, remains one of the most important educational issues of modern education.

The most significant danger for effusion is anxiety; Csikszentmihalyi (1993) being aware that effusion is moderately difficult to be obtain when at school, suggests three ways the L_2 teachers should base designs their lessons: (1) bringing plenty of enthusiasm into the language classroom; (2) keeping harmony between the forms of students' task/topic preparation and what they ask for to

cover the topic; and (3) providing students with didactic and emotional support, thanks to which they will not feel the anxiety and will do the task in a more confident way.

Most of the observations proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1993) can be used when one wants to motivate children. Despite an obligatory attempt to evoke the feeling of enthusiasm in the young learner's approach to the tasks s/he has been expected to take an active part in, one of the other 'must-be' situations is the use of the target language during lessons in English delivered to preschool and early school learners. However, such a situation is not easy to attain. Szramek-Karcz (2019) observes that if the children are "closed" to the language and think that they do not need to communicate in that specific language, you will not 'open' the child. If the child is communicating with the right person in the right place and time, s/he will start to "open" to the language. Parents (or teachers) could help children open to the language and teach them the language imperceptibly by playing different games, singing songs or chants, or repeating different nursery rhymes whenever they are willing to do that. Another way to motivate early school learners is the prize system (Szpotowicz & Szulc-Kurpaska, 2013); when the students know the correct answer, they could get a sticker to put it on the back of their notebooks. At the end of the semester, the whole class can count how many stickers they have in their notebooks.

Naporowska (2019) claims that CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) can be one more useful way to motivate preschool and/or early school learners to actively get involved in the whole process of L_2 education This method offers many exciting but straightforward ways to invite the learners to the active use of the target language. One way described by Naporowska (2019) that can be performed by both parents and/or teachers is story-reading (or story-telling). Parents (or teachers) can read a story to the young learners, ask them to produce pictures based upon the story they listened to or even sing special songs the story heroes used to sing in some specific situations. Parents can also motivate their children when using the target language to ask them to perform some simple housework activities such as cooking, cleaning, or even going shopping. Such (and many others) easy to follow routine-abiding tasks need to be concurrently repeated, mostly because of the type of memory active in preschool and/or early school children.

As Naporowska (2019) remarks, the L_2 teacher has to adjust the language requirements and/or the selected tasks to the age of the students and joins them with many different areas of education. The methods of teaching English to younger children should be primarily in the form of play. The conditions created by the L_2 teachers during both regular and inclusive classes enable children to become familiar with the foreign language in various everyday life situations. Reading children's books in English, playing together, singing songs,

reciting poems, watching fairy tales together, allows children to get used to a foreign language. During classes with younger children (SEN children included), the L_2 teacher should enable them to learn new words or phrases in free play, in natural situations. When delivering the language lessons to the impaired learners, it is important that the regular teacher of English work closely with the extra teacher. Thanks to this cooperation, teaching English is expected to be as effective as possible. The children must trust and like the teacher, they should feel safe in the classroom. This special bond will allow the teacher to gradually and naturally introduce the students to the world of the foreign language. During integrated classes, the L_2 teacher should use common topics, and together they change, show, teach, and solve cognitive topics. As observed by Cameron (2001), younger students closely observe other people's behavior and develop socially, emotionally, mentally and morally. We should take care of positive emotions and good, friendly relations in the group. Therefore, it is best to end each English class with younger students and children with special educational needs with a positive summary. It is especially important for emotionally and socially immature children.

Bieńkowska & Sajkowska (2011) remark that SEN children are often a challenge for modern schools and their teachers; they have problems in communication, expressing emotions, social relations and coping with difficulties. Special developmental and educational needs occur mainly in children who, due difficulties, disturbances, and developmental disorders caused by various biological and social factors, have difficulties in broadly understood learning, i.e., in integral, biological, mental, social, moral and spiritual development. According to these researchers, SEN children are at risk of marginalization, and even social exclusion from the group. They are threatened by limiting their activity and losing their developmental potential. That is why a foreign language teacher with the right approach to the student is so important. It should be remembered that such children need understanding, and acceptance, which naturally requires demonstration of broad competencies and more effort from the teachers.

The help, normally provided to SEN students, should not only be of the therapeutic type (where the teacher should enable the child to participate in various forms of therapy on the school premises or outside it, e.g., in psychological therapy, in compensatory and revalidation classes, in corrective and compensatory classes, in speech therapy, and in attending therapeutic classes), but also of didactic and educational type (the use of such methods or methods of assessment or educational methods during the lesson that facilitates the student's learning and social adaptation). Every teacher of SEN students should strive to create proper educational conditions for them (such as adjusting the way of communicating with the students, maintaining the appropriate distance,

extending the working time or changing the forms of activity appropriate for given students).

One of the main tasks of the teacher is to ensure that education genuinely, i.e., for every learner individually. Each child in the schools should receive an educational offer that meets their needs, taking into account to their specific talents and requirements. Supporting the parents of these students has to be focused on solving various educational and didactic problems; it should improve the SEN learners' educational skills and, consequently, increase the effectiveness of psychological and pedagogical help they should receive.

3. Thesis statement

The main theses of the research presented in this paper were: (1) the L_2 teachers are aware of the tasks facing them when designing language lessons to SEN learners; and (2) whether the learners themselves, when appropriately motivated, can make use of such lessons. We also wanted to find out the position performed by L_2 teachers in the process of motivating inclusive students receive. Thus, the main asset of the research was to show that the proper motivation of SEN students (as well as other students attending inclusive classes) has a significant impact on the acquisition of new L_2 material and consequently on their classroom behavior.

3.1. Methods

The research tool used in the study is an online questionnaire. The main aim of the questionnaire was to discover the different types and methods of motivating SEN students are used by their teachers. Thus, we asked about the problems which appear in teaching SEN students (Q1); the forms of motivation used in respect of hard-of-seeing students (Q2); the teachers' ideas to help such hard-of-seeing learners function in inclusive classrooms (Q3); the ways of motivating hard-of-hearing learners (Q4 & Q5); the forms of motivating dyslexic students (Q6 & Q7); the issues that might work (Q8) and are recognized as successful (Q9) when motivating learners with different speech impediments; the teachers' beliefs/opinions concerning the periods of time needed to motivate SEN learners effectively, i.e., when the ideas invested in the process of motivation begin to pay back (Q10 & Q11); and the teachers' opinions concerning the treatment of both SEN and non-SEN learners in an inclusive classroom (Q12).

3.2. Sample characteristics

The research sample embraces a group of 50 teachers of English who have declared to teach SEN learners in inclusive classes. The online questionnaire, especially designed for the purposes of the research, was expected to be anonymous; the teachers were requested to give genuine answers to all the research questions. We were interested in the teachers' work and their involvement in the process of motivation of SEN learners, such issues as the teachers' seniority, the place of their work (village schools or municipal schools, for example) and their age were not taken into account. The only issue that mattered was their education and the way(s) they got qualifications to work with SEN learners in inclusive classrooms.

3.3. Research procedure

The tool was an online questionnaire that was sent to all the teachers who had previously declared either their work with SEN learners or their functioning in inclusive classrooms. The teachers were supposed to complete the questionnaires and send them back to us. When all the questionnaires had been received we began calculating the answers and looking for the answers that could satisfy the research hypotheses presented above. Right after the collection of all the answers, there began (month long) analyses presented above. We formulated the answers and completed the description of the research results. Finally, we made an attempt to confront the results found by us with those presented in the other (mentioned above) studies.

4. Findings

The initial question of the questionnaire referred to various motivation-related problems the respondents might have when working in inclusive classrooms. While answering this question, the most often chosen answer concerned general behavior problems presented by SEN students, chosen by 37% of the respondents. The second most often picked answer was the teachers' complaint about evidently observed laziness demonstrated by SEN students (32% of the respondents). The remaining part of the group (30% of the respondents) chose the third possibility, i.e., reluctance to absorb the class material. No teacher marked some other motivation problems, different from these specified by us.

When we're analyzing the two questions concerning motivation issues among hard-of-seeing learners taking part in the lessons in inclusive classes

(Fig. 1), it is easy to notice that the most popular answer given by the respondents is that motivation pairs their interest in the lesson topics (79 indications); the two other issues helping in the growth of motivation of such learners are individual approach (72 indications) and acceptance of their achievements (68 indications). The three least popular indications turned out to be 'bigger letters put on the blackboard' (28 indications), 'clearly explained lesson topics' (36 indications) and 'help received from other students' (39 indications). In this way, the forms of teacher behavior that are by far the most commonly believed to be taking place in very many inclusive lessons, i.e., writing the lesson contents in bigger letters, very detailed explanations of the lessons, and/or telling other students to help their hard-of-seeing peers are generally understood as not being of much help when an attempt to motivate such learners seriously considered. The respondents openly admit that the main motivation triggers are lessons that make all learners involved in their contents, as well as letting visually impaired learners work by themselves, being able to accept their achievements and/or revealing genuine interest in their work.

The distribution of the answers observed in question 2 offers partial explanations to the puzzling answers found in the initial question of the research, as it tells us where the behavior problems originate. If such learners assess the les-
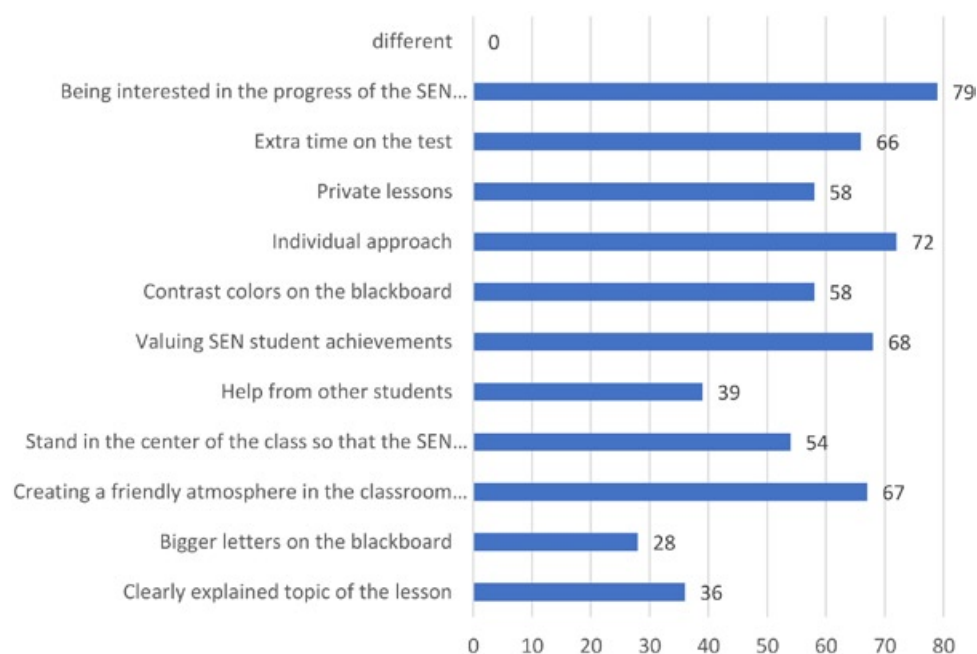

Fig. 1. What substantively motivates your students who have vision problems? Own elaboration
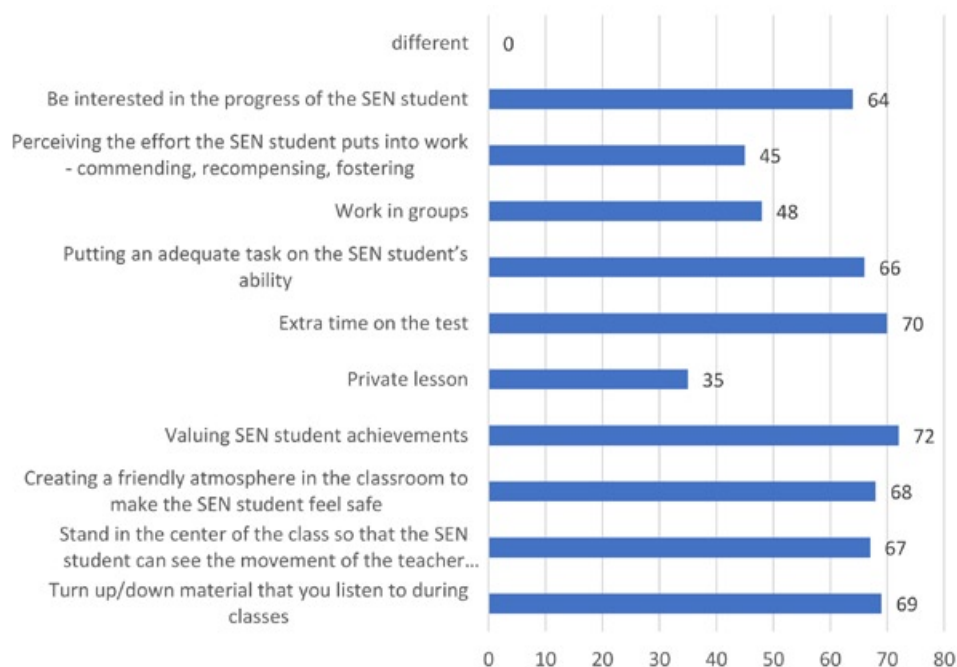
Fig 2. What substantively motivates your students who have hearing problems? Own elaboration

sons in which they participate as poorly interesting and involving, they usually give up, become passive, and became reluctant to absorb the class material as smoothly and without problems, as their teachers might expect them.

When we're analyzing the results given by individual teachers, we could also see that each teacher completing the questionnaire tends to present his/her own motivational methods s/he believes to be effective enough. For example, one teacher prefers to use the colors on the blackboard, whereas another will prefer a more personal approach to inclusive students. Such a tendency could be found in the answers given by individual teachers throughout the whole questionnaire.

A similar situation could be observed in the analyses of the answers that concern the questions dealing with motivation issues that refer to hard-of-hearing learners (Fig. 2). Here again are the situations where the efforts of hard-of-hearing learners are accepted, valued, and/or appreciated, which has been recognized as the most stimulating motivation-growing activity. At the same time, giving private lessons to such students was assessed as the activity that could not help the learners rebuild their motivation one more time. Strangely enough, the second place was occupied by the notion 'additional time for a test;' most probably the teachers thought one more chance given to such learners might
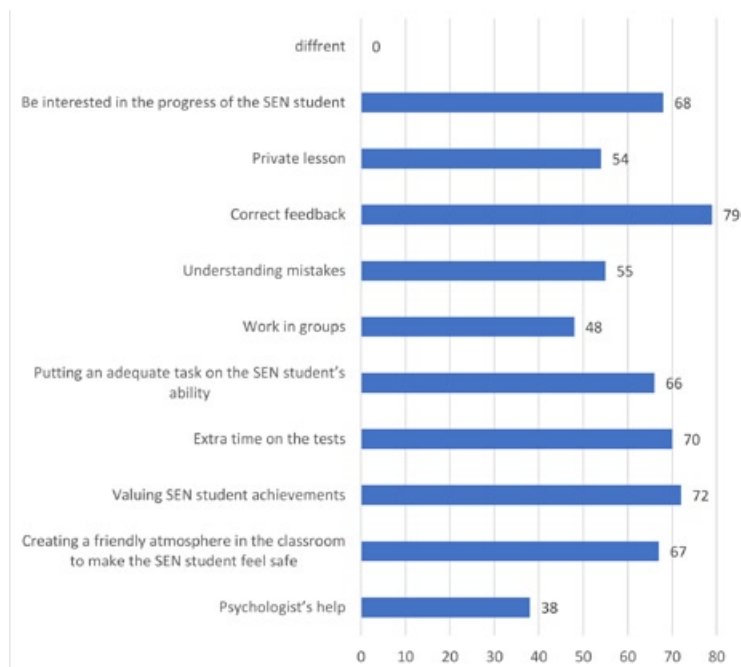
Fig. 3. What substantively motivates your students who are dyslexic? Own elaboration

be a good occasion to help their motivation grow was to adjust the sound in such a way that it was not too loud for the students.

The results found in the answers concerning the motivation triggering issues in respect to dyslexic students look similar to those found in the two earlier questions. The difference between the highest result of the answer, i.e., 'correct feedback' (68) and the lowest one, i.e., 'psychological help' (38) is 30 indications less. The respondents seemed to remember that such students usually have many different troubles in learning, especially a new language. Furthermore, in school, teachers usually do not recognize a dyslexic student without a special document that notifies them about the problem. It is important such students should be offered correct forms of feedback that should help them reanalyze the information one more time.

Quite interesting answers can be found in the question concerning motivation activities in respect to the students revealing different speech impediments (Fig. 4). The selected possibilities clearly indicate that the approach to such learners in which they experience a friendly atmosphere, are given the materials that do not overvalue their actual cognitive and/or physical possibilities, and/or are praised in case they have done some tasks well enough were recognized as those that strongly motivate such learners. One more time, it was un-
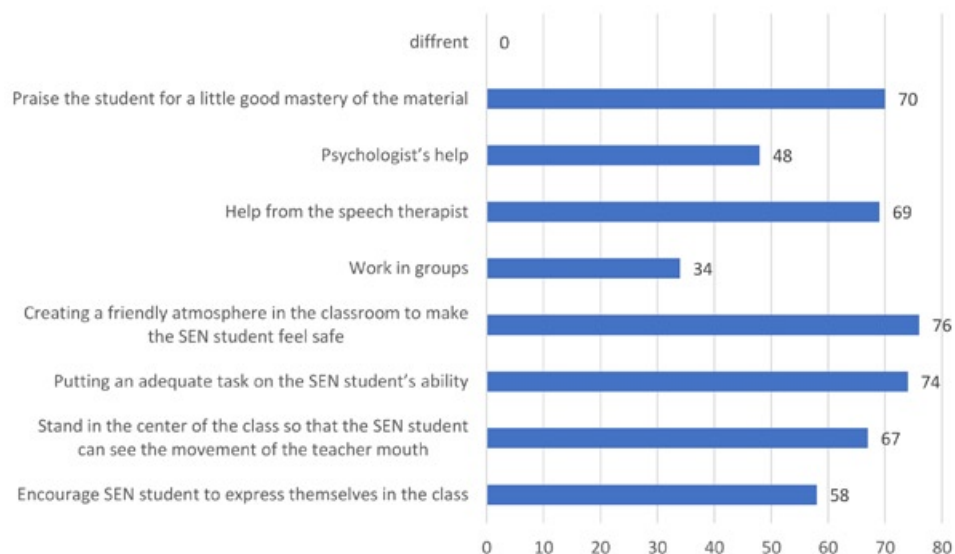
Fig. 4. What substantively motivates your students who have different speech impediments? Own elaboration

derlined that the forms of activity in which the students are encouraged to express themselves at the class forum are not of high motivational potential. Students with different speech impediments are usually timid; they are often afraid of speaking because they do not want to be a spectrum for the peers who may laugh at their impediment.

The answers given by the respondents to the question embracing the situation which could allow them notice the first positive results of their motivation promoting behavior appeared to be quite puzzling for us (Fig. 5). Although 29% of the respondents indicated the answer 'after the lesson,' the option 'after one week,' was chosen by 18% of teachers, and the one indicating a month lapse by 12% of them. At the same time the option 'after one year' was chosen by the least number of the respondents, i.e., 9% only. Noticing that the students were positively motivated (SEN students included) at the end of a lesson usually means that the whole process of lesson assessment carried out by the teacher at the end of the lesson (Scrivener, 2010) was to be recognized as being positive for the teacher her/himself. Such an approach hardly ever includes the learners as the teacher usually assesses his/her input into the lesson and whether s/he has been able to present the material earlier than planned to be introduced. Additionally, Ur (1996) notices that there are two forms of lesson material comprehension and it is the one labelled 'delayed knowledge store' that truly indicates whether the lesson procedures were motivationally positive for the
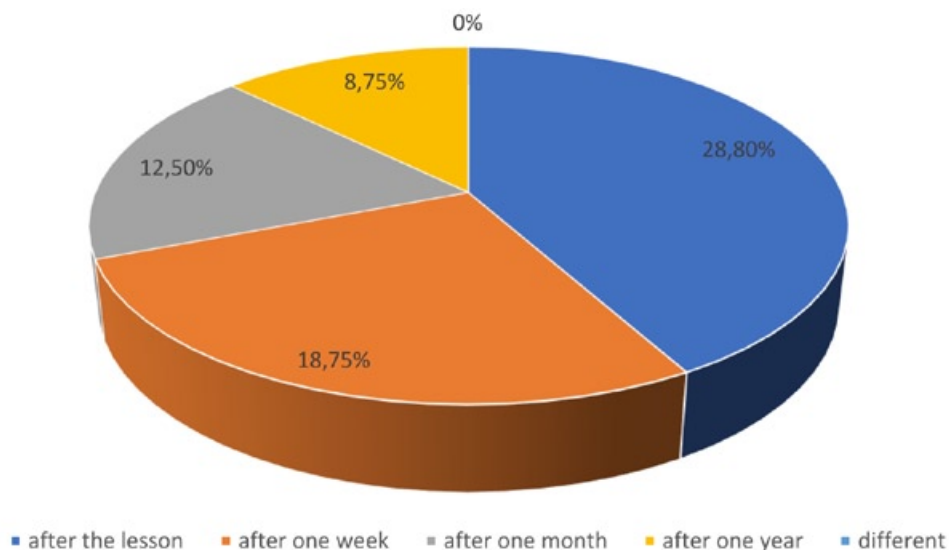
Fig. 5. When did you see the first positive results of motivating the SEN students? Own elaboration

learners. Saying that the learners were motivated during a lesson right after it has been over means that such a lesson has to be highly creative for the learners and such lessons are usually not commonly observed. On the other hand, waiting for a year with an assertion that one's lessons truly motivated the learners seems to be a form of under-appreciation of the educational activities performed in the classroom. It seems that the most of the respondents were not quite sure how to answer this question and the selection presented here is a form of wishful thinking. The teachers thought that the option selected by them would indicate their educational potential and skillfulness to deal with the material when teaching inclusive classes.

As far as the last question asked in the survey is concerned, i.e., whether SEN and non-SEN learners are treated identically in inclusive classes, as many as 33% of the polled teachers answered that they cannot positively answer this question mostly because of the different ethical standards they think they need to be placed between the two groups of students. At the same time they claimed they do practically everything to treat all the students identically, but there are situations such individual treatment is simply not possible. Quite many teachers (46%) openly admitted they prefer not to focus on SEN learners during their classes because they know that the time given by such learners when answering their questions would need far more time that they are able to secure to them. The remaining 21% of the teachers admitted they expect SEN learners

to answer their questions sporadically only, mostly when they know such questions will be answered positively. Such an approach reveals the attitude held by most of the polled teachers towards impaired learners in inclusive classes — it's OK when they are there, but since a lesson contents need to be closed within stiff time limits, it is much better not to ask such learners rather than focus the class attention on them and spend more time on work with them. If necessary, such lessons should also include many situations of mini-dialogues and/or other forms of student interaction, as such forms of L_2 education will allow other non-SEN learners to cooperate with the impaired learners what, in turn, may be useful of the SEN learners.

5. Conclusions

As seen in the presented research the surveyed teachers of English are generally of the opinion that the level of the students' motivation to learn the target language in inclusive classes, is at a sufficient level. The teachers believe them know how to motivate such students and hope that the motivational instruments they offer positively influence their learners. One of the issues that revealed objections was the amount of time the teachers need to find the results of the motivational activities introduced during their lessons; as presented above, the most commonly indicated option (i.e., after the lesson) could be interpreted as an illustration of the teachers' hopes rather than the situation where could really take place. The results of the questions the respondents of the questionnaire were requested to answer to tend to illustrate the option that the teachers think they are competent enough to handle the problem of motivation in inclusive classes. If then one were to take these answers into account one had to admit that the information given be the teachers in the very first question of the poll analyzed by us could not be treated seriously; the teachers who know how to handle motivational problems would not be opt to complain of the learners' laziness, or the problems connected with their reluctance to absorb the class materials. What could be more recognized as much closer to the truth was the teachers' assertion that they need some more psychological knowledge, or even attending a course able to instruct them how to react more properly on the forms of behavior observed in inclusive learners in a more practical way. The research showed that although many teachers are theoretically aware of the techniques that could turn to be more beneficial when motivating students in inclusive classes of English they often either seem to forget about them or do not take them as the first option of topic application. No teacher can treat a class as the sum of individual students and fail to realize that both the attitude towards learning, school, class, or teachers themselves and the ac-

tual behavior of impaired students in inclusive classes are closely related to the social processes that take place in the class considered as a social structural unity. When the students get to know each other and live their lives, the class itself transforms into a more coherent social group. Supported by the teachers who not only possess enough theory but are also able to make use of it in the situations where require the use of its practical forms, such students will be able to turn into more socially able participants of a multicultural society that uses and communicates in many languages of the modern world.

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