

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE FORMATION OF ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TO LEARNING ENGLISH: A PILOT STUDY

Ágnes Kovács

Language Pedagogy PhD Programme, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
hubja.bubja@gmail.com

Abstract: The present small-scale study aims to serve two purposes. Firstly, it maps the interrelationship of adult EFL learners' attitudes and motivations to learning English and those of their social environment. Secondly, it attempts to describe the validation procedure of a questionnaire highlighting the possible difficulties of data collection researchers might need to face. The sample comprised 53 adult English language learners studying English at language school courses in Budapest. The courses were aimed at the general public and not specifically geared for companies. The central finding of the research is that the attitudes and motivations of the social environment do exert a strong influence on those of adult non-company course language learners in which the teacher, friends, workplace, and the language school play an essential part. The results also indicate that the attitude of language schools towards learners' learning English have a detrimental influence on adult language learners' attitudes to learning English.

Keywords: social environment, attitudes, motivation, non-company course learners

1 Introduction

This study aims to describe the pilot procedure of a quantitative instrument designed to measure the influence of the attitudes and motivational role of the social environment on the attitudes of adult learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). My hypothesis is that the attitudes and the motivational role of adult learners' social environment - that is, their family, friends, colleagues, the staff of the language school and their language teacher - exert a strong influence on adult EFL learners' attitudes to learning English in case of company course learners as well as non-company courses.

The idea that the social environment plays a major part in an individual's cognitive and affective development was modelled by Bronfenbrenner (1979), who described the environment of a developing person as being similar to a Russian doll. He stated that the individual's environment can be represented as a set of concentric interactive layers. Their continuous interaction with each other and with the individual defines the possible routes of development. Although based on this model numerous studies have been conducted concentrating on the nature of interaction and the validity of the model in different circumstances (see e.g. Eamon, 2001; Garbarino & Eckenrode, 1997), I know of no research which aims to describe the nature of the influence of the attitudes and motivational role of the social environment on the attitudes of adult EFL learners at non-company courses. Therefore, the present study intends to validate a questionnaire with which it is possible to draw up a

model of this interrelationship. Thus, in this piece of research the following research questions will be answered:

- (1) What modifications do the results of the validation process prompt to the research instrument in order to improve the internal consistency of the scales?
- (2) What factors influence EFL adult language learners' affective attitudes to learning English?
- (3) What factors influence EFL adult language learners' cognitive attitude to learning English?
- (4) What is the possible model of interrelationship of the motivations and attitudes of the social environment and those of EFL adult language learners?

2 Literature review

The theoretical background of the present research originates from three main sources: motivational studies of language pedagogy, attitude research, and socio-psychological studies on the interrelationship between the individual and the social environment. Concerning attitude research, and socio-psychological studies, the present study is mostly based on the groundbreaking works of Bronfenbrenner and of Ajzen written in the 1970s and 1980s. Although their studies might not seem to be up-to-date now, they represent the bases of the field of attitude research and human social environmental research even today.

The interrelationship of the social environment and the individual represents a vital input in the maturation process of a child. Among other factors, the attitudes and motivations that the social environment conveys to the growing child serve as essential sources in the child's formation of his/her own motivations and attitudes. This phenomenon was structurally modelled by Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his Ecological Systems Theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the social environment with concentric circles positioning the individual into the centre of the system. With this structure he models not only the factors of the social environment that affect the child, but also the strength of the influence.

In Bronfenbrenner's model there are three circles of the social environment. In the most influential circle, which is closest to the individual, there is the close family and the peers of the individual child; the next circle comprises the extended family, school, neighbours, mass media, and parents' workplace. The outermost circle consists of society, culture, history, economy and laws. As this model applies only to the individual child and not to adult EFL learners, I needed to reconstruct this idea, and set up a related model for adult EFL learners' social environment. During this process I faced two issues: (a) in Bronfenbrenner's model the circles can consist of groups and individuals as well as abstract notions or groups of individuals, and (b) the macrosystem circle tapped into environmental elements that were too broad and complicated to be able to be researched in a small-scale pilot study. Therefore, in my study, due to time and resource limitations I abandoned the largest circle, the macrosystem. When I constructed my own model I decided on restricting the types of items that can appear within a certain circle, based on the idea that abandoning the abstract notions not only assists the participants in answering the questionnaire items without much hesitation but also supports the validity of the questionnaire. Although Bronfenbrenner (1979) intends to model the general social environment of a child, I decided on excluding the outermost circle from my own model due to the financial and resource limitations of my study. Based on the two considerations, I created my theoretical model of adult language learners' social environment, shown in Figure 1.

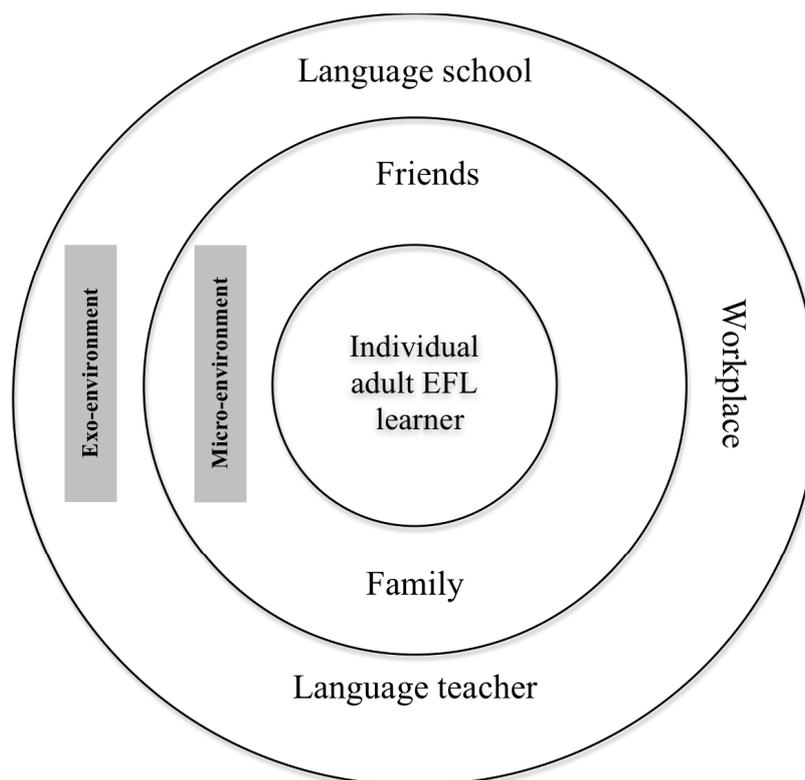


Figure 1. Kovács's model of adult EFL learners' social environment

As Figure 1 shows, in my model there are two social environmental circles, the first being the immediate micro-environment that consists of family and friends. I included these two factors because they comprise those people who in adult life represent the private environment and possess the most personal information about the individual adult EFL learner. The outer circle, the exo-environment, comprises the workplace, the language teacher, and the language school. For adult EFL learners these facets of life represent daily and regular activities and convey rich stimuli; however, they do not belong to the private environment. According to my hypothesis, the motivations and the attitudes of these two major facets influence the attitudes and motivations of adult EFL learners.

In my theory, I follow Ajzen's (1988) definition and categorization of attitudes. To summarize Ajzen's ideas on attitudes (1988, pp. 2-23), the concept of attitude always involves an evaluation of the individual's environment for instance, objects, people, or institutions. In other words, an individual's positive or negative attitude towards something reflects his/her positive or negative relation to a particular part of the environment. He distinguishes three types of attitudes: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. Cognitive attitudes are those evaluations with which an individual can express beliefs about the attitude object, whereas affective attitudes are feelings towards the attitude object. Behavioural attitudes mean intentions to behave in a certain way in a particular situation.

As the above definitions show, the concept of motivation and attitude share a lot of common features. Dörnyei (2001) defines motivation as the direction and magnitude of human behaviour – that is, how long, how hard, and why an individual pursues a certain action. According to his approach, motivation and attitudes are two different approaches to the same phenomenon. Attitudes are related to the individual's social identity, relations, and

social situations, whereas motivation concerns the individual as a system of interrelated motives that direct human behaviour and that stem from inner cognitive processes.

Although in my theory both approaches are vital for examining the interrelationship of the social environment and the adult EFL learner, in the present study I will concentrate largely on the social-psychological aspects, in other words the attitudes of the social environment and the individual learner. The next section, details the instrument created to examine the possible interrelationships.

3 Method of data analysis

The research was conducted between February and May in 2010. A quantitative research instrument was constructed (Cseh-Szombathy & Ferge, 1971; Szokolszky, 2004) in continuous consultation with my supervisor and my fellow PhD students. The focal point of the research was to conduct a deep statistical analysis of the data gained and check the reliability of the questionnaire as well as setting up a possible path model of the interrelationship between the social environment and the adult EFL learner.

3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were adult foreign language learners of English (N=53; n[female]=32; n[male]=21) who study at various language schools in Budapest. Before the selection of the participants meeting the above criteria, I needed to define three terms: adult language learner of English, foreign language learner of English, and language school. The definition for the term adult language learner has long been discussed (see e.g. Knowles, 1973; Joiner, 1981); however, there is not one universally accepted definition of adult language learner in second language acquisition studies. Therefore, I needed to create my own angle from which I intend to define what I mean by adult language learner. My definition involves the following features:

- an individual who is above the age of 18
- an individual whose language learning is not financed by his/her workplace
- an individual who studies at courses organised by a language school

Besides, the participants were required to be Hungarian foreign language learners of English. In my usage, foreign language learner means an individual whose mother tongue is other than English and who does not learn English in the native environment but attends classes of English on a regular basis in the first language context. Moreover, in my study the first language context is narrowed down solely to language schools, by which I mean private-run institutions specialised in language education, offering a range of English courses either in group- or one-to-one format.

3.2 Data collection

The data collection was conducted between March and May in 2010. First, numerous language schools in Budapest and language teachers who teach in language schools in Budapest were asked to give the paper-based questionnaires to their learners. Approximately 150 adult foreign language learners of English were approached. However, due to the low

return rate (23 out of the 150), I needed to find another method to be able to include more participants in the sample. Therefore, the learners were also approached via email, and were asked to fill in the questionnaire and send it back to my personal email address. The main problem for the participants who filled in the questionnaire sent via email appeared to be that the questionnaire was originally constructed to be paper-based and therefore I was only able to send a Microsoft Word format document. This format was not truly convenient for electronic use, which is why many of the participants reported that the filling-in procedure was tiring and problematic. Via emails, I received an additional 30 questionnaires.

3.3 Instrument design

The process of instrument design took place from September 2009 to March 2010. As I know of no other study researching specifically the present issue, a new instrument was constructed for this study. As the aim was to amass generalizable data, quantitative research methods were used. For the first version of the questionnaire, 16 constructs were created:

- (1) learners' affective attitude to learning English
- (2) learners' cognitive attitude to learning English
- (3) parents' perceived affective attitude to learning English
- (4) parents' perceived cognitive attitude to learning English
- (5) friends' perceived affective attitude to learning English
- (6) friends' perceived cognitive attitude to learning English
- (7) partner's perceived affective attitude to learning English
- (8) partner's perceived cognitive attitude to learning English
- (9) present EFL teacher's perceived affective attitude to learners' learning English
- (10) present EFL teacher's perceived cognitive attitude to learners' learning English
- (11) perceived affective attitude of the workplace to learning English
- (12) perceived cognitive attitude of the workplace to learning English
- (13) perceived affective attitude of the language school to learners' learning English
- (14) perceived cognitive attitude of the language school to learners' learning English
- (15) perceived affective attitude of previous schools to learning English
- (16) perceived cognitive attitude of previous schools to learning English

Every construct consisted of five items; therefore, 80 questionnaire items were created. These items were 5-point Likert scale questions. The questionnaire was in Hungarian to prevent the possible issues regarding the misinterpretation of the questionnaire items. I chose the 5-point scale because it is familiar to all participants from their school experiences, so they were capable of rating the items accurately. I also included items asking for background information about the participants:

- a) gender
- b) age
- c) time spent studying English
- d) highest educational level
- e) time of learning in the present language school
- f) proficiency level of the current course book applied
- g) rank number of English language within the chronological order of all the foreign languages learnt

During the construction it was necessary to make a decision regarding the inclusion of questionnaire scales dealing with the learners' perceptions of their previous English language teachers. Although it is clear that the previous teachers might play a very important role in

learners' attitudes to English learning, in the finalised pilot version these scales were not included. The reasons for this decision were twofold. Firstly, there might be a number of learners in the sample who did not have previous language teachers, therefore they could not have filled in these items. Thus, during the statistical analysis the data gained for these scales could not have been comparable with any other groups in the sample. Secondly, the other reason for excluding these scales was that there is a significant risk of learners' memory distortion (see e.g. Bartlett, 1995; Johnson, 2001). More precisely, the time elapsed since their experience with their previous English language teacher, aging, or socio-psychological factors can distort their memories, which would have led to biased data.

Based on these items that were finally included in the pilot version, a paper-based version of the questionnaire was constructed. This version was pre-piloted with the help of my supervisor and my fellow doctoral students. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire as if they were potential participants of my study. During this process it evolved that the items related to the partner's attitudes to learning English might be difficult to answer in case a particular participant does not have a partner or does not intend to reveal personal information of this kind. Besides, items related to parents' attitude to learning English appeared to be problematic in case the participant's parents do not have any experience with English and English language learning. Therefore, these four constructs were reconsidered and in the finalised version of the pilot study they were merged into family-related items. This way the problem of the possible absence of a partner, the personal nature of the items, and the possible absence of parental experience with English were eliminated. Additionally, four new constructs were included in the questionnaire, measuring the motivational role of (a) friends and family (b) colleagues and workplace (c) present English language teacher (d) present language school. In sum, in the finalised version of the questionnaire (see the Appendix for the English translation) 16 constructs (with altogether 84 questionnaire items) were included as Table 1 shows.

Scales	Questionnaire Item Numbers
EFL learners' affective attitude to learning English	Items 1-8
EFL learners' cognitive attitude to learning English	Items 9-15
Friends' perceived affective attitude to learning English	Items 45-49
Friends' perceived cognitive attitude to learning English	Items 50-54
Family's perceived affective attitude to learning English	Items 40-44
Family's perceived cognitive attitude to learning English	Items 35-39
Present EFL teacher's perceived affective attitude to learners' learning English	Items 61-65
Present EFL teacher's perceived cognitive attitude to learners' learning English	Items 55-60
Perceived affective attitude of the workplace to learning English	Items 71-75
Perceived cognitive attitude of the workplace to learning English	Items 66-70
Perceived affective attitude of the language school to learners' learning English	Items 80-84
Perceived cognitive attitude of the language school to learners' learning English	Items 76-79
Motivational role of friends and family in learners' learning English	Items 16-23
Motivational role of the workplace in learners' learning English	Items 24-27
Motivational role of the present EFL teacher in learners' learning English	Items 30-32, 34
Motivational role of the present language school in learners' learning English	Items 28-29, 33

Table 1. Scales and the questionnaire items belonging to each scale

3.4 Methods of data analysis

The data gained was analysed with SPSS 16.0 for Windows. Firstly, the reliability of the scales was checked. Secondly, the mean values of the scales were calculated. Thirdly, regression analyses were conducted to set up a possible cause-effect model of the constructs.

4 Results and Discussion

Firstly, a reliability analysis was conducted on the scales. This analysis pointed out the items that are not needed and which should therefore be excluded. In the second step I conducted a regression analysis and created the path model of the scales.

4.1 Internal consistency and mean values of the scales

As a first step, it was essential to check whether the scales are capable of measuring the intended concepts. Therefore, an internal consistency analysis of the scales was conducted. In Table 2, Cronbach Alpha values show the reliability of the scales. Additionally, Table 2 highlights the questionnaire items that were necessary to exclude from the scales in order to create more reliable scales. The presented Cronbach Alpha values are calculated after the dropping of the inadequate items. The deletion of an item was decided, based on two guidelines: a) if the item lowered the internal consistency of the scale by a minimum of 0.5, and b) if during the seminar presentation of the questionnaire and the results two items were criticized for meaning the same. Based on these guidelines, items 29, 49, 55, 65, 69, and 82 were deleted. For the purpose of easier understanding, these questionnaire items are crossed out in the Appendix. Item 65 was discarded because it appeared to mean the same as item 62 and during a comprehension check conducted with think-aloud protocol the participants reported item 65 as being more difficult to comprehend than item 62. Items 29, 49, 55, 69, and 82 were dropped because they lowered the Cronbach Alpha values of the scales by a minimum of 0.5. As the Cronbach Alpha values were all above the universally accepted 0.7 (Székelyi & Barna, 2002) without dropping any items, which excludes the possibility of a hidden independent factor in one construct, I decided not to apply factor analysis.

Scales	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha	Item deleted
EFL learners' affective attitudes to learning English	4.32	.59	.85	n.a.
EFL learners' cognitive attitudes to learning English	4.03	.57	.80	n.a.
Motivational role of the family and friends in adult EFL learners' learning English	2.63	.76	.81	n.a.
Motivational role of workplace in adult EFL learners' learning English	2.89	1.23	.89	q29
Motivational role of the language school in adult EFL learners' learning English	3.67	1.01	.88	n.a.
Motivational role of the language teacher in adult EFL learners' learning English	4.04	.95	.83	n.a.
Perceived cognitive attitude of the family to learning English	2.27	1.06	.89	n.a.

Perceived affective attitude of the family to learning English	2.54	1.09	.91	n.a.
Perceived cognitive attitude of friends to learning English	3.52	.87	.91	q49
Perceived affective attitude of friends to learning English	3.37	.97	.90	n.a.
Perceived cognitive attitude of the language teacher to learners' learning English	3.76	.92	.90	q55
Perceived affective attitude of the language teacher to learners' learning English	3.96	.94	.94	q65
Perceived cognitive attitude of workplace to learners' learning English	2.5	1.27	.89	q69
Perceived affective attitude of workplace to learners' learning English	2.88	1.14	.90	n.a.
Perceived cognitive attitude of the language school to learners' learning English	3.54	.94	.89	n.a.
Perceived affective attitude of the language school to learners' learning English	3.44	.97	.93	q82

Table 2. Mean values and reliability of the scales

As Table 2 presents, after the elimination of certain items the Cronbach Alpha of all scales are above 0.8 which means that the scales are reliable and capable of measuring the intended concept. Table 2 also presents the mean values of the scales. Based on the mean values it can be stated that the participants possess fairly positive cognitive and affective attitudes to learning English. The learners' attitude gains the strongest motivational support from their present EFL teacher. EFL teachers' perceived cognitive and affective attitudes to learners' learning English are also rated fairly positively, that is, above 3.5 on the five-point scale. Teacher-related attitude scales have the highest mean values out of the 12 scales measuring the perceived attitudes of the social environment. Interestingly enough, attitudes of the family and the present language school are all rated the lowest, that is, below 3. This means that participants consider EFL teachers' attitude the most positive, whereas they perceive the attitudes of the family and the language school the lowest. Although these values reflect how strong participants perceive the attitudes of the social environment to be, they do not hold information about which scales have an effect on learners' cognitive and affective attitudes to learning English. In order to point out the influential factors of the social environment, regression analysis was carried out.

4.2 Regression analysis – learners' cognitive and affective attitudes to learning English as dependent variables

One of the aims of this study was to gain information about whether this instrument can detect the facets of the social environment that directly influence adult EFL learners' cognitive and affective attitudes to learning English. To achieve this, regression analysis was applied to find the factors that have an effect on learners' attitudes. Table 3 presents the three social environmental factors that affect adult EFL learners' cognitive attitude to learning English.

Scale	Final model		
	β	B	Sig.
Affective attitude of friends to learning English	.39	.24	.001*
Affective attitude of the language teacher to learner's learning English	.31	.19	.007*
Motivational role of workplace in adult EFL learners' learning English	.29	.14	.012*
R²	.44		

Table 3. Significant factors of social environment on learners' cognitive attitude to learning English as the dependent variable. * $p < .05$

As Table 3 highlights, elements of both the microsystem and the exosystem can be considered influential in the participants' cognitive attitude to learning English. The most influential factor is their friends' affective attitude to learning English. This means that for adult EFL learners, friends represent a strong influential background, even more influential than the present English language teacher. Therefore, during the process of attitude formation throughout teaching, friends' attitudes must be taken into account. Besides this, Table 3 also shows that the learners' cognitive attitude is primarily influenced by affective ones, which means that in the learning process the teachers' feelings towards the learners' achievements as well as friends' emotional commitment to learning English represent a considerable influence on learners' cognitive attitude set-up. The third influential factor is the motivational role of the workplace, which for adult EFL learners might mean the necessity to assimilate in the professional environment, to being capable of coping with job-related tasks efficiently, and to being as qualified as their colleagues.

Scale	Final model		
	β	B	Sig.
Motivational role of workplace in adult EFL learners' learning English	.45	.21	.001*
Affective attitude of the language teacher to learners' learning English	.47	.35	.001*
Affective attitude of the family to learning English	.33	.18	.005*
Cognitive attitude of the language school to learners' learning English	-.35	-.22	.006*
R²	.47		

Table 4. Influential factors of social environment on learners' affective attitude to learning English as the dependent variable. * $p < .05$

A regression analysis was conducted with adult EFL learners' affective attitudes to learning English as a dependent variable as well. The results in Table 4 show that there are four scales influencing the participants' affective attitude. Besides the motivational role of the workplace and the affective attitude of the teacher to learners' learning English, there are two novel elements, which are the affective attitude of the family, and the cognitive attitude of the language school. The presence of the affective attitude of the family to learning English might

indicate that emotional commitment to languages, language learning, and English language learning might be deeply rooted in the family, and tied to family traditions and heritage.

The other new factor in influencing the participants' affective attitude is the cognitive attitude of the language school to learners' learning English. Interestingly enough, although this factor exerts quite a strong influence on learners' affective attitude to learning English, it presents a negative linear relationship. Based on the results in Tables 3 and 4, I intended to set up a path model of all the variables applied in the study. The next section presents the results based on multiple regression analyses.

4.3 Path models for adult EFL learners' cognitive and affective attitude to learning English

This chapter presents the path models for adult EFL learners' cognitive and affective attitude to learning English. Figures 2 and 3 consist of three types of blocks: solid black, grey, and dashed. The three types represent three different strata of hierarchy highlighting their proximity to the dependent variable. The blocks framed in solid black are the first layer and they indicate the scales that directly connect to the dependent variable. The blocks framed grey represent the second layer, which connect directly to the first layer, whereas the dashed blocks are the third layer connecting to the second layer.

The present study is small-scale and the first step towards broader and more detailed research, therefore further research is needed in order that each model could be explained in detail. Despite the small-scale nature of the research, however, it provides an informative insight into how active adult language learners in Budapest perceive the effects of their social environment on their English language learning. Thus, the models shown in Figures 2 and 3 offer a statistically reliable and valid picture of the interrelated factors the active adult English language learners' rely on when they form their dispositions towards their own English language learning. Thus, at this point only the most important relationships can be highlighted and explained.

Figure 2 shows the factors in immediate cause-effect relationship with the participants' cognitive attitude to learning English: the teachers' affective attitude, the friends' affective attitude, and the motivational role of the workplace. The second layer shows that the teachers' affective attitude to the learners' learning English is connected strongly to the other teacher-related scales, in other words the teachers' cognitive attitude and the teachers' motivational role. Interestingly enough, the affective attitude of the family also connects to the teachers' affective attitude, which needs further research. The motivational role of the workplace is connected to the cognitive attitude of the teacher, the workplace, and the language school, as well as learners' affective attitude to English learning. The background of friends' affective attitude is on both family and friends-related scales.

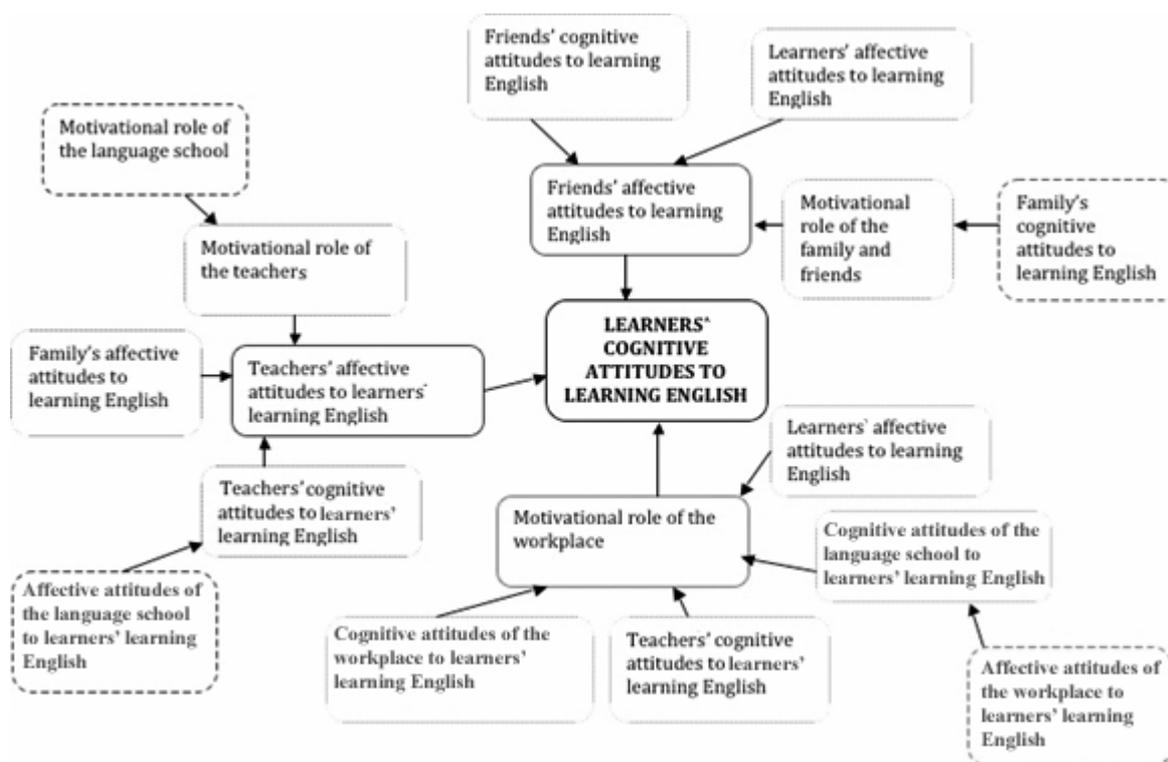


Figure 2. The path model of learners' cognitive attitudes to learning English

As the path model in Figure 2 shows, there are three major roots of learners' cognitive attitude to learning English: the homogeneous group of family and friends-related factors, workplace-related factors that involve the language school, learners' affective attitude, and the teachers' cognitive attitude, and thirdly, the teacher-related factors that comprise language school and family-related scales as well.

Figure 3 shows the path model of adult EFL learners' affective attitude to learning English. In this model we can see four major groups connected to adult EFL learners' affective attitude in harmony with the findings presented in Table 4. Surprisingly enough, in Figure 3 we can see that a family-related attitude scale, that is, the cognitive attitude of the family, directly explains the teachers' affective attitude to learners' learning English. This recurring issue needs further research to reveal whether it is rooted in the inadequacy of the constructs or whether it presents a real interrelationship.

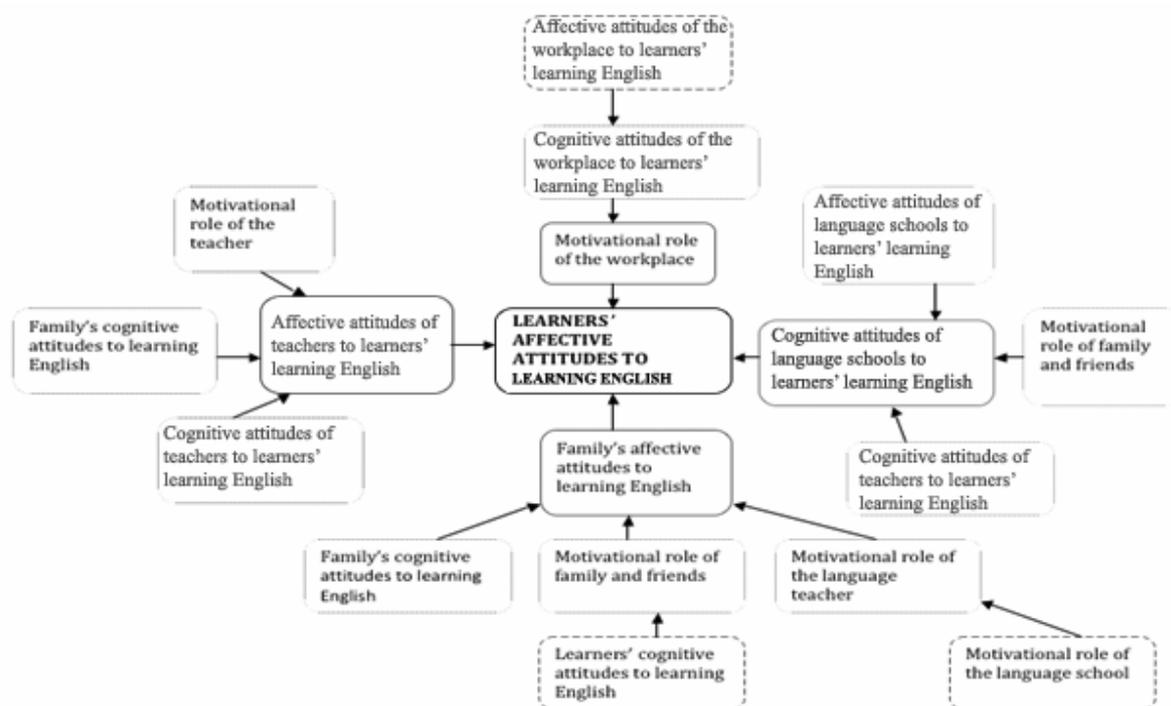


Figure 3. The path model of learners' affective attitudes to learning English

5 Evaluation of the instrument of the study

Firstly, based on the data and the results gained, it can be stated that the present instrument is capable of measuring the intended concepts as well as providing rich and valuable data. As Table 2 shows, all the 16 scales can be considered reliable due to the fact that the Cronbach Alpha of all scales are above 0.8, which proves the reliable nature of the scales. However, it is important to state that items 29, 49, 55, 65, 69, and 82 needed to be removed from the scales in order to ensure high reliability rates and avoid questions that have the same meaning. Secondly, both a web-based and a paper-based version of the instrument might need to be created as a result of the low return rate. Although the paper version enables the data collector to have more personal contact with the participants, whereas electronic data collection does not, the personal contact is limited and cannot influence the results to the extent that the difference between the two ways of collecting data would question the validity of the results. Besides, the use of computers is so widespread that as was reported, most of the participants would consider the paper-based version outdated and inconvenient.

6 Conclusion, limitations and possible directions of future research

Despite the fact that this is a small-scale study, it has resulted in some intriguing findings. Firstly, the results show that the social environmental factors included in the present study have an influence on learners' cognitive and affective attitudes to learning English. The results of this paper show that two of the social environmental factors play a role in learners' cognitive as well as affective attitude formation, namely the motivational role of the workplace and the affective attitude of the language teachers to learners' learning English. As regards to learners' cognitive attitude formation, learners' micro-environment proves to be

very influential as well. As Figure 2 shows, friends' affective attitude plays an important role in learners' cognitive dispositions. In learners' affective attitude to learning English, however, the family's affective attitude and the cognitive attitude of the language school proved to be influential besides the motivational role of the workplace and the affective attitude of the language teachers to learners' learning English. Moreover, the multiple regression analysis highlighted a possible path model for both cognitive and affective attitudes of learners to learning English as dependent variables. These path models show that every variable can be placed in the model and they suggest possible interrelationships among the different variables.

This study, however, has a number of limitations as well. Due to time, resource, and financial limitations I decided on excluding the macro-system and some factors of the exo-system from my model (see Figure 1), which could have enriched the results of the study. Besides this, as a consequence of the low return rate the sample consisted of only 53 participants, which does not ensure the generalisability of the results. Additionally, the data was obtained only from learners who study in language schools in Budapest, and so the results do not reflect the perceptions of learners in other regions of Hungary nor those of company course learners.

As a next step I intend to gain access to company courses and make contact with learners from various counties in Hungary. Furthermore, in the next phase I wish to delve into the nature of relationship between the family attitudes and the teachers' attitudes as well as the negative direction of the interrelationship between the language school's cognitive attitude and learners' affective attitude to learning English.

Proofread for the use of English by: Julian Goddard, Prestanda Kft

References:

- Ajzen, I. (1988). *Attitudes, personality and behavior*. Chicago: The Dorsey Press.
- Bartlett, F. C. (1995). *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cseh-Szombathy, L., & Ferge, Zs. (1971). *Szociológiai felvétel módszerei* [Methods of data collection in sociology]. Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Kiadó.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Harlow: Longman.
- Eamon, M. K. (2001). The effects of poverty on children's socioemotional development: An ecological systems analysis. *Journal of Social Work*, 2, Retrieved 6 May, 2011 from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6467/is_3_46/ai_n28853359/
- Garbarino, J., & Eckenrode, J. (1997). *Understanding abusive families: An ecological approach to theory and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Johnson, M. K. (2001). Psychology of false memories. In N. J. Smelser, J. Wright, & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (pp. 5254-5259). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Joiner, E. G. (1981). *The older foreign language learner: A challenge for colleges and universities*. NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Knowles, M. (1973). *The adult learner: a neglected species*. Houston: Gulf Publishing Company.

SPSS Inc. (2007). *Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows version 16*. [computer software]. IL: Chicago.

Székelyi, M., & Barna, I. (2002). *Túlélőkészlet az SPSS-hez – Többváltozós elemzési technikákról társadalomkutatók számára* [Survival book to SPSS – Multivariate statistical techniques for social scientists]. Budapest: Typotex.

Szokolszky, Á. (2004). *Kutatómunka a pszichológiában* [Research in psychology]. Budapest: Osiris.

APPENDIX

The English translation of the questionnaire mapping the model of interrelationship of the attitudes and motivations of the social environment

N.B. Items deleted in the course of the validation process are included here and are marked by having been crossed out.

Questionnaire

Dear Student,

I would like to ask for your help with my research project. Please answer the following questions concerning language studies. This questionnaire is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers; I am interested in your opinions. Please answer sincerely because this is crucial to the success of my research. I assure you that the questionnaire will not be used outside of my current research and will not be released to any third party. The questionnaire is anonymous. Should you have any questions regarding my research, please send them to the following e-mail address:@.....
Thank you for your assistance.

.....
Kovács Ágnes

Please rate the following statements from 1 to 5 according to how well they apply to you by circling the appropriate number.

		not true at all	mostly not true	partly true, partly untrue	mostly true	completely true
1.	I find learning English fun.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I am pleased to be able to understand more and more English texts.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	It feels good to make more sense of websites in English.	1	2	3	4	5

4. Improving my English feels good.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I enjoy being able to give directions to foreign tourists in English.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am pleased to be capable of expressing myself in English with increasing eloquence.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I enjoy being able to write e-mails or letters in English with increasing ease.	1	2	3	4	5
8. It feels good that I understand English movies better.	1	2	3	4	5
9. English language skills are very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. English language skills are general knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
11. English language skills provide an opportunity to make more acquaintances.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Nowadays English language skills are indispensable for adults in Hungary.	1	2	3	4	5
13. English language skills are useful in making valuable acquaintances.	1	2	3	4	5
14. English language skills can help in finding employment abroad.	1	2	3	4	5
15. English language skills are often required for jobs.	1	2	3	4	5

Please rate the following statements from 1 to 5 according to much you agree with them by circling the appropriate number.

1= not true at all

5=completely true

16. The attitude of my friends towards the English language inspires me to learn English as well.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My friends have played an important role in me starting learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I have many friends who are learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I have many friends who speak English well.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I have many family members who are learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I have many family members who speak English well.	1	2	3	4	5
22. My family's attitude towards the English language inspires me to learn English as well.	1	2	3	4	5
23. My family has played an important role in me starting learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
24. My workplace emphasizes the importance of English language skills for me.	1	2	3	4	5
25. My workplace has played a significant role in me starting to learn English.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Many of my colleagues speak English well.	1	2	3	4	5
27. English language skills are required at my workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
28. There is high-level professional work being conducted at my current language school.	1	2	3	4	5
29. My current language school provides me all the assistance I need to learn English.	1	2	3	4	5
30. My current language teacher's work is professional and of high quality.	1	2	3	4	5
31. My current language teacher speaks English well.	1	2	3	4	5

32. My current language teacher has played a significant role in me learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
33. The atmosphere at my current language school inspires me to learn English.	1	2	3	4	5
34. The professional work carried out by my current language teacher inspires me to learn English.	1	2	3	4	5

Please rate the following statements from 1 to 5 according to much you agree with them by circling the appropriate number.

1= not true at all

5= completely true

35. English language skills are very useful for members of my family in everyday life.	1	2	3	4	5
36. English language skills are advantageous for members of my family at their workplaces..	1	2	3	4	5
37. Members of my family acquire many important pieces of information in English.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Members of my family have made valuable acquaintances through the English language.	1	2	3	4	5
39. English language skills constitute a vital part of the lives of members of my family..	1	2	3	4	5
40. Members of my family like learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Members of my family like improving their English language skills using movies and books.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Members of my family like learning about the culture of English speaking countries.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Members of my family consider English language skills very important.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Members of my family are glad to report their progress in developing their English language skills.	1	2	3	4	5
45. My friends find English language skills advantageous in life.	1	2	3	4	5
46. The careers of my friends have been influenced positively by English language skills.	1	2	3	4	5
47. My friends have developed an advantageous network of acquaintances using their English language skills.	1	2	3	4	5
48. English language skills allow my friends to be better informed.	1	2	3	4	5
49. My friends consider English language skills part of general knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
50. My friends like learning English very much.	1	2	3	4	5
51. My friends like watching movies in English to develop their English language skills.	1	2	3	4	5
52. My friends like using English in everyday life.	1	2	3	4	5
53. My friends like making friends using English.	1	2	3	4	5
54. My friends are interested in the cultures of English speaking countries.	1	2	3	4	5
55. My current English teacher considers constantly developing the English language skills of learners important.	1	2	3	4	5

56. My current English teacher emphasizes the advantages of learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
57. My current English teacher emphasizes the importance of English language skills in my line of work.	1	2	3	4	5
58. My current English teacher indicates how English language skills can expand my horizons.	1	2	3	4	5
59. My current English teacher emphasizes the importance of English language skills in the job market today.	1	2	3	4	5
60. My current English teacher shows me how much information English language skills can provide.	1	2	3	4	5
61. My current English teacher enjoys seeing my English language skills develop.	1	2	3	4	5
62. My current English teacher enjoys it when I consider learning English a part of everyday life.	1	2	3	4	5
63. My current English teacher likes it when I use English more and more on a daily basis.	1	2	3	4	5
64. My current English teacher enjoys seeing my horizons expanding through learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
65. My current English teacher enjoys the fact that using the English language is becoming a part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
66. Developing English language skills is an important requirement at my workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
67. Developing my English language skills is one of the requirements of my promotion at work.	1	2	3	4	5
68. Some of the communication at my workplace is conducted in English.	1	2	3	4	5
69. My working environment considers developing English language skills a part of general knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
70. I must develop my English language skills in order to carry out quality work.	1	2	3	4	5
71. My working environment likes those colleagues who develop their English skills.	1	2	3	4	5
72. My working environment likes to promote learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
73. My working environment gladly supports my development of my English skills.	1	2	3	4	5
74. My working environment is glad to see the development of my English language skills.	1	2	3	4	5
75. My working environment is glad to see my efforts to develop my English language skills.	1	2	3	4	5
76. My current language school considers it important to constantly develop the language skills of their students.	1	2	3	4	5
77. My current language school emphasizes the advantages of English language skills.	1	2	3	4	5
78. My current language school points out how learning English can expand my horizons.	1	2	3	4	5
79. My current language school shows how much information English language skills can provide.	1	2	3	4	5
80. My current language school enjoys seeing my English language skills developing.	1	2	3	4	5

81. My current language school enjoys seeing my perseverance and effort devoted to improving my English language skills.	1	2	3	4	5
82. My current language school likes to emphasize the individual performance of learners.	1	2	3	4	5
83. My current language school provides positive encouragement to continue learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
84. My current language school has a positive attitude towards my previous successes in learning English.	1	2	3	4	5

Please mark the box which applies to you with an X.

Gender: female male

Age: 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 over 55

Time spent studying English less than five years 5-10 years over 10 years

Highest educational level elementary school secondary school technical/vocational school
 BA / former 'college' degree MA / former 'university' degree

Time spent studying in the present language school

0-12 months 13-24 months over 24 months

Proficiency level of the current course book applied

elementary pre-intermediate intermediate
 upper-intermediate advanced I do not know

Rank number of English language within the chronological order of all the foreign languages learnt first second third or higher

**Thank you very much for
your help.**

