

UDC 159.953:159.923

## REISS' MOTIVATIONAL PROFILE (RMP) AS A KEY TO PERSONALIZED FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Gritskevich E.I., Leon O.V.

*Baranovich State University, Baranovich,**e-mail: elena\_gritskevich@mail.ru, hoyden.feanorown@gmail.com*

The article examines the phenomenon of personal motivation for learning English among university students who acquire the professional education of an EFL-teacher in Belarus. First-year students majoring in linguistics were offered a modified Reiss' motivational profile test to assess their fundamental needs. This study is aimed to discover what type of motivation prevails among the contemporary Belarusian first-year students of a regional higher educational establishment, with the aim of subsequent individual selection of authentic texts and teaching tools for conducting more effective English grammar practicals and workshops. The research data were obtained from first-year university students via online testing based on the adapted Reiss' motivational profile questionnaire. As a result, three prevailing motivational profiles were identified. Based on the analysis of the research results, assumptions were formulated about the possible reasons for the predominance of a particular motivational profile. In the future, it is planned to conduct an experimental test of the influence of individualization of the material, means and methods of teaching, according to the motivational profile, on the quality of English grammar acquisition.

**Keywords:** Reiss' Motivational Profile Testing, intrinsic motivation, EFL-teaching, motivation profiling, personalized learning

Teaching is both a science and an art. At present, Belarusian EFL-teacher training has an urgent need for teachers to adopt new personalized methods to guide students towards more efficient learning, break away from the dull routines of traditional grammar classes and increase learners' motivation. Issues of motivation are known to contribute to low standards of achievement in English teaching and learning [1; 2]. Very few studies based on students' perceptions of teaching aids, materials and strategies to motivate English language learners have been carried out in Belarus [3]. Meanwhile, in CIS countries there has been a distinct increase in research papers dedicated to EFL-learning motivation issues in the recent years [4-7], which makes it relevant to study the personal motivational peculiarities of students training for EFL-teaching career for further use of research results to customize educational content and activities accordingly.

Differences in students' and teachers' perceptions of the motivational effect of teaching strategies in an EFL classroom are a cause to students' ineffective processing of the material in the language class [2]. If teachers are more aware of the impact of their teaching strategies on students' motivation, they may be able to identify what teaching strategies [2], aids and authentic materials their students personally find interesting and engaging.

The idea of personalized learning rests on the foundation that humans learn through experience and by constructing knowledge. It is heavily influenced by a learner's prior experiences and is accomplished via language and social interaction [8]. Personalization is not the

only way to approach teaching and learning. Furthermore, learning will and should take a variety of forms. The guarantees of effective, solid personalized learning lie in proper education, blended instruction, differentiation, proactive supports, real-world connections, and applications. In general, personalized-learning models strive to adjust to each learner's strengths, weaknesses, and interests, as well as the instructional tactics, content, and activities used. Letting students control what and how they learn, tailoring educational process for every individual student, and offering real-time feedback are all part of personalized learning. A framework put together according to the students' personality features can facilitate practical individualized learning for all and can be developed when particular issues arise. The given framework can ensure structured common-sense individualized learning [8].

One-size-fits-all learning models do not consider important distinctions between learning types and, when necessary, try to manage these differences. So we are to pay our attention to personalized learning. The term personalized learning, or personalization, "refers to a diverse variety of educational programs, learning experiences, instructional approaches, and academic-support strategies that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students"[9]. Personalized learning is viewed upon as an alternative to the so-called "one-size-fits-all" approaches to education, according to which teachers, for example, provide the same type of instruction, assignments, and assessment to all students in a given course

with little or no variation or modification from student to student. As the general aim is to make individual learning needs pivotal in educational and instructional decision-making, rather than what might be preferred, more convenient, or logistically easier for teachers and schools, personalized learning may also be described as a student-centered learning model [9].

By considering the impact of emotions and intentions, educators can better understand how and why individuals learn differently. Meeting this challenge requires a better understanding of the psychological sources that influence an individual's learning ability and how a learner may want or intend to learn. Specifically, the search for more sophisticated learning theories requires a better understanding of learners' motivation.

The recent learning orientation research suggests that learners can be intrinsically driven (self-motivated to some degree). Nevertheless, research also suggests that we generally place too much emphasis on extrinsic motivation and not enough emphasis on fostering intrinsic or self-motivation toward learning more successfully. Due to this fact, *the aim* of our research is to determine the motivational profiles of first-year Belarusian university students who are to become EFL-teachers.

### Research materials and methods

The study attempts to answer *research questions* related to students' motivational profiles that may be used by the university teachers in teaching various aspects of a foreign language. These are as follows:

- What type of motivational profile prevails among first-year Belarusian university students who are to become EFL-teachers?
- What factors define which motivational profiles will prevail in a certain group of people, and which are supposed to be neglected?

Employed *research methods* include questionnaire, Reiss Motivation Profile test, qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

Sensitivity theory provides an analysis of personality based on what people say motivates their behavior [10]. After Reiss and Havercamp confirmed a factor solution to self-reported human strivings, the Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivation Sensitivities psychometric instrument was standardized [10; 11]. According to sensitivity theory, people go through life looking for the ways and means of satisfying their motives, mainly those that are strongest and valued most highly (which depends on individuality). The key is

that basic desires motivate everybody but not equally. How strongly or weakly an individual usually experiences each of the strivings determines the individual's priorities [10]. A desire profile (or individual hierarchy) is a person's unique prioritization of the strivings [10]. To explain a person's behavior, according to Reiss and Havercamp [10; 11], one should pay attention mostly to the unusually strong (high) or unusually weak (low) strivings in comparison with the appropriate norms.

In order to suggest a possible way of personalizing educational content, we tuned to Reiss Motivational Profile (RMP) as the methodological basis for subsequent individual selection of authentic texts and teaching tools for conducting more effective English grammar practicals and workshops. First-year students (15 participants as a total) majoring in linguistics were offered a modified Reiss' motivational profile test to assess their fundamental needs.

All the participants study at Baranovichi State University, which is located in a provincial (although relatively big) town of Baranovichi, Belarus. They were invited to participate on their own free will in October, 2021. Thirteen of the participants were girls, two – boys, which should be taken into account considering the results of motivational profile test characterized by vividly feminine worldview. The gender ratio of the respondents is illustrated below (See Figure 1).

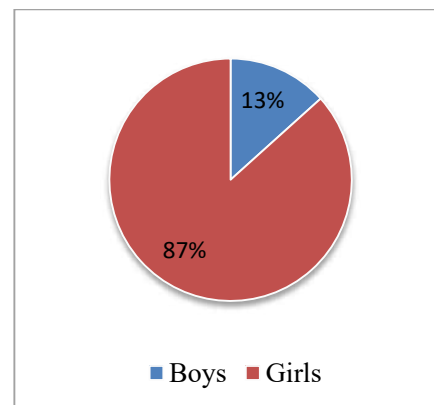


Fig. 1. The Gender Characteristics of the Respondents

The questionnaire containing 40 questions digitized via online platform Online Test Pad was taken as a basis for our research. The questions were designed by North-Western Coaching and Management University [12]. To avoid misunderstanding, the questionnaire was conducted in Russian.

**The discussion of research results**

Answering the first research question, three prevailing motivational profiles were identified: Flexibility, Saturation and Honor (See Figure 2).

It can be noticed that many people depend on the opinions of the people around them because of the desire to show themselves better than they really are, because of the fear of being condemned by the people around them for their shortcomings, that's why Flexibility prevails among the respondents of our questionnaire. We should also keep in mind that the participants of the questionnaire were first-year students with only three months of students' live experience, who found themselves in a completely new educational environment with new subjects to study, many different teachers, each with their own set of demands,

rules, values, personality traits and communicative style, and on a new level of pedagogical communication where they are expected to act as responsible adults. The need to adjust themselves to ever-changing pedagogical situations and produce the best impression possible on the instructors and professors empowered to assess their performance looks natural for a first-year student (a yesterday's schoolchild).

The highest frequency of the Saturation profile echoes the well-known social stereotype about students' perpetual food-craving. This stereotype does have a grain of truth in it, especially if we speak about first-year students who miss homemade food, while most of them cannot cook for themselves, and all of them have to change their eating habits in accordance with their newly developed daily routine.

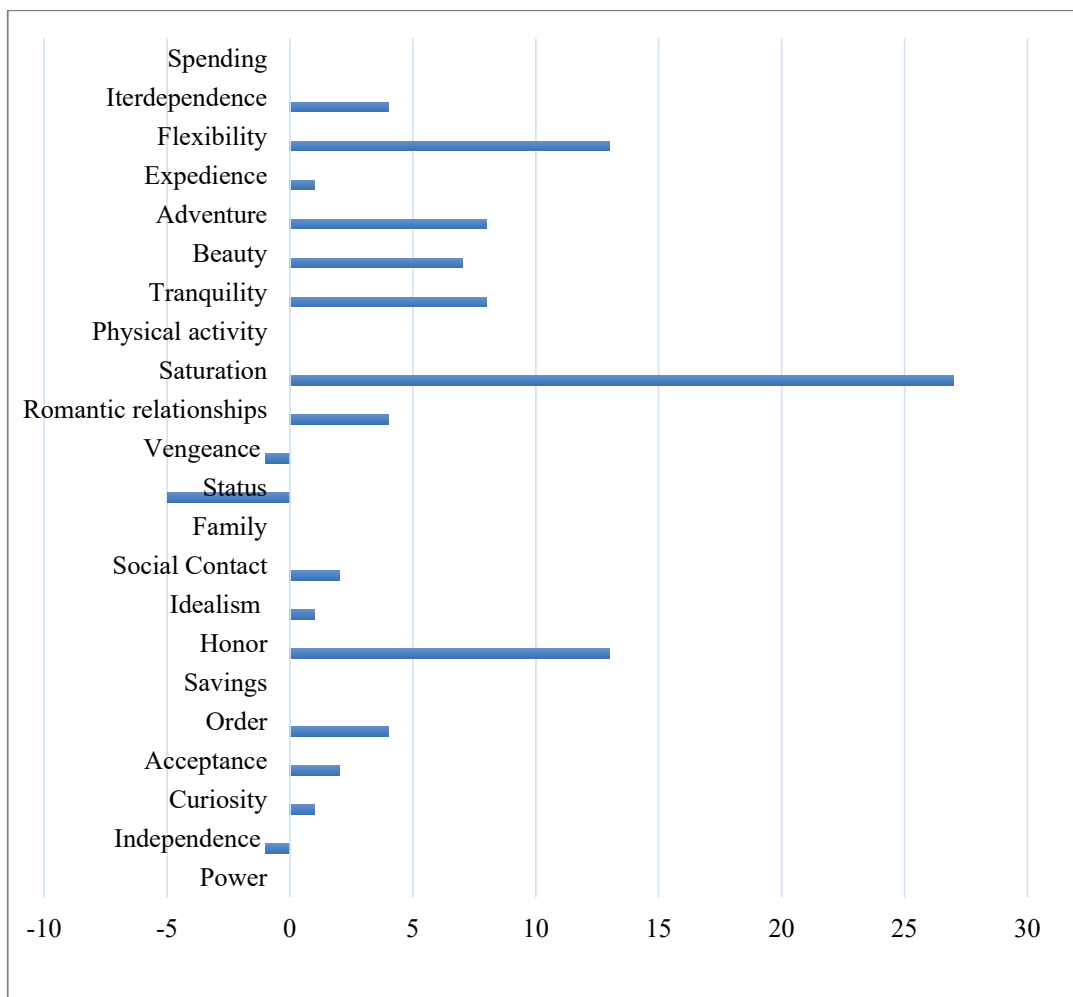


Fig. 2. Identification of the Students' Prevailing Psychological Needs

From the psychological point of view, nutrition helps us to understand how what we eat influences how we feel – including our emotions, moods, sensations and motivations. The evidence for psychological variables and food choice is sparse, and the postulated mechanisms for the association are complicated. Stress may cause changes in human behavior that have an impact on health; the impact of stress on food choices is complex and individualistic: some people eat more and choose unhealthy food, while others eat less. Changes in motivation, physiological changes, alterations in eating opportunities, food availability, and meal preparation are all thought to contribute to stress-induced changes. So these factors possibly explain the leading role of the Saturation profile for the first-year students of Baranovichi State University, whose adaptation to their new lifestyle and educational environment is a stressful process.

The basic desire for Honor motivates people to embrace moral codes of conduct. So the fact that Honor is among the top three motivational profiles in the sample group means that the participants are loyal to their parents as well as other ancestors, and take pride in their ethnic heritage. The students' adherence to moral codes and national traditions may be explained on the grounds of Belarusian mentality features. As I. Piniuta [13, p.49] suggests, Belarusians are characterized by a combination of respect for traditions and pragmatism, as well as modesty [13, p.47], which is also reflected in the prevalence of Honor over Status. The Status Profile is characterized with a highly negative numerical value, which describes the respondents as humble and down-to-earth people, who appear to be more impressed by moral values and principles than fame, popularity, public attention and the prestige value of the things they own.

According to I. Piniuta, Belarus represents a high-power distance culture, which means people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has his/her place, and which needs no further justification [13, p.43]. This factor can have had some impact not only on the high frequency of the Flexibility profile, but also on the respondents' lack of motivation towards Vengeance, Independence and Power.

Concerning the second research question, we came to the conclusion that the frequency of choosing particular motivational profiles by first-year students of Baranovichi state university, who are trained to be EFL-teachers, is heavily influenced by a number of psycholog-

ical, social and cultural factors, such as stress level, the degree of personal independence, the need to adjust to a new educational environment and reconstruct one's daily routine, and some features of national mentality cultivated in the process of family upbringing. As individual as they may be, the group-level results of the questionnaire proved to possess common features, which unite most of the group members according to the same prevailing motivational profiles. If the students' motivational profiles are taken as a basis for further personalization of educational content and activities, we can anticipate that personalized learning in this case will turn out not as much individualized as one might expect.

Nevertheless, according to our observations, it is important to take students' motivational profiles into consideration while developing teaching aids, selecting teaching materials and drawing out lesson plans, while the individual features of prevailing motivational profiles result from the impact of the students' socio-cultural environment. It can be regarded as one of the reasons for a number of pedagogical cases when textbooks and teaching aids issued by foreign editors demotivate students from other countries, as the materials designed by native-speakers do not correspond to the motivational profiles peculiar of the students' own national culture.

### Conclusion

Overall, this study established that the prevailing types of motivational profiles among the contemporary Belarusian first-year students who receive their pre-service EFL-teacher training at a regional higher educational establishment are Flexibility, Saturation and Honor. The possible reasons that could be suggested to explain the results obtained lie, firstly, in the psychological state of the first-year students in the middle of the stressful first semester of their student life too soon after their entry to adulthood with absolutely new requirements, obligations and behavioral patterns, and, secondly, the distinctive features of Belarusian national mentality, such as respect for traditions, pragmatism, modesty and the unconditional acceptance of a hierarchical social order with an assigned place for everybody.

The results presented in the given article are related to the initial phase of a more extensive research aimed to investigate how the English grammar teaching and learning is carried out within the framework of individualization of learning using personalized content approach.

## References

1. Suroso S. The Effects of Learning Motivation towards Student's Learning Achievement in English. *Lexeme. Journal of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics*. 2019. № 1. P. 6-18. DOI: 10.32493/ljal.v1i2.5122.
2. Kassing R. B. Perceptions of Motivational Teaching Strategies in an EFL Classroom: The Case of a Class in a Private University in Indonesia: a thesis ... of Master of Education. Victoria University of Wellington, 2011. 152 p. DOI: 10.26686/wgtn.16992493.v1.
3. Lukashevich K.K. Ways of solving psychological and pedagogical problems in teaching a foreign language // Mineral resource complex: engineering and economic solutions: collection of materials. XVII International Scientific and Practical Conference dedicated to the 100th anniversary of BNTU, October 29, 2020 / ed. by Col. S.Y. Solodovnikov (pred.) [et al.]. Minsk: BNTU, 2020. P. 261-262.
4. Ulanov D., Bogatyreva S.N. Formation of positive internal and external motivation in secondary school students when learning English // Formation of a digital culture of continuing humanitarian education in the context of preserving traditional values: collection of scientific articles, Moscow, June 08-09, 2021 Moscow: Your format, 2021. P. 328-333.
5. Karimova A.O., Zhumataeva E. Increasing Students' Motivation by Creating an English Language Learning Environment. *Bulletin of the Kazakh National Women's Pedagogical University*. 2020. № 4. P. 43-49.
6. Belyaeva E.G. Authentic tasks as a strategy for increasing motivation of students of non-linguistic universities // Variability and standardization of language education in a non-linguistic university: collection of articles based on the materials of the IV International scientific and practical Conference, Nizhny Novgorod, April 27-28, 2021 / Edited by M.V. Zolotova. Nizhny Novgorod: N.I. Lobachevsky National Research University, 2021. P. 39-43.
7. Abdullayeva M.A., Mansurova Sh.M. Psychological factors of increasing the motivation of primary school students to master a foreign language through intercultural dialogue // *Successes of the Humanities*. 2021. No. 4. P. 7-10.
8. Shemshack A., Spector J.M. A systematic literature review of personalized learning terms. *Smart Learning Environments*. 2020. Vol. 7. Iss. 33. P. 1-20. DOI: 10.1186/s40561-020-00140-9.
9. The Glossary of Education Reform. [Electronic Resource]. URL: <https://www.edglossary.org/personalized-learning/> (date of access: 23.12.2021).
10. Havercamp S.M., Reiss S. A Comprehensive Assessment of Human Strivings: Test-Retest Reliability and Validity of the Reiss Profile. *Journal of Personality Assessment*. 2003. Vol. 81. Iss. 2. P. 123-132. DOI: 10.1207/S15327752JPA8102\_04.
11. Reiss S., Havercamp S.M. Toward a Comprehensive Assessment of Fundamental Motivation: Factor Structure of the Reiss Profile. *Psychological Assessment*. 1998. № 10. P. 97-106.
12. Rapid Reiss Test: How to define your motivational profile? [electronic resource]. URL: <https://clck.ru/ZoGiW> (accessed: 10/21/2021).
13. Piniuta I. Belarusian Mentality in the Context of Intercultural Communication: Grounds or Pessimism and Optimism. *Sustainable Multilingualism*. 2017. № 11. P. 34-53. DOI: 10.1515/sm-2017-0012.