The aim of this presentation is to explore the motivation of Finnish comprehensive school students’ towards learning foreign languages. Specifically, the interest is in whether their motivation is different for learning English compared with other foreign languages.

English is the most studied foreign language in Finnish schools (NBE, 2014), as in most of the European countries (Eurydice, 2012). According to the results from the national assessment of learning outcomes in foreign languages (FEEC, 2014), Finnish ninth-graders consider English as the most useful foreign language. As Ushioda (2013) puts it, the status English now has might affect students’ motivation to learn other foreign languages negatively.

The study reported in this presentation is based on a dataset gathered with a large-scale e-questionnaire which included 13 different motivational scales. The target languages were English (compulsory) and French, German, Russian, and Spanish (optional). The data consisted of 1206 answers from ninth-graders from 33 schools and it were analyzed statistically using latent profile analysis.

The results show that Finnish students are far more motivated to study English than the other foreign languages. Five different motivational profiles can be found: the most motivated, the average motivated with low anxiety, the average motivated, the least motivated, and students with high anxiety. The learners of English were clearly overrepresented in the the most motivated group.

The results of the analysis and their implications for language teaching will be discussed in the presentation.

References


Keywords: foreign languages, language learning, motivation.