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What motivates older adult learners in Poland to study foreign languages in later life?

Introduction

The first decades of the 21st century have brought changes in our perception of old age, the role of older adults in the developing societies, as well as in the understanding of the need of continuing one's lifelong education in later life. As a result, in countries with ageing populations, education for older adult cohorts has become particularly important (see Schmidt-Hertha/Jelenc Krašovec/Formosa 2014). Indeed, Foreign Language Geragogy[1] (my transl.), or in other words, teaching foreign languages to older adult learners, has gained importance in most developed countries in response to the growing number of people at the age of 60 and older who are interested in acquiring new linguistic competences. According to the recent data provided by the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), due to participation in various courses, the percentage of the subpopulation of older adults who know one or more foreign languages has increased. In 2011, 44% of people at the age of 60-69 could speak at least one foreign language. In 2016 that number grew to 50.7%. There are also visible differences between villages and cities. In the former group, in 2016, 39.2% of older adults could speak one or more foreign languages, while in the latter group the percentage was much higher and equalled 56.5% (GUS, 2020:64).

In order to answer the growing need for lifelong education, numerous senior centres, Universities of the Third Age (U3A) and private language schools promote courses for this age group (often funded by the European Union programmes, such as, for instance, European Social Fund for people 50+ or European Union Lifelong Learning Programme). To provide an

[1] See also Fremdsprachengeragogik in Berndt (1997); Glottogeragogika in Jaroszewska (2013); Critical Foreign Language Geragogy as introduced by Gómez (2016b).

example of the scale of the issue, there are currently 640 Universities of the Third Age in Poland, attended by 113200 students, out of which 86.3% are at the age of 61 and older (70.3% of all students are at the age 61-75, and 16% are 76 years old and older) (GUS, 2020:67).

However, it should be pointed out that even though such a wide ranging and rapid development of various senior educational centres is very welcome, it also has its drawbacks. According to Glendenning and Battersby (1990, qtd. in Formosa 2002, 2012), this new situation has led to the development of Critical Educational Gerontology (CEG). Moreover, programmes designed for this age group tend to put forward a negative and often stereotypical understanding of old age and do not provide the course participants with techniques and strategies necessary to make the process of learning easier and more effective. Also, not every kind of education is valuable for this age group or has a positive effect on the quality of life of only senior learners; therefore, older adults are, and should be treated as a heterogenous group with special educational needs (see Gómez 2016a). All of these aspects affect the learners' motivation and can easily discourage them from continuing studying the chosen foreign language.

The research of learners' motivation has a long tradition (see Gardner/Lambert 1959; Gardner 1982; Dörnyei 2001, 2020; Dörnyei/Ushioda 2009; Dörnyei/Kubanyiova 2014; Dörnyei/MacIntyre/Henry 2015). However, the matter of older adult learners' motivation to study foreign languages (FLs) still lacks a detailed and comprehensive analysis. Moreover, it seems that its level and factors shaping it may vary from country to country. Its role in older adult FL learning may also be inconsistent due to divergent understanding of age boundaries and terminology associated with old age.

It should be highlighted that the problem of defining the age brackets for older adult cohort is influenced by various factors, such as the subjective understanding of one's age, stereotypical treatment of this age group (both positive and negative), a heterogeneous character of the subpopulation of older learners, as well as the incoherent and fragmented research devoted to the fields of geragogy and Foreign Language Geragogy (see also Słowik-Krogulec 2019a).

Moreover, the common understanding of adulthood, or 'middle age' and 'old-age' or 'Third Age' differs markedly depending on the source, as can be seen based on the examples presented in some of the largest currently available dictionaries. The descriptions can be viewed as imprecise and in-

consistent as, for instance, “Shorter Oxford English dictionary” and “Cambridge Dictionary” give the following definitions of the former term: “the period after early adulthood and before old age, about 45 to 65” (‘Middle Age’, Shorter Oxford English dictionary 2007:1777), and “the period of your life, usually considered to be from about 45 to 60 years old, when you are no longer young, but are not yet old” (‘Middle Age’, n.d., n.p.[2]). “Cambridge Dictionary” characterises the last term quite vaguely in terms of interests associated with this stage of human ontogeny, as an “old age, esp. when viewed as an opportunity for travel, further education, etc.” (‘the Third Age’, n.d., n.p.[3]), while “Merriam-Webster” provides two definitions of this stage of life: “the fact of being old” and “the time of life when a person is old” (‘Old Age’, n.d., n.p.[4]) (see also Słowik-Krogulec 2019b:44).

Along similar lines, the World Health Organization (WHO) provides age brackets that are different from the ones suggested by the United Nations (UN) and Eurostat. The former use the following terms: pre-old, middle-age, immobile age, non-mobility age for people aged 45-59; young-old for those aged 60-74; old-old for people aged 75-89; and oldest-old or longlife for over 90-year-olds (see also Klimczuk 2012). The UN, on the other hand, consider the age of 60 to be the beginning of the so called ‘third age’. Finally, according to Eurostat, the onset of the ‘third age’ is 65. In ‘developing societies’, the bracket for this age group is lower and begins from 50 or 55 (WHO, 2012a). Findsen/Formosa (2011:10) add that “[n]ational studies … take the statutory retirement age as the onset of later life, the figure that is usually between ages of 60 and 70”. It is also the researchers that have tried to set age boundaries, sometimes basing them on the incoherent data. To give a few examples, Alice Homstad (1987) used the term ‘over forty’, Mark Patkowski (1980), Anna Jaroszewska (2013) studied people at the age of 50; Gail Weinstein-Shr – those who were “40 to 65 years old” (1993:1), and J. J. Wilson classified this cohort as “those above the age of seventy” (2008:14) (see Słowik-Krogulec, 2019b:43-48).

There are two main conclusions that can be drawn based on the aforementioned examples. Firstly, trying to apply precise age-boundaries seems to

[2] Retrieved from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pl/dictionary/english/middle-age on 25.04.2017.

[3] Retrieved from https://dictionary.cambridge.org /pl/dictionary/english/old-age?topic=stages-of-life on 25.04.2017.

[4] Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/old%20age on 25.04.2017.

be futile as the variety of life and learning experiences, as well different trajectories of age-related biological, psychological, cognitive, neurocognitive and social changes affect our understanding of this period of human life. Secondly, such an attempt at classifying this group in a non-descriptive way seems extremely difficult due to the learners' subjective theories related to chronological and biological age. This is not to say, however, that older adult learners should not be viewed as a separate group. Instead, it needs to be highlighted that older adults have special educational needs and ought to, therefore, be treated as a peculiar group, while their cognitive abilities and learning preferences have to be further studied and analysed, since they may be significant indicators of their motivation to continue learning FLs in later life.

Motivation

Blanchard-Fields/Horhota/Mienaltowski (2008) define motivation as resulting from people's mental activities, physical actions and perception of the world around them. Hence, according to the authors, "goals, emotions and social knowledge" should be all included as elements which motivate people to act (p. 615). At the same time, due to the highly individualised character of people's motivation, they can perceive the same situations in different ways, which means that the same contextual environment can affect people's recollections and interpretations of various events. Along similar lines, Findsen/Formosa (2011:117-118) define motivation as "a psychological construct wherein a person decides from the application of internal processes (thinking, reasoning, feeling, etc.) to act. In this sense, motivation is an individual disposition. Arguably, it is equally sensible to consider motivation in a person belonging to a particular historical and social context". In other words, motivation can be affected by both internal processes and individual activities, which are considered to be the microscale, as well as by the external world, which is the macroscale.

There are four types of motivation, which are most commonly paired into integrative vs instrumental motivation, and intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation (see Gardner/Lambert 1972). The first type, i.e., integrative, refers to the student learning the language in order to become a part of and connect with a different culture, or a certain community when, for instance, moving to and planning to settle in a different country. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is connected with the students' need to improve their language skills for some practical purpose, such as better job per-

spectives, or getting a promotion (see Ellis 1994; Cook 2000; Mahadi/Jafari 2012). Intrinsic motivation denotes a learner who is eager to take part in a learning activity because he or she feels that it is going to be beneficial, interesting or useful. If the student is extrinsically motivated, his or her actions become dictated by an anticipation of an external reward or punishment, e.g. getting a good grade or having to retake a failed exam.

Unlike a younger beginner, an older adult learner starting the process of studying a FL has a clear aim (whether recreational or vocational) when deciding to sign up for a language course (Grundy 1995; see also Cox 2013). Identifying the reasons for taking up FL learning in later life is crucial, as it should influence the curriculum design. Exploring the motifs of older adults to learn a FL, learning about their needs and learning preferences should help create a friendly and propitious learning environment. As mentioned earlier, in the case of older adults, motivation is primarily intrinsic (ibid.), yet the highly heterogeneous character of later life, as well as various previous learning experiences and different life situations, may lead to some variations. According to Pulvermüller/Schumann (1994:682-683), motivation is viewed as the single most important factor that has an influence on successful language acquisition in adults. Therefore, it is crucial to find the reasons behind the decision of each individual older adult to start learning a FL.

Findsen/Formosa (2011) refer to two empirical studies on individual motivation that could be applied to older adult cohorts. The first research presented by the authors was carried out by Cyril Houle (1961:120), who divided the participants into three groups based on their goals: (1) "Goal-oriented learners who use education as a means of achieving some other goal"; (2) "Activity-oriented learners who participate in education for the sake of the activity itself and the social interaction"; (3) "Learning-oriented learners who seek knowledge for its own sake". These goals can change and overlap. This was observed, among others, in 2015, among 10 groups of learners who signed up for a language course financed by the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme in International House Wrocław, which is a private language school, and a Cambridge teacher training centre with nearly 30 years of experience. The aim of the classes was to develop linguistic competences of people at the age of 50 and older in order to reintroduce them to the job market. However, many learners who were drawn to school after so many years by the promise of free classes often did not pay enough attention to the contract that they had to sign at the beginning of the school year. As a result, they were surprised

that after finishing a given module they were supposed to sit a Cambridge exam (PET, KET or FCE). The learning, initiated by to the need to socialise, hope to acquire new skills and learn a new language in one's own pace, ended in the learners' serious attempt to acquire a particular academic qualification that was to be tested in a formal environment. In this way the activity- and learning-oriented learners had to become more goal-oriented not only in order to learn the language at the given level, but also to prepare for an exam: learn how to approach tasks, what to expect from each part of the test, and how to learn more effectively. Even though many learners joined the classes in order to socialise, get involved in new mental activities and learn the language for their own reasons (see Research below), they had to use a coursebook imposed by the language school, which was designed for teenagers and vocationally active adults, try to overcome or at least deal with various impairments that are typical of the normal (not pathological) process of ageing, while completing unit after unit, despite their inability to acquire so much in such a short time. Although the learners had to be more disciplined (and as already mentioned, goal-oriented) and to work harder than they expected, the courses could not be viewed as successful attempts at teaching English to people at the age of 50 and above. This situation allowed not only to recognize many problems that are related to the older adults' needs and goals, but also the lack of professional knowledge on how to approach this group. Indeed, neither the students nor the teachers[5] knew what to expect from one another. As a result, both groups based their classroom interaction on stereotypes, which frequently led to ageism and age discrimination. This, in turn, proved to be very disheartening for many participants. Additionally, the learners' motivation and reasons for enrolling

[5] All of the teachers had many years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language and were all certified – had either Cambridge CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), or DELTA (Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). The CELTA certificate, which is the most popular one, recognises the worldwide practical English language teaching qualification offered by Cambridge English to pre-service teachers, is awarded to trainees who completed the course, and marks their level at Foundation to Developing stages on the Cambridge English Teaching Framework. The DELTA qualification is aimed at in-service teachers and covers the last, i.e., Proficient to Expert stages of qualification on the Cambridge English Teaching Framework (for both CELTA and DELTA, see Continuing Professional Development (CPD) frameworks for English language teachers – a joint statement by the British Council, Cambridge English and EAQUALS (n.d.); and the European Profiling Grid (EPG), 2013).

on the language course in later life did not play any important role due to the aforementioned main aim of the classes, i.e., exam preparation.

As described by Kim/Merriam (2004:443), based on the abovementioned Houle's model, Sherman Sheffield (1964) "generated a list of 58 reasons for participation in education and developed an instrument to measure the learning orientations of adults. A factor analysis of the questionnaire revealed five factors: (1) learning orientation, (2) desire-activity orientation, (3) personal goal orientation, (4) societal goal orientation, and (5) need-activity orientation". Findsen/Formosa (2011:120) refer to yet another study that "did not involve older adults, [but] its breadth does demand that we attend to its results seriously". The authors point out that in their project, Morstain/ Smart (1974) researched 611 learners in the USA and "a meta-analysis of data ultimately produced six pervasive factors: social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, professional development, escape/stimulation and cognitive interest" (ibid.). Along similar lines, in a more recent study Boshier (1991) created a new version of an Education Participation Scale (EPS), the purpose of which was "to clarify certain basic parameters associated with learning among older adults" (Kim/Merriam 2004:443). EPS consisted of seven factors, each of which contained six items (42 items in total). "The final seven factors include (1) Communication improvement, (2) Social contact, (3) Educational preparation, (4) Professional advancement, (5) Family togetherness, (6) Social stimulation, and (7) Cognitive interest" (Kim/Merriam 2004:444). In their article analysing "Motivations for learning among older adults in a learning in Retirement Institute", Kim/Merriam (2004:445) note that, "[t]he motives of older adults for learning are arguably complicated and multidimensional. Rarely does a single motive lead older adults to participate in educational activities. Generally, both external and internal forces influence the decision of older adults to pursue learning". Moreover, the authors refer to several other similar studies and conclude that that there are two main groups of motivations among older students: (1) "cognitive interest (intellectual curiosity) and a desire to learn" (which suggests that older students are likely 'to learn for the sake of learning' and 'to seek knowledge for its own sake'), and (2) "personal growth and satisfaction, which includes the following items: *enrichment*, *enjoyment*, *self-satisfaction*, and *sense of accomplishment*". According to the authors, this means that "[o]lder learners also often choose social contact or social relationship as an influencing factor in their participation" (Kim/Merriam 2004:446; see also Furst/ Steele 1986; Russett 1998; Scala 1996).

Parks/Evans/Getch (2013) analysed a group of older learners who chose to attend a traditional university. The conclusions presented by the authors once again confirm that older adult learners view learning in later life as a necessary component of their lives that enables them to continue their self-development and to improve their physical and mental condition: "Participants in this study identified a commitment to the value of lifelong learning, which they described as a fundamental aspect of their identity, as their motivation for returning to school at a large university. Many interviewees saw lifelong learning as part of their biological nature, while others cited life experiences as triggers for their learning style. All participants reported benefits from returning to the classroom, including remaining youthful, maintaining an active lifestyle, and garnering mental health benefits" (Parks/Evans/Getch 2013:72).

Duay/Bryan (2008) studied effective and ineffective learning experiences of participants at the age of 64 and older in order to better understand what they expect from continuing their education in later life and what could facilitate or hinder the process. The authors stated that "effective learning experiences are involving, the instructor is a key component in the classroom, and familiar or relevant topics are interesting and engaging" (Duay/Bryan 2008:1073; see also Słowik-Krogulec 2019b).

To sum up, all of the aforementioned studies allow to conclude as follows: (1) The scarcity of research on motivation of older adult FL learners makes it difficult to identify the main motivating factors although some common trends seem to be emerging from the already existing studies; (2) There are many similarities that exist within this subpopulation, especially in reference to the motifs of continuing lifelong education in later life. The findings presented in these examples are also in line with the research presented below in this article.

Research

There were 92 subjects that took part in the survey. Thirty three subjects attended classes in a private language school and 59 studied at the University of the Third Age at the University of Wrocław. Seventy nine learners (86%) had a bachelor's or master's degree and stated their occupation. The remaining participants did not state their job/occupation. Seventy students were at the lower CEFR A1 level, and 22 students at the higher, i.e., CEFR A2+ level.

There were 11 men and 81 women (see Table 1). The majority of the participants were at the age of 60-70 (n=36), closely followed by the group at the age of 70-80 (n=32) (see Table 2). The oldest learner was 89 years old.

Table 1: The total number of subjects. Level and gender distribution

	male	female	total
Older Adults CEFR A1 (beginner)	6	64	70
Older Adults CEFR A2+ (pre-intermediate)	5	16	22
total	**11**	**81**	**92**

Source: own research.

Table 2: Age of older adult subjects

	male	female	total
50-60	5	13	18
60-70	4	32	36
70-80	3	29	32
80+	0	6	6
total	**11**	**81**	**92**

Source: own research.

The non-probability sampling technique, namely the convenience sample, was used to choose the participants of the study. Due to the specific characteristics of the subjects of the study, all of the participants included in the research were students known to and taught by the researcher.

The learners were asked to specify their previous language learning experience:, i.e., how long they had been learning English and what other languages they had studied in their lives. The participants had been studying English for the period of 0 (it was their first English course) to 5 years. Among the other languages mentioned as the ones learnt earlier were as follows: Russian (42% of the answers), German (35%), Latin (15%), French (6%) and other (2%).

The subjects were also asked two open-ended questions: (1) Why do you want to learn English? (see Table 3); (2) What motivates you to learn English? (see Table 4). It should be noted that based on the answers provided in the questionnaire there were some limitations of the second question, as it did not elicit the same kinds of answers in all the respondents. It seemed to be interpreted by the participants in various ways as, for example, the reasons for continuing learning or working harder, practising English outside of the classroom, or taking an active part in the process of learning. Therefore, in future studies more detailed questions ought to be posed in

order to yield more accurate results. The answers were grouped into the following categories to show the variety of attitudes and interpretations and draw possibly most accurate conclusions (there were more answers than participants):

Table 3: Reasons for learning English (Why do you want to learn English?)

Social contact (75%) to communicate with the family living abroad (30.4%) to become more socially and culturally active (16.3%) to get to know new people (14.1%) to give me a reason to leave home (8.7%) to share interests with grandchildren (3.3%) to keep in touch with colleagues living abroad (2.2%)
Communication skills (68.4%) to communicate in the target language (40.2%) to communicate while travelling (28.2%)
Cultural aspects (62.9%) to travel and visit new places, get to know new cultures (44.5%) to learn about the target language culture (14.1%) to better understand other cultures (4.3%)
Language improvement (29.3%) to feel less anxious while speaking (15.2%) to learn new vocabulary (6.5%) to have better pronunciation (5.4%) to learn grammar (2.2%)
Personal growth (21.7%) to learn something new (14.1%) to fulfil my dreams (5.4%) to feel younger (2.2%)
Intellectual curiosity (18.4%) to maintain intellectual abilities (18.4%)
Participation in modern reality influenced by English (13.1%) to understand linguistic landscape (4.3%) to understand how to use the Internet (3.3%) to watch films in the target language (3.3%) to be able to read in the target language (2.2%)
Other (4.3%) to find a better job (4.3%)

Source: own research.

Table 4: Motivation (What motivates you to learn English?)

Other people in the class (79.3%) Teacher (45.6%) Other learners (33.7%)
Communication (59.8%) The ability to communicate abroad (40.2%) The ability to communicate (19.6%)
Class environment (51%) Good atmosphere (25%) Interesting topics (21.7%) Interesting materials (4.3%)
Other people outside the class (44.6%) Family (27.2%) Friends (9.8%) Self-motivation ('I') (7.6%)
Intellectual curiosity (41.3%) The need to learn new things (22.8%) Cognitive development (18.5%)
Social contact (33.7%) Social contact with peers (33.7%)
Personal growth (25%) Sense of accomplishment (10.9%) Self-satisfaction (9.8%) New job (4.3%)

Source: own research.

Presentation and discussion of the results

In sum, the answers could be viewed as four-dimensional, i.e.: family-, leisure-, self- and work-oriented. The first category is related to the relatively new situation in which many older adults face the problem of a communication barrier with their family members living abroad, often in relationships with speakers of other languages (especially English). This issue became so central to the lives of many people in Poland that it entered mainstream discourse and was even explored in a 2016 Allegro commercial, in which an older Pole is shown as learning English in order to fly to visit his son and to get to know his grandchild in England. Open-borders, which allowed free visits to the countries belonging to the European Union, not only made it easier for younger generations to look for new work opportunities, but also became a contributing factor for older adults who could afford to travel abroad. In fact, the vast majority of older adults who attended English courses in the years 2015-2020 either already visited other countries or were planning to see new places in the near future and were keen on learning about the target language culture, its customs

and traditions. Their main aim was to become communicative users of English who are independent enough to book a hotel room/flight, and who can feel more comfortable at the airport, in a restaurant, or a hotel, etc. Hence, the second group of answers is associated mainly with the ability to socialise with other people and to be able to communicate while travelling. The third category is, in turn, related more to personal growth and intellectual curiosity, which could be described as learning for the sake of learning new things. The participants showed an awareness of the effect that learning new languages has on their cognitive development and self-satisfaction. Finally, the last category is related to developing one's linguistic competences in order to find a better job or to be able to keep the old one, and to prove that one can still be a competitive employee. This, however, was the least popular category in the case of the learners of the University of Third Age in Wrocław (all of the positive answers came from vocationally active learners of the private language school, who were looking for new job opportunities).

However, the summary presented above provides only a general overview of the participants' answers which are further divided into: Social contact (75%), communication skills (68.4%), cultural aspects (62.9%), language improvement (29.3%), personal growth (21.7%), intellectual curiosity (18.4%), and participation in modern reality influenced by English (13.1%) (see Table 3); Other people: in the class (79.3%), and outside the class (44.6%), communication (59.8%), class environment (51%), intellectual curiosity (41.3%), social contact (33.7%), personal growth (25%) (see Table 4).

The most popular reason for learning English during one's retirement (see Table 3) was to maintain social contact (75% of the answers). Communication skills were chosen as the second most popular aim for continuing one's linguistic development in later life by 68.4% of the respondents (with 40.2% of the subjects pointing to the need of being able to use the target language effectively and 28.2% highlighting that they need English to feel comfortable when travelling), and learning about or getting to know new cultures was important to 62.9% of learners. Interestingly, language improvement (29.3%), which is often mistakenly thought to be the main aim of signing up for a language course in later life, was chosen by only 29.3% subjects, who mentioned the following aspects of language learning: speaking (15.2%), vocabulary (6.5%), pronunciation (5.4%) and grammar (2.2%). Listening and writing were not enumerated by the learners, which could be explained by two aspects that were noticed in the studies of FLG: older adults' considerable reluctance to do listening exer-

cises in the classroom (which, in turn, is caused by the age-related aural and dual decline that make these tasks increasingly difficult), and by their belief that writing is the least useful skill, as they will rarely need to communicate non-verbally, except for filling in some forms, e.g. in a hotel (see also Gómez 2016b; Słowik 2016a,b; 2017a,b,c). Personal growth was seen as an important aspect of language learning for 21.7% of the participants and was closely followed by intellectual curiosity (18.4%). It could be said that both of these categories are similar, as they are related to self-motivation and the need to do things for oneself or to 'learn for the sake of learning'. When analysed together, both of these group add up to 40.1%, which might be seen as a rather significant indicator of the learners' needs.

The answers associated with factors that the subjects find motivating to learn English (see Table 4) could be grouped into six categories. According to the respondents, other people (79.3% of the comments) were viewed as the most important element that affects their foreign language education (with 45.6% of the participants pointing to the role of the teacher and the remaining 33.7% to the relationship with other learners). The ability to communicate abroad seemed to be another crucial factor that helped the subjects in continuing their linguistic development (40.2%); however, additional 19.6% of the participants pointed to the need to communicate in general and did not specify in which circumstances. Another factor that contributed to the learners' motivation was class environment (51%), with good atmosphere in the classroom (25%), as well as interesting topics (21.7%) playing a vital role. Materials used during the lessons were highlighted by 4.3%, which might seem to be rather surprising when taking into account the learners' preferences and numerous problems with ill-suited coursebooks (see Słowik-Krogulec 2019a). The next category, i.e., intellectual curiosity, was mentioned by 41.3% of the participants and could be divided into the need to learn new things (22.8%) and to continue one's cognitive development (18.5%). Social contact was listed by 33.7% of the learners, which once again points to the need to re-evaluate current methods and attitudes related to teaching older adults. Finally, personal growth was seen as an important factor influencing the learners' motivation to study a FL by 25% of the respondents.

Conclusions and Classroom implications

The answers provided by the participants of the study reported above, the analysis of secondary research related to the field, as well as nearly ten years of practice in teaching English to older adult learners show that this

cohort should be treated as a group with special educational needs. The findings presented above confirm that although communication is by far the most important reason for older adults to sign up for a language course, such factors as social and cultural aspects, intellectual curiosity or personal growth also play a very important role and should not be overlooked in teaching this age group. These conclusions have practical implications for programme planning for older adults. When designing the curricula, both educators and programme providers ought to take into account the specific needs and interests of this age group in order to create a propitious and motivating learning environment. Therefore, the teachers' role is not only to help students in learning a new foreign language, but also to stimulate their intellectual curiosity, create a friendly atmosphere, which will allow them to freely express their thoughts and learning preferences, and to share their vast knowledge and learning experiences with their peers.

In fact, it was already 30 years ago that Malcolm Knowles (1990) stated as follows: "[e]lder learning programme providers should recognize the specific learning styles of older adults. Elder learning, as part and parcel of adult learning, is basically a cooperative venture in informal, non-authoritarian learning environment. The main objective for adult learning is to discover the meaning of experience, and is therefore 'life-centred'; that is, targeted toward enhancing people in their functioning in daily living, instead of merely acquiring a particular academic qualification. Thus, the appropriate units for organizing adult learning are life situations but not subjects" (qtd. in Chui/Zhao 2016:176). This claim remains relevant also in the discussion of older adults' motivation to study foreign languages, since it points to the crucial aspect of the learners' role in designing the courses. It should be, therefore, highlighted that even though Foreign Language Geragogy shares many qualities with andragogy and pedagogy (see also Słowik-Krogulec 2019b), it should be treated as a separate field of studies in order to ensure a better understanding of the subject matter. More research devoted to foreign language teaching and learning to adults will, in turn, ensure a better quality of courses offered to this age group.

Although more studies are necessary to fully understand why older adult learners in Poland take up studying English in later life, this article aims to show that older adults need English to be able to communicate not only with their families and friends who live in other countries, but to travel to different locations and be able to use the language that is understood in most tourist destinations. Indeed, English as a lingua franca has dominated the linguistic landscapes of many countries. As a result, older adult learn-

ers, as well as the learners of other age groups, often find themselves in a Non-English Speaking Environment (NESE) and need the knowledge of foreign languages simply to understand the world around them and not to feel isolated and excluded while seeing English on billboards, in shop windows, while watching TV and using the Internet. However, at the same time many older adults also find it necessary to learn the language in order to communicate with their children and grandchildren who left the country and often live in a solely English Speaking Environment (ESE) with their English-speaking spouses or partners. Therefore, learning the language in order to communicate with their families becomes a crucial element of their motivation. The knowledge of the foreign language also allows them to form new friendships and spend their free time in other countries while communicating with others. This point is linked to the often overlooked motivating factor, i.e., socialisation. The feeling of loneliness and the need to spend time with other people is one of the main reasons behind the need to continue one's education in later life even if it is done after a longer break. As a result, older adults often join language groups in order to spend their free time in a pleasant, but at the same time also meaningful, way, which will help them both to maintain intellectual abilities and to form new relationships. This has also vital consequences for teachers, who when planning their lessons need to remember that the students are not only there to learn a new skill and memorise the new material, but also to enjoy themselves and the time spent with their peers.

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What motivates older adult learners in Poland to study foreign languages in later life?

Older adult cohorts (aged 60 and older) currently represent approximately 24% of the population of Poland.[6] It is expected that by 2050 this proportion will increase to 40.4% of the overall population. The demographic change is also reflected in the continuing widespread popularity of various courses designed for this age group and the resulting rise of the number of Universities of the Third Age and other senior centres. However, in order to offer propitious and motivating learning environment for this age group, more research into the participants' expectations and goals is needed. Three major findings were identified in this study: (a) older adults take up learning languages in later life in order to communicate while travelling (also with their families who live abroad); to socialise and get to know new people and cultures; to maintain intellectual abilities and to develop cognitively; (b) the instructor and other learners are key components in improving older adults' motivation; and (c) stereotypes related to senescence and to *Foreign Language Geragogy* should be challenged to make classes relevant and interesting for this age group.

Keywords: motivation, Foreign Language Geragogy (FLG), late-life foreign language learning and teaching, lifelong learning, older adults.

[6] The data provided by GUS for Poland. Population figure in total: 38 433 558 people (18 593 175 men and 19 840 383 women); population figure of older adults (at the age of 60 and more) 9 293 592 (3 869 259 men and 5 424 333 women). As of 2020, older adults constitute 24% of the entire population of Poland.