

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND OTHER DIMENSIONS OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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### ABSTRACT

Motivation is an important ingredient to success in every attempt to achieve a goal, and so it is for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. The way the teacher motivates students, and the way students are motivated to learn the language, effects their language acquisition. This scenario stands for every subject and every type of knowledge to be acquired but for the learning of a foreign language motivation plays a role that is even more important than in other subjects because behind the language there is culture, history and attitudes towards the language itself and what it represents. The main aim of this paper is to show the relationship between teachers' motivation skills and other dimensions of classroom management. It will be investigated how motivation increases students' level of perception on dimensions like effective implementation of lesson plans, knowledge of the subject matter and teachers' personality. For the analysis of the data of this quantitative study the SPSS (version 21) program was used. The participants of the study were 1020 students of secondary schools in three cities of Albania, Tirana, Elbasan and Durrës. From the statistical analysis of the data it was found that teachers' motivation skills have a strong positive correlation with all other dimensions of classroom management. In this paper only the three strongest correlations will be presented. So, from eleven dimensions the three dimensions that have the strongest correlation with teacher's motivation skills are; effective implementation of lesson plans ( $r_s = .787$ ,  $n = 813$ ,  $p < .005$ ), knowledge of the subject matter ( $r_s = .772$ ,  $n = 850$ ,  $p < .005$ ), and teacher's personality ( $r_s = .770$ ,  $n = 823$ ,  $p < .005$ ).

**Keywords:** Motivation, classroom management, language acquisition.

### INTRODUCTION

Appropriate curricula and good teaching are necessary but not sufficient so that students learn. Teaching, however purposeful, cannot automatically lead to learning for the simple reason that learning is primarily a personal construct controlled by the individual learner (Kumaravadivelu, 2003 p. 44). If students minimize their investment of attention and effort, they won't learn much. The degree to which they invest attention and effort depends on their motivation (Good & Brophy, 2008 p. 143).

The desire to achieve some goal is the bedrock of motivation and, if it is strong enough, it provokes a decision to act (Harmer, 2007). In the classroom context, the concept of student motivation is used to explain the degree to which students invest attention and effort in various pursuits, which may or may not be the ones desired by their teachers (Brophy, 2004, p. 4). According to Brophy, (2004) student motivation is rooted in students' subjective experiences, especially those connected to their willingness to engage in lessons and learning activities and their reasons for doing so. By motivation to learn, Good and Brophy mean a student's tendency to find learning activities meaningful and worthwhile and to try to get the intended learning benefits from them. Motivating students to learn means not only stimulating them to take an interest in and see the value of what they are learning but also

providing them with guidance about how to go about learning it (Good & Brophy, 2008 p. 168).

Research shows that Second Language motivation has important social and psychological dimensions which distinguish it from other forms of learning motivation, since learners are expected not simply to acquire knowledge of the language but to identify with the target language community and adopt their distinctive speech behaviors and styles (Ushioda, 2012, p.78). Finding ways of sparking students' initial interest and enthusiasm is not enough, since motivation needs to be regulated and sustained through the long and arduous learning process, so the key lies in orchestrating the social learning environment and learning experience in such a way that students will want to participate and want to learn (Ushioda, 2012).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Teacher's motivation skills

In order to motivate and maintain motivation Dornyei (2001 in Ushioda, 2012) has developed a framework for motivational teaching practice structured according to these successive phases: -*Creating the basic motivational conditions*, which involves establishing good social relations and a positive learning atmosphere. -*Generating initial motivation*, which involves building students' interest in and positive attitudes to learning the language.

-*Maintaining and protecting motivation*, comprising pedagogical strategies for keeping students well motivated and involved during the learning process. -*Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation*, which entails enhancing students' self-perceptions of competence and success (p.79).

Ushioda (2012) suggests that in order to increase students' motivation, teachers need to engage students in using the target language to express their own personal meanings, interests and identities, rather than treating them as language "learners" who are merely practicing or demonstrating knowledge of the language (p.83). In this context, students, apart from personal meanings, interests and identities, might also discuss about personal goals in learning the language as research and theory on motivation indicate that learners are most motivated when they believe the tasks they're involved in are relevant to their personal goals (Marzano, 1992).

In his book "Motivating Students to Learn" Jere Brophy (2004) states that, "students will not respond well to motivational attempts if they are fearful, resentful, or otherwise focused on negative emotions. To create conditions that favor your motivational efforts you will need to establish and maintain your classroom as a learning community- a place where students come primarily to learn, and succeed in doing so through collaboration with you and their classmates" (p 26).

Another element that enhances motivation to learn is teacher's enthusiasm. When teachers are enthusiastic about a subject, students are likely to develop enthusiasm of their own, and as a result achieve at higher levels. According to Good and Brophy (2008), teacher enthusiasm includes at least two major aspects. The first is conveying sincere interest in the subject, and the second aspect is dynamic vigor. Enthusiastic teachers are alive in the room; they show surprise, suspense, joy, and other feelings in their voices and they make material interesting by relating it to their experiences and showing that they themselves are interested in it (Good and Brophy, 2008 p. 311).

A very important moment when teachers should be enthusiastic, and also show it, is when students make questions. Good and Brophy (2008), confirm that students typically ask very few questions during lessons and they should be encouraged when they do so by using techniques and being opened to students' questions. Encouraging questions is especially important at the beginning of the term, because some of the students' previous teachers may have discouraged questions or allowed them only at certain times. Warm encouragement of questions shows students that you view them as co-participants and need their questions to help you teach well (Good and Brophy, 2008 p. 311).

### **Effective implementation of lesson plans**

Even the best planned lessons are worthless if not conducted with the right procedures. In order for effective implementation of lesson plans to happen, teachers should ask students questions about their previous knowledge and experience, match the activities with the set objectives, lead the students to practice the acquired knowledge, and give students the opportunity to work individually, in groups or as a whole class, according to the task being performed. Teachers should also give clear instruction to pass from one activity to another, make sure the students are able to perform what they are asked to, and make a summary of the acquired knowledge at the end of each class.

A key ingredient for successful implementation of lesson plans is the choosing, applying, and monitoring of classroom activities. Key dimensions of an activity are duration, the physical space in which the activity occurs, the type and number of students, the props or resources used, and the expected behavior of students and the teacher (Doyle, 1980). In selecting an activity, the teacher defines, organizes, and directs what a group of students are to do for a specific block of time. Once an activity is operating, it carries much of the burden of controlling behavior. Events become predictable. The teacher and students are able to anticipate what is likely to happen. The careful selection and arrangement of activities reduces the complexity of the classroom and furnishes a framework for order. Doyle distinguishes three phases to the life history of an activity. Seatwork is an especially good example of this cycle. At the beginning of seat-work, engagement is usually low as students assemble materials and ask questions to clarify procedures. This is a time when experienced teachers monitor behavior closely and work to get the activity started. During the middle phase of seatwork, involvement typically increases until most students at least appear to be working. During this phase the demand for continuous teacher vigilance is often reduced (Doyle, 1980). As a last issue concerning activities, Doyle states that efficient monitoring is more than simply looking. A teacher must know when to look and what to look for. Classrooms are complex environments and must be monitored selectively. Teachers who know what is likely to happen in a classroom are able to anticipate events and see signs that indicate the direction an activity is taking. A teacher who is aware that a particular student is easily distracted from assignments, for example, can watch that student carefully whenever an interruption occurs (Doyle, 1980).

Furthermore, according to Emmer and Evertson (2009), well-planned lessons with a variety of appropriate activities support the positive learning environment, (Emmer & Evertson 2009). In order to effectively implement lesson plans, teachers should have knowledge about activities, and their types. Emmer and Evertson explain that the term activity describes organized behavior that the teacher and students engage in for a common purpose (p. 88). The authors explain that typical activities in secondary classes include discussions, recitations, group work, presentations, seatwork, and checking, although this is by no means a complete

list (p. 88). Emmer and Evertson (2009) assert that a central theme in managing activities well is the idea of activity flow, the degree to which a lesson proceeds smoothly without digressions, diversions, or interruptions. Activity flow is maintained through three types of teacher behaviors: preventing misbehavior, managing lesson movement, and maintaining group focus (p. 95.)

### **Knowledge of the subject matter**

When providing a general profile of effective teachers, Sammons and Ko (2013) state that effective teachers among other characteristics, are knowledgeable about curriculum content and the strategies for teaching it. So, adequate knowledge is seen as a necessary prerequisite (although not in itself a sufficient condition) for effective teaching and learning (Sammons et al,1995). Several studies have found that deep content-area knowledge appear to positively impact student achievement (Brown & Bachler, 2013). Through deep knowledge of content the teacher knows how to transform the instructional design into a sequence of activities and exercises that make it accessible to students (Brown & Bachler, 2013).

According to Shulman (1986, 1987) the literature of research on teaching till that time focused on how teachers manage their classrooms, organize activities, allocate time and turns, structure assignments, ascribe praise and blame, formulate the levels of their questions, plan lessons, and judge general student understanding, but missed important questions about the content of the lessons taught, the questions asked, and the explanations offered (p. 8). He states that mere content knowledge is likely to be as useless pedagogically as content-free skill. But he suggests that to blend properly the two aspects of a teacher's capacities requires that we pay as much attention to the content aspects of teaching as we have recently devoted to the elements of teaching process. He introduced “Content Knowledge” as referring to the amount and organization of knowledge per se in the mind of the teacher, and “Pedagogical Content Knowledge” a second kind of content knowledge, which goes beyond knowledge of subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching (p. 9).

As far as the teaching of English as a foreign language is concerned, apart from the ability to create and foster good teacher-student rapport and the possession of skills necessary for organizing successful lessons, teachers need to know a lot about the subject they are teaching, they need to know what equipment is available in their schools and how to use it, what materials are available for teachers and students, and they should do their best to keep abreast of new developments in teaching approaches and techniques (Harmer, 2007, p. 30). Harmer (2007) mentions four main areas of teacher knowledge; the language system, materials and resources, classroom equipment, and keeping up-to-date. Teachers need to be constantly finding out about new techniques and activities in the classroom. A good way to do this is to read the various teacher’s magazines and journals that are available. Things change almost daily, and staying in touch with those changes can seem daunting, of course, but it is worth remembering how deadly it would be if things always stayed the same (p. 32).

### **Teacher’s personality**

Teacher’s personality is found to affect students’ learning and teacher’s performance in the classroom (Martin, & Baldwin, 1993, Jamil et al, 2012, Eryilmaz, 2014, Roberts et al, 2007). For Williams and Burden (1999 as cited in Larenas et al, 2011) personality refers to an individual’s characteristic patterns of thought, emotion and behavior, together with the psychological mechanisms –hidden or not– behind those patterns.

Getzels and Jakson (1963 as cited in Martin, & Baldwin, 1993) maintained that the personality of the teacher is the most significant variable in classroom success. Martin and Baldwin present other studies that also indicate that many of the variables associated with effective teaching are non-academic in nature. Pittman (1985) found that student ratings of teacher effectiveness were highly correlated to the personality dimensions of warmth, creativity, and organization. They also cite Easterly, (1985) who found that teachers identified as "effective" by their peers were willing to take risks, had a capacity for loving, were independent and assertive, and were more mature (Martin, & Baldwin, 1993, pp. 6-7).

The personality literature shows a consistent and robust relationship between neuroticism and negative affect and extraversion and positive affect (Jamil et al, 2012). In a study about pre-service teachers' association of performance, personality and, beliefs, Jamil, Dower, & Pianta, (2012) state that teaching is a very stressful profession, requiring high levels of social interaction, and extraverted individuals who are naturally prone to positive affectivity and enjoy interacting with others might feel better prepared to enter such a career. Similarly, teachers who are less prone to psychological distress tend to be less reactive and can better manage the stresses of teaching, so they may also feel more confident that they will be able to succeed in such a stressful work environment. In addition, the positive physiological and emotional arousal associated with high extraversion and low neuroticism is another source of self-efficacy, further clarifying why teachers in their sample who exhibited these personality traits might have reported higher levels of teacher self-efficacy (Jamil et al, 2012).

Apart from the role of interaction between teachers and students, the personality traits of teachers also play a part in increasing academic success. For instance, teachers with personality traits such as conscientiousness are more likely to help students with their academic success (Patrick, 2011 as cited in Eryilmaz, 2014). Eryilmaz, (2014) found that the most important personality traits of "liked" teachers are extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness. Supporting the same conclusion about extroversion, Larenas and others (2011), even though with not a great difference in percentage, found that the majority of teachers in public schools are extroverted (Larenas et al, 2011). Roberts, Mowen, Edgar, Harlin, and Briers on the other hand found a positive relation with "judging", as a feature of personality, and efficacy in classroom management (Roberts et al, 2007).

Even though it may not be possible to change stable elements of basic personality traits, programs might play a role in helping teachers modify the characteristic adaptations, or the coping strategies, defense mechanisms, and other behaviors that develop from the interaction of their personality and their social context. Engaging teachers in discussions about their personality traits, and how these impact the ways in which they respond to classroom situations, may be a small step in helping them feel better equipped to the challenges they will face in their careers (Jamil et al, 2012).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Population and sampling**

The population of this study consisted of all secondary school students in the cities of Tirana, Durrës and Elbasan. Out of the total population, a sample of 1020 students was randomly selected as respondents. To ensure equality of representation, the secondary schools were selected to be private and public, general and professional, and these schools were chosen from the suburb as well as the central areas of the cities. Of all the 1020 participants in this

study 35.4% (n=361) of the respondents were males, and 64.6% (n=659) of the respondents were females.

### The instrument

The questionnaire used in this study investigates three main areas of classroom management which are further subdivided in a total of twelve dimensions. The dimensions included in this paper are; teacher's skills as motivator, effective implementation of lesson plans, knowledge of the subject matter, and teacher's personality. The questionnaire design is based on a Five Point Likert scale; 1 - It never happens in my classroom, 2 - It helps me very little in knowledge acquisition, 3 - It helps me somehow in knowledge acquisition, 4 - It helps me very much in knowledge acquisition, 5 - It is one of the elements that helps me the most in knowledge acquisition.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collecting tool, a pilot study was conducted in three secondary schools; each one selected from each city included in the study. The questionnaire was revised in the light of the results gained from the pilot study. Furthermore, three lecturers of SLA and Didactics in the Foreign Language Department were engaged to cross check the items and finally the questionnaires were administered to the selected sample by the researcher. Cronbach Alpha was calculated to ensure reliability of the instrument (Tab. 1).

Table 1. Instrument reliability. Cronbach's Alpha of the dimensions included in this paper.

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha	Nr of items
Teacher's skills as motivator	.82	11
Effective implementation of lesson plans	.78	10
Knowledge of the subject matter	.72	6
Teacher's personality	.83	11

### Analysis of the data

Data was collected from a sample of 1020 secondary school students using a questionnaire. After presenting the instrument and its aim to the students, they were told that the filling in of the questionnaire was not obligatory. The students that accepted to fill in the questionnaire were 1020, and the 1020 questionnaires that were personally administered to each respondent were collected by the researcher and the response rate was 100%. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS program, version 21.

Prior to reviewing the data, assumptions for the statistical analyses were assessed. The data have been examined for normality (skewness and kurtosis), as well as for missing data. A two-tailed alpha level of .05 was set and used for all statistical tests. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. These analyses showed a non-normal distribution, and for this reason non-parametric tests were performed. The relationships between the dimensions that are dealt with in this paper were investigated using Spearman's rho correlation coefficient.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings and results of this study are presented in the following tables. According to the significance of the correlation, teacher's skills as motivator and the other dimensions' correlations are ranked as follows (Tab. 2).

Table 2. The ranking of the correlations.

Dimension	Dimension	Correlation
Teacher's skills as motivator (TSM)	Effective implementation of lesson plans (EILP)	.787**
Teacher's skills as motivator (TSM)	Knowledge of the subject matter (KSM)	.772**
Teacher's skills as motivator (TSM)	Teacher's personality (TP)	.770**

The relationship between the dimension "teacher's skills as motivator" and the dimension "effective implementation of lesson plans" was investigated using Spearman's rho correlation coefficient. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines in relation to this coefficient, small  $r = .10$  to  $.29$ , medium  $r = .30$  to  $.49$  and, large  $r = .50$  to  $.1.0$ . As a result there is a strong positive correlation between the two dimensions,  $r_s = .787$ ,  $n = 813$ ,  $p < .005$  with high levels of TSM associated with high levels of EILP (Table 3).

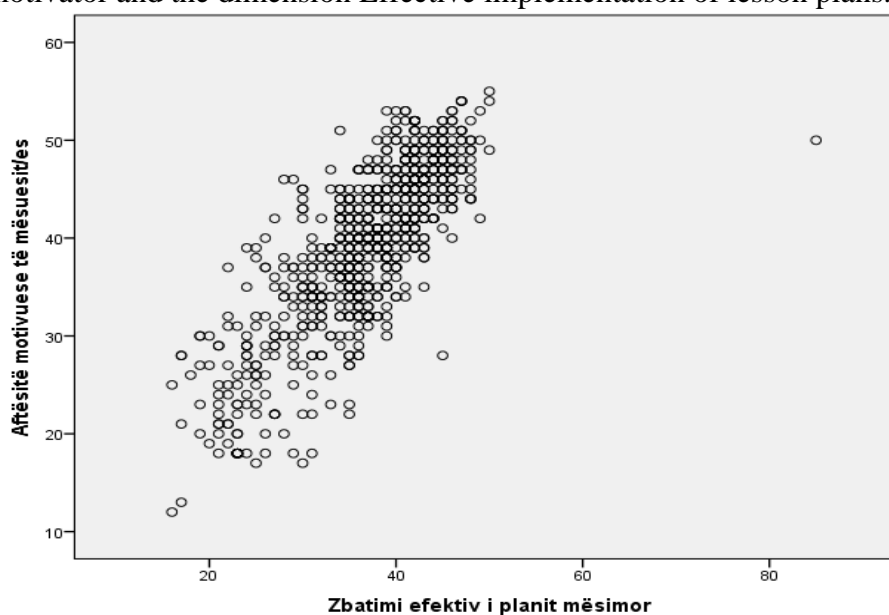
Table 3. Correlation between the dimension Teacher's skills as motivator and the dimension Effective implementation of lesson plans.

### Correlations

		Teacher's skills as motivator	Effective implementation of lesson plans
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.787**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	882	813
	Correlation Coefficient	.787**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	813	921

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Graphic 1. Scatter plot for the correlation between the dimension Teacher's skills as motivator and the dimension Effective implementation of lesson plans.



As shown in table 4, a strong positive correlation is also found between the dimension Teacher's skills as motivator and the dimension Knowledge of the Subject Matter,  $r_s = .772$ ,  $n = 850$ ,  $p < .005$ , with high levels of TSM associated with high levels of KSM (Table 4).

Table 4. Correlation between the dimension Teacher's skills as motivator and the dimension Knowledge of the subject matter.

#### Correlations

		Teacher's skills as motivator	Knowledge of the subject matter
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.772**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	882	850
	Correlation Coefficient	.772**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	850	964

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Graphic 2. Scatter plot for the correlation between the dimension Teacher's skills as motivator and the dimension Knowledge of the subject matter.

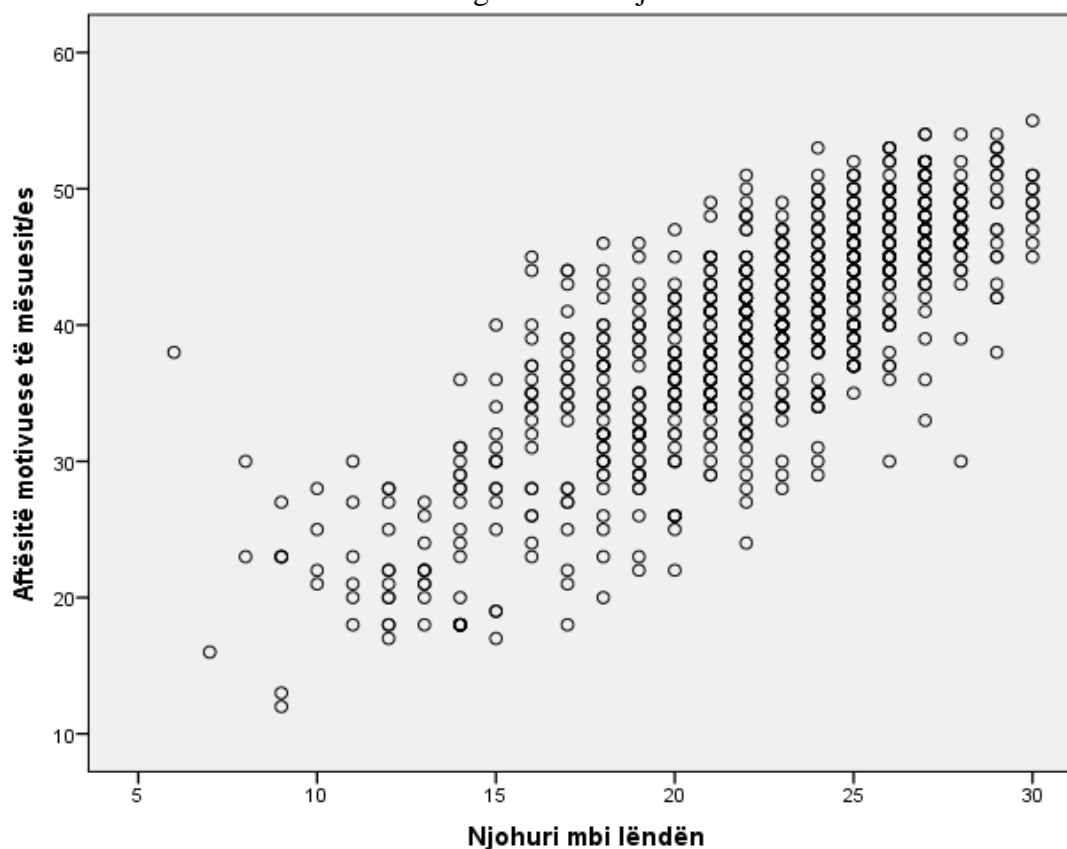


Table 5 shows a strong positive correlation between Teacher's skills as motivator and Teacher's personality,  $r_s = .770$ ,  $n = 823$ ,  $p < .005$ , with high levels of TSM associated with high levels of TP (Table 5).

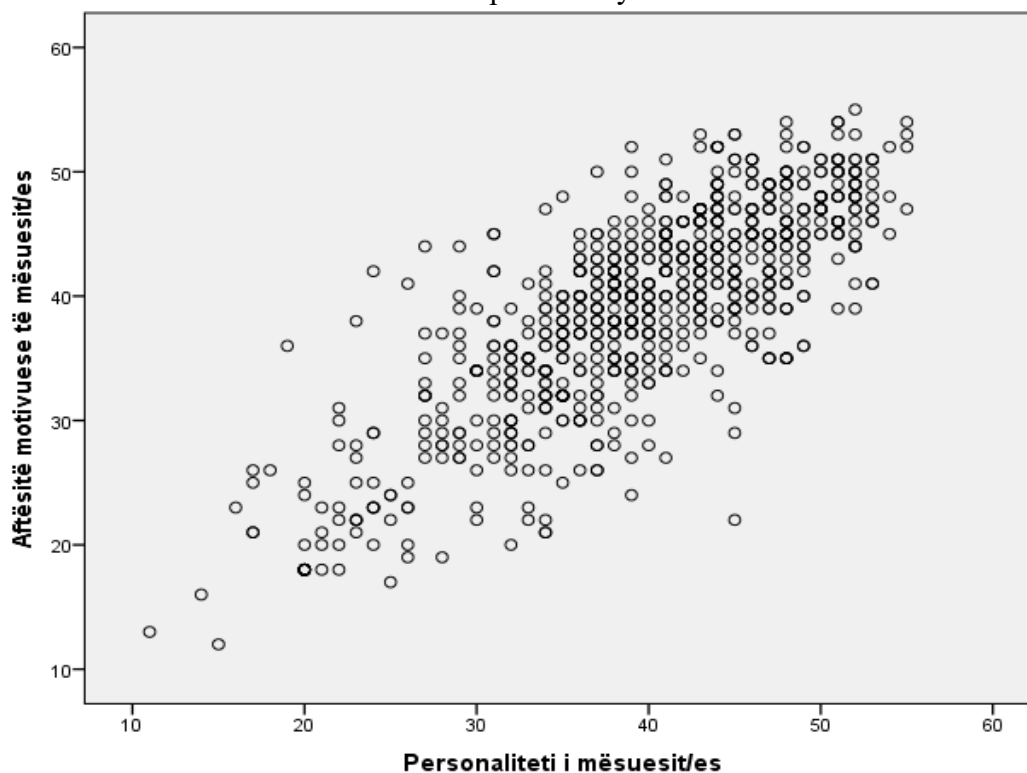


Table 5. Correlation between the dimension Teacher's skills as motivator and the dimension Teacher's personality.

			Teacher's skills as motivator	Teacher's personality
Spearman's rho	Teacher's skills as motivator	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.770**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	882	823
	Teacher's personality	Correlation Coefficient	.770**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	823	925

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Graphic 3. Scatter plot for the correlation between the dimension Teacher's skills as motivator and the dimension Teacher's personality.



## CONCLUSIONS

As it was discussed throughout this paper, teachers' motivation skills affect students' academic achievement. Motivation is a crucial element for the building and maintaining of a productive learning environment. This is especially the case for second language motivation as it has important social and psychological dimensions that distinguish it from other forms of learning motivation, since learners are expected not simply to acquire knowledge of the language but to identify with the target language community and adopt their distinctive speech behaviors and styles (Ushioda, 2012, p.78).

Because motivating students is of an indisputable importance, teachers should pay close attention to all the elements that help in motivating students and sustaining motivation. Sustaining motivation in a language class is not an easy task as progress is slow and not always visible and measurable. So, it would be advisable for the teachers of English to find ways to always intermingle teaching and motivation, and be enthusiastic about their subject.

The findings presented in this article, might help teachers to reflect upon their instructional practices and how to improve their teaching and motivation skills. A strong positive correlation was found between teachers' motivation skills and effective implementation of lesson plans, between teachers' motivation skills and content knowledge, and between teachers' motivation skills and teachers' personality. So as a conclusion these strong positive correlations suggest that if attention is paid to dimensions like effective implementation of lesson plans, knowledge of the subject matter, and teachers' personality, teachers' motivation skills will improve and students' achievement will grow.

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