

Exploring young EFL learners' motivation: Individual versus pair work on dictogloss tasks

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Abstract

Motivation has been widely considered one of the most influential variables in the field of second language learning. Motivation may vary throughout the years, even within the duration of a single language class, and this might occur due to different factors, such as the choice of tasks or the activity type (i.e., collaborative or individual). These two factors have not been investigated in depth with young learners in foreign language settings, and from a task-based perspective. Thus, this paper addresses this gap, and explores the potential changes in motivation of 64 Spanish young learners of English as a foreign language who worked on a number of dictogloss tasks in pairs and individually over the span of a school year. Data was collected several times by means of different tools that measured students' general and more specific task motivation, as well as their attitudes towards individual/pair work. The findings revealed that, overall, these children's motivation was high and consolidated with time, while their level of anxiety decreased. Their attitudes towards the dictogloss were positive from the beginning to the end of the school year, and more so when they carried out the task in pairs. These findings support the benefits of collaborative work, and the

dictogloss, as an appropriate task that engages children in their learning of a foreign language.

Keywords: L2 motivation; task motivation; young EFL learners; dictogloss; individual vs. pair work

1. Introduction

Motivation is considered one of the most influential variables in second language (L2) learning (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2014a; Dörnyei, 2009; Gardner, 1985), as without this key learner factor, “nothing much happens” (Cohen & Dörnyei, 2002, p. 172), and it helps to make the “long [and] often tedious” process of learning of a foreign language (FL) more pleasant (Dörnyei & Ryan 2015, p. 72). Gardner (1985) defined motivation as the desire to achieve the goal of mastering a language and to expend effort to do so combined with favorable attitudes towards it. Moreover, he referred to attitudes as “evaluative (positive or negative) reactions” of a learner towards a FL, which may result in behavioral implications in the FL learning process (Gardner, 1985, p. 9).

While motivation has long been considered a stable trait, recent developments in the field have highlighted its complex, changeable character (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015), and have focused on the socio-dynamic perspective on motivational variation through the lens of the complex dynamic systems (CDS) theory (Larsen-Freeman, 2015; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). Following this theory, motivation should be viewed as a system of interrelated components, experiencing constant changes (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). In formal and pedagogical contexts such changes may also occur as an effect of carrying out specific tasks (Dörnyei, 2019; Kormos & Dörnyei, 2004). Thus it is important to assess how different tasks might affect motivation in order to enable researchers and teachers to better understand their role in the process of language learning (Dörnyei, 2019). This is precisely the main aim of this study, to analyze the motivation, and task-specific motivation of a group of young learners who worked on several dictogloss tasks (Wajnryb, 1990) individually and in pairs.

2. Background

2.1. Motivation and young learners (YLS)

As mentioned above, according to CDS theory, motivation is in constant flux (Dörnyei et al., 2015; Larsen-Freeman, 2015; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). Such

conceptualization makes the study of motivational change central, highlighting the interaction of the different components of motivation, its nonlinearity, and context-dependency. It is therefore important to consider that these changes can also happen in school education, when children spend multiple years sometimes struggling with their FL learning.

Not necessarily all children commence their learning adventure with a favorable disposition towards the FL (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2012). Even if during their early years of FL learning YLs' motivation soars, as years go by, they often get bored and tired of their FL learning process (Henry, 2009), and their motivation and attitudes towards FL learning often decrease over time (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006; Henry, 2009; Williams, Burden, & Lanvers, 2002). This may be due to a general "disenchantment with school" at this age (Henry, 2009, p. 184), and the classroom-based FL learning becoming rather a frustrating experience (Dörnyei et al., 2006). However, this decreasing enthusiasm towards the FL is also accompanied at the same time by students' stable commitment towards learning English, a popular and demanding basic skill in education in the 21st century (see Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Dörnyei et al., 2006).

In Spain, the setting of our current study, some authors have attributed a decrease in YLs' motivation to a change in methodology. As stated by Cenoz (2009) and Lasagabaster (2000), in the first years, YLs start learning English as a FL (i.e., EFL) usually through a communicative approach based on storytelling and projects, which in later grades converts to much more grammar-based and textbook-centered approaches. Such a change in the learning experience, if too abrupt, may affect pupils' initial favorable mindset towards EFL learning, as it is not that enjoyable anymore (Cenoz, 2009). More recently, in a Spanish EFL setting, Muñoz (2017) traced 14 Spanish EFL YLs (aged 6) over 10 years. She administered a questionnaire to them and the students had to mark one of the different smiley faces next to each item. Muñoz found that the development of motivation of these YLs did not generally decrease, but their intrinsic motivation – which engages individuals doing something for their own personal enjoyment – was higher at the beginning of the data collection, and was gradually surpassed by more instrumental motives to learn English, such as learning English to gain a particular future reward concerning work status, or economic advantage. Muñoz highlighted the complex and multifaceted character of the YLs' motivation and the disjuncture between pupils' positive attitudes towards the English language itself, and their (less enthusiastic) attitudes towards English as a school subject (see also Fenyvesi, 2018; Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore, 2011). Her findings are in line with Nikolov (1999), as this author pointed out that instrumental motives to learn a FL emerge around the age of 11-12. Nikolov also underscored that when dealing with YLs, the most important motivating factors are classroom-related, such as enjoyable and satisfying activities and tasks.

2.2. Task motivation

Some studies have therefore closely looked at the relationship between tasks and motivation. Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) investigated the role of motivation of 46 Hungarian EFL adolescents (aged 16-17) when they performed an oral argumentative task. The researchers found that situation-specific motives, that is, learners' motivation towards the task, were particularly influential on these learners' task engagement.

Julkunen (2001) stated that L2 task motivation was a combination of trait and state motivation, that is, a blend of a learner's general disposition towards learning the FL and their more task-specific motivational state. He explored the task-specific motivation of 593 Finnish EFL learners (12-14 years old) who worked cooperatively (in pairs or groups of three) and individually on two different vocabulary tasks (i.e., open-outcome, closed-outcome). These learners' task motivation was measured by means of a pre- and post-task questionnaire, and the results showed that collaborative work was the most motivating factor for these EFL learners, more than individualistic or competitive setting, regardless of their EFL competence (high vs. low achievers) or the task type (open vs. closed).

Poupore (2013) investigated the task motivation of 38 Korean adult EFL learners who performed 15 tasks (e.g., information gap, problem solving, opinion exchange, etc.) in groups of three or four over the period of a semester. Pre- and post-task questionnaires were used to measure task attraction, perceived relevance and difficulty, learners' emotional state, intended effort, and success expectation. Structured interviews with a selection of participants were also carried out, which allowed greater understanding of the interplay of different motivational factors. In a more detailed analysis of two of the tasks, conducted within a CDS approach, Poupore found that different combinations of motivational, socio-affective variables and variables related to task conditions, such as cognitive complexity or topic choice (demanding, or controversial subject), resulted in a decreasing motivational pattern.

Al Khalil (2016) used a motivational thermometer to measure learners' task motivation. Participants were 44 adult learners of FL Arabic in the United States, and completed six oral interactive tasks with a native speaker of Arabic. Their task motivation was measured upon each task completion, by indicating on a scale how they felt after having finished the interaction, bearing in mind the effort they expended to complete the task, how much they wanted to learn from it, and how much they enjoyed it. The researcher found that task motivation constantly changed, and that it did not always correlate with participants' previous beliefs about a task.

Research with primary school students has also explored learners' attitudes towards the dictogloss task (Wajnryb, 1990), which is the one used in the

present study. Shak and Gardner (2008) analyzed the attitudes of 78 EFL primary school students (aged from 9 to 12) in Brunei towards different focus on form tasks, including a dictogloss or consciousness-raising tasks, among others. The data they considered included 2-day lessons and the participants in their study had to rate the tasks they carried out for enjoyment, ease, performance and motivation. Data were collected by means of an attitude questionnaire and group interviews. The authors also explored what task features influenced the learners' preferences. The results indicated that participants showed generally positive attitudes towards all four tasks and highlighted children's preference of pair work to individual work. The findings of the study indicate that familiarity with the task led to an increase in positive perceptions (Shak & Gardner, 2008, p. 398). More recently, Calzada and García Mayo (2020) explored the attitudes towards collaborative work and collaborative writing in general, and the dictogloss task in particular, in a group of 32 Spanish EFL learners (11-12 years old). In their study, children worked in dyads and triads on a dictogloss task twice, first individually and next collaboratively, and were asked to complete an attitude questionnaire the following week. The authors found that these children showed positive attitudes towards pair and group work, and the dictogloss task, although only two items in their questionnaire referred specifically to this task.

According to Dörnyei (2019, p. 60), the "‘learning-through-doing’ tenet has been a key principle of communicative language learning in general and task-based language learning in particular," and therefore learners' active involvement in classroom tasks is crucial for their success in the learning process. Adequate tasks may therefore play a decisive role in fostering students' motivation. However, research on the topic, from a task-based perspective (Ellis, 2003), and in particular with YLs, is still scarce (Muñoz, 2017). Moreover, the above-mentioned studies conducted with adolescents (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000; Julkunen, 2001) and adults (Al Khalil, 2016; Poupore, 2013) have reported different findings with regard to the impact of tasks on learners' motivation. What is more, with the exception of the studies by Shak and Gardner (2008) and Calzada and García Mayo (2020), there is still little evidence about the role of the dictogloss task in the attitudes of primary school children. This study aims at shedding more light on the topic by exploring task motivation of EFL YLs from a task-based perspective.

2.3. Pair vs. individual work

Another important factor to bear in mind when focusing on motivation is the extent to which the type of activity, individual or collaborative, plays a role in learners' motivation. As mentioned above, Julkunen's (2001) study shed more light on the topic, but research with YLs from a task-based perspective is still

lacking. Several studies conducted within a task-based framework have focused on potential differences between individual and pair work, and have reported that pair work leads to more accuracy in students' written production (see Díaz Vega, 2016; Fernández Dobao, 2012; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Storch, 1999; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009) and higher vocabulary gains (Kim, 2008) than individual work. Moreover, pair work also results in shorter texts (Storch, 1999) and more time necessary to finish a task at hand (Fernández Dobao, 2012), but this is because learners also employ more time in discussing linguistic issues, which leads them to reflect on grammar and receive feedback on their production (Fernández Dobao, 2012).

In sum, there is some empirical evidence to suggest that pair work results in more successful practice than individual work with regard to improving complexity, accuracy and fluency in learners' performance; however, it is still unclear whether it also leads to higher motivation. Baleghizadeh and Farhesh (2014) explored this issue with a group of EFL Iranian adult learners. They analyzed the motivation of two groups of students: one group worked in pairs on several collaborative activities, such as role play or information-gap tasks, while the other group engaged individually in different unspecified tasks. Baleghizadeh and Farhesh examined the motivation of these participants by means of a questionnaire, and the results pointed to higher motivation in the case of the students who worked in pairs (similar to Julkunen, 2001). Thus, Baleghizadeh and Farhesh (2014) provided more insight into the impact of individual/pair work on motivation, but their sample carried out tasks either in pairs or individually, not both, and the study was conducted with adult learners. To the best of our knowledge, similar research with YLs is non-existent. Similar to adult learners, YLs may also show higher motivation towards pair work, but they also tend to pay attention to their own needs rather than assisting their peers (see Oliver, 1998), and as a consequence, their motivation might decrease when working in pairs if they feel their needs are not fully covered. In order to assess the motivation of YLs in pair and individual work, this study will also explore this issue.

3. The present study

Considering the lack of research carried out on EFL YLs' motivation, including task motivation, and collaborative versus pair work, the present study focuses on the motivational changes of a group of EFL YLs over the course of one school year, and it specifically explores their general and task-related FL motivation by means of a dictogloss task in pair work vs. individual work. We address the following research questions:

1. What is the general and more specific task motivation of EFL YLs when they work on a dictogloss task? Do they vary over the span of a year?
2. Are there differences in the children's motivation depending on whether they perform the task individually or in pairs?

3.1. Participants

A group of 64 Spanish EFL YLs in 6th grade of primary education (aged 11-12) participated in this study. There were 33 girls and 31 boys. Their English level, as assessed by means of the *Cambridge Flyers*, which consisted of an oral comprehension test and a written comprehension and production test (UCLES, 2017), was A2.1 (beginner), according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). The whole group obtained the mean score of 78.2 out of 100 on the oral comprehension test and a mean score of 72.1 out of 100 on the written comprehension and production test.

3.2. Data collection instruments and procedure

Before the data collection, we asked for the permissions to carry out research with the children in the school. Then, the school teachers gave the students a consent form which they had to take home and bring back signed by their parents/guardians granting permission to participate in the study. Only students whose parents had granted written permission to participate in this study did so.

3.2.1. Dictogloss tasks

The pupils worked on different dictogloss tasks six times, and the data were collected over the span of a common Spanish school year (September-June), which consists of three terms. The first three tasks were carried out in November-December, during the first term and over a period of three weeks, and the last three in May, in the third term, again over three weeks. In both cases, the students first carried out the dictogloss task individually in the first and third week, and in pairs in the second week.

The dictogloss task for both activity types, individual and pair work, followed the standard procedure (Wajnryb, 1990): listening to a recording twice, taking some notes the second time the YLs listened to it, and then reconstructing the story. Dyads pooled their ideas to write the text collaboratively, whereas during individual performance learners relied on their own notes alone. The researchers created the dictogloss tasks and were informed by the teachers as to their appropriateness on the basis of the participants' linguistic ability and the

different topics they were covering in the classroom, such as school routines, cooking and Halloween (first term) and family and personal relationships (third term). Thus, all six dictogloss texts were short narrations of a similar number of words and lexical diversity, following Guiraud's (1960) index. Texts were recorded at a normal pace by the same speaker (a sample of these texts can be found in Appendix A). In order to avoid a task bias effect, the order of the tasks in each term was counterbalanced. We categorized three different groups of pupils, and each group was assigned a random order of tasks to be carried out either individually or in pairs.

Individual dictogloss tasks were conducted in standard classrooms, whereas "pair" dictogloss tasks were performed in different rooms where YLs' performances were video-recorded. The cameras were arranged before the pairs entered the room, and they knew from the start of the data collection that they were going to be recorded. As for the individual performances, no recording was made, and only the YL's final written output was taken into account for further analysis. Our present study belongs to a larger project, and the analysis of the recordings and learners' written texts are beyond the scope of this paper.

3.2.2. Background and motivation questionnaires

The pupils filled in a background questionnaire with some basic personal information (e.g., name, age, years studying English) before beginning with the data collection. Then, for our analysis, we asked them to complete a motivation questionnaire in Spanish (see section 1 in Appendix B for its English version), based on Doiz et al. (2014a) before the first time they performed the first dictogloss (pre-test), and then after the last dictogloss task (post-test). This general motivation questionnaire consisted of 16 items followed by a traditional Likert scale which ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Its aim was to analyze possible changes in the general motivation of these EFL YLs over the span of one school year, and was divided into four scales that measured students' *intrinsic motivation* (items 1, 7, 8 and 11), which referred to their inherent enjoyment related to learning English; *instrumental motivation* (items 3, 6, 10, 12, 13 and 15), which encompassed more practical motives to learn English (e.g., to find a better job in the future); *anxiety* (items 2, 4 and 5), which referred to the feeling of apprehension and unease experienced while using English; and *motivational strength* (9, 14 and 16), which focused on the YLs' readiness to expend effort to learn English.

Around the middle of the data collection process, right after the first three dictogloss tasks were completed at the end of the first term, these YLs were asked to respond in any language from their repertoire: Spanish, Basque or English to a combination of open-ended questions (see section 2 in Appendix B),

and Likert-type questions (see section 3 in Appendix B), following Doiz, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2014b) (mid-test). These extra questions aimed at gathering more information on the participants' thoughts on the task (i.e., dictogloss) or the type of activity (i.e., collaborative or individual). They replied to the same questions at the end of the data collection (post-test), together with the motivational questionnaire, as mentioned above. The questionnaire was first piloted with a group of learners of the same age before beginning with the study in order to confirm that it was adequate and understandable for YLs. Table 1 summarizes when the different questionnaires were administered.

Table 1 Timing of the different sections of the motivation questionnaires

| | N of items | Pre-test | Mid-test | Post-test |
|-----------|------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Section 1 | 16 | X | | X |
| Section 2 | 6 | | X | X |
| Section 3 | 3 | | X | X |

Following Doiz et al. (2014a), Cronbach's alpha tests were performed to check the reliability of the four scales under scrutiny in this paper (i.e., *intrinsic motivation*, *instrumental orientation*, *anxiety*, and *motivational strength*). As shown in Table 2, all the scales reached satisfactory values, above .70 (Dörnyei, 2007), with the caveat that the *anxiety* scale was slightly lower, although still acceptable.

Table 2 Main variables and reliability coefficients in the motivation questionnaire

| Variables | N° of items | Cronbach's alpha values | | Sample item |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------|--|
| | | Pre-test | Post-test | |
| Intrinsic motivation | 4 | .87 | .76 | I really enjoy learning English. |
| Instrumental orientation | 6 | .79 | .85 | Studying English is important for me because I'll need it for my future studies. |
| Anxiety | 3 | .69 | .64 | I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes. |
| Motivational strength | 3 | .71 | .77 | I put my best effort into learning English in my English language class. |

3.2.3. Task motivation thermometers

Apart from the motivation questionnaire, the participants completed an alternative motivation assessment measure tool before (see Figure 1) and after (see Figure 2) completing each dictogloss task. This tool was a thermometer, based on Al Khalil (2016), which contained a scale from 0 (lowest grade) to 10 (highest grade) and different statements. The children had to indicate how they felt at that specific moment. Although we acknowledge that learners' emotional state

does not necessarily equal their motivational disposition, even if these two affective factors are related, we decided not to change Al Khalil's (2016) thermometer, and keep it in its original form. In addition, the children had to provide at least one reason for their answer from the ones supplied together with the thermometer, although they were allowed to write a different answer. This instrument enabled us to gather more data about learners' motivation towards the task, and it allowed task motivation to be measured dynamically both within the task and repeatedly across time in terms of task repetition.

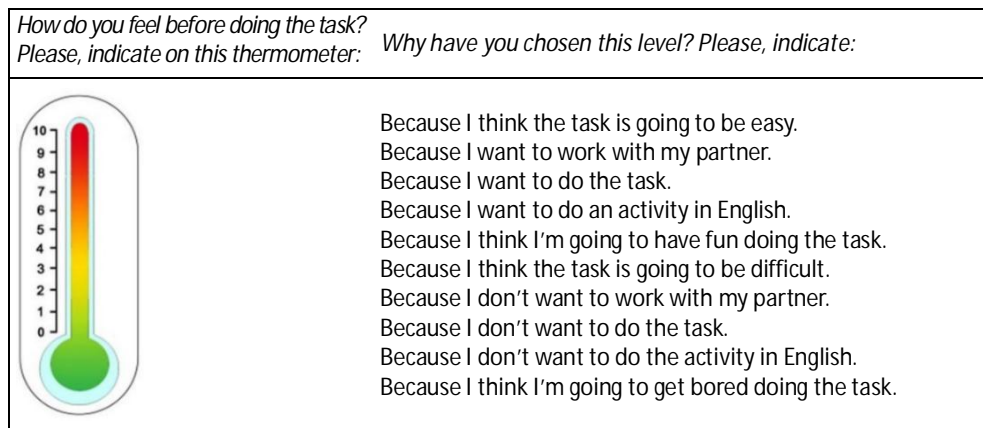


Figure 1 Example of a task motivation thermometer carried out pre-task before the pair work¹

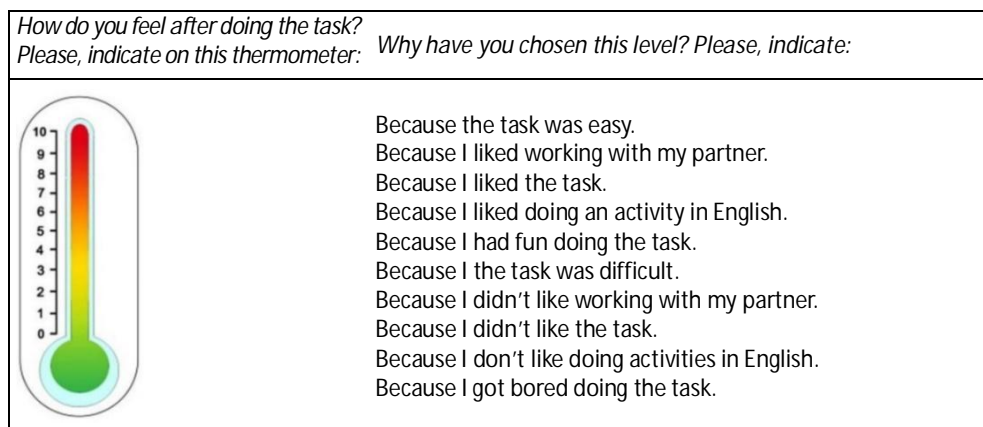


Figure 2 Example of a task motivation thermometer carried out post-task after the pair work

¹For the individual dictoglosses, reasons referring to working with a partner (phrases 2 and 7) were not included, as they could distract the students.

3.3. Data analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed both quantitatively (section 1 and 3 in Appendix B) and qualitatively (section 2 in Appendix B, and thermometers). A Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was carried out in order to compare the results from the pre- and post-thermometers after the performance of each dictogloss task and the pre-test and post-test questionnaire data (section 1 in Appendix B), and mid-test and post-test Likert-type questions (section 3 in Appendix B). The magnitude of the results was measured by means of *eta squared* calculations and we followed Cohen's (1988) classification of effect sizes as small = .01, medium = .06, and large = .14. The main findings of these analyses are explained in the next section.

Qualitative data obtained in the questionnaires (section 2) were transcribed, codified and examined following the three-step procedure put forward by Garrett and Gallego (2014). Firstly, the discrete ideas in the YLs' answers were identified; secondly, they were classified under the general themes of positive and negative aspects of the three issues under scrutiny (i.e., the dictogloss task, individual and pair work); and, finally, the ideas were clustered into broader categories of what these EFL YLs liked the most/least. Categorization of the themes mentioned by YLs in their responses was done in English, although learners could reply in Spanish, English or Basque.

4. Results and discussion

The research questions referred to the dynamics of the changes in motivation, both general and task-specific, of the EFL YLs observed when they worked on several dictogloss tasks over the span of a year. This study also explored differences in their motivation depending on whether they carried out the task individually or in pairs. The results and discussion of these two research questions are presented below.

4.1. General and task-specific motivational changes over time

Overall, the findings showed that these learners exhibited high motivation and positive attitudes towards EFL and the task from the start of the school year (pre-test) that consolidated significantly after they finished the tasks (post-test). This is shown specifically in the data corresponding to the increase of their instrumental motivation ($p = .025$, $\eta^2 = .04$) and motivational strength ($p = .032$, $\eta^2 = .04$), which, together with intrinsic motivation, reflected their general favorable disposition to learn English. Moreover, their initial medium-level anxiety decreased

significantly ($p = .045$, $\eta^2 = .06$), which shows that their uneasiness towards using English diminished with time. The magnitude of these results was medium. As for their intrinsic motivation, similar to their instrumental motivation and motivational strength, it was high at the beginning and increased at the end of the data collection, but in this case this improvement was not statistically significant (see Table 3 for more details).

Table 3 Comparison of general motivational variables in pre- versus post-test

| Variables | Pre-test | | | Post-test | | | Z | p | η^2 |
|-------------------------|----------|--------|------|-----------|--------|-----|--------|-------|----------|
| | Mean | Median | SD | Mean | Median | SD | | | |
| Intrinsic motivation | 4.0 | 4.0 | .81 | 4.2 | 4.4 | .77 | -1.854 | .064 | .03 |
| Instrumental motivation | 4.4 | 4.6 | .60 | 4.5 | 4.8 | .60 | 2.243 | .025* | .04 |
| Anxiety | 2.9 | 3.0 | 1.02 | 2.7 | 2.7 | .89 | 2.047 | .045* | .06 |
| Motivational strength | 3.8 | 3.7 | .74 | 3.9 | 4.0 | .77 | -2.139 | .032* | .04 |

Note. * significant at $p < .05$ level

Our findings are in line with Nikolov (1999) and Muñoz (2017), as for these EFL YLs, favorable disposition towards learning English for some utilitarian reasons (i.e., instrumental motives) carried more weight, carried more weight than intrinsic ones (i.e., favorable disposition towards EFL learning as it is regarded as naturally satisfying and enjoyable), even if both motivational factors were strengthened during the study. As referred to above, Nikolov (1999) reported in her study that instrumental reasons arose around the age of 11-12, which is the age of our current sample. At this age, learners might start to be aware of the importance of English for their future, as to find a better job, travel abroad or simply watch any of the numerous streaming platforms with multiple English shows. Although their intrinsic motives to learn English were strong, their being superseded by the more instrumental ones could have been due to these aforementioned reasons.

Overall, these learners' relatively strong instrumental and intrinsic motives for learning the FL are also supported by the responses to the items corresponding to the *motivational strength* scale, which referred to students' effort invested in learning EFL as a school subject, and which showed learners' high commitment that was further intensified in the post-test. However, this goes against previous research carried out in the field (Fenyvesi, 2018; Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore, 2011; Muñoz, 2017), which reported a lower motivation for EFL YLs towards English as a school subject. However, only three items helped us tap into this attribute and thus, these findings should be considered with caution.

The extra open-ended questions (section 2 in Appendix B) and the Likert-scale questions (section 3 in Appendix B) that focused specifically on the dictogloss showed that these EFL YLs had a positive attitude towards it before and after they worked on the task, in line with findings reported by Calzada and García

Mayo (2020), and Shak and Gardner (2008). In the case of the open-ended question about what they liked/disliked most about the dictogloss task (section 2 in Appendix B), the learners were asked to indicate at least three ideas, although the majority of them included only two. Overall, most learners indicated that they liked the opportunity it gave them to work with someone else, and this was the most popular answer in the mid-test and the post-test. This corroborates the preferences for collaborative work found among young learners in other investigations (Calzada & García Mayo, 2020; Shak & Gardner, 2008). The most unpopular opinions about the task were having to (re)write the text they listened to, to take notes while listening to it, and to repeat the task again. Very few responses indicated a negative answer towards the task. These findings are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4 What the YLs liked most (+) and least (-) of the dictogloss: top 3 answers at mid- versus post-test

| | Mid-test | N | Post-test | N |
|----------|-------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|----|
| Positive | + Pair work | 23 | + Pair work | 21 |
| | + Stories, audio recordings | 10 | + Stories, audio recordings | 12 |
| | + Thermometers | 7 | + (Re)writing & note-taking | 7 |
| | + Doing activities in English | 7 | | |
| Negative | - (Re)writing & note-taking | 13 | - Repetition | 12 |
| | - Repetition | 11 | - (Re)writing & note-taking | 10 |
| | - Task (dictogloss) | 5 | - Audio recordings | 6 |

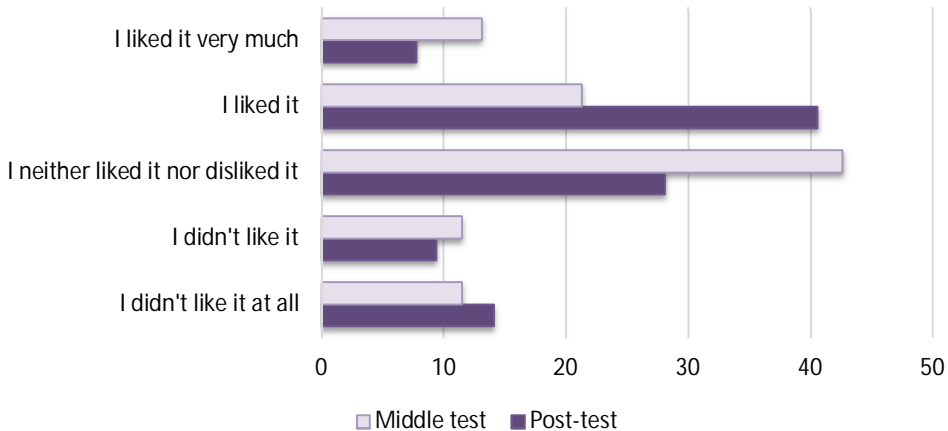


Figure 3 Students' responses to the Likert-scale question about dictogloss on the mid-test and post-test (values represent the percentage of students replying to each item)

However, when comparing these learners' responses to the dictogloss-oriented Likert-scale question (section 3 in Appendix B), no significant changes ($Z = -.010$, $p = .992$, $\eta^2 < .001$) in the mean scores were found in their answers from the mid-test ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.2$) to the post-test ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.2$). According to these data, in the mid-test the majority of the students reported a neutral attitude towards this task (i.e., neither liked it nor disliked it), while in the post-test most of them said they liked it. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

These EFL YLs enjoyed working on the dictogloss, and this finding was further supported by the thermometers presented above (Figures 1 and 2), which included mainly task-oriented reasons the students had to mark (e.g., because the task was easy, because I liked the task). Furthermore, there was a significant increase in motivation, with a large effect size, when comparing the thermometer indications before and after completing the dictogloss tasks, regardless of whether participants carried out the task individually or in pairs, except for the first time they did the task. Detailed results are included in Table 5 below and depicted in Figure 4.

In Dörnyei's (2019, p. 60) words, learners' general motivation is crucial for "preparing the deal," but their task motivation is of utmost importance for "sealing the deal," that is, for their actual active engagement in the task at hand. Thus, at least for these EFL YLs, the dictogloss task actively engaged them and fostered their motivation, which supports its utility as an engaging and motivating L2 learning task in EFL primary education.

Table 5 Pre- versus post-task motivation (individual and collaborative dictogloss)

| | | Mean | SD | Median | Z | p | η^2 |
|-----------------|-----------|------|------|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| Individual 1 | Pre-task | 6.65 | 1.89 | 7 | | | |
| | Post-task | 7.21 | 3.16 | 8 | -1.734 | .083 | .03 |
| Collaborative 1 | Pre-task | 7.20 | 2.01 | 8 | | | |
| | Post-task | 8.28 | 1.73 | 9 | -3.913 | <.001* | .14 |
| Individual 2 | Pre-task | 6.30 | 2.46 | 7 | | | |
| | Post-task | 7.44 | 2.55 | 8 | -3.861 | <.001* | .14 |
| Individual 3 | Pre-task | 5.17 | 2.56 | 5 | | | |
| | Post-task | 6.85 | 2.20 | 7 | -4.209 | <.001* | .16 |
| Collaborative 2 | Pre-task | 7.45 | 1.72 | 8 | | | |
| | Post-task | 8.00 | 1.81 | 9 | -2.912 | .004* | .08 |
| Individual 4 | Pre-task | 5.73 | 2.39 | 6.25 | | | |
| | Post-task | 7.44 | 1.96 | 8 | -4.867 | <.001* | .22 |

Note. * Significant at $p < .05$ level

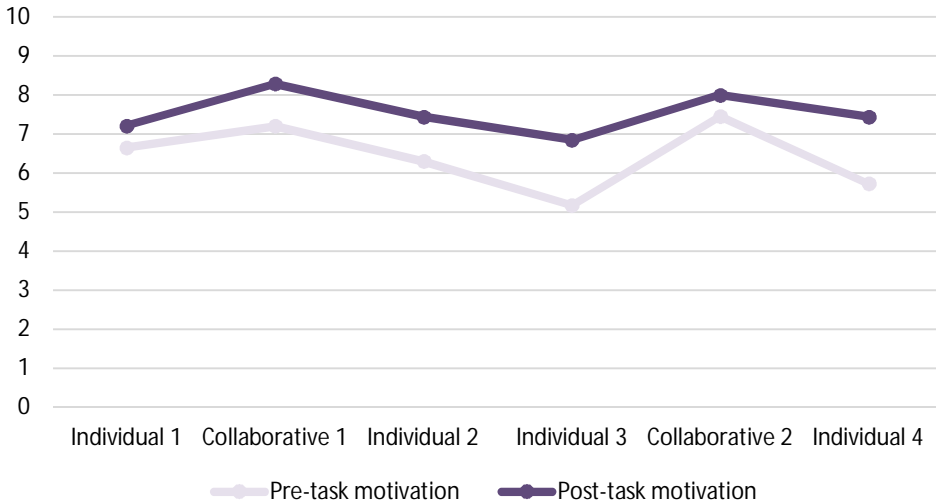


Figure 4 Pre- versus post-task motivation: comparison of thermometer means after each dictogloss performance

4.2. Motivational differences in individual and collaborative performance

The results of the comparison between individual and collaborative work in our study also showed a greater variation in the case of individual work over the school year than in the case of collaborative work. The latter remained stable throughout the school year and with high levels (7 and 8 points out of 10), as shown in Figure 4. Moreover, the findings for individual work were characterized by a greater fluctuation, especially on the third performance. In this particular case, the motivation levels, based on the pre-task data, were at their lowest level ($M = 5.17$) in comparison with the rest of the performances, but after the post-task they increased significantly ($M = 6.85$). The students performed this task right after a long bank holiday, and close to the end of the school year. The fact they had to go back to school after the holiday season, and so close to the summer vacation, could have affected their overall motivation towards school, and also towards performing a task they were already familiar with (i.e., dictogloss) once more. In fact, as displayed above in Table 4, one of the aspects some of the students liked the least from the dictogloss was precisely the repetition of the task.

However, when a closer look is taken at the open-ended questions regarding pair work and individual work (section 2 in Appendix B), the findings reveal (see Table 6) that these children liked working individually because it allowed them to develop their own ideas and make their own decisions, although they missed the assistance that pair work provided them with. As mentioned above,

Oliver (1998) reported that sometimes YLs feel their needs might not be fully covered while interacting with a peer, and for some students this could have been the case. By contrast, when working in pairs, the majority of these students appreciated collaboration with a partner as they received more help from their peers, although sometimes this type of work might lead to arguments and lack of agreement, which were some of the items on their “least popular” list. In both cases, no negative answers were recorded this time against the dictogloss task, which suggests that whether individually or in pairs, the dictogloss proved to successfully engage these students in the learning process.

Table 6 What the YLs liked most (+) and least (-) of the individual and pair work: top 3 answers at mid- versus post-test

| | Mid-test | N° | Post-test | N° |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| Individual work | + Own work | 17 | + Own work | 18 |
| | + Concentration | 8 | + Concentration | 9 |
| | + Thermometers | 7 | + Thermometers | 5 |
| | - No help | 15 | - No help | 18 |
| | - Repetition | 10 | - (Re)writing & note taking | 8 |
| | - (Re)writing & note-taking | 8 | - Repetition | 6 |
| Pair work | + Pairs | 16 | + Pairs | 24 |
| | + More help | 14 | + More help | 14 |
| | + Enjoyment | 9 | + Opportunity to speak in English | 8 |
| | - No agreement | 9 | - No agreement | 8 |
| | - Being recorded | 8 | - Being recorded | 7 |
| | - Problems with the partner | 7 | - Problems with the partner | 5 |

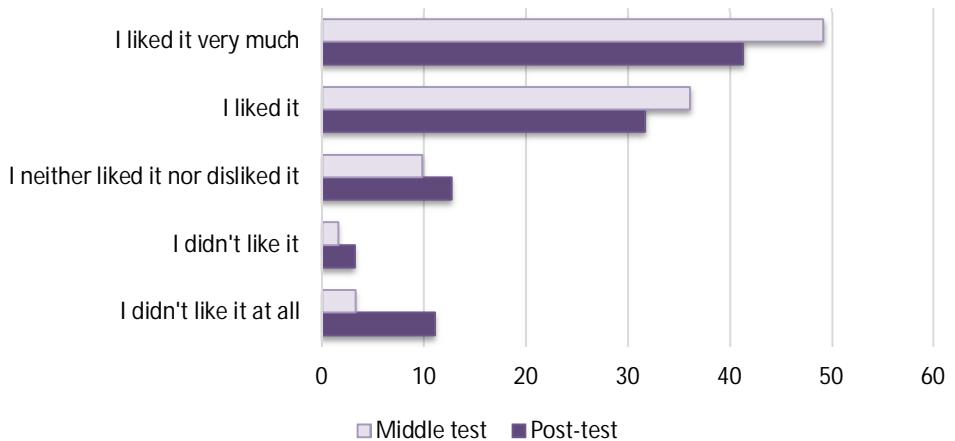


Figure 5 Students' responses to the Likert-scale question about pair work in the mid-test and post-test (values represent the percentage of students replying to each item)

In the case of the additional Likert-scale question in section 3 (see Appendix B), the findings seemed not to be totally in line with the thermometer findings, or the YLs' answers to the open-ended questions. In the case of individual work, there was no significant difference ($Z = 1.256$, $p = .209$, $\eta^2 = .01$) in the mean scores from the mid-test ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 1.1$) to the post-test ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.2$), and these YLs' disposition towards individual work was found to be rather neutral. However, the analysis revealed a significant reduction ($Z = -2.869$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .07$) of YLs' initial enthusiasm ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 1.0$) towards working on the dictogloss in pairs at the end of the school year ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 1.3$). These findings are depicted in Figure 5.

This last finding suggests that these EFL YLs' attitudes towards individual work was neutral, while they were more positive in the case of collaborative work. On the whole, pair work registered higher levels of motivation across the school year than individual work, that is, this arrangement fostered these YLs' motivation, which is in line with Baleghizadeh and Farhesh (2014), and Julkunen (2001). However, the mixed findings, including those of pair work showed that, for some students, repeating the task could result in some level of tediousness, and for this reason there was a change in their responses (section 3 Appendix B) in the post-test. Moreover, this last data collection took place at the end of the school year, with the summer holidays around the corner, and after carrying out all the tasks and filling in the questionnaires, the students could have felt a bit overwhelmed.

5. Conclusion, pedagogical implications and lines for further research

This study explored the general and task motivation of EFL YLs as well as whether performing different dictogloss tasks several times individually and in pairs played a role in their level of motivation. The findings pointed to a positive disposition towards the task and, especially, towards collaborative work. Moreover, the general motivation of these learners seemed to consolidate with time. These findings support the benefits of collaborative work, which EFL teachers should keep in mind, as well as the usefulness of dictogloss as a motivating classroom task. Moreover, although pair work seemed to be more popular than individual work, these EFL YLs also appreciated the fact that they could concentrate more on the task if they did it alone; thus, individual performance should not be completely disregarded in the EFL classroom, but combined with pair work.

This study has shed more light on the impact of individual and collaborative work in the EFL primary classroom, but it also has some limitations that should be kept in mind and that could serve as lines for further research. More qualitative data, such as individual or group interviews with the YLs, might enable greater insights into the motivational dynamics occurring in the classroom,

and allow the researchers to understand the motives behind learners' mindset regarding certain tasks. Furthermore, it seems vital to gather pupils' beliefs and opinions on what they (dis)like most of the tasks they perform in their EFL classes in order to better understand the motivational processes involved in the L2 classroom. This study has only explored the motivation of these EFL YLs in one task (i.e., dictogloss), and task modality differences (i.e., oral vs. written tasks) could shed more light on the task motivation of EFL YLs. Finally, more studies with a wider array of qualitative measures of L2 motivation are needed to capture the flux in learners' task-related motivation and to further refine our understanding of the motivational processes that YLs experience.

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APPENDIX A

Sample dictogloss texts

Halloween night

Every year, Lucy waits for Halloween night. She puts on her witch mask and asks her neighbors for sweets. She knocks on their door and says: "Trick or treat?". She usually gets many sweets of different flavors. She eats them all the same night, and she shares some with her younger sister Anna. If the neighbors don't give her any sweets, she plays a trick on them and they get very scared. But this year, when she bites her first sweet, one of her teeth hurts a lot! So her mum takes her to the dentist. The dentist looks at her teeth and tells Lucy that she shouldn't eat so many sweets. So this time Lucy only scares the neighbors with her mask!

A day in the garden

The Smiths are spending a day together in the garden. Tom is playing football with his uncle. He calls his grandmother to join them, but she is busy playing cards and she is winning all the time! Now it is lunchtime. They are all sitting at the table in the garden. María, the oldest granddaughter, asks her mum to take some pictures. Her dad pulls funny faces and they laugh. In the afternoon, it's very hot. Tom sees that his grandfather is preparing ice cream in the kitchen. He calls his sister and they go quickly to try it. It's delicious! Maria gives a big hug to her grandfather. Then, she takes a portion for her aunt, who is in the swimming pool. What a wonderful day!

Section 2

1. What is that you liked most and least of the dictogloss task in English? Please, write the first three words that come to your mind:

What you liked most of the dictogloss task:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What you liked least of the dictogloss task:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. What is that you liked most and least while working individually on the dictogloss task in English? Please, write the first three words that come to your mind:

What you liked most of the individual work:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What you liked least of the individual work:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. What is that you liked most and least while working in pairs on the dictogloss task in English? Please, write the first three words that come to your mind:

What you liked most of the pair work:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What you liked least of the pair work:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Section 3

How much did you like or dislike the following things? Please indicate by putting a cross or circling your answer on the scale:

| I didn't like it at all | I didn't like it | I neither liked nor disliked it | I liked it | I liked it a lot |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|------------|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 The dictogloss task | | | | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2 Working on it individually | | | | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3 Working on it in pairs | | | | 1 2 3 4 5 |

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE ☺