are more abundant; linguistic progress is (compared to German) initially much steeper; English sounds “softer” than German, etc.

External motivation is featured in another important yet less sizable group of statements. Although the individual categories of external motivation were nothing unexpected, i.e. institutions, parents and the media, their ranking was nonetheless surprising. Institutional reasons as motivational influences superseded parents, and the media proved to have little impact on foreign language learning. One could, however, speculate that media influence was insignificant because the participants considered English in the media as a means of communication, not an aim—especially not for foreign language learning.

To sum up, the results of the analysis show some common and representative motivational features of early foreign language learning, which are, however, not linguistic, but pragmatic and utilitarian. These findings encourage didactic approaches that promote linguistic functionality – in accordance with the recommendations of the European Council. However, shortcomings still exist and are to be found in practice and in the reality of early foreign language learning, where traditional, language-oriented methods and methodology are firmly rooted.

References