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Emotion and motivation in younger learners' second foreign language acquisition

Abstract: Reports and studies repeatedly indicate that foreign languages other than English are facing major challenges in European educational systems (European Commission 2012). While young learners' motivation to learn a second foreign language (SFL) is often reported to be low (Tholin and Lindqvist 2009), studies have only recently started to take emotional factors into account in order to better understand how young learners experience foreign language learning and use. Learners' emotions might particularly influence younger learners' behaviour such as mitigating their willingness to communicate despite being engaged and motivated learners (MacIntyre 2002; Teimouri 2017). In this study we therefore examined 9th grade Swedish SFL (French, German and Spanish) learners' (N=120) foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA; Horwitz et al 1986), their SFL motivation (Dörnyei 2009; Gardner and Lambert 1972), and their willingness to communicate (WTC; McCroskey and Baer 1985). As only few studies have examined motivations and emotions of students who study different SFLs, we also asked to what extent emotions and motivation are language-specific or learner-general in SFL learners within the same educational system. Results indicate that differences between learners of different SFLs are few and that FLCA together with learners' motivation is the strongest predictor for their willingness to communicate. Results indicate further that there are persistent gender differences between girls' and boys' emotions and motivations in SFL learning. Taken together the findings of our study point to the importance of including emotions into studying motivation and use of SFLs also in younger learners.

Keywords: motivation, emotion, willingness to communicate, foreign language classroom anxiety, second foreign languages

1 Introduction

Foreign language (FL) learning is a highly emotional experience. Most people who have tried learning a new language will recognize just how emotional it can be to experience communicative success or failure when trying to use the

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FL in any given situation. Consequently, narratives based on learners' own accounts of their language learning trajectories stemming from a variety of settings and moments in life are often highly emotional (Norton 2000; Swain et al. 2010). Adolescence is a stage in life particularly marked by biological, social and psychological transitions and therefore it could be considered unsurprising that research in social psychology shows that adolescents' behaviours and perceptions are particularly influenced by emotional states (Moksnes et al. 2010).

Against this backdrop, some SLA scholars have pointed out for some time that the role of emotions in FL learning should be given more attention in L2 research (Dewaele 2005) and that emotions are under-researched compared to, for example, cognitive aspects of SLA (Swain 2013). To date, research on emotions and FL learning has to a large extent focused on the language learner, including such factors as gender (e.g., Dewaele et al. 2016), personality (e.g., Dewaele & Al-Saraj 2015) and more recently multilingualism (e.g., Dewaele and Greiff 2020). In the bulk of this research, the sole target language has been English, which is commonly the first foreign language in the European context (Boo et al. 2015), but some research has also compared English to a further second foreign language (SFL) (Dewaele 2002). However, only few studies have examined motivations and emotions of students who study different SFLs within the same school system. SFLs face common challenges in educational systems, but they often enjoy different popularity and status among students. We know for example from research on language attitudes and perception that the reasons for choosing a particular language vary from one language to another (Williams et al. 2002).

In this paper we aim to investigate to what extent emotions and motivation are language-specific or learner-general in SFL learners within the same educational system and to what degree emotions influence younger learners' behaviour such as their willingness to communicate and its relation to motivation.

2 Background

2.1 Affective variables in language learning

Language learning has often been considered to be primarily a cognitive endeavour of producing and perceiving target language meaning (Prior 2019). Emotions have played, if any, a secondary role. Since the 1980s, however, Krashen's concept of the "affective filter" inspired researchers to more closely examine the impact of negative emotions on language learning (Dewaele and Li 2020; Krashen 1982). The development of a validated instrument to measure

levels of anxiety in language learners, *the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scales* (Horwitz et al. 1986) spurred this attempt further and allowed systematic research into the topic. Also, researchers of motivation in language learning have called for the inclusion of emotion in motivation research (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009; MacIntyre and Gregersen 2012). Today, the study of emotions in language learning is an established line of research, and affective variables and motivation are considered to be crucial in order to understand how learners choose, learn and keep learning foreign languages (MacIntyre and Vincze 2017; MacIntyre et al. 2019). However, young learners' emotions and motivation have not yet been studied in SLA to the same extent as in adult learners (Lamb 2017; Mihaljević Djigunović 2012).

Negative feelings, most importantly *Foreign Language (Classroom) Anxiety*, were the first ones to be explored starting from the 1980's on and are today the most researched emotions in the field (MacIntyre and Gregersen 2012) even though also positive emotions such as joy and excitement are nowadays frequently studied (Dewaele and Dewaele 2017; MacIntyre et al. 2019). Horwitz et al. (1986: 127) define foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) as the total of three fears: 1) communication apprehension 2) test anxiety 3) fear of negative evaluation, which all three might be triggered particularly but not only in the foreign language classroom. In the foreign language classroom, communication situations can be perceived as test situations, and as such be particularly prone to causing anxiety among learners. Also, the social climate in the classroom has been shown to be an important factor for the development of FLCA particularly in oral production (Mihaljević Djigunović 2015; Nilsson 2020) as well as the concern of giving a bad impression or the urge to deliver a perfect performance (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002).

Procrastination and avoidance that are often reactions to anxiety have negative impacts on foreign language training and learning. Negative associations between anxiety and learner strategies have, for example, been observed by Liu and Chen (2014) and Lu and Liu (2011). Similarly, much research has examined the relation between anxiety and language learning outcomes, finding overall support for the negative association between anxiety and language achievement (e.g., Dewaele and Ip 2013; Horwitz 2001; Nilsson 2020; for a meta-analysis see Teimouri et al. 2019; but see Chastain 1975; Edwards et al. 2015; Hardy and Hutchinson 2007; Owens et al. 2014 for a discussion on potential positive learning effects of mild anxiety). FLCA has been found to correlate with gender (Dewaele et al. 2016; Tuncel 2020) and gender together with age (Hye-Kyoung et al. 2017). Dewaele et al. (2016) found, for example, that females seemed to enjoy FL studies more than males even though they experienced a mild form of FLCA.

2.2 Motivation and emotion

Motivation in instructed language learning has been conceptualized in different theoretical strands. For many decades, Gardner's socio-educational model was one of the leading models in which integrativeness, that is, the identification with a specific, target language speaker group and the wish to become part of their culture, together with instrumentality, that is, the pragmatic external reasons to learn a language, were the main concepts. Motivation was partly defined by positive attitudes towards the speakers, language and the learning contexts (Gardner and Lambert 1972; Gardner 1985, 2019). Recently, and as an elaboration of Gardner's socio-educational model, the *Second Language Motivational Self System* (L2MSS; Dörnyei 2005, 2009) expanded particularly the concept of integrativeness. One of the reasons was that a clearly defined, external group to identify with, as for example in the case of learning Global English, was lacking (Busse 2017). Instead, motivation has been conceptualized in relation to future internal self-guides, that is, in relation to how people wish to be in the future. It combined the psychological theory of Possible selves (Markus and Nurius 1986) and Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1987) in that motivation is assumed to be generated by the perceived discrepancy (if reasonably sized) between the real self and future ideal selves (Higgins 1987). Dörnyei's model is built upon different components, but particularly the *ideal L2 self*, the interpersonal and emotional side of motivation which occurs when learners desire to resemble to and imagine themselves as competent speakers of the target language, has been shown to be positively associated with language learning outcomes (Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie 2017; see Li and Zhang 2021 for a review).

As already noted above, research on language learning motivation has so far focused more on cognitive aspects of motivation with emotions playing only a minor role (MacIntyre 2002). However, this does not mean that emotions have been completely absent in the study of language learning motivation. Gardner's *Attitude/ Motivation Battery Test* (AMBT, Gardner, 1985), for example, used positive or negative emotions related to FL learning in a few items in order to elicit attitudes and motivations. In the more recent theory of the Second Language Motivational Self System (L2MSS, Dörnyei 2005, 2009) emotions are sometimes argued to contribute to a more elaborate and robust possible self (Henry 2012). Emotions are however usually not measured separately. Therefore, researchers have already some time ago called for a more comprehensive inclusion of emotions in language motivation research (Dewaele 2005; Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009; MacIntyre and Gregersen 2012).

2.3 Willingness to communicate

Much research has used students' intended effort to measure behavioural effects of learners' motivation and emotion in language learning (e.g., Al-Hoorie 2018; Papi 2010). In recent studies *Willingness to Communicate* (WTC) has been used for these purposes (e.g., Teimouri 2017).

WTC was first examined by McCroskey and Baer (1985) within first language (L1) communication research and defined as a personality trait. As the WTC in L2 was found to be more variable than in L1, MacIntyre et al. (1998) suggested it to not only be a disposition but also to be dependent on situational factors (Wang et al. 2021). They defined WTC as “a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time, with a specific person, using a L2” (MacIntyre et al. 1998: 547). WTC is a dynamic, and volitional process (MacIntyre 2007) and complex in so far as it is directly or indirectly promoted or impeded by an array of factors. In the WTC literature different cognitive, emotional and situational factors have been identified to be related to WTC (e.g., Collins 2013; MacIntyre et al. 1999; Munezane 2013). Among emotional factors, language speaking anxiety and confidence have been the most researched ones showing negative and positive effects on WTC respectively (e.g., Asmali 2016; Hashimoto 2002; see Shirvan et al. 2019 for a meta-analysis). There are several studies showing that a well-developed ideal L2 self increases learners' WTC (e.g., Teimouri 2017; Öz and Bursali 2018; but see Shirvan et al. 2019 claiming that the association is under-researched). Usually participants in these studies have been university students.

Studies with younger learners suggest a more complex picture of relations between FLCA, motivation and WTC. While for example a study on younger British learners of German, French and Spanish as FL (N=189) by Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) showed that a low level of FLCA together with high proficiency in the FL and the learners' age were the strongest predictors of WTC, a study by MacIntyre et al. (2002), on the other hand, found a different pattern of associations. They examined WTC in a cross-sectional study of younger learners in a French immersion class at ages 12–14 (N=268) and observed that the WTC increased even when anxiety levels were stable and motivation dropped over time. Teimouri (2017) used WTC as a criterion measure to examine the effects of motivation conceptualized in the L2MSS model and studied young learners (12 to 18 years old) of English as an FL in Iran (N=524). He found that even though learners were highly motivated, WTC was mitigated by negative emotions. In sum, the available research on factors affecting WTC in different populations is not conclusive and more research is needed.

2.4 Gender differences in motivation, FLCA and WTC

Gender differences have often been reported in motivation and emotion research. Particularly in motivation research, girls usually score higher on motivational scales than boys. In fact, only few studies show no gender differences (but see e.g., MacIntyre et al. 2002). Interestingly gender differences seem to be context-independent in motivation research. Differences were found in a wide range of disparate cultures (e.g., Canada: Kissau 2006; China: You et al. 2016; Hungary: Dörnyei et al. 2006; Japan: Oga-Baldwin and Fryer 2020; Sweden: Henry 2009; Henry and Cliffordson 2013; Taiwan: Lay 2008; Turkey: Öztürk and Gürbüz 2013; the United Arab Emirates: Calafato and Tang 2019). Furthermore, gender effects have been found irrespective of the motivational aspect or theoretical construct under scrutiny. Particularly females score higher on ideal L2/L3 selves, integrative oriented and intrinsic motivation (e.g., Calafato and Tang 2019; Iwaniec 2019; Kissau 2006; Williams et al. 2002).

Even though gender differences seem to be persistent, only few studies have tried to explain them. Henry and Cliffordson (2013) associated them with different ways of constructing one's self-concept. Self-concepts were categorized into interdependent (socially oriented) or independent ones (uniqueness oriented). As females were argued to construct their identity interdependently, i.e. socially, language as a tool of communication was suggested to be more important to this group. Furthermore, they claimed that females have a greater capacity and interest to project into future social life, and therefore have a more elaborated ideal L3 self. Chaffee et al. (2020) on the other hand, have argued that stereotype forming is at the core of gender differences and that the subject foreign language learning is traditionally stereotyped as being feminine. In an experiment, they found that men who held traditional gender ideologies in their masculinity expressed more negative attitudes towards foreign languages and less interest in learning them when threatened in their masculinity than men whose masculinity had been affirmed or who held less traditional gender ideologies from the beginning. Accordingly, stereotypes and gender ideologies affect the motivation to study languages.

Gender differences have also been studied concerning emotions in foreign language learning. Dewaele et al. (2016) found gender differences in a large international survey using the FLCA scale. Females seemed to enjoy FL studies more than boys even though they experienced mild FLCA. The higher emotional sensibility was argued to benefit language learning. Gender differences were also found studying FLCA in association with WTC. A longitudinal study by MacIntyre et al. (2002) found that whereas boys' measures of WTC and FLCA remained similar over time, girls' WTC increased once anxiety decreased.

In the Swedish context Henry and Cliffordson (2013) found gender-related variance in the L3 ideal self when they studied Swedish SFL learners in grade 9 to the effect that girls scored higher on L3 ideal self than boys. Gender differences are also observed more generally in the Swedish school context. Females are more prone to choose SFLs than boys and Spanish is the language which nowadays attracts most boys (National Agency for Education 2021; SOU 2010: 91).

3 Current study and its context

Taking stock of previous research on emotions and motivation in learners of a foreign language, the current study was designed to focus on young learners of three different second foreign languages – French, German and Spanish – within lower secondary school in Sweden. Before outlining the research questions, we will briefly present the situation for second foreign languages within the Swedish school system in general and for each of the three languages in particular.

In Sweden the study of an SFL is not mandatory and previous reports have suggested that the motivation for learning an SFL is low (European Commission 2012). The study of an SFL has been an entitlement for all in secondary school since 1962, but remains an individual choice. About 80% of all students choose to start studying an SFL at age 12 (6th grade), but the attrition rate is relatively high (about 20–25% according to Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009). As a response to the declining interest in the study of SFLs, the Swedish government decided in 2007 to introduce a system of incentives labelled *Grade Point Average Enhancement Credits* (GPAEC) (*meritpoäng* in Swedish (Government bill 2004/05:162). The goal of this incentive measure was to raise the general interest in studying SFLs, to reduce the number of dropouts and to encourage pupils to continue study at higher levels of SFLs in upper secondary school. In brief, the system means that completed higher levels of SFLs (with a pass grade) can increase the pupils' GPA scores when applying to university. The system has been revised on several occasions during 2010–2015. Initially the measure only targeted the transition between upper secondary school and university, but in 2014 it was expanded with a similar measure targeting the transition between lower and upper secondary school. While there has been no official evaluation of the GPAEC measure, Granfeldt et al. (2021) have shown that it is likely that the measure has had a positive effect on enrolments to SFL classes, but mostly so in areas and social groups where transition rate to university among young people is high. Currently, about 72% of all students study an SFL at the end of lower-secondary school which is an increase of about 10% since 2000 (Granfeldt et al. 2021).

English is studied mandatorily from Year 3 at the latest, but often introduced earlier.

Even though studying an SFL is not mandatory in the Swedish educational system, it is compulsory to make what is called a ‘language choice’ (*språkval*) at the latest in the year preceding year 6 (age 12 years). Students can choose one of the SFLs offered by the respective school or an alternative.¹ The most common SFLs studied in Sweden are French, German and Spanish. Schools are required by law (School ordinance) to offer at least two of these three SFLs with the majority offering all three even though French is offered less in Northern Sweden and smaller municipalities (Granfeldt et al. 2019, 2021). Historically, German and French have been the two SFLs that have been offered as choices in lower-secondary school with German being the most popular. Only in 1994 Spanish was added to the standard choices in upper-secondary school. In the early 2000’s Spanish saw a considerable increase in popularity, mainly at the expense of German, and today more pupils study Spanish (about 42%) than German (about 18%) and French (about 13%) together (Granfeldt et al. 2021). Against the background that studying an SFL is not compulsory in Sweden and that not all languages are offered, students’ motivations become particularly relevant (Sayehli et al. 2021; Parrish 2020).

As evidenced by the literature review above, there are several studies examining motivation and emotions in foreign language learning. However, there are only few studies that compare what motivates students within the same school system to study different SFLs and to our knowledge none in the Swedish context. Differences in spread and status of SFLs suggest that there might be motivational differences between them. To know whether there are learner-general or language-specific motivational and emotional profiles across learners is important in order to understand students’ language choice, to be able to effectively motivate them and eventually to keep them from dropping out from SFL studies and to help them become successful language learners. Similarly, it is important to examine how emotions are related particularly to younger learners’ intended behaviour such as mitigating their willingness to communicate despite being engaged and motivated learners.

The current study therefore sets out to compare students’ motivations and emotions and their willingness to communicate studying different SFLs (French, German or Spanish), in Swedish lower-secondary schools while taking gender differences into account.

¹ Alternatives are usually subjects such as mother tongue instruction (if other than Swedish), remedial Swedish or English (or a combination of both) or Swedish sign language.

More specifically the research questions of the current study are:

- (1) Are there motivational and/or emotional differences between young learners of different SFLs?
- (2) How are young language learners' emotion and motivation related to their motivated behaviour as measured by WTC?
- (3) Are there gender differences in SFLs' motivations and emotions?

4 Material and methods

4.1 Participants

Participants were L3/SFL learners of French, German or Spanish in grade 9 coming from 15 different schools in Sweden. The schools were randomly selected from a representative and randomly stratified sample of 416 schools considering five parameters (geographical spread, school type, educational level of the students' parents, students' foreign language background and school year).² All learners were Swedish L1 speakers and had learnt English since at least school year 4. Participant characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant characteristics.

language	n	age	Gender		
			girls	boys	others
French	52	15	36	16	0
Spanish	31	15	17	14	0
German	37	15	18	18	1
Total	120		71	48	1

Note. The last three columns give number of participants' self-reported gender.

4.2 Questionnaire

Using an electronic questionnaire, we examined emotional and motivational constructs. The motivational constructs were based on Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self

² The stratified sample was made by Statistics Sweden. Statistics Sweden is a government agency that produces official statistics.

System (Dörnyei 2009) and Lambert and Gardner's socio-educational model (Gardner and Lambert 1972). More specifically we used items referring to the students' *ideal L3 self* (Dörnyei 2009; Henry 2012; Rocher Hahlin 2020) and their *instrumental motivation* (Gardner and Lambert 1972). The instrumental motivation focused on students' immediate future (their final grades). The emotional construct was *foreign language classroom anxiety* with items from the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (Horwitz et al. 1986). We also tested participants' *willingness to communicate* with items from McCroskey and Baer (1985). All items were piloted twice with different learner groups in two parts of the country. Number and wording of the items were recalibrated after each pilot. Positively and negatively worded items were rated on a five-point Likert scale with five indicating strong and one no agreement. Negatively worded items were reverse coded prior to analysis. Cronbach's alphas for all but the *instrumental motivation* scale were over .80 (see Table 2 for Cronbach's alphas).

Table 2: Questionnaire constructs.

construct	# items	Cronbach α
ideal L3 self	9	.91
instrumentality	4	.69
foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA)	8	.87
willingness to communicate (WTC)	9	.88

4.3 Procedure

The study was approved by the Ethics Review Board of Southern Sweden (approval number 2017/745). Students gave their informed consent. If students were under age 15 additional parental consent was obtained. The electronic questionnaire was part of a bigger test battery and carried out as the first of four other tests (a written c-test and two oral tasks). It was administered online on students' own computer or school devices during school hours and took 20–30 minutes to complete. Its first section was on students' linguistic background, its second on motivation, emotions and attitudes. Students could skip items and still finish the questionnaire.

4.4 Analyses

The data were anonymized. For each participant and construct data were aggregated and a mean (M) was calculated. Participants who missed data on one item,

missed data for the entire variable. To examine research question 1, that is, to what extent emotions and motivation were language-specific or similar in SFL learners within the same educational system and in order to examine research question 3 whether there were gender effects, four two-way ANOVAs with *ideal L3 self*, *instrumental motivation*, *foreign language classroom anxiety* and *willingness to communicate* as the respective dependent variable (DV) and with *languages* (French, German and Spanish) and *gender* (male, female) as independent variables (IV) were conducted. Assumptions of ANOVA were met as the data was normally distributed as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$) apart from German females' FLCA ($p = .024$) and French females' Ideal L3 selves ($p = .013$) (Maxwell and Delaney 2004). There was homogeneity of variances as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances for all four ANOVAs ($p > .05$). To examine research question 2, that is, how young language learners' emotion and motivation were related to their motivated behaviour (WTC), correlations between the four motivational and emotional variables were calculated on the whole group and split by *language* and *gender*. Multiple regressions were performed to test which variables best predict learners' WTC.

5 Results

Table 3 summarizes the descriptive results for the four DVs across languages and gender. The averages for the different constructs are overall slightly above a middle value (2.5 of a 5 point-Likert scale) circling round 3.0. On the whole students score slightly positive in all categories. Differences are overall small.

Table 3: Descriptive results.

		Ideal L3 self	Instrumentality	FLCA	WTC
French	girls	3.50 (.77)	2.88 (.82)	3.22 (.82)	2.56 (.88)
	boys	2.72 (.93)	2.82 (.54)	2.78 (.88)	2.88 (.94)
	total	3.26 (1.09)	2.86 (.74)	3.09 (.86)	2.66 (.90)
Spanish	girls	3.46 (.77)	3.41 (1.02)	3.23 (1.05)	2.37 (.85)
	boys	3.28 (.92)	3.50 (.93)	2.75 (.81)	2.82 (1.10)
	total	3.38 (.83)	3.45 (.97)	3.02 (.97)	2.56 (.97)
German	girls	3.13 (.86)	2.96 (1.09)	3.16 (.95)	2.32 (.80)
	boys	2.97 (1.05)	2.82 (1.14)	2.39 (.68)	2.98 (1.05)
	total	3.04 (.96)	2.89 (.95)	2.78 (.91)	2.65 (.98)
Girls		3.40 (.97)	3.03 (.95)	3.21 (.90)	2.45 (.85)
Boys		2.97 (.98)	3.02 (.95)	2.62 (.79)	2.90 (1.01)
Total		3.22 (.99)	3.02 (.95)	2.98 (.90)	2.63 (.94)

Note. Averages given in columns, standard deviations in parentheses.

Four separate two-way ANOVAs were performed to examine the effect of *language* and *gender* on the *ideal L3 self*, *instrumentality*, *foreign language classroom anxiety* (FLCA) and *willingness to communicate* (WTC). There were no statistically significant interactions between the effects of *language* and *gender* on any of the emotional or motivational variables. There was a main effect of language on instrumentality $F(2, 110) = 4.308, p = .016$; partial $\eta^2 = .073$ to the effect that Spanish learners tended to be more instrumentally motivated than learners of German ($p = .044$) and French ($p = .018$) who did not differ from each other. There were also statistically significant differences for *gender* and FLCA, $F(1, 110) = 10.994, p = .001$; partial $\eta^2 = .091$, and *gender* and WTC $F(1, 111) = 6.978, p = .009$; partial $\eta^2 = .059$ showing that girls had higher levels of FLCA and lower WTC than boys. There was also a trend towards a significant difference for *ideal L3 self* and *gender*: $F(1, 104) = 3.732, p = .056$; partial $\eta^2 = .035$ to the effect that girls had a stronger ideal L3 self than boys (see Table 4).

Table 4: Two-way ANOVA results with instrumentality, ideal L3 self, FLCA and WTC as criterion.

DV	IV	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Partial η^2
ideal L3 self	gender	3.523	1	.876	3.732	.056	.035
	language	1.753	2	1.140	.928	.398	.018
	gender X language	2.280	2	.944	1.208	.303	0.23
	language						
instrumentality	gender	.033	1	.033	.038	.846	.000
	language	7.489	2	3.745	4.308	.016	.073
	gender X language	.206	2	.103	.118	.889	.002
	language						
FLCA	gender	8.287	1	8.287	10.994	.001	.091
	language	1.152	2	.576	.764	.468	.014
	gender X language	.612	2	.306	.406	.667	.007
	language						
WTC	gender	5.960	1	5.960	6.978	.009	.059
	language	.265	2	.133	.155	.856	.003
	gender X language	.588	2	.294	.344	.710	.006
	language						

Note. DV = dependent variable, IV = independent variable, df = degrees of freedom.

Correlations among the emotional and motivational variables across all learners suggested that *ideal L3 self* was positively associated with *WTC*, and negatively with *FLCA*. The correlation between FLCA and ideal L3 self was only weak (below $r = .4$) and could therefore be entered as separate predictors into a

multiple regression testing their effects on WTC. *WTC* and *FLCA* were negatively associated (see Table 5).

Table 5: Correlations across learners.

	Ideal L3 self	Instrumentality	FLCA	WTC
ideal L3 self				
instrumentality	.09			
FLCA	-.36**	-.07		
WTC	.50**	.02	-.69**	

Note. Pearson's *r* correlations. ** $p < .01$.

Correlations performed split by language suggested that there was a different pattern of significant correlations depending on the language learnt. While for all language learners *FLCA* and *WTC* were negatively associated, only French learners showed significant positive associations between *ideal L3 self* and *instrumentality*. Spanish learners were the only ones who did not show positive associations between *ideal L3 self* and *WTC*, and German learners were the only group who did not show negative associations between *ideal L3 self* and *FLCA* (see Table 6).

Correlations performed split by gender suggested that both girls and boys showed significant negative associations between *ideal L3 self* and *FLCA* and between *WTC* and *FLCA*. For both groups *ideal L3 self* and *WTC* were positively associated (see Table 6).

Table 6: Correlations per language (French / Spanish / German) and per gender (girls / boys).

	Ideal L3 self	Instrumentality	FLCA	WTC
ideal L3 self		.23/-.13	-.38**/-.63**	.51**/.65**
instrumentality	.35**/-.30/.02		-.14/.08	-.12/-.13
FLCA	-.43**/-.48/-.26	-.09/-.02/-.21		-.67**/-.69*
WTC	.51**/.34/.62**	.18/.19/-.21	-.74**/-.72**/-.61**	

Note. Above the diagonal Pearson's *r* correlations split by gender (girls / boys), under the diagonal Pearson's *r* correlations split by language (French / Spanish / German). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

A multiple regression analysis was carried out to investigate whether *FLCA*, *ideal L3 self*, and *instrumental motivation* could significantly predict learners' level of *WTC*. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 54% of the variance in *WTC* ($R^2 = .54$) and that the model was a significant predictor of levels

of WTC, $F(2,104) = 60.94, p < .000$). While FLCA and ideal L3 self contributed significantly to the model, instrumental motivation did not (see Table 7).

Table 7: Regression coefficients of predictors of WTC.

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>95%CI</i>
constant	3.672	.401	9.147	.000	[2.876, 4.469]
FLCA	-.600	.072	-8.302	.000	[-.743, -.457]
ideal L3 self	.261	.065	4.047	.000	[.133, .390]
instrumental	-.044	.064	-.693	.490	[-.170, .082]

6 Discussion

This study aimed to find out whether there are motivational and/or emotional differences between young learners of different SFLs within the same school system considering that different SFLs enjoy different popularity among students. A basic question we are asking is the following: Do learners studying a very popular SFL like Spanish in Sweden have different emotions and motivations compared to learners studying less popular languages like French and German? A related question is if learners of different SFLs display different motivational and emotional profiles. Potential differences were examined studying their SFL motivation (conceptualized as the ideal L3 self; Dörnyei 2009 and as instrumental motivation; Gardner and Lambert 1972), foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA; Horwitz et al. 1986) and their willingness to communicate (WTC; McCroskey and Baer 1985). We were also interested in how emotions might influence younger learners' behaviour such as their willingness to communicate in relation to their motivation and whether there are gender differences in the learners' motivational and emotional set-up.

The results can be summarized as follows. First, considering the constructs individually, results show that there is only little systematic variability between students' language-learning motivation and emotions that can be associated with the different SFLs. We found that Spanish learning students had higher instrumental motivation than those learning French or German, but learners of the three different SFLs did not differ in the strengths of their L3 self, their classroom anxiety or their willingness to communicate in the SFL. Second, when we considered associations between motivation and emotions, we found more differences between learners of different languages. Even though all students showed that the more anxious they were, the less willing they were to

communicate in the SFL, only French and Spanish learners' ideal L3 self was associated with anxiety levels such that the more developed their L3 self was, the less anxious they were. German learners did not display that association. The ideal L3 self of the German learners was however positively associated with their willingness to communicate, similarly to French learners, but unlike Spanish learners. And finally, only French learners displayed a positive association between ideal L3 self and instrumentality. Third, we found across all learners that FLCA was the strongest predictor for younger learners' behaviour and thus mitigating their willingness to communicate despite being overall motivated learners. Finally, we found persistent gender differences between girls' and boys' emotions and motivations in SFL learning. Despite the fact that girls showed more developed L3 selves than boys, the girls displayed higher anxiety levels and were less willing to communicate in their SFL than the boys. As association patterns between the constructs found in correlations split by gender were similar across gender, results suggest that girls' motivation and emotions in SFL were not different in kind but generally stronger than those of boys.

Answering our first research questions, our results suggest that motivational and emotional patterns among the students who opted to study them are generally similar, even though there are some differences to which we come back below. Different observations might explain this situation. First of all, the task of learning a second foreign language, with its tensions and joy and its cognitive challenges such as learning a new grammar and new words might be basically the same for all SFLs, and therefore the differences between SFLs are small. Furthermore, the SFLs examined in this study have in common that they are the students' preferred choice irrespectively of the exact SFL they chose. Preference might contribute to generating similar emotional and motivational shapes. A further commonality between the studied SFLs is that they all are only little visible in social, cultural and media life in Sweden (in contrast to for example, English, see e.g. Sundqvist 2009). As learners' main contact with the SFLs is within the classroom, SFLs might be less perceived as different languages in the sense of being a means of communication and rather as one single school subject with different branches. This tendency might also be supported by the fact that all the three SFLs have equal status in the educational context. In the Swedish school system, they all have one single curriculum under the name 'moderna språk' (Modern languages) and learning targets, progression and incentives (grade point average enhancement credits, GPAEC, *meritpoäng*) work in the same way for all three languages. Taken together the similarity of the learning task and the similarity of the SFLs' societal and educational status might underlie the similar emotional and motivational patterns we found.

Still we found some interesting differences. Spanish students displayed higher scores on instrumentality than students in French or German. More specifically,

the prospect to eventually gain higher final grades (through grade point average enhancement credits, GPAEC) motivated more students in Spanish than in French and in German. Similar results have been found in Norway (Carrai 2014) where students also were found to be more instrumentally motivated to study Spanish. The results corroborate with observations that Spanish is sometimes perceived as the easiest among the three languages (Riis and Francia 2013) and might therefore particularly attract students who are instrumentally motivated with the aim to obtain higher grades. The introduction of the GPAEC system in 2007 that went more or less hand in hand with the Spanish boom in Sweden, might have spurred this tendency. With the GPAEC system, a clear instrumental incentive measure (see above), more students chose to study an SFL (Granfeldt et al. 2021) and many of them probably chose Spanish. Often practitioners and also researchers, such as Riis and Francia (2013), expect students of Spanish to show higher integrative motivation due to the existing Spanish heritage language community in Sweden, Spain being a frequent Swedish holiday destination and Latin music being fairly popular. These circumstances did however not translate into higher L3 selves among the Spanish learners in our study.

Further differences between the SFLs were however found in the strengths of associations between emotions and motivations. High ideal L3 selves were associated with lower FLCA only for Spanish and French learners possibly because different factors underlie FLCA in Spanish and French as opposed to German. Due to typological similarity, Swedish learners of German often report less pronunciation difficulties which might reduce FLCA in production. Supposedly then, learners of German do not need to be equally highly motivated in order to avoid anxiety, but this needs to be further investigated in future research. French learners on the other hand were the only ones showing a significant association between ideal L3 self and instrumental motivation, supporting anecdotal evidence that French studies attract ambitious and motivated students. The association that prevailed across languages (and gender see beneath) was that the more anxious learners are, the less willing they are to communicate.

This finding leads us to our second research question: how young language learners' emotion and motivation relate to their motivated behaviour when measured by WTC. We found that the strongest predictor of WTC was FLCA together with the learners' ideal L3 self. The less anxious they were and the more developed the learner's ideal L3 self was, the more they were willing to communicate. These results are in line with previous findings and underscore that motivation is not alone sufficient to promote intended motivated behaviour, even when both motivation and intended behaviour imply communication. In other words, the fondness of picturing one's ideal self in communicative activities does not necessarily translate into the willingness to actually communicate in real situations. It thus

explains why some learners despite having motivational goals do not intend taking the action that they envisage and that would get them closer to their goals (cf., Teimouri 2017). Reducing anxiety together with developing learners' ideal L3 self is thus important also from a teacher perspective, especially since some research has found that higher WTC is associated with higher learning outcomes (e.g., Al-Murtadha 2021; Menezes and Juan-Garau 2015; but see Joe et al. 2017 for results to the contrary). This might be particularly important for girls as we found them – examining our third research question – to be significantly more anxious and less willing to communicate than boys, even though their L3 selves were more developed. Possibly young learners might be extra affected as “keeping face” is crucial and emotions are particularly intense in that phase of life.

7 Conclusion

This study has shown that there are few motivational and emotional differences between young learners studying different SFLs within the same educational system, despite the fact that French, German and Spanish enjoy different popularity among students generally. Factors such as the similarity of the language learning task, the similar (non)-saliency of the three SFLs in socio-cultural life, and their equal status in the educational contexts are argued to contribute to our results. Nevertheless, we also found some language-specific differences that suggest that incentives, such as the GPAEC, and perceived or experienced difficulty to learn a language might have different effects on motivation and emotions of learners of different SFLs. Importantly, this study provided evidence that learners' emotions predict learners' intentional behaviour such as their willingness to communicate to the effect that it mitigates the intended behaviour of otherwise well motivated learners. This is suggested to pertain particularly to girls. In sum then, this paper adds to the evidence that emotions are central in understanding both the learning and the use of second foreign languages.

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