Young students' Language Choice in Swedish compulsory school – expectations, learning and assessment

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SVANENMÄRKET

Trycksak
3041 0234

Abstract

Title:	Young students' Language Choice in Swedish compulsory school – expectations, learning and assessment
Author:	Ingela Finndahl
Language:	English with a Swedish summary
ISBN:	978-91-7963-135-2 (printed)
ISBN:	978-91-7963-136-9 (pdf)
ISSN:	0436-1121
Keywords:	young language learners, modern languages, language learner beliefs, teaching, assessment, agency

The second foreign language, referred to as Modern Languages in the Swedish curriculum, begins no later than year 6 in compulsory school. Swedish students normally make their Language Choice (in Swedish "Språkval") in year 5 and begin their learning of the chosen language in year 6. Almost nine out of ten students choose a Modern Language (normally French, German or Spanish) but as an alternative to a Modern Language, they can also decide on additional Swedish or English, Swedish as a Second Language, their mother tongue (if other than Swedish) or Sign Language. Spanish is by far the most popular Modern Language and more than half of the students choosing a Modern Language decide on Spanish in year 6. However, the drop-out rates are substantial and in school year 9 the percentage of students learning a Modern Language is around 70%. Consequently, approximately 30% of the students in year 9 have either dropped the language or have not started to learn one in school year 6.

Drawing on a socio-cognitivist approach, this thesis investigates the attitudes, perceptions and experiences that young language learners (11 to 12 years old) hold prior to making their choice and during their first year of learning a new language. The students' perspective is essential, and based on three thematic aspects, namely *Wanting to learn*, *Learning* and *Having learnt*, the study investigates their experiences concerning language learning, teaching and assessment. Three Modern Language classes and their teachers were followed during school year 2019/2020 (one class in each language). A mixed methods approach was used including qualitative methods (classroom observations, interviews and fieldnotes) in conjunction with quantitative methods (three questionnaires).

The students' Language Choice was primarily inspired by their families, by visits to a country where the target language is spoken and by the comfort of having a friend in the Modern Language group. Furthermore, it was found that among the participating young language learners, motivation for learning a Modern Language in year 6 was high prior to their Language Choice (in year 5), as well as during and after their first year of learning. However, a small decrease in motivation was noticeable at the end of the first year. In terms of gender, the analyses generated no conclusive results to indicate that motivation for language learning differed between the girls and boys participating in the study. There seem to be several contextual parameters that are interrelated and influence students' motivation, such as group dynamics, learning conditions, peers, and parents/legal guardians. Furthermore, results indicate that emotions are closely connected to language learning and that these emotions can be both motivational and demotivational.

Other findings show that the majority of the students were content with the teaching practices they encountered in the Modern Language classroom, that many of them had their own strategies for studying and that they believed that they had learnt a lot during their first year of learning the new language. Findings also reveal a certain ambiguity towards language learning. Although many students liked and thought that they would have good use of their Modern Language in the future, some also believed that they would probably manage well without knowing any other foreign languages besides English. Another important finding was that contextual parameters play a significant role in relation to the Language Choice. Organizational and administrational features influenced the teaching and learning practices in the language classroom as well as the teacher's assessment. The conditions for learning a Modern Language also varied between the three languages, mainly due to the large groups of students learning Spanish. These differences have implications for the students learning and for the teachers' teaching and assessment and can therefore be considered problematic from a comparability perspective.

Abbreviations

CEFR   Common European Framework of References for Languages
CLIL   Content and Language Integrated Learning
ELP   European Language Portfolio
FL   Foreign Language
L1   First Language
L2   Second language
L3   Third language (in this thesis referred to as SFL)
NAE   (Swedish) National Agency for Education
SFL   Second Foreign Language
TL   Target Language
YLL   Young Language Learner

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without my two excellent supervisors Professor Gudrun Erickson and Professor Camilla Bardel. Words cannot fully express my gratitude to both of you – for your support, commitment, experience, knowledge and kindness. The journey was not straight, but the different curves on the road made it all the better! I am grateful for your thorough readings, for your thoughtful comments on my texts, for your difficult and challenging questions, and for believing in me. I am also forever grateful to the SEMLA research organizers who offered me a place within this research school, namely Professors Camilla Bardel, Gudrun Erickson, Eva Lindgren, Liss Kerstin Sylvén and Elisabeth Zetterholm. I can never thank you enough.

I would like to express my gratitude for valuable comments and feedback during this process to several readers of my text: to Jörgen Tholin at the Planning seminar; to David Little at the Mid seminar and to Alastair Henry at the Final seminar. A special thanks to Jörgen Tholin for positive support and encouragement on numerous occasions. I am also grateful for valuable feedback provided by Ofra Inbar-Lourie. Special thanks should also go to Linda Borger for her valuable support and knowledge within quantitative analyses. I am very thankful to Rhonwen Bowen who read my text with great care and gave valuable feedback on my written English. Many thanks to Margareta Skoglund Ålin for all practical help, support, and kindness during these years as a doctoral student.

To the three teachers at Meadow School – thank you for allowing me into your classrooms, for your welcoming attitude and your generosity in sharing your everyday teaching experiences with me. This gratitude also includes all students who, by participating in the study, made the research project possible. Without you, teachers and students, there would have been no study.

To my fellow SEMLA doctoral colleagues – such luck that we all got be in the same research school! Life as a doctoral student has been a lot easier with you as colleagues: Jasmine Bylund, Anna-Marie Csöregh, Elisabeth Nilsson, Elisabeth Ohlsson, Clara Palm, Sara Snoder, Erika Sturk and Marcus Warnby. Thank you for many inspiring and interesting discussions, for all our laughs together and for allowing a bit of crying in-between, and foremost for your valuable friendship! Not

1 Introduction

During my years as a teacher of French in an upper secondary school in Sweden, most of my students showed an interest in and a motivation to learn the language, but quite frequently I also met students who were demotivated for further language studies. Some students seemed tired of learning French already when starting their first year in upper secondary school, stating that their choice of French was made for tactical reasons, while others seemed to feel that they did not have the proficiency needed and gave up. Furthermore, these students stated that they did not need to learn French, or any other foreign language except English, and they were quite content when dropping the language subject. I soon recognized the need to work with my students' motivation to learn French, realizing that as a teacher I played a crucial role in both motivation in the language classroom, and I must sadly admit, sometimes also demotivation. What brought me to undertake my PhD journey was the desire to learn more about motivational aspects of language learning and how I could enhance my students' motivation to continue to learn French.

Consequently, this study focuses on the perceptions and experiences of learning a foreign language other than English among young language learners (11 to 12 years old). By investigating the beliefs that young language learners hold at the beginning of their learning of a second foreign language, it will hopefully be possible to better understand what makes language studies more fulfilling and worthwhile; this may also be applicable for older learners.

1.1 Context and background

In the Swedish curriculum, the learning of a second foreign language, called *Modern Languages[1]*, begins in year 6 in Swedish compulsory school. All students choose a

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1   In the Swedish curriculum, the school subject which entails the learning of a second foreign language is called Modern Languages. Most students choose Spanish, German, or French (in order of students' choice) but Chinese, Finnish, Italian or Arabic may, in some cases, be offered. Modern Languages as a subject has its own syllabus and is the same for all foreign languages except English, Swedish as a second language and Chinese. It may appear strange that English is not included in Modern Languages; this is due to the special status of English as one of the core subjects in the Swedish curriculum with its own syllabuses.

language to learn (Swedish 'Språkval', literally translated into English 'The Language Choice') at the end of year 5, (i.e., they decide which additional language they would like to learn in addition to English); this is normally French, German or Spanish. The Language Choice was introduced as a concept in the Swedish curriculum in 1994 ('Lpo94') and refers to the fact that all students must make a choice of additional language learning, but not necessarily a new foreign language. Students can also choose to study additional English and/or Swedish, Swedish as a Second Language, their mother tongue (if other than Swedish) or Sign Language[2].

The concept 'Language Choice' is essential in this study and could be further problematized. Statistics show that many schools are not able to offer all three second foreign languages (Granfeldt et al., 2019), hence the 'choice' is quite often between two languages. In a strict sense, one could therefore argue that the Language Choice is not much of a choice. Further, the word 'choice' itself needs to be regarded with caution, since students are likely to be influenced by several factors, such as expectations from legal guardians and/or opinions from siblings and peers, so their final decision may be based on more than their own preferences. Moreover, school policies seldom allow students to choose between subjects, and the Language Choice is therefore the first (and only) choice students make during lower secondary school, at least regarding choices between subjects.

According to statistics from the Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE), around 85% of all students in year 6 in school year 2021/2022 chose to learn either French, German, or Spanish[3] (Skolverket, 2021/2022a). Spanish is by far the most popular second foreign language in Swedish schools and more than half of the students chose Spanish as a Modern Language for school year 6 (Skolverket, 2021/2022a). Furthermore, the drop-out rates from Modern Languages are substantial and in school year 9 the percentages of students learning a Modern Language is approximately 70% (i.e., a drop-out rate of roughly 15%). Consequently, 30% of all students in year 9 have either dropped their Modern Language subject or did not start learning one in year 6 (Skolverket, 2021/2022b). Initially, the option of not choosing a Modern Language was intended for students with difficulties in Swedish and/or English or for children with a mother tongue

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2   Swedish Sign Language for the Hearing
3   In school year 2021/2022, 87% of all students in year 6 chose a Modern Language; the percentage between the three Modern Languages in school year 6 was 20% for French, 22% for German and 58% for Spanish.

other than Swedish[4]. However, in practice, many schools have allowed students to drop their Modern Language due to lack of motivation, energy or when students express that learning a new language is hard work (Lärarnas Riksförbund, 2016; Skolverket, 2018a; Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009).

During the past two decades, a central issue for educational policy makers in Sweden has been the declining interest in foreign language learning, except for English. Many schools also find it difficult to recruit teachers of Modern Languages, and language teachers claim that many of their students are not particularly motivated for the language subject (Lärarnas Riksförbund, 2016). Although several interventions have been put into place to prevent students from dropping their Modern Language studies, there is still a great concern about the status of Modern Languages.

The background presented here indicates a complexity of factors that interact when Swedish students choose to learn, or choose not to learn, or even drop their Modern Language. Further, little is known about the Language Choice in school year 6. Hence, this study sets out to investigate the Language Choice in a Swedish compulsory school where three Modern Language classes were observed during one school year. The students in the three year-six classes were learning French, German, or Spanish. The overall aim is to gain knowledge about young language learners' beliefs in relation to learning, teaching and assessment in the Modern Language classroom. In addition, how do the practices encountered in the Modern Language classroom influence their further motivation for learning the new language?

1.2 Aims and research questions

Previous research into the motivational field of language learning has primarily investigated adults' or older students' experiences of language learning (Lamb, 2017; Wesely, 2012). There has been less attention to young language learners' understanding and perceptions of language learning. Therefore, this research project aims to generate an increased understanding of young language learners' learning of a foreign language in Sweden. In addition, the project aims to capture the beliefs of younger students, and what impact these might have on their learning. The intention is to investigate young learners' (aged 11 to 12) attitudes, beliefs, and

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4   Children with other mother tongue than Swedish can also choose Mother Tongue instruction as their Language Choice.

expectations before and throughout their first year of Modern Language instruction, as well as the policy and organization of the Language Choice at school level.

The study has three different points of departure/thematic aspects. The first starting point is the notion of '*Wanting to learn*' where the focus is on the learners' beliefs prior to and during their learning process. The second point of departure is '*Learning*' with the aim to further explore the beliefs and attitudes of young learners in relation to classroom practices. The third point, '*Having learnt*', addresses how the young learners experience the outcome of their first year of learning, (i.e., the assessment, both self-assessment and teacher assessment).

Many schools in Sweden are no longer primarily monolingual, (i.e., with Swedish as the mother tongue of most children), but multilingual[5]. Formally, multilingual students can choose their mother tongue within the Language Choice. However, there are no statistics (or very little) available in relation to Mother Tongue instruction, or for extra English and/or Swedish. This diversity in linguistic backgrounds will therefore also be taken into consideration (see 2.1).

Consequently, the empirical study was conducted with the purpose of exploring the following three main research questions:

1. What beliefs about their Language Choice do students hold prior to and during their first year of learning a Modern language?

2. What learning and teaching practices are manifested in the language classroom and how are these practices experienced by the students?

3. How do students assess their own language learning and how do they experience their teacher's assessments, both the continuous and that which is conducted at the end of their first year of studying a Modern Language?

The thesis will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the students' beliefs about language learning and language assessment. The results may have implications, not only for teaching and language proficiency, but also for teacher education.

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[5]   In this thesis, the use of multilingualism leans on the definition given by the European Commission (2007): 'the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives' (p. 6). This does not, however, mean that the languages are on an equal level in mastery or balance (Cenoz, 2013).

The methodological point of departure for the study is a mixed method approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Traditional qualitative methods, such as interviews and classroom observations, are used in combination with questionnaires and register data to gain a broader picture of young language learners' beliefs about language learning.

1.3 Outline of thesis

This chapter has presented the overall aims and research question of the thesis. In Chapter 2, the contextual background to the research project begins with the learning and teaching of foreign languages in the Swedish educational context, providing both an historic overview and a current contextual background regarding policy and curricula. This is followed by a presentation of the Swedish linguistic situation also addressing the omnipresence of English and the special status of this language in Sweden. In addition, the chapter presents an overview of previous studies and research in relation to the current study. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical framework relevant to the thesis, divided into three thematic perspectives, namely, *learning a foreign language*, *teaching practices in the language classroom*, and *assessment of young language learners' learning*. The three aspects present theoretical concepts which are relevant in relation to the subsequent analyses and results of the study. Chapter 4 describes the methodology of the thesis and the rationale for the chosen design. It gives an overview of the process of the data collection and the data analyses. Issues of reliability and validity are also included and in the last section of this chapter, ethical considerations are discussed. In Chapter 5, the results of the study are presented in accordance with the three research questions. In Chapter 6, the results are discussed. Summary and conclusions are presented in Chapter 7 where suggestions for further research also are included. After Chapter 7, a postscriptum is added which discusses the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the research study. A Swedish summary is presented in Chapter 9.

2 Contextual background and literature review

The following chapter provides the contextual background of the research project. Firstly, it addresses the linguistic situation of Swedish and the strong position of English and then continues with a historical review of foreign language teaching in Sweden. It also provides an overview of the current situation for Modern Languages where recent changes and current issues are addressed. The chapter then continues with a literature review divided into two parts. National reports and surveys are presented first, followed by previous research in relation to Modern Languages in the Swedish educational context. Last, the chapter turns to the European context of foreign language teaching and learning, where both similarities and differences compared to Sweden are noticed.

2.1 Linguistic diversity in Sweden

Sweden is a country with approximately 10.5 million inhabitants which entails that, from a global perspective, the Swedish language is spoken by comparatively few.

Even though Sweden may have previously been considered a largely monolingual country, minority languages have always co-existed together with the Swedish language. Due to historical and cultural reasons, there are five official minority languages: Sami, Meänkieli (Tornedal Finnish), Finnish, Romany Chib and Yiddish. In 2009, the Swedish parliament adopted a Language Act (SFS 2009:600, Kulturdepartementet [Ministry of Education]), giving the five national minority languages, and the Swedish Sign Language, certain rights; these include the right to use the minority language in societal and public contexts and 'in the public sector and in international contexts' (SFS 2009:600). The Language Act stresses the right to use one's mother tongue: '[…] persons belonging to a national minority are to be given the opportunity to learn, develop and use the minority language.' (SFS 2009:600, section 14). The right to be entitled to support in a first language also applies to all minority languages; this makes Sweden's language policy seem quite radical in a global perspective (Lindgren & Enever, 2015). Furthermore, Sweden has acknowledged the European Language policy recommendation that all

European citizens should be able to speak two foreign languages besides their mother tongue, also known as the '1 + 2 formula'[6].

Like many other European countries, Sweden has had several waves of immigration during the 20th century mirroring an increasing globalization as well as political and economic crises. According to the Language Council[7] in Sweden, there are about 200 different languages in Sweden; these minority languages include (in order of frequency, starting with the most frequent) Arabic, Finnish, Somali, Dari, Persian, Tigrinya, Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian, Polish, Turkish and Spanish (Institutet för språk och folkminnen, 2021). Recent statistics from Statistics Sweden[8] show that approximately 20% of the Swedish population have a migrant background.

This linguistic diversity has changed the school context and schools in Sweden can no longer be seen as mainly monolingual. Furthermore, there is an increasing number of students with Swedish as a second language, and with an increased demand for Mother Tongue instruction and language guidance in the mother tongue[9] within the school timetable. However, only about 55% of the students entitled to Mother Tongue instruction receive this instruction (Thurfjell, 2017). According to statistics from the NAE, 26% of all students in compulsory school have a foreign background[10] (Skolverket, 2020a; 2020b).

2.1.1. English in Swedish society

Increasing globalization has entailed changes for certain languages and perhaps this is most pertinent for the English language. In many parts of the world, English is no longer seen as a foreign language, but as a second language. The wide spread of English as a global language was already discussed by Kachru in 1985, when he illustrated the historical spread of the English language with the use of concentric circles. The 'inner circle' is represented by native Anglophone speakers, the 'outer circle' represents the postcolonial territories where the English language is used

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6   The '1 + 2' formula refers to the mother tongue (1) and the learning of two foreign languages (2), which was first stated in the conclusions in the Barcelona European Council Conclusions (2002).

7   Språkrådet is the Language Council of Sweden and is a part of Institutet för språk och folkminnen [The Institute for Language and Folklore].

8   Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån) is responsible for official statistics and for other government statistics: https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/manniskorna-i-sverige/utrikes-fodda

9   Språkhandledning i modersmålet.

10 The term used by the NAE is "utländsk bakgrund", literally translated into 'foreign background', referring to children who were either born in a foreign country, or have two parents who were born in a foreign country.

for administration and official purposes as a second language, and finally, the 'expanding circle' represents English as a foreign language. According to many scholars, this 'expanding circle' has widened during the last few decades and in some contexts, the 'expanding circle' has become more of an 'outer circle'; in the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, the English language is present to a great extent in many contexts of society (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006; McKay, 2002). This presence of global English has implications for the educational context in many parts of the world. Ushioda (2013a) points to the fact that mobility and new possibilities of communication have dramatically changed language learning in ways we might never have imagined: '[…] contexts of learning and using English in the globalized world are becoming fluid, flexible, mobile, transitory, borderless, and less easily definable.' (p. 5).

In the Swedish context, English is constantly present on social media, in films that are not dubbed, and music, and many Swedes consider themselves fluent speakers of English, especially the younger population. Furthermore, Swedish students outperformed a considerable number of other European students participating in the European Survey on Language Competences (European Commission, 2012a) in language skills, primarily in reading and listening skills where Swedish students even attained better results than students from Malta, where English is an official language.

In the Eurobarometer 386 survey (European Commission, 2012b)[11], 91% of the Swedish respondents indicated that they were able to speak at least one foreign language besides their mother tongue; in the Swedish context, English is generally the first foreign language (86%). Further, 44% of the Swedish respondents stated that they were able to speak two languages besides their mother tongue. In relation to personal development, 93% of the Swedes stated that English was the most useful language, followed by German (29%), Spanish (18%) and French (11%), while the other languages mentioned in the survey were not perceived as very useful (4% for Chinese, 2% for Italian and 0% for Russian). In terms of languages which might be important for (their) children to learn, the overwhelming majority (95%) considered English to be the most important language. The second most useful language for children to learn was Spanish (34%), followed by Chinese (19%), German (15%) and French (9%). These findings are in line with the results from Thorson et al. (2003), Cabau-Lampa (2007), and Henry (2011)[12], suggesting

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11 The European Commission has not conducted any follow-up surveys on 'Europeans and their languages' after the survey in 2012.

12 References are given in chronological order.

that many young Swedes consider knowing English as sufficient in a globalized world.

There are, of course, many ways of learning a foreign language, but when it comes to English, many Swedes acquire a lot outside school. The high amount of English input – both oral and written – on social media, in music, films and gaming online, facilitates the learning of the language and this high amount of English outside the school context has been coined as a concept – 'extramural English' (EE) by Sylvén (2006). Research has shown that high exposure to EE raises the proficiency not only in vocabulary but also regarding syntax and grammar (Sundqvist, 2009; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2012, 2014, 2016; Warnby, 2022). Furthermore, recent research has shown that Swedish children can have a large vocabulary already at a very young age (Sylvén, 2022). The omnipresence of EE might also have made it more difficult for Swedish teachers of English to motivate their students in the classroom, since they seem to be learning most of the language outside school. This observation was also supported by the School Inspectorate in a report from 2010, where one of the conclusions was that schools need to better bridge the gap between the English learnt outside school with the English subject taught in school (Skolinspektionen, 2010a). The importance of the English language is also supported in the Swedish curriculum, where English differs from other foreign languages, regarding starting time, number of teaching hours, as well as being mandatory all through the school system.

As shown, the English language has a unique position in Swedish society and several researchers (Bardel et al., 2013; Falk et al., 2015; Hyltenstam, 2004; Sylvén, 2013) have suggested that English is unofficially acquiring the role of a second language; in Kachru's terms, it is moving from the expanding circle to the 'outer circle' (1985). English is expanding in many other sections in Swedish society, for example in academia, in politics and in culture; this is often the case when a prestigious language spreads at the expense of other languages (Vetenskapsrådet, 2012). There are, however, critical voices concerning the dominance of global English, such as Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) who claimed that multilingualism and the promotion of foreign language learning are hindered by the monolingual view of English in a European context. Philipson (2017) goes as far as comparing the English dominance as a kind of colonization where English is seen as a lingua franca for humanity and expressed in the myth: '[…] in international communication the only language you need is English' (p. 316).

In Sweden, discussions regarding the status of English might not be characterized by the notion of language imperialism, but there are concerns for the Swedish

language as well as for other languages – both minority languages and foreign languages. One concern is that Swedish will lose ground, or even disappear at the expense of English, especially in certain domains, such as education, research, and technology (Cabau-Lamba, 2007; Hult, 2005). When knowledge and skills in English are regarded as important key features for both individual and societal success, the view on other languages changes, resulting in diminishing interest in foreign languages, other than English.

2.2 Foreign language teaching in Sweden - history and curricula

In the Swedish curriculum, the subject that comprises the second foreign language option is called 'Modern Languages'. Historically, it has evolved from being a rather small subject taught to a limited number of students, to a subject that most students start in year 6, at the age of 12.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the three languages of English, French and German were included as subjects in the curriculum of Swedish upper secondary schools, where French was regarded as the most important of the three foreign languages (Jonasson, 1991, in Hyltenstam & Österberg, 2010). In 1859, German became the first foreign language (FL) taught in Swedish schools (Bardel et al. 2019; Hyltenstam & Österberg, 2010). However, only a small number of students studied languages in the highly selective school system of that time. German kept its position as the first FL learnt in school until 1946, when, after the Second World War, it was replaced by English. Eventually, in1962, English was made compulsory for all students when the Swedish Education Act introduced a nine-year compulsory school. French and German became optional subjects but were required for continued studies in upper secondary school and for further higher education (Malmberg, 2000; Sörensson, 1999). Language studies were seen as a sort of instrument for selection of students, mirroring the assumption that some students are theoretically gifted while others are practically gifted (Marklund, 1985, p. 220). The belief that not all students had an aptitude for language learning, especially for German, and later also for French, contributed to the status of the languages. English, on the contrary, was not regarded as an instrument of selection but was considered a subject for all students, although some students could even be relieved of that subject if it was considered too demanding for them (Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009).

According to the 1962 national curriculum for lower secondary school, all students were to study English between school years 4 and 7 but the subject was optional in grades 8 and 9. However, nearly all students continued to learn English in year 8 and 9 and approximately 50% of them also studied another FL - German or French (Marklund, 1985; Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009). In the period of the 1962 curriculum, around 40% of those students studied German and approximately 20% studied French (Malmberg, 2000). English became compulsory in the national curriculum of 1969 from school year 3 up until school year 9 and about 60% of the students also chose to study a second foreign language (SFL), to be able to qualify for higher education following the nine-year compulsory school. The foreign languages taught were still German and French and the subject could be divided into two different levels – one general level and one more advanced (i.e., a General and a Special level)[13]. The number of students in SFLs was stable during the following two decades, but the drop-out rate increased, especially among boys (Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009).

In the national curriculum of 1980 ('Lgr 80'), SFLs were no longer a requirement for higher education as they were in the upper secondary school reform in 1969. Prior to the new curriculum, there were plans from the National Board of Education [Skolöverstyrelsen] to make an SFL obligatory in the Swedish curricula, but these plans or suggestions met with a solid resistance, especially among the language teachers. The Organization for Language Teachers in Sweden (LMS) recommended that an SFL should be optional for students, and only 12% of the teachers asked wanted it to have a mandatory status (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1991). Furthermore, if an SFL should be mandatory, the language teachers' organization recommended that the groups were divided according to language proficiency. Because of the strong protests, the proposal to make the SFL obligatory for all students was abandoned and accordingly, students still had the option to choose, or not to choose, an additional FL. However, the possibility to divide the students into different proficiency levels in French and German was abolished but remained in English and Mathematics. According to statistics from 1985, the number of students in year 7 who chose to study French, or German was approximately 65% and at the end of ninth grade the percentage had dropped to 50.5% (Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009).

The national curriculum of 1994 ('Lpo94') brought about further changes for FLs. For the first time, a language choice was made mandatory for all students,

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13 Swedish 'allmän och särskild kurs'

however not necessarily a new *foreign* language. The proposal was presented as a 'mild requirement' by the government bill regarding the new curriculum of 1994 (Proposition 1992/93:220) and the intention from the Government was that a large majority of students would choose one SFL. Further, Spanish was introduced as an option in addition to French and German; it rapidly increased in popularity among students. Apart from these three languages, students could also decide on extra English and/or extra Swedish, Swedish as a Second Language, Sign Language, or Mother Tongue instruction (if other than Swedish). The possibility to study extra English and/or Swedish was intended for students who had specific reasons not to study an additional foreign language. However, extra English and/or Swedish developed into an option for many students who, for various reasons, did not want to study an SFL, and soon became the largest language choice since many schools decided to combine the two subjects into one (Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009).

The syllabus changes in 1994 implied an increased amount of instruction time for the SFL (+ 25%). Furthermore, a modification of the syllabus was made in order to make the standards, referred to as 'knowledge requirements', easier to attain; the intention was that more students would study an SFL. Along with these changes, national assessment materials were introduced by the Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE) to support both learning and assessment. However, these materials were optional for teachers and schools to use. Another change in Lpo94 was the possibility to start learning the SFL from year 4. However, only a very small number of students started their SFL studies earlier than year 6 or 7, mainly due to organizational reasons (Malmberg, 2000). In addition to the possibility of an early start, schools could offer students the opportunity to learn a third foreign language in year 8; only a minority of students chose (or had the possibility to choose) this option and less than 1% of the students in 9th grade studied a third foreign language in 2021/22 (Skolverket, 2021/22a).[14]

In year 2000, the NAE made changes to the syllabuses for foreign languages with the aim to guarantee continuity in the different language courses from the senior level of compulsory school and forward through upper secondary school. The subject now changed its name to 'Modern Languages' and a new proficiency scale of seven steps was introduced to establish a clear progression in the language studies throughout school. The new scaling system was inspired by the first draft

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14 A third foreign language in school year 8 was made possible within what was known as the Student's Choice (Elevens val). There is, however, a suggestion to remove this from the curriculum and this is being considered by the Ministry of Education.

of the CEFR (1996) (see 3.2.3.1). The scale of seven steps included all foreign languages taught in the Swedish syllabus, hence also English. Communication and communicative competence were stressed even more in the syllabus from 2000, although the oral competences (listening and speaking) and written competences (reading and writing) had been seen as the foundations in every syllabus from 1962 (Malmberg, 2000). In the syllabus for Modern Languages of 2000, the communicative approach was highlighted from the very beginning stating that the students should develop 'a broad communicative competence' ["en allsidig kommunikativ förmåga"].

2.2.1 The communicative stance

Since the early 1980s, the communicative stance has been increasingly emphasized in the Swedish curriculum, as it was in many western societies since the paradigm shift[15] in language teaching during the twentieth century (Malmberg, 2001).

Drawing on the work of Chomsky (1965), the communicative competences in language learning became more important to discuss and to determine during the following decades (Campbell & Wales, 1970; Hymes, 1972). Canale and Swain (1980) developed a theoretical framework which encompassed several competences within the comprehensive communicative competence, such as *grammatical competence*, *sociolinguistic competence,* and *strategic competence*. In the European context, the communicative approach was promoted and developed by influential experts within applied linguistics and by the Council of Europe (see also 3.2.3) since many European countries experienced a growing need for functional language competences among their citizens. Furthermore, a communicative syllabus was developed, also known as 'threshold level' of communicative language proficiency in a foreign language (van Ek, 1975; van Ek & Alexander, 1980), which also entailed a French version 'un niveau seuil' (Coste et al., 1976). In 1986, van Ek presented six different competences to reach communicative ability, namely *linguistic competence*, *sociolinguistic competence*, *discourse competence*, *strategic competence*, *sociocultural competence,* and *social competence* (van Ek, 1986, p. 36). The first, *linguistic competence* is the very basis for communication, meaning that to be able to communicate, there is a need for knowledge of vocabulary and for grammatical structure. The *sociolinguistic competence* addresses the ability to communicate smoothly, meaning that the learner

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15 The communicative approach departs from Hymes (1972) who introduced the concept of communicative competence, meaning the ability to use language in meaningful ways and adopted to specific situations. It soon became an important approach in language teaching and learning and is, therefore, seen as a paradigm shift by many scholars (Bardel, 2018).

needs to know what to say in which context. The *discourse competence* is the ability, for example, to know how to start and end a conversation, whereas the *strategic competence* addresses how the learner manages to use different strategies to make him- or herself understood. The *sociocultural competence* refers to contextual knowledge which enhances communication and last, the *social competence* addresses the will and motivation for communication to take place. The work of van Ek (1986) provided a bridge between the 'threshold level' and the development of the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) (see 3.2.3).

The communicative stance in language learning is based on a functional view of language learning, namely, that communication is the main function of language use. Communication happens in different situations and settings, and in an educational setting, the language learner needs to practice and develop different communicative skills, depending on the language function. Swedish researchers took an active part in the CEFR-project already from the very beginning and the influence of the CEFR is most apparent in the syllabuses from 2000 and in the current syllabus from 2011 (Erickson & Pakula, 2017). The action-oriented view on language learning is emphasized in the syllabuses of Modern Languages, English, Swedish as a Second Language and Sign Language for Hearing where the seven steps of language learning [originally referred to as 'steg' in Swedish] are tentatively linked to the proficiency levels (from A1 to C2) in the CEFR. In the syllabus for Modern Languages, communication is emphasized from the very beginning in the phrasing of the subject aim, for example, that *speaking* precedes *writing*:

> 'Through teaching, students should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills. This skill involves understanding the spoken and written language, being able to express oneself and interact with others in the spoken and written language and being able to adapt use of language to different situations, purposes, and recipients.' (Skolverket, 2018c, p. 66)

> (Translated by the NAE)

These sentences reflect the very core of the communicative approach in the sense that it is the *use* of the target language that is emphasized: '[…] use the language in different situations and for different purposes' (Skolverket, 2018c, p. 66).

2.2.2 Modern Languages in the Swedish curriculum

In the Swedish curriculum, major changes were made in 2011 for compulsory school. This curriculum was referred to as 'Lgr 11' and entailed more descriptions of core content and a new grading scale (see below). In contrast, other than the

new 6-point scale, the syllabus for Modern Languages did not undergo any significant changes in relation to learning core content and aims. The curriculum was modified in 2022 into what is referred to as 'Lgr22', which meant partly new terminology and emphases, that did not, however, affect the communicative approach at large (Skolverket, 2022)[16]. The subject syllabus for Modern languages is still common for all FLs, except for Chinese that has a modified syllabus regarding core content and grading criteria. As in Lgr11, the total number of hours of instruction for Modern Languages in Lgr22 is regulated to 320 hours up to year 9, starting in year 6 at the latest. At least 48 hours of instruction are reserved for school year 6 (Skolverket, 2021b).

The syllabus for Modern Languages describes the overall objectives of the subject and the abilities and skills that students should acquire. It expresses long-term goals aiming at enhancement of intercultural knowledge, thereby giving students opportunities to participate in a globalized world. Furthermore, goals or aims that are more specific are presented in bullet points as subject-specific abilities (Skolverket, 2018c, p. 66).

The students should
- understand and interpret the content of spoken language and different kinds of texts
- express themselves and communicate in speech and writing
- use language strategies to understand and make themselves understood[17]
- adapt language for different purposes, recipients, and contexts, and
- reflect over living conditions, social and cultural phenomena in different contexts and parts of the world where the language is used.

(Translated by the NAE)

The abilities mentioned above all draw on the competences for communication described by van Ek (1986). The first two bullets relate to linguistic competence and discourse competence, whereas the third bullet describes strategic competence. The fourth bullet relates both to sociolinguistic competences and discourse

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16 https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/grundskolan/aktuella-forandringar-pa-grundskoleniva/amnessidor-for-andrade-kursplaner-2022/sprak/moderna-sprak

17 The use of receptive strategies as a subject-specific ability has been removed in the revised syllabus which applies from the autumn term of 2022.

competence and the last bullet point is what van Ek would call sociocultural competence.

Furthermore, by developing skills and strategies for language learning, the learners should learn how to learn, that is, develop metacognitive skills and to become independent and autonomous learners (Malmberg, 2001). Putting the learner in the centre and promoting learner autonomy are important ingredients in the communicative approach. This is further emphasized in the CEFR, as well as in the European Language Portfolio (ELP)[18], (Little, 2009), and clear in the Swedish language syllabuses.

The syllabus, the former as well as the current, expresses different *core content* [centralt innehåll] which should guide the learning and teaching of the new language. The *core content* expresses the content of communication drawing on the different skills in both reception and production of the language. In year 4 - 6 the content of communication is centred around areas that are close to the students, such as family, interests, everyday situations, places, and people. These areas are the same for school years 7 - 9, but enforced with communication around activities, events, and more demanding tasks, such as expressing an opinion, an emotion or describing an experience.

The so-called knowledge requirements (referred to as grading criteria in the 2022 version of the curricula) are different for school years 6 and 9 in compulsory school. The students are awarded grades each term as of year 6 and criteria are provided for the grade levels of E, C and A[19]. From school year 2018/2019, a new regulation requires grades for all subjects in year 6, also in Modern Languages, which was not the case previously. The regulation introduced a new time plan in Swedish compulsory school and the appointed time for Modern Languages is 48 hours between school year 4 - 6. The rationale for introducing grades in Modern Languages in year 6 was to enhance equivalence between schools (making sure that students had equal time of instruction) (Skolverket, 2021a).

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18 ELP European Language Portfolio (see 3.2.3.1 and 3.3.3)

19 The Swedish grading system introduced in Lgr2011 runs from F to A where grade E is equivalent to having passed the lowest knowledge requirements and A is the highest grade. The F grade means that the student has not reached the knowledge requirements for E. There are descriptions of knowledge requirements for grades E, C and A, whereas grades D and B are to be awarded when a student has met all the requirements for the lower grade, and a substantial part of the higher grade.

2.2.2.1 Assessment in Modern Languages

In terms of assessment in Modern Languages, there are no mandatory national tests as there are in English. However, national assessment materials are provided for French, German, and Spanish by the NAE[20]; these tests are developed according to the same principles as the national tests in English, comprising four different sub-tests (focusing on reading, listening, writing, and speaking). These tests are scored according to the Swedish grading system. In addition, formative assessment materials are provided for beginners.

Given the non-mandatory status of these tests, there are limited statistics available of test results or the frequency of usage on a national level. There are, however, indications of a relatively high usage of the national assessment material in Swedish schools (Axelson et al., 2020). In the TAL study, 86% of the participating teachers[21] stated that they had used the tests, either in all four skills, or in some of the skills (Erickson et al., 2018).

2.2.3 The current situation for Modern Languages

During the past two decades, there have been many alarming and pessimistic reports in the media about Modern Languages in the Swedish educational system (Bardel & Novén, 2012; Elfving, 2002; Röshammar, 2021; Stridsman, 2016). Drawing on statistics from the NAE from 1996 to 2011, Tholin (2019) conducted an overview of the number of students studying a Modern Language in school years 7 to 9 and concluded that the percentage was quite stable over that period of time. Tholin also found that about 80% of the students started to learn a Modern Language in year 7, but approximately 20% had dropped their Modern Language before leaving lower secondary school in year 9[22].

To prevent students from dropping their Modern Language, a reform that rewarded students for continuing their language studies was introduced in 2007 (re-

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20 National Tests of Foreign Languages. The NAE has commissioned the project 'Nafs' project (National Tests of Foreign Languages) at the University of Gothenburg to develop national tests and assessment materials in English and Modern Languages.
    https://www.gu.se/en/national-tests-of-foreign-languages

21 In the TAL study, 315 teachers from different compulsory schools (randomly chosen), were asked about their use of the assessment materials provided by the NAE.

22 In addition, French, German, and Spanish have even more difficulties in attracting students to continue their language studies to a higher level in upper secondary school, especially for the courses 4 or 5 - corresponding to the B1.1 or B1.2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale (Skolverket, 2018a). This declining trend in language studies, other than English, is also evident for many of the Swedish universities (SUHF, 2017

ferred to as extra qualification points; in Swedish *meritpoäng)*. The system entails that extra points are added to the grade point average for those students who continue to study a Modern Language in upper secondary school; these extra points could enhance access to university. In 2014, the system of extra qualification points was also introduced in lower secondary school to deter students from dropping their foreign language before the 9th grade. Recent national statistics from the NAE show that an increasing number of students start to learn a Modern Language in year 6 (around 85%) and that the number of students with a grade in French, German, or Spanish in year 9, is around 70%.[23]

The distribution between the Modern Languages has been quite constant during the past decade. After the introduction of Spanish in compulsory school in 1994, the language has been the most popular of the three and around 50% of the students studying a Modern Language learn Spanish. The previous most popular language, German, has seen a declining number of students in language classes. In the study conducted by Tholin (2019), statistical analyses showed that in 1996, German was the most popular foreign language (after English) with almost half of the students in year 7 choosing German. One fourth of the students studied French and very few studied Spanish. In 2009, Spanish had become the largest Modern Language at the expense of the other two, where German had lost the largest number of students. According to statistics from the NAE for school year 2021/2022, the percentage of students receiving a final grade in year 9 in Modern Languages was 22% for German, 19% for French and 59% for Spanish[24].

However, there are demographic differences in relation to students' Language Choice. While Spanish is widely studied in all municipalities in Sweden, German is studied more in rural areas and French is studied more in urban areas (Granfeldt et al., 2021).

The large number of students wanting to learn Spanish as a Modern Language has led to large groups of students and difficulties in finding qualified teachers (Riis & Francia, 2013). In addition, many language teachers in French and German will soon reach retirement age, which will further increase the shortage, and not only in Spanish (Lärarnas Riksförbund, 2016). The declining interest in foreign languages, other than English in Swedish society might reflect the alarmingly low

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23 According to statistics of school year 2021/2022 provided by the NAE, 70% of all students in year 9 studied a Modern Language. Out of these students, 95% passed the knowledge requirements for at least an E grade (many of them receiving a higher grade than E).

24 Beside these three languages, a very small group of students (less than 1%) studied another modern language, namely either Finnish, Chinese, Sami, or Arabic (Skolverket, 2021/2022a).

numbers of teacher students applying to become teachers in French, German, and Spanish, which are the least popular subjects chosen by students applying to become teachers (Bardel et al., 2019). According to the NAE, the need for certified language teachers is most urgent for school years 7 to 9. To accommodate this need, approximately 200 teacher students of Spanish and 100 teacher students of French and German would need to graduate every year from 2017 - 2021 to meet the increasing number of students as well as the forthcoming retirements (Skolverket, 2017b, p. 62). Unfortunately, this has not been the case and the scarcity of language teachers is, therefore, a present threat. The need for graduated teacher students in all three languages will, according to the same forecast, be considerable and no improvement can be noticed at least until 2031 (Skolverket, 2017b, p. 63). Furthermore, statistics from the Swedish Higher Education Authority [UKÄ][25] (2019) show that the average number of graduated teachers during school year 2011/2012 - 2017/2018 was below 50 for Spanish, and about 20 for German and French (p. 21); this is far below the number needed according to the NAE. In school year 2017/2018, as many as 80 (out of 290) municipalities in Sweden were not able to recruit certified teachers in one of the subjects French, German, or Spanish (Bergling, 2018).

In 2016, the Swedish Union for Teachers (Lärarnas Riksförbund) published a report concerning Modern Languages in Swedish schools where it was concluded, in a similar vein as the NAE, that there will be shortage of certified language teachers within the next decade (as many as 5 700 new language teachers in Modern Languages in the period of 2015 to 2029). The report gave several possible explanations for the current situation (note that the study was conducted by an organization which cannot be considered altogether neutral). These include: 1) language teachers are less paid than other teacher categories, perhaps due to the strong overrepresentation of women among language teachers (89% of language teachers are women), 2) dissatisfaction with working conditions and 3) a declining interest among students and school leaders regarding Modern Languages. According to the report, 60% of the teachers involved in the survey stated that they (had) considered leaving their employment as a language teacher (Lärarnas Riksförbund, 2016).

In addition, organizing Modern Language instruction in year 6 is problematic for many schools, especially in rural areas where it might be difficult to find qualified teachers (SKR, 2020)[26]. Many schools need to transport their students to an-

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25 UKÄ [Universitetskanslersämbetet] stands for Swedish Higher Education Authority.
26 SKR [Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner] stands for Swedish Municipalities and Regions.

other school for Modern Language classes, since the Modern Language teachers normally teach students in year 7 to 9. In addition, due to the present lack of teachers, many schools cannot offer all three languages. Results from the large-scale TAL[27] research project show important differences between schools and municipalities around Sweden, where larger schools with more students tend to offer French, German, and Spanish, whereas smaller schools do not always offer all three languages (Granfeldt et al., 2019). The study also indicates that school districts with a higher socio-economic parental index seem to offer all three languages and start the language education earlier, in year 6[28]. If only two languages are offered, it is usually German and Spanish. In the northern parts of Sweden, French is less often taught and there are more students learning Mother Tongue as their Language Choice (24%) compared to other regions (Granfeldt et al., 2019).

In terms of the present lack of certified language teachers, the NAE made it possible for schools to provide computer-based distance teaching (in Swedish "Fjärrundervisning")[29] in Mother Tongue, Modern Languages, and Sign Language. The possibility for distance teaching started in 2015 (SFS 2011:185) and with an increasing shortage of teachers in all subjects, not only in foreign languages, the government has accepted distance education also in other subjects from 2021 (Utbildningsdepartementet[30], 2020). The possibility to teach languages through distance teaching was introduced as an experiment, but as the preliminary results were positive (Skolverket, 2017a), the project continued and henceforth also includes other subjects. In 2018, about 7% of the compulsory schools in Sweden organized distance education, mainly in Mother Tongue but also in Modern Languages (Wallin, 2018). During the Covid-19 pandemic, sporadically, as many as 60% of all lower secondary schools used distance teaching to prevent the spread of the virus (Skolverket, 2021c). The implications of distance teaching, whether positive or negative, are not yet clear, given the closeness in time of the pandemic.

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27 TAL (Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Second Foreign Languages) is a large-scale survey investigating foreign languages, other than English, in the Swedish context (see 3.4).

28 When the TAL survey was conducted, each school authority responsible could choose when their students should start Modern Language education, including year 7. According to new regulations in 2018, Modern Languages should start in year 6, at the latest.

29 Fjärrundervisning [Distance teaching] refers to a group of students in a classroom, being taught by a teacher online (i.e., through a digital link). In compulsory school, the group of students should be assisted by a coach present in the classroom.

30 Ministry of Education

2.3 Modern Languages in the Swedish context – national reports, surveys, and previous research

During the past two decades, several studies investigating second foreign language learning in the Swedish educational context have been conducted. The following section presents a literature review divided into two categories: 1) an overview of reports and surveys (most conducted by authorities) and 2) previous academic studies.

2.3.1 Reports and surveys

In 1999, Sörensson conducted a pilot study commissioned by the NAE with the intention to investigate the Language Choice implemented five years earlier. Sörensson concluded that the amount of time allocated for foreign languages had increased, just as the implementation required, and that many students who started their SFL in school year 6 instead of year 7 seemed rather positive to the earlier start. However, the teachers were not as enthusiastic about the earlier start, referring to the educational context, such as organizational issues when students had to be transported between schools, to large groups of students, and that teaching younger language learners required other teaching skills.

In another report, Barbier (2002) concluded that the educational context in Modern Languages is essential for motivating students, stressing the importance of *how* languages are learnt, and *wha*t is being taught. Barbier pointed to the importance of teacher in-service training and the implementation of the communicative approach. In addition, the report showed that beliefs and attitudes among students, such as knowing English being enough, played an important role also for FL learning.

The educational context is also highlighted in the report entitled "Språkig enfald eller mångfald?" [Language simplicity or diversity?] (Thorson et al., 2003). The study was conducted in upper secondary school in collaboration with teacher students and showed that attitudes towards the English language and the motivation for learning it, are very different from the motivation to learn a second, third or even fourth foreign language. Many students stated that they could not see the importance of learning a FL, nor the use of it, apart from English. The teachers' explanations for the students' drop-out rates from Modern Languages mainly included tactical reasons, while the students pointed to the educational

context, such as the teacher and/or the learning content. The study concluded that there is a need for more authentic material, more communicative practices and a need for further in-service training addressing language teaching.

Tholin and Lindquist (2009) investigated the Language Choice of Swedish and/or English. After the introduction of 'Lpo94' and the syllabuses changes, this new subject (often merged into *one* subject) attracted many students. Although the study focused on the Language Choice of Swedish and/or English, important conclusions could also be drawn for Modern Languages. This report pointed to the fact that the SFL is optional and not compulsory which might explain some of the large drop-out rates from the Modern languages (as many as 40% of the students chose the alternative of Swedish and/or English in the ninth grade). The option of Swedish and/or English was perceived as 'an easy subject' since the subject has no specific syllabus; some students expressed that Modern Languages is not an important school subject. Furthermore, the study showed that the drop out from Modern Languages is more frequent among boys, almost twice as many boys drop their SFL as compared to girls. In their report, Tholin and Lindquist suggested several explanations for the many drop-outs, such as organizational circumstances, attitudes, and motivational aspects but also the educational context in the Modern Languages classrooms.

In a report from 2010, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate [Skolinspektionen] concluded that schools generally try to encourage all students to choose a SFL, but that the information regarding the Language Choice could be improved. The report also stated that the practices in the language classroom may not provide enough motivation. Examples included little authentic material, low use of the target language, and a homogeneous way of teaching where students' different needs were not taken into account. Another dilemma, according to this study, was the lack of students' influence and autonomy in the language classroom (Skolinspektionen, 2010b).

In 2012, the NAE published an international language assessment survey (ESLC[31], see 2.4.1) in which Swedish students participated in English and Spanish. Swedish students had excellent results in English, but poor results in Spanish. The report mentions the different learning conditions for the two languages in the Swedish context, for example pointing to the fact that Spanish is mainly learnt in the classroom. (European Commission, 2012a; Skolverket, 2012).

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31 European Survey on Language Competences.

The conditions for learning and teaching Spanish in the Swedish educational context were investigated in a study by Francia and Riis (2013). As previously mentioned, the many students who want to learn Spanish has led to large groups of students and a lack of qualified teachers. Furthermore, the drop-out rates from Spanish in compulsory school were substantial and it was apparent that more boys than girls dropped the subject. The reasons behind these drop-out rates seemed to be the non-mandatory status of the subject, the lack of qualified teachers, lack of extra support for students in need of it, and a lower grade of motivation to learn Spanish. The report demanded political action on municipality level, pointing to the different conditions for the three languages and recommended in-service training and increased opportunities for teachers to obtain a formal qualification in Spanish. According to the conclusions in the report, Spanish as a school subject needs to be given more financial support than the other two languages within the Language Choice (French and German) to meet the learning targets in the common, national syllabus (Francia & Riis, p. 113).

The previously mentioned survey (see above) conducted by the Swedish Union for Teachers (Lärarnas Riksförbund, 2016) not only pointed to the upcoming shortage of language teachers, but also to the conditions for teaching a foreign language, which in turn demonstrate the conditions for learning. In this survey, many language teachers stated that their dissatisfaction was related to working conditions, such as large heterogeneous groups that sometimes involve varying levels among the students and poor prospects of further teacher training. Furthermore, many language teachers experienced that a considerable number of their students had a low degree of interest in foreign language learning.

In a recent report, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate [Skolinspektionen] (2022) concluded that many of the issues mentioned in their previous report from 2010 are still urgent problems, such as the importance of in-service training for language teachers to maintain and develop teacher competence and that more can be done to prevent students from dropping the subject. Other issues addressed include the seemingly low status of the subject, and the fact that in many schools, language teachers often lack colleagues in the same language subject. The report also points to inequality issues, in relation to parental support and socio-economic factors.

2.3.2 Previous studies

In the following section, previous research investigating SFL in the Swedish educational context will be presented. Researchers have primarily focused on older

students in lower secondary school (15 to 16 years old) or in upper secondary school (16 to 18 years old); many of those studies have focused on motivation, trying to comprehend and discuss the issues and reasons behind Swedish students' relatively common lack of interest in FL (other than English), also including the many drop-outs from SFL learning.

In a doctoral thesis, Österberg (2008) investigated the interplay between language development through syntactic complexity and accuracy in spoken language and the motivation and aptitude for learning Spanish as an L2. The longitudinal study was conducted in Swedish upper secondary school. The results indicated a correlation between language performance and progression and a higher degree of intrinsic motivation (see 3.1.1). Students with high intrinsic motivation were more likely to continue their language studies, whereas the students who drop out were more instrumental in their learning approach. The study drew on the motivational theories of Dörnyei and Skehan (2003), showing that individual intrinsic motivation correlates with language progression and performance.

Henry and Apelgren (2008) investigated attitudes towards Modern Languages before and after the introduction of a Modern Language in school year 4, 5 or 6. The learners' attitudes in relation to the Modern Language were compared with the students' attitudes towards English, in order to investigate possible gender variances. Results showed that young learners were positive towards learning both English (boys and girls equally positive), and a Modern Language. Girls were, however, slightly more positive towards learning a Modern Language, and furthermore, this positive attitude was still present after one year of instruction, although a small decline could be found. Additional results showed that girls were more positive to communicative activities in the classroom than boys, and that girls had a higher level of self-concept[32], meaning that the girls in the study could more easily imagine a possible *ideal self* (see further 3.1.1). In several studies, Henry has further investigated motivational influence on language learning. In a study from 2010, results revealed that most students who drop their Modern Language do so because they find the subject boring. In another study (Henry, 2013a), six students in upper secondary school were interviewed about their rationale for continuing to learn French; the results show that three students learnt the language out of interest and a desire to learn more, whilst the other three continued to learn French mainly because of the extra qualification points.

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32 In this context, self-concept refers to '[…] some more basic identification process within the individual's self-concept' (Dörnyei and Csésier, 2002, p. 453). Within this 'self-concept', they acknowledge a willingness or desire to become 'an ideal' L2 speaker.

In a licentiate thesis from 2014, Nylén interviewed thirteen Swedish teachers of Spanish focusing on their values and opinions about grammar instruction and its role for enhancing communicative competence. Findings showed that teaching grammatical structures to students was important for all the teachers interviewed and that many displayed a focus on form in their practice. Most teachers also addressed a need for in-service training where matters of how to teach grammar were called for, as well as a closer connection between teaching and research.

Cardelús (2015) studied motivation and attitudes among students in the last year of upper secondary school (18 to 19 years old). The students focused upon in his doctoral thesis were learning their SFL for the sixth year, which is statistically rare since most students drop the SFL after year 9 (at the age of 15 or 16) or after the first year in upper secondary school. Hence, the students in Cardelús' study were highly motivated SFL learners. Results showed the importance of intrinsic motivation, positive emotional references towards the target language and an important amount of self-efficacy[33] in language learning. Furthermore, the study indicated that family and friends played an important role when initially choosing the language and that contacts with the target language increase motivation.

Tholin (2019) investigated state control and governance from 1996 - 2011, with a focus on language learning (French, German, and Spanish) in Swedish compulsory school from the changes in the syllabus made in 1994 and 2000. These changes were meant to strengthen Modern Languages but according to the study, very little was gained from the implementation. The drop-out rates were not reduced and the number of students who passed the level of grade E did not increase. Even though there was a clear governmental goal, the implementation failed due to low state governance and the fact that teachers did not seem to perceive the changes as important as intended. In addition, Tholin points to several explanations why teachers might not perceive the changes as significant as intended, namely that in many schools, language teachers have no colleagues in the same SFL subject, which, in turn, might lead to teachers setting their own standards for assessment; the assessment materials provided by the Swedish NAE are recommended for use, but not obligatory, which might also explain a variety in grades between schools. The most important result, however, was that the state governance did not rely on previous research on why students do not want to learn an SFL, or why they drop the subject after just a couple of years.

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33 Bandura's theory of self-efficacy enhances learning when focusing less on problems and more on solutions and setting goals, i.e., the self-perceived ability to perform (1997).

The learning of Modern Languages was investigated from a sociological perspective by Krigh in a doctoral thesis (2019). Drawing on the theoretical concept of capital introduced by Bourdieu (1977), Krigh showed that language studies are used as an educational strategy for the well-educated middle-class, whereas families with less educational and cultural capital emphasized that learning English was sufficient. Hence, Krigh concluded that investment in language studies, in the current system, reinforces cultural and educational capital. In terms of gender, girls (especially from upper middle-class families) reached higher final grades than boys, who were more inclined to drop the subject (especially those from working class families).

Rocher Hahlin (2020) investigated motivation for language learning in two Swedish 9th grade classes learning French (students aged 15 - 16 years old, *n* = 45). Drawing on Dörnyei's *L2 motivational self-system* (2009) (see further 3.1.1)*,* this intervention study investigated the students' *Ideal L3 self*. The results show that classroom activities can stimulate the *Ideal French self* and that such activities should be introduced as early as possible. There was also a strong correlation between students' effort and *Ideal French self*. Rocher Hahlin thereafter turned the perspective to the teachers and their beliefs about motivation, as well as their motivational role in the classroom. The study emphasizes the important role of the teacher and his or her beliefs, as well as the psychological relationship between the learner and the teacher.

Albeit in a study of English as the first foreign language, Nilsson (2020) investigated young students' experiences of learning, focusing on foreign language anxiety, agency and learner beliefs. The students were in school year 2 to 5 in Swedish primary school. Generally, the learners expressed a positive attitude towards English as well as to the teaching practices they encountered. Although some learners experienced high levels of anxiety in the language classroom, for example when they did not understand what was expected of them, they strongly relied on their teacher and her/his view of abundant input in the target language and the importance of guessing and daring to speak. Further, some also expressed a fear of social exposure and negative reactions from their peers, which made them silent in the language classroom.

The TAL project (2016 - 2018) was a large-scale survey of Modern Languages funded by the Swedish Research Council. The project was a collaboration between several universities and researchers in Sweden, and aimed to map learning, teaching, and assessment of SFLs in the Swedish school context. The focus was on oral proficiency, seen as an under-researched aspect of the language competences. The

purpose of the project was to gain a better understanding and paint a broader picture of the Swedish SFL context. The project has presented its results in several articles and in symposia[34], and further publications are underway. One interesting finding, out of many, is that language teachers nowadays are more positive towards making the SFL mandatory for all students. As many as 68% of the language teachers asked in a survey conducted with 315 teachers, randomly sampled in Sweden, were positive towards this change (Bardel et al., 2019; Erickson et al., 2022). As a comparison, only 12 per cent of the language teachers were in favour of making the SFL obligatory when asked in 1991 (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1991). Further, as many as 80% of the teachers stated that they would become a language teacher again, given the possibility to change their professional career (Erickson et al., 2022). Hence, these findings do not quite support the rather pessimistic findings from the Swedish Union for Teachers (Lärarnas Riksförbund, 2016).

Another important result from the TAL study shows that there are important differences in the educational context of Modern Languages across Sweden in terms of languages offered in urban and rural areas. These differences are due to regional, socio-economic, and educational reasons (Granfeldt et al., 2019).

In relation to this thesis, Sayehli et al. (2022) published an interesting article from the TAL study showing the importance of emotions and motivation in SFL learning. Foreign language anxiety, motivation for learning an SFL and willingness to communicate were variables investigated among students in school year 9. Findings point to certain gender differences in motivation and emotions in SFL learning. Girls generally displayed stronger emotions and motivation in SFL, but their responses also indicated higher levels of anxiety and they seemed less willing to communicate in the foreign language.

In a recent doctoral thesis, Håkansson Ramberg (2021) investigated validity in written assessment in German in upper secondary school. The study compared the students' written performance in relation to the CEFR and to the Swedish courses 1 to 7 (previously steps, in Swedish *steg*). The study concluded that the Swedish raters' ability to rank their students' performances was satisfactory, although challenges could be found, particularly for the intermediate and higher levels. Furthermore, Håkansson Ramberg stressed the importance of rater training as well as discussions about assessment among language teachers.

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34 A list of publications is to be found at https://tal.blogg.lu.se/

2.4 European perspectives

In a European context, there are, of course, both similarities and differences concerning foreign language teaching and learning. The Eurostat Newsrelease (2017) concluded that 59% of all students in lower secondary school learn two or more foreign languages. In many member states, the figure is higher, for example, in Luxemburg (100%), Finland (98%) and Italy (96%). The two most studied languages in the European school context are English and French. English is the most studied language in lower secondary school (97%), followed by French (34%). French is the number one choice in Ireland and Belgium, as well as the second choice in many other European countries. After French, German was the third most studied language (23%) with the highest numbers in Denmark, Poland, and Slovakia. However, Spanish, which was in fourth place in the Eurostat Newsrelease in 2017, has surpassed German and is currently the third choice, with high popularity in France, Italy, Germany, and Sweden (Eurostat, 2020)[35]. Other languages which are studied in the European context are Russian (3%) and Italian (1%). The former is mainly studied in the eastern parts of Europe, in some countries it is even the second most common studied language, for example in the Baltic member states, whereas the latter is the second most common language in Malta. In some member states, English is, however, not the main foreign language, for example in Belgium (French), and Luxembourg (German).

The European Commission promotes language learning as a 'key competence' (European Commission, 2006) to enhance mobility and trade across the European Union, but also to promote intercultural competences. The Barcelona European Council Conclusions (2002) aimed at improving language skills 'in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age' and also to establish 'a linguistic competence indicator' (European Commission, 2005).

As CEFR (see 3.2.3.1) is an important tool to learn more about language proficiency and assessment of foreign language education across Europe, it has been used as a tool of reference in two large scale surveys - The ELLiE project (Enever, 2011) and the ESLC survey (European Commission, 2012a).

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35 Later statistics show a change from the percentages presented in the Eurostat Newsrelease from 2017, where the trend has been an increasing popularity for Spanish.

2.4.1 European studies and reports

The ELLiE[36] research study, initiated by the British Council, investigated young language learning across Europe (Enever, 2011). The study was a transnational and longitudinal research project (2007 - 2010), supported by the European Commission and the British Council, involving researchers from seven European countries (Croatia, England, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Sweden). The aim of the project was to increase knowledge of early language learning across Europe, with a broad research focus involving different parameters - such as school policy in different European settings, learners' attitudes, motivation and experiences, the school context (including teachers and parents) and the learners' achievements in the target language. The children were all learning English, except in England where the target language was French or Spanish.

The research results concluded that an early start in language learning can be beneficial, albeit, under the right circumstances, such as teachers who are qualified and adjusted to the age group. Other important factors to learning success are the amount of out-of-school exposure of the TL through the media, internet, travelling, and support from parents. The affective and motivational part of language learning was also investigated, where one conclusion was that affective development of young learners was rather complex. Although many researchers have assumed that young language learners are generally motivated and positive when starting to learn a FL, not all of them are. As many as 25% were quite neutral in their attitudes and a small minority expressed that they did not like FL learning at all. Another interesting result of the ELLiE project is that the meta-learning ability, (i.e., the awareness of the learning process), seems to begin early. The participating children were able to express how they learned the FL and how they experienced different learning and teaching methods, for example which activities they liked or disliked and also why.

Another large-scale research project initiated by the European Commission (2012a) was The First European Survey on Language Competences (The ESLC Survey). The aim of this study was to collect information about language learning, teaching, but also about policies, curricula and learning conditions across Europe (2011). Approximately 54 000 students from 14 different European countries[37] participated in the survey. The students were all in the last year of lower secondary

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36 ELLiE: Early Language Learning in Europe.
37 The participating countries in the ESLC were Belgium (three different language communities in Belgium), Bulgaria, Croatia, England (UK), Estonia, France, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

school or in the first year of upper secondary school. The study assessed the participants' achievement in receptive skills (reading and listening) and in one productive skill (writing). In almost all European countries, English is the first foreign language learnt in school with few exceptions[38]. In each country, skills in the two languages most widely taught were tested which resulted in five languages – English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. To facilitate the comparisons between the language achievements, the assessment materials were aligned to the CEFR with a focus to determine a basic user (A1 and A2) and an independent user (B1 and B2). Although there were no descriptors for beginners in the CEFR (at that time), a pre-A level was also determined.

The results of the ESLC study show that there are both similarities and differences in language policies for the participating countries. European students normally learn two foreign languages which is also the goal of the European Commission (2005). As previously stated, the first foreign language is often English and in most countries the students' start of instruction is early (at the age of 6 to 7). The first foreign language is normally compulsory, whereas the second foreign language could be both obligatory and optional in relation to different educational contexts. In some countries there is a choice between several languages (both for the first and second foreign language), while in other countries the choice is only between two languages. The learning of classical languages is quite rare in most European countries, except in the French and German parts of Belgium and in Greece, where as many as 25% of the students study Greek or Latin.

In all countries, the policy documents for foreign language teaching emphasize communicative skills and competences. There are, however, differences regarding views on which skill is to be regarded as the most important. The choice of languages to learn varies between countries and there are both cultural and regional explanations for these differences. In some countries, the vicinity to other language regions enhances visits abroad and informal language learning, while other countries seem to have fewer opportunities to participate in intercultural exchanges. All the participating countries stated that the use of information and communication technologies are common in language education and one can probably assume that this use has increased since 2011.

When it comes to language proficiency in the first and second foreign languages, there are major differences across Europe. The results are somewhat pessimistic in general – the level of competence is low in both the first FL and the

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38 In this survey, the German and Flemish part of Belgium and England had French as the first foreign language.

second FL. Only 42% of the students reached the level of an independent user in the first FL, whereas for the second FL, only 25% reached that level (B1 and B2 according to the CEFR scale). Furthermore, 14% of the students did not reach level A1 (basic user) for the first FL and for the second FL, the number was 20%. Yet, there are large differences between the countries participating in the study. Only 14% of the French students reached the level of independent user for English (first FL) and the English students learning French (first FL) did not perform any better – only 9% reached the level B1 + B2.

As previously stated, Swedish students had excellent results in English, the first FL. For the second foreign language, however, (i.e., Spanish), approximately 80% of the Swedish students' performances were assessed as pre-A or A1 (in listening and writing, the percentage for pre-A level was approximately 40%). In comparison with other European countries, the Swedish results are extreme, either excellent or weak. However, there are other countries that have similar results as the Swedish, such as Malta, the Netherlands and Estonia showing high proficiency results in English as a first FL. For the second FL, the results were similar to those of Sweden, for example Poland (learning German as a second FL) and Greece (learning French as a second FL). Interestingly, Spanish was assessed only in Sweden and in France, and although the French students had better results than their Swedish peers, the differences were not so great, which might be seen as a surprising result, considering the kinship between the Spanish and French languages.

The results from the study show that there are positive correlations between language proficiency and an early start of learning the language. Positive correlations were also shown for language proficiency and parents' knowledge of the TL, as well as the students' exposure to the target language. The students that showed high levels of foreign language proficiency perceived the TL as useful and they used the TL to a high extent during language lessons.

The ESLC survey indicates that, to a large extent, language teachers in Europe have a formal qualification. There are, however, considerable differences between the 14 European countries, which was also highlighted in the report from the Joint Research Centre (JCR)[39] (European Commission, 2013), pointing to policy and educational context, learning conditions and methodology in the specific language

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39 European Commission Joint Research Centre is the Commission's science and knowledge centre which provides research to support and advice the Commission's work.

classroom[40]. Furthermore, the JRC report shows that there are other important insights from the ESLC study: 1) class size differs between countries but does not seem to be a determinant factor for language learning; 2) CLIL[41] instruction seems to have little impact on the achievement of the three skills assessed in this survey; 3) depending on context, methodology seems to have an important impact on learning, such as the teaching of grammar and the use of the target language (TL) in the classroom, and the use of multimedia; 4) a correlation was found between motivation and the perception of good teaching, (i.e. the quality of teaching). In addition, the students' questionnaire shows that the majority of the students perceive English as the most useful language to know and the easiest to learn. The students' perceptions of the English language are, most probably, mirrored by the power, status, and privilege of the English language as a universal lingua franca. The JRC report concludes: 'This report confirms that school systems that offer a wide choice of languages tend to achieve better results in language learning. This suggests that a plurilingual cultural environment is more conducive to language learning' (p. 52).

In the summary of the ESLC report[42], several challenges are listed to improve language learning in Europe. Overall, the results of the survey point to a need for improved language competences throughout Europe. To achieve this, the report suggests language policies which promote 'language-friendly living and learning environments' both in- and outside educational contexts (p. 13). It suggests learning methods with more exposure to the TL, more meaningful communication in the TL and more encouragement for students to learn several languages. The report also points to the fact that European countries can learn from each other when comparing school systems.

2.4.2 Implications and lessons to learn?

Drawing on the results from the ESLC survey and the ELLiE research project, the findings are in line with several other researchers investigating foreign language teaching and learning, both in the European context as well as globally.

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40 The European Survey on Language Competences: School-internal and External Factors in Language Learning (2013) analysed the survey using a multinominal regression analysis for correlational explanations behind language learning achievement. The model was controlled for socio-economic and gender.

41 CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning and implies that […] a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a non-language subject in which both language and subject have a joint role (Marsh, 2002, p. 58).

42 Executive summary of the ESLC Final report (2012).

Both studies emphasize the importance of language education quality, which in turn is directly linked to the teachers. Previous research has shown that teachers' qualifications play a crucial role in primary education (Holmes & Myles, 2019), which was also shown in the ELLiE study. The teacher is, obviously, important for older students as well – for enhancing learning achievement but also for motivating the students. The teacher motivates students by providing plenty of input in the foreign language, encouraging students to develop language self-confidence and trying to create meaningful communication adapted to the students' level of proficiency (Dörnyei, 2020; Lamb, 2017; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) claim that demotivation is as complex as motivation and that teachers play a vital role in *not* demotivating their students. In addition, there is a growing research field investigating language teacher beliefs (Kalaja et al., 2015) and cognition (Borg, 2003, 2006) when teachers' psychology and identity are in focus in trying to understand the relationship between what teachers think and believe and their practices in the classroom.

The use of technology was investigated in the two research projects, which has also been highlighted in other research studies. Both the ELLiE report and the ESLC survey point to the importance of out-of-school input of the TL, mainly through internet use of movies and digital multimedia. Henry (2013b) emphasizes the need to recognize and utilize students' knowledge of technology as well as their use of out-of-school activities involving the TL in which he refers to 'addressing the authenticity gap' (p. 139). Technology makes authentic language and material available in class which also stresses the need for further teacher training on how to best utilize this possibility.

Another finding in the JRC report was that CLIL students did not seem to outperform non-CLIL students, except for the students in Spain and Portugal where significantly better results were shown among the CLIL students. The use of CLIL methodology in Europe has expanded (especially in the northern parts of Europe) but also in other parts of the continent, for instance in Spain where CLIL is 'particularly popular with curriculum designers' (Lamb, 2017, p. 324). The concept is often called bi-lingual education in the European context (Lorenzo, 2007) and differs between countries and educational contexts in different types of programmes (Coyle, 2007). The most common CLIL model is to combine a foreign language with a regional language, but English is the most widely spread language of instruction used in CLIL (Pérez-Cañado, 2012). Research investigating the impact of CLIL methodology shows different results where several parameters interact and influence the outcome, for example, Sylvén (2013) investigating the Swe-

dish CLIL context. There are studies showing that CLIL instruction promotes language achievement (Dalton-Puffer, 2011); the results, however, have been questioned as other studies point to certain selection effects, such as CLIL students tending to have a higher level of proficiency when entering a CLIL programme (Admiraal et al., 2006; Lo & Murphy, 2010).

2.4.3 Current trends and issues

Finally, it is evident that even though the European Commission promotes and enhances foreign language learning and plurilingualism, the dominating foreign language in Europe is English. Furthermore, there seems to be a negative trend for other languages, not only in Sweden, but in several other Scandinavian countries such as Denmark (Gymnasieskolernes Lærerforening, 2020)[43] , Norway (Carrai, 2016), and Finland (Korhonen, 2006; Yle, Uutiset[44], 2017). This trend is also evident in English-speaking countries. Lamb (2017) resumes that '[…] in Anglophone countries, the global spread of English has undermined the raison d'être for foreign language teaching, reflected in a diminished role for languages in national curricula and shrinking enrolments for study at higher levels' (p. 301). Hence, the effects of the global spread of English are not only a declining interest in foreign languages in Anglophone countries, but also in many other countries around the world where English is perceived as the most important, and often the only FL to learn. Byrnes (2007), claims that all policies are connected to larger socio-cultural trends and drawing on that assumption, one might point to the fact that global English is one such trend influencing policymaking throughout Europe and other major areas of the world.

This is in sharp contrast to the European Commission's visions of language diversity within the union. The Commission defines multilingualism as 'the ability of societies, institutions, groups or individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives' (European Commission, 2007, p 6). Multilingualism is promoted and seen as an asset in the complex European linguistic landscape (European Commission, 2008[45]; European Commission, 2020b). In the executive summary of the ESLC study, the challenge for improved language learning in Europe was stated as follows: 'While all languages are not

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43 Gymnasieskolernes Lærerforening is the Danish Teacher Union that supports the publication of 'Tænketanken om sprog' to support language learning in upper secondary school.

44 'Teachers concerned about declining interest in foreign languages' (Uutiset, 2017)

45 Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on multilingualism, in European Union Official Journal (2008).

equally relevant when entering the labour market, linguistic diversity remains vitally important for cultural and personal development. Therefore, the need to improve language skills for employability in a globalized world must be combined with the promotion of linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue.' (p. 12). In reality, however, the English language dominates and is perhaps seen as the only linguistic diversity needed. This is also supported by the large research field investigating English as a global language, English as a lingua franca and World Englishes (Rose et al., 2021).

3 Theoretical framework

In accordance with the research questions of the thesis, the following chapter provides an overview of theories and concepts which are relevant in relation to the current study and its analyses. The chapter is structured around three central concepts, namely learning, teaching, and assessment. In the initial part, theories about second and foreign language[46] learning are presented and the conceptual notions of motivation, language engagement, learner beliefs, and agency in relation to language learning are introduced. The second part focuses on theories about language teaching and methods used in foreign language classrooms. The third part presents theories about language testing, in particular, the assessment of young learners' language learning.

3.1 Learning a foreign language

Second language acquisition[47] (SLA) is an interdisciplinary research field with roots from linguistics, cognitive psychology, child language acquisition and language teaching. The birth of the research field is usually dated to the late 1960s, finding inspiration from several other disciplines, for example, sociology, education, and anthropology (Ortega, 2013a). The first language (L1) refers to the mother tongue, or mother tongues when a child has more than one first language, for example, in cases of early bi - or multilingualism. Languages acquired after the first language are generally referred to as the L2, even in the case of foreign languages learnt in school, or other additional languages learnt in informal settings. Even if a person has several additional languages, the term L2 is often used in SLA, but the term L3 is also frequently used – it could be the fourth, the fifth or even the ninth language – as a term when investigating additional languages after the L1 and L2 (Bardel & Falk, 2007; Bardel et al., 2016; Henry, 2011). However, previous studies

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46 In the Swedish educational context, the first foreign language learnt in school is English and the second language is the Modern Language: in practice, French, German, or Spanish.

47 In this thesis, the term *acquisition* is used when referring to the first language (L1), which the child acquires spontaneously (Krashen, 1976). The term *learning* will be reserved for L2 and L3, when learnt in a formal context. L2 and L3 are used when focusing on the learning order.

have shown that the learning of the L3 differs from the learning of L2; these differences are due to specific factors which interact and influence the learning of the L3, such as individual experiences of previous learning, strategies used (before) in language learning and transfer from previous known languages (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000).

In this study, the term L3 is adequate in relation to the research context and the research questions. The participants are children learning a second foreign language (SFL) in a school context where most of them have no prior knowledge of the target language (TL). Furthermore, in the current study, the conditions for learning an SFL are in many ways specific; although research investigating children's learning of an L2 are generally part of bilingualism studies, traditional SLA research is often conducted with older or adult learners' learning of a second language, in relation to migration and/or global intercultural exchanges. Still there are obviously both similarities and differences in the learning of an L2 and an L3, which is the reason that the theoretical concepts used in this study relate to both.

According to Ortega, SLA research has primarily focused on some 'universal influences', namely, *age*, *mother tongue*, *environment,* and *cognition* (Ortega, 2013a, p. 9). Aptitude for language learning is seen as mostly a *cognitive* construct while motivation is seen as a *conative* construct. Aptitude and motivation are the two most researched constructs in SLA that are used to explain individual differences in L2 learning. However, researchers point to several other constructs which have proven to influence learning outcome, for example, *affective* concepts, such as emotions, attitudes, and beliefs[48]. Language learning is a complex phenomenon which might also be the reason for the existence of different theories on how to understand language learning, such as the cognitivist approach, the sociocultural approach, and the complexity theory approach.

The cognitive approach dominated SLA language research during the 1980s and 1990s, drawing on epistemologies where SLA was considered as a linear process, ruled by an inner grammar (Chomsky, 1986); the language learner followed cognitive steps or phases, which could consequently be studied simply as phases (Krashen, 1985). In this theory, input of the target language is fundamental, comparing the child's acquisition of a first language where (s)he is constantly exposed to the language and acquires it automatically. In an SLA perspective, the learner

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48 The three concepts cognition, conation, and affect (or emotions) originate from a psychological perspective on individual differences. Cognition refers to learning processes in the human mind, conation refers to the wanting and willingness to do something while affect involves emotions and strong feelings (Ortega, 2013a, p. 146).

should be given numerous opportunities for adequate input seeing learning of a second language as a cognitive process (Ellis, 2003). The cognitive approach was followed by the sociocultural perspective on language learning. This approach transformed the SLA research field; it was also referred to as 'the social turn' (Block, 2003). Language learning is seen as socially conceptualized where languages are tools to comprehend and communicate, helping the human being to make meaning of our lives (Lantolf, 2011, p. 25). The sociocultural approach is still, to a large extent, present within SLA research.

In this current study, the young language learners are learning a third language (L3) in an educational setting. This language will mainly be referred to as the second foreign language (the SFL). The perspectives and concepts relevant are both sociocultural and cognitive, also referred to as the socio-cognitivist approach (Atkinson, 2011; Ellis, 2010). The socio-cognitive approach to SLA has developed out of the assumptions that neither the sociocultural nor the cognitivist perspective can fully explain the complexity of language learning. The research questions arise from the acknowledgement of the universal influences emphasized by Ortega (2013a), that is, *environment*, *cognition,* and to some extent *age*, (i.e., age as a learning and experience factor among young learners). Further, one of the aims of the thesis is to learn more about young language learners' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about language learning. In terms of learner beliefs, these must be recognized as being shaped by a cultural context (*environment*) and that learning always takes place in a specific context, that is, that learning is 'situated'[49]. In addition to the importance of the social and cultural factors, it must be recognized that individual differences are also dependent on cognitive maturity and capacity (*cognition*).

3.1.1 Motivational research in SLA

Motivational research in language learning has constituted an important contribution to the SLA field for more than half a decade. The first milestone was Gardner and Lambert's work in 1959, which investigated motivation for learning French among English speaking students in Montreal (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). In their study, they found that motivational factors played an important role in language learning, introducing the notion of *integrativeness*, which refers to the wish to be a part of, and, integrated into a language community. The work of Gardner and Lambert must be seen in the bilingual Canadian context where both English and

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49 The concept of 'situated learning' derives originally from Lave and Wenger (1991), meaning that learning is a social process which requires activity and participation.

French are official languages but where English is the dominant and most powerful language of the two. Gardner later developed the instrument used in the first survey, into the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) scale, (Gardner, 1985). This scale has been used by many different researchers and research teams and has also provided good results regarding validity and reliability, for example, by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) and Gardner and Trembley (1994). The notions of instrumental and integrative motivation are fundamental in the AMTB-scale, where the 'instrumental' refers to a learner who is rather pragmatic is his/her learning orientation, wanting to learn the language, for example, in order to get a good grade, to get into university or to get praise from parents. The latter notion (integrative motivation) refers to a learner who is aiming at, besides knowing the language, being part of a culture or community where the language is spoken (i.e., integrativeness), (Gardner and Lambert, 1959). The notion of integrativeness has been criticized by other scholars in the field (Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2009) who have emphasized that the term relates to the Canadian context in which it was first developed, but that in a global world, the language learner may not necessarily want to be integrated into a specific language community. The English language is, as an example, used as a *lingua franca* in many parts of the world, and the learner may have multiple motives for learning it. In a multilingual context, motivation to learn a language is seen as much more diverse than before. The Japanese researcher Yashima (2002) introduced the term 'international posture' referring to the many Japanese learners of English who are motivated by international relations, for example, in foreign affairs and intercultural exchanges. Further, Ushioda (2013a) pointed to the power and status of English, which can be a demotivating factor to learn other foreign languages.

Dörnyei departed from Gardner's notion of *integrativeness*, but developed the concept further, inspired by other psychological research (Markus & Nurius, 1986), and presented the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009) which introduced three concepts of the self: the *possible self*, the *ought-to self* and the *ideal self*. The three 'selves' imply some sort of visualization of the language learner; this could for instance be a visualization of the *ideal language self*, referring to someone who can speak the target language with a certain proficiency and perhaps who wishes to live in a place where the language is spoken. Increasing migration and globalization have led to larger multilingual populations in many countries, often with various reasons and motives to learn a new language. Ushioda (2009, 2017) states that language learners need to be seen as individuals with different types of goals, and with different strategies to reach these goals.

Influenced by the sociocultural perspective on language learning, current motivational research recognizes the social context as an important factor which may both motivate and demotivate (Dörnyei, 2020). Previously, motivation was mainly seen as individualistic, focusing on the individuals' traits to explain why one language learner was more motivated than another. The 'self-determination theory' of Deci and Ryan (1985) was used as a theoretical tool for understanding the basic human need to relate to a social group or context. According to this theory, humans are capable of autonomously regulating their behaviour, and motivation is viewed in a continuum from controlled to autonomous (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The theory presents two types of motivation, namely, intrinsic and extrinsic, which are fundamental for understanding why humans make different types of choices, and act differently, for example, in relation to learning. In an educational context, intrinsic motivation refers to an inner will to learn, out of interest, where learning is seen as rewarding in itself. Extrinsic motivation is connected to rewards from the outside, such as grades, parental encouragement, or praise from the teacher. Learners could be motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, for example, when a student is praised by the teacher (extrinsic motivation), the intrinsic motivation increases. The two concepts integrative and instrumental (see above) by Gardner and Lambert (1959) were found dichotomous and insufficient to fully explain the multifaceted motivational behaviour in L2 learning. The theory of Deci and Ryan was, therefore, seen as a complement to reach a better understanding of motivational aspects of learning.

The motivational aspects of language learning have grown into a vast field of research where different angles are studied, acknowledging the fact that motivation is a dynamic and complex system where many parameters are intertwined (Dörnyei et al., 2015). Drawing on theories found within physics, mathematics, chemistry, meteorology, and biology, where explanations are found in non-linear systems, (also known as Chaos theory, van Gelder & Port, 1995), researchers within SLA drew parallels with languages and language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman, 2011; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008). This 'complexity turn' (Ushioda, 2017) emphasizes the complexity of language acquisition, recognizing it to be open to changes, situated and dependent on multiple variables. As stated by Ushioda (2017), motivational research in SLA has mainly focused on monolinguals learning a second foreign language, and bilingual or multilingual learners have not been given the same attention. She argues that SLA research needs to move away from the 'target language norm to linguistic multi-competence' (p. 475).

The multilingual perspective is also emphasized by the Douglas Fir Group (2016). They stress the fact that although multilingualism is nothing new, globalization has entailed a changed view upon second and foreign language learning and teaching. In their transdisciplinary framework (2016), they state that language learning is multifaceted in nature and interacts with entities on several levels, from the individual learner's micro-level up to both a meso-level and a macro-level. In the meso-level, the importance of the context is stressed. Learning takes place in a situated context and parameters such as families, schools, and neighborhood interact with the learning. This contextual parameter has implications also for the motivational dimensions of language learning. Finally, the macro-level refers to the societal level, which involves beliefs and ideologies about languages and language learning where cultural, political, and economical values interact.

As shown above, motivation in language learning (both L2 and L3) is dependent on several variables, individual and social. In this study, there are possibly many variables which interact, such as the learners' age, parents and peers, the educational context, and previous experiences of language learning. These previous experiences and perceptions are also referred to as learner beliefs; this is a research area where language learners' affective characteristics need to be investigated.

3.1.2 Learner beliefs

In order to understand the concept of learner beliefs, various notions within this broad concept need to be clarified. In the research review provided by Wesely (2012), the more overarching term *learner beliefs* usually encompasses *attitudes* and *perceptions,* which are to be regarded as related but not as the same constructs. *Learner attitudes* normally comprise attitudes towards the learning situation and the target community where both culture and language are included. *Learner perceptions* often include the learners' own perception of themselves as (language) learners and how they perceive themselves in the learning situation (Wesely, 2012). Learner beliefs can also encompass *self-efficacy*, which are the beliefs that learners hold about their own capability (Bandura, 1997). Sometimes, language learner *self-concept* is also included in learner beliefs which relate to how language learners feel about themselves as language learners (Mercer, 2011b). In addition, beliefs encompass *feelings* and *emotions* since attitudes, perceptions and beliefs are all affective components. Pavlenko (2013) talks of 'the affective turn' within SLA, stating that emotions affect learning, but also the other way around (i.e., that learning affects our emotions and identity) (Pavlenko, 2013; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). In this thesis, the con-

cept of learner beliefs is used as the overarching term which includes attitudes, perceptions, and emotions in relation to language learning.

Research investigating learners' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs within the field of SLA field began in the 1980s with the early empirical works by Horowitz (1988), Horowitz et al. (1986), Wenden, (1986) and Wenden and Rubin (1987). Horowitz' research started within her own work at Austin University, investigating students' perceptions of 'anxiety' in the language classroom. Wenden (1986), on the other hand, researched students' knowledge of their own language learning, focusing on learner strategies and *metacognitive knowledge*, adopted from cognitive psychology where beliefs were seen as cognitive in nature. This early research (in the 1990s) had immediate implications for the field of applied linguistics' and in the 21st century, it grew into a separate field within SLA. The concept '*metacognitive knowledge'* later changed into the concept '*learner beliefs'* which was initially defined as '[…] the ideas or opinions about aspects of second language acquisition (SLA) held by learners' (Horowitz, 1987, p. 119-120).

Instruments trying to capture these beliefs (i.e., the attitudes and perceptions that language learners hold), were developed into the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), (Horowitz et al., 1986) that measures foreign language anxiety[50] and the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) scale (Horowitz, 1988). The first studies into learner beliefs were mainly quantitative, departing from the two instruments mentioned above and covering what learners think about themselves as learners, about the learning situation and the target community (Wesely, 2012). Present research has moved towards a more complex view on learner beliefs, seeing them as dynamic, variable, and context-dependent, inspired by sociocultural theories and complexity theory (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011).

The emotional aspect of language learning has been concerned with both negative and positive emotions (Barcelos, 2015). As mentioned previously, anxiety has been investigated by many researchers, but later studies have pointed to a diversity of emotions in the language classroom which have been even more extended with a multilingual perspective (Dewaele, 2010; Pavlenko 2013). In relation to anxiety, previous research has shown that female students are more inclined to report emotional features in their learning (both positive and negative) than their male peers

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50 Research investigating foreign language anxiety (FLA) has grown into a research area of its own where extensive research has been carried out to investigate student anxiety in the foreign language classroom, often by using the FLCAS scale. Current trends within FLA research have increased the concept to include contextual explanations behind students' perceptions of anxiety (MacIntyre, 2017).

(Dewaele et al., 2017, 2018). Further, in his overview of language anxiety research, MacIntyre (2017) concluded that anxiety is often associated with language performance (generally speaking). Recent research has found more complex and dynamic explications, namely the assumption that anxiety is both a cause and a consequence of language performance.

Learner beliefs are presently viewed in a wider context, attempting to understand how these beliefs interact with learner agency, emotions, and identity in an educational setting. In other words, today, they are seen as something much more complex than in the early definitions and perceived as changeable and to a large extent constructed in relation to the people we meet, interact with, and the situations we encounter. Beliefs are dynamic and complex and there is no '[…] simple cause-and-effect relationship or defined by the change/stability dichotomies in terms of belief development' (Mercer, 2011c, p. 343).

Most research carried out within the field of learner beliefs in SLA has dealt with aspects of learning English and often by adult learners. Kalaja et al. (2015) point to the fact that it is more complex to investigate the beliefs of learners than the beliefs of teachers which might explain the extensive research field on teacher cognition, for example, Borg (2006, 2019) and Freeman (2002). However, there are examples of research investigating the beliefs of younger learners, for example, the ELLiE study (Enever, 2011) (see 2.5.1), as well as research conducted by Henry and Apelgren (2008), Muñoz (2014), Nikolov (1999) and Nilsson (2020).

3.1.3 Language learner engagement

To have motivated students is undeniably a goal for every language teacher (as well as for all teachers). One of the strongest signs of motivation is engagement, meaning that the students actively engage in their own learning process. Engagement is a psychological construct and, for the past two decades, has become increasingly interesting to researchers within SLA motivational research. Sinatra et al. (2015, p.1) state that researchers are searching for 'the holy grail of learning', to which engagement has been considered as appropriate. Engagement with learning is associated with positive learning outcomes, such as higher achievement, self-efficacy, motivation, and interest (Christenson et al., 2012). Hence, engagement is closely related to motivation, but the two concepts differ; motivation is about intent (i.e., as a learner, you can have the intention to learn something) while engagement is about action (i.e., transforming this intent into action). A learner could be moti-

vated to learn, but still not learn much, since he or she lacks the action to engage in the learning (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020).

The definition of engagement sometimes varies, which is often the case when researchers have different perspectives. Hiver et al. (2021) argue that language learner engagement has three characteristics, namely, action, context, and object. Engagement is shown when the language learner is actively involved in the learning process (for example in a task). Engagement is also dependent on the learner context, such as peers, families, and classrooms (and the activities which take place in these classrooms). Furthermore, engagement is associated with a clear learning objective. Hiver et al. (2021) stresses the situational variable in engagement; engagement is always situated in both time and place, and it can easily change and transform (i.e., there is as strong dynamic dimension in the construct).

According to Hiver et al. (2021), four dimensions of engagement have primarily been defined in SLA research. The first, behavioural engagement, refers to how actively the learner engages in the task in relation to the amount of time and quality involved. The second, cognitive engagement, refers to the cognitive (or mental) effort and activity in the learning process. The third dimension, emotional engagement, relates to the affective reactions involved in the learning process. These emotions could be both positive and lead to more engagement, as well as negative and result in disengagement. The last dimension is the social engagement, which refers to relational and personal dimensions in the language learning. Svalberg (2009; 2018) stresses the social dimension of engagement, however, as other researchers have pointed out, the social dimension is involved in all aspects of learning. Mercer (2019) argues that '[…] all aspects of cognition and affect are socially situated and behaviour typically involves others in social settings.' (p. 646). According to Mercer, true engagement needs to involve behavioural engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement.

3.1.4 Learner agency and learner autonomy

The two concepts of agency and autonomy are closely related, and although they are occasionally confounded or even muddled together, they are generally treated as two distinct concepts (Huang & Benson, 2013). The first, agency, is one of many key concepts within psychological research used in order to understand human nature. Agency refers to the actions we undertake consciously and willingly, and furthermore, our capacity to evaluate these actions to make other choices and actions (Bandura (1997). In SLA research, the concept of agency has its roots in the

late 1970s, when theories about learner autonomy, intrinsic motivation and initiative were emerging (Kalaja et al., 2015). The perspective was individual and centred around the learner's role in the language learning process (Benson, 2007; Mercer, 2011c). After the so-called 'social turn' in SLA (Block, 2003), agency is seen as socially constructed and dependent both on individual features and the environment. Language learners are seen as agents who 'actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning' (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 145). Hence, agency is fundamental to all learning. Van Lier (2008) states that agency is '[…] action potential, mediated by social, interactional, cultural, institutional and other contextual factors' (p.171). However, he also suggests some caution that not all actions performed in the classroom bear signs of agency; a learner can participate without being deliberately active. Further, agency might entail resistance to learning, for example when a learner expresses agency by not participating in a given classroom activity. This is what Ahearn (2001, p.115) calls 'oppositional agency', which may, of course, be manifested in numerous ways.

The second concept, learner autonomy, is as previously mentioned interrelated to agency. Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (p.3). Hence, learner autonomy implies that the learner plans, monitors and evaluates his or her own learning. Furthermore, when learner autonomy was introduced as a pedagogical approach in the 1980s and 1990s, it implied changes in classroom teaching where the learner's ability to independently plan and structure the learning process should be promoted (Benson, 2007). Little (1995) stated that the 'pedagogical dialogue' between the learner and the teacher is an important contribution to the learning process, meaning that autonomous learning is dependent on autonomous teachers who can support the development of autonomous language learning. The focus in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century was in the language classroom and how learner autonomy should be implemented. Little (2004), however, stated that learner autonomy is nothing new, successful language learners have always shown a high degree of autonomy. When students are actively involved in the learning process, they shape their learning after personal goals and interests, which also raises their intrinsic motivation for learning.

An important contribution to the learner autonomy concept was the Council of Europe's Framework of Reference for Languages: teaching, learning and assessment (CEFR), in which learner autonomy is clearly visible in the notions of learner strategies and the belief that learners should be trained as able language learners, capable of making their own choices in the learning process (Council of Europe,

2001). The action-oriented approach means that learners who use or learn a language 'are seen as 'social agents', referring to them as members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action' (p. 9). The language learner is therefore seen as someone who develops competences (in this case language competences) within different domains using different strategies to engage in various language activities. The action-oriented approach underlines the individual's capability to actively engage in his or her own learning process. This view on learning is also evident in the European Language Portfolio (ELP), which provides language learners and language teachers with learner-based assessment materials promoting self-assessment and learner autonomy (Little, 2005; 2009), (see also 2.2.2 and 3.2.3.1).

During the last two decades, the focus has shifted from the individual learner to the classroom context, but also beyond the classroom since not all language learning takes place in the classroom (Benson, 2007). New technologies and globalization made other kinds of language learning possible where learner autonomy is promoted, such as language courses online and computer-based distant courses. Furthermore, the definition of learner autonomy has developed further. Huang and Benson (2013) state that this capacity involves both an *ability* (e.g., skills and knowledge), a *desire* (the intention and will to learn a language or perform an activity), and *freedom* (the degree to which learners can control their own learning process and agenda), (Huang & Benson, 2013, p. 9).

The two concepts of agency and autonomy are closely linked to motivational theories, learner beliefs, and identity (Mercer, 2011c); several studies have investigated language learners' capacity for autonomous and self-regulative learning, such as Gao (2010), Huang (2011), and Ushioda (2007). For instance, Ushioda (2011) states that language learner autonomy promotes language learning and the shaping of identity where language learning and communication are seen as '[…] a medium for self-expression, communication and accessing information and resources.' (p. 228). By expressing oneself in a foreign language, the learner is expressing not only a proficiency, but shaping an identity where the new language repertoire opens new personal perspectives.

Furthermore, Mercer (2019) has pointed to the importance of autonomy for language learner engagement, stating that the learner needs to feel '[…] an active sense of being able to influence their learning experiences' (p. 651). In the language classroom, the teacher is generally working on a continuum of allowing the students to have an influence. This influence could constitute autonomy to different

degrees; being able to choose among different tasks or different methods are also examples of influence. Further, autonomy-supportive teaching has proved to increase engagement in language learning (Reeve, 2006).

To summarize, the concepts of agency and learner autonomy have evolved from an individual cognitive perspective, to encompass a broader social dimension of the interplay between the individual and the social context. Current research within SLA investigating agency is often concerned with motivation, beliefs and identity and the focus has shifted slightly from the educational dimension of the agency concept and moved towards the individual learner and his or her sense of language learning.

3.1.5 Young language learners

Since various educational systems introduce a first (L2) or second foreign language (L3) at different student ages, the definition of *young learners* varies between geographical contexts. This may also be an issue when categorizing young language learners (YLL). However, in order to facilitate discussion and research, YLLs are often categorized into groups depending on age and maturity. The European Union's member states' working group categorize young learners as primary school students between 7 and 12, but they have also introduced the concept of very young learners (3 to 6 years old).

The participating students in this research project were between 11 and 13 years of age. Obviously, young learners are not a homogeneous group, and it is important to recognize that there are individual differences and variation among them, just as there are in all groups of learners. These differences are not only due to age and maturity in cognitive and social skills but are also a result of differences in cultural and linguistic background and educational context.

As previously mentioned, motivational research has primarily been concerned with older students or adults, and the motivational dimensions of YLLs have been less investigated (Lamb, 2017). For a long time, YLLs' affective characteristics were seen as different from older language learners, for example, the assumption that all YLLs are highly motivated and that their learner beliefs are stable and not likely to easily change. However, recent research has shown that the beliefs and attitudes of YLLs are as dynamic and complex as those of adults (Mihaljević Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019). However, for young language learners, two fundamental features seem to be shaping motivation for language learning, namely, the teacher and the tasks. The teacher seems to be of paramount importance for many

YLLs, as teachers '[…] raise and maintain YLs' motivation through meaningful, interesting and challenging classroom activities' (Mihaljević Djigunović, & Nikolov, 2019, p. 522). The relational dimension with the teacher is also important, because when YLLs like their teacher, they are often inclined to like the foreign language as well (Nikolov, 1999). Furthermore, the teacher's ability to create an inspirational and supportive learning environment is considered of great importance in the beginning of the learning process (and obviously for all learners, young or old) (Mihaljević Djigunović, & Nikolov, 2019)

According to several researchers, tasks used in language learning for YLLs play a significant role in motivating further learning (Mihaljević Djigunović & Vilke, 2000; Nikolov 1999, 2001). In addition, task mastery seems to be important, as well as the fact that the result is rewarding, in itself (e.g., feelings of having learnt). Tasks or activities that YLLs seem to appreciate the most are role plays, watching videos, free conversations, and games. Furthermore, classroom studies have shown that some tasks could be motivating at first, but could be experienced as less motivating in time, for example, if they are perceived as childish or repetitive, too difficult, or not challenging enough (Mihaljević Djigunović, & Nikolov, 2019).

As a result of the present status of English as a *lingua franca*, many countries around the world have implemented the policy of English learning at an early age. By pointing to successful immersion programmes in Canada (Lambert & Tucker, 1972) and Spain (Dobson et al., 2010), the pedagogical idea seems to be that the younger a child starts learning a foreign language in school, the better. As previously mentioned, some research studies have shown good results for early starters, such as the ELLiE report (Enever, 2011) and the ESLC Survey (European Commission, 2013). Enever (2018) discusses the global phenomenon of the onset of an early foreign language learning and states that '[…] there has been an increasing emphasis on prioritizing English as the first FL in schools, with a strong trend towards introducing it as a subject from the very earliest phase of schooling or even in the preschool sector.' (Enever, 2018, p. 28). When English becomes a symbol of economic growth, the stakes are more important for a successful implementation of language policies where stakeholders need to see results of successful learning. However, there is both an ongoing debate as well as research concerning the age factor. Several researchers show that older starters (i.e., at the age of 9 to 10) outperform early starters in most proficiency tests (Cadierno et al., 2020; Muñoz, 2011; Pfenniger & Singleton, 2016). There are, however, no clear-cut answers regarding the best starting age and there are several parameters which should be taken into account, such as continuity in the language learning (Baumert et al.,

2020). Further, Pfenniger and Singleton (2017) concluded that the pace of learning is slower for YLLs than for adolescents or adults. Consequently, the teacher must adapt the teaching to this pace and use tasks which are appropriate to the students' age and maturity. Furthermore, there appear to be many parameters which interact in the shaping of motivation in the language classrooms, such as peers and classroom context.

Today, many children often know some English before they start learning the language in school (e.g., in Sweden where they are constantly surrounded by the English language), and many children know more than one language from home. However, in many other countries, English might not be as present and is, therefore, learnt as an entirely new foreign language. In the Swedish context, this is often the case for the SFL (i.e., French, German, or Spanish) where most Swedish students have little prior knowledge in the TL. Given these differences in how languages are learnt and taught, the research of YLLs displays quite a diverse context of learning, which entails several challenges on both micro- and macro-levels.

3.2 Teaching practices in the language classroom

Historically, language teaching research has mainly focused on methods and approaches and the comparison between them, to find the best approach for successful language learning (Ellis, 2012). Today, research into teaching practices and the relationship between language teaching and learning has a wider scope and touches upon a wide array of theoretical research fields, such as, for instance, psychology, pedagogy or applied linguistics. It is naturally connected to the field of SLA, although the latter focuses on the learner, learning processes and learner language.

In Sweden, during the 20th century, language teaching followed international trends where various methods and approaches were prominent in different periods of time. However, there are some methods which have been more salient than others, such as the Grammar-Translation Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, the Direct Method, and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach.

3.2.1 The Grammar-Translation Method

The Grammar-Translation Method has its roots in the learning and teaching of Latin and this method dominated European language education from the middle

of the 19th century to the middle of the 1940s. As the name implies, the key features of the method are grammar and translation where much focus is put on grammatical rules and accuracy. The foreign language is taught through reading and writing (less through listening and speaking), and the medium of instruction is the L1 of the majority of the students (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Even though the Grammar-Translation Method has been questioned and rejected, there are still traces in current foreign language teaching, such as bilingual vocabulary lists and sentence translation in language workbooks. Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that although these activities may be frustrating and boring for many students, the approach is not very demanding from a teachers' perspective since it gives lessons a clear structure with specific learning content and little room for spontaneous use of the target language. The approach is currently practised in many parts of the world, especially in countries with limited learning and teaching conditions, for instance, if the classes are large and the teacher's proficiency of the target language is low.

3.2.2 The Direct Method and the Audiolingual Method

In the 20th century, language teaching and language learning specialists became more interested in developing different methods which could benefit learning, such as the Direct Method and the Audiolingual Method.

The Direct Method[51] (sometimes referred to as the 'natural method') was inspired by first language acquisition and sought to imitate the procedures of a child learning his/her mother tongue. Hence, according to the Direct Method, language learning happens through demonstration and action, where the teacher speaks as much as possible in the TL. The teacher (preferably a native speaker) should speak naturally, using everyday language whereas grammar was assumed to be learnt inductively. Much attention was paid to correctly pronouncing the TL. The Direct Method was successful in private language education, but less successful in state-run schools, mainly because the method required native speaking teachers. Furthermore, many teachers found the method complicated, especially when they were, basically not allowed to use the majority language of the students in the classroom. The Direct Method was most prominent in the first half of the 20th century. However, the criticism led to an increased interest in language learning,

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51 The Direct Method has its root in the 19th century Reform Movement which tried to reform the traditional Grammar-Translation methodology with more oral language teaching. Behind the Reform Movement was the German phonetician Wilhemn Viëtor. (Warwick, ELT, Archive)

important discussions and the development of other methods or approaches. Furthermore, the emphasis on spoken language and target language use in the classroom were important changes to previous teaching (Richard & Rogers, 2014).

Another method which has influenced language teaching during the 20th century was the Audiolingual Method. Drawing on the behaviouristic theory of learning (language is seen as verbal behaviour), the method emphasized reinforcement as a central part of the learning process. The learner should memorize dialogues with different patterns and structures, and the spoken language should precede the written. Repetition and memorization (drills and patterns) were important tools in the learning, where pronunciation and intonation were stressed, aiming for a native proficiency in the target language.

In current language teaching, there are traces of both the Direct Method and the Audiolingual Method. The communicative approach has several elements from the Direct Method, for example, target language use and the view that grammar is best learnt inductively. Furthermore, pronunciation and intonation are still important ingredients in language learning, as well as dialogues which are repeated several times and memorized.

However, the approach which has dominated language teaching for the last 50 years is Communicative Language Teaching (i.e., the communicative approach).

3.2.3 Communicative Language Teaching

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach departs from the notion that language is a means of communication and that learning a new language entails conquering different communicative competences (Hymes, 1972). Consequently, language learners therefore need to acquire communicative competences in order to become competent speakers and use the language in different settings, either as an L1 or an L2. These settings are close to what the linguist Halliday meant with a *functional use of language* (Halliday, 1975). The functional use of language focuses on different *uses* or *functions* of the speech acts; these functions could easily also be transferred to the research field of SLA. Furthermore, the paradigm shift from a cognitive view on language learning towards a more sociocultural perspective implied different views on language teaching and learning. The learner should not be seen as someone who is entirely dependent on his or her cognitive capacity, but the psychological and social conditions need also to be acknowledged (van Ek, 1986).

The theoretical base of CLT is communication which can be seen in the following characteristics:

- Language is a system for the expression of meaning
- The primary function is to allow interaction and communication
- The structure of the language reflects its functional and communicative uses
- The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourses
- Communicative competence entails knowing how to use language for a range of purposes and functions […]. (Richards and Rodgers, 2014, p. 89-90).

In the 1980s, the communicative approach was promoted and developed by influential experts within applied linguistics and by the Council of Europe[52]. The globalization and the dominance of English paved the way for an increasing demand for language competences within different areas in societies. Governments and societies needed citizens who could communicate with other countries and a more efficient language teaching was requested. Van Ek and Alexander developed a communicative syllabus, also known as the Threshold Level syllabus (1975, 1980). This syllabus has only one level, roughly equivalent to the CEFR B1, and it was later to be replaced by the Common European Framework of References (CEFR).

3.2.3.1 The Common European Framework of References: Language, Teaching, Assessment

The CEFR is a framework for language learning, teaching and assessment, developed by the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe has had a major involvement in language learning in the European context in order to '[…] increase international understanding, promote lifelong learning and increase the quality and practicality of language education in schools.' (CEFR- Companion volume with new descriptors, 2018, p. 21). The process started already during the 1970s and 1980s with the aim to develop a common measurement for language learning abilities, but the actual starting point was an international meeting in Switzerland in 1991 where the Council of Europe recommended the establishment of a common European framework. The Council of Europe published two draft versions in

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52 The Council of Europe has two goals: the preservation of linguistic diversity, and the promotion of international communication and cooperation.

1996, but the final document, (i.e., the current CEFR), was published in English and in French in 2001 (Council of Europe, 2001); the document has had a major influence on European language teaching and has been translated into more than 40 languages.

The position of the CEFR is the action-oriented approach to language proficiency and language use: 'The CEFR's action-oriented approach is based on the principle that in performing COMMUNICATIVE ACTS we use STRATEGIES to determine how to make the most appropriate and effective use of our LINGUISTIC RESOURCES' (Little, 2006, p. 169)[53]. The CEFR provides a descriptive scheme where the users are divided into three categories - basic user (A1 and A2), independent user (B1 and B2) and proficient user (C1 and C2). These categories are provided with descriptors of what the user can do at a certain level, according to the six-level scale (A1 to C2). Communicative activities are divided into four groups - reception, production, interaction, and mediation; reception is further divided into listening and reading, whereas the productive skills are elaborated into spoken or written production/interaction. No scales for mediation were presented in the volume of 2001, but they were included in the so-called Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020). The activities are scaled according to the proficiency level where the language learner is provided with 'can do-statements' to enhance self-assessment and learner autonomy. In the same way as the competences are scaled, so are the strategies in language learning (Little, 2006). The CEFR was complemented with comments and new descriptors in the 'Companion volume with new descriptors' (2018), and in the 'Companion volume' (2020) (Council of Europe, 2018, 2020), in order to make the framework more user-friendly and more clearly oriented towards mediation and plurilingualism. Furthermore, there are new descriptors available for the level Pre-A1 (for those activities where a level before A1 has a purpose).

An important viewpoint in the CEFR is the plurilingual approach, defined as an individual competence of several different languages which interact with one another and build up a person's communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5). This plurilingual competence is vital in the educational goals of the CEFR and mirrors the European diverse linguistic landscape with both national, regional, and foreign languages. In the Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020), multilingualism and plurilingualism are distinguished as two different terms, where the former is explained as 'the coexistence of different languages at the so-

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53 The capital letters are used by Little (2006).

cial or individual level' and the latter is seen as 'the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner' (p. 30). Little (2020) describes the distinction as follows: '[…] not all multilingual communities are made up of plurilingual individuals, and not all plurilingual individuals live in multilingual communities' (p. 272).

In terms of young language learners, several European member states have developed their own guidelines for younger language learners, often inspired by the European Language Portfolio (ELP).[54] The updated descriptors are meant as a support for further development of a curriculum for young language learners starting at the level of Pre-A1 and taking into account the cognitive and social development of the age group. The descriptors target learners at primary or lower secondary school. The Companion Volume has not yet been translated into Swedish, but it is available in English and several other languages, for example French, German and Spanish.[55.]

3.2.3.2 Communicative stance in the classroom

The pedagogical implications of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are numerous and address both teachers and learners. According to the CLT approach, teachers should strive to create meaningful and real communicative tasks in the classroom where learners are given plenty of opportunities to express themselves and to develop both accuracy and fluency in the target language.

Both the functional and the structural aspects of language learning are important, but the structural aspects could be learnt implicitly, by letting the learners discover the rules on their own through different tasks addressing specific features in the TL. According to CLT, when learners are provided with plenty of input, which is meaningful and authentic, the learner acquires structural rules implicitly, without knowing it. This view on language learning draws on the theory of how children acquire their L1, namely through meaningful communication with their

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54 The European Language Portfolio (ELP) was developed and published by the Council of Europe (Little, 2009). The ELP was developed to support learner autonomy, plurilingualism and intercultural awareness. The ELP consists of a language passport, a language biography, and a dossier where the learner can put his/her work. Alongside the ELP, a junior version was published by the National Centre for Languages (CiLT, 2001). In Sweden, there are three official versions of the ELP: two for age groups 6-11 and 12-16, published by the NAE; one for learners 16+ published by Uppsala university (see further https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/inspiration-och-stod-i-arbetet/stod-i-arbetet/europeiska-sprakportfolion).

55 The Companion Volume with new descriptors is also available on the website of the NAE and on https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages

parents. Consequently, as in real life communication, language lessons should provide opportunities for language learners to develop different competences and use different strategies in the learning process (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

However, several researchers have shown that this implicit learning of structures in the target language does not seem to work as well as it does for infants learning their L1, and that explicit instruction (i.e., more focus on form) is beneficial in educational language learning (Ellis et al., 2009). In the Swedish context, the issue of explicit versus implicit language learning and teaching was very much in focus in the 1960s and 70s, mainly connected to the so-called GUME project ('Göteborg - Undervisningsmetoder i engelska' / Gothenburg - Methods of teaching English), (Levin, 1972). On the one hand, many researchers seem to agree that language learning should be both implicit and explicit. Furthermore, there is still a strong consensus that learners should be given plenty of target language input and plenty of opportunities to use the target language in meaningful communication, which involves form-tasks as well. On the other hand, this target language input and use seem to be problematic in many foreign language classrooms; several studies have shown that target language use is low, at least in the Swedish and Norwegian educational context (Erickson et al., 2022; Skolinspektionen, 2010b, 2022; Stoltz, 2011; Vold & Brkan, 2020).

3.2.4 Current trends in language teaching

Multilingualism is obviously not a new phenomenon in SLA research. It has, however, since the beginning of first decade of the 21st century, been emphasized and even resulted in a change of epistemic stance, coined as 'the multilingual turn' (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014). Globalization has led to an increasingly multilingual world which also affects the view on language learning and teaching. Severe criticism has addressed the view of the language learners in the classroom (or elsewhere) as monolingual learners, implying that they all have the same mother tongue, also referred to as '*the monolingual bias*' (May, 2014). To a large extent, the monolingual bias has framed and ruled foreign language teaching and learning. Furthermore, one might refer to the exclusive use of one language, (i.e., the main language), in mainstream education, and where other languages (e.g., minority languages) are taught in strict separation. This goes back to the notion of 'one-nation-one-language' which is adopted by many European countries (Meier, 2014). In addition, motivational research within SLA has focused on the monolingual learner wanting to learn a second language (L2), and less attention has been paid

to multilingual language learners and their experiences of learning languages (Henry, 2017; Ushioda, 2017). Recent research points to the motivational dynamics when language learners speak several languages, and how these different languages interact with each other in terms of identity.

Other criticism relates to the norm of '*nativeness*' as a target proficiency: 'Success in additional language learning tended traditionally to be interpreted as a level of achievement comparable to monolingual native speaker proficiency' (Muñoz & Singleton, 2018, p. 4). The questioning concerns what 'nativeness' actually is in a multilingual world where many different variations of languages can be present. Instead, one should consider language learning as the development of proficiencies within different linguistic repertoires (Muñoz & Singleton, 2018; Cook, 2002). Ortega (2013b) states that SLA research has departed from a deficiency perspective, where the language learner must strive to reach a proficiency in the target language, which for many learners is not a realistic goal: 'This bi/multilingual turn demands an epistemic reorientation through concerted collective disciplinary action. For disciplinary changes to ensue, however, viable alternatives must be offered to replace predominant monolingual theories, constructs, and research practices.' (p. 33).

The new orientation towards linguistic repertoires has implications for the language classroom, where the norm to speak the TL is therefore questioned, and there are demands for the use of different languages that can interact and coexist.

3.2.4.1 Translanguaging

The concept of translanguaging was first introduced by the Welsh researcher Williams (1996) to describe the linguistic situation in Welsh classrooms where English and Welsh were used simultaneously. Williams (1996) stated that if the students are able to use both their languages, they will improve not only their language proficiencies in the two languages, but also their knowledge in the subject content. The term translanguaging has been further spread by the work of García (2009) and her studies of Spanish-speaking people in the US. In her studies, she sees how translanguaging occurs both in speaking and in writing and in different contexts, for example, at work, at school or in the family. García defines translanguaging as '[…] the act performed by bilinguals (and multilinguals) of accessing different linguistic features of various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential […]' (García, 2009, p. 140). García states that translanguaging is a change between language practices, and that languages might not even exist, but should be considered as 'new language practices'

(García, 2009; García & Wei, 2013). According to this view, languages should be seen as a tool for communication created by humans. Furthermore, different languages are not isolated systems, especially not for a bilingual or multilingual person where the different languages interact constantly. Hence, a multilingual person should be given the opportunity to use all his or her language resources which also implies that the language classroom becomes multilingual. This may, however, imply a conflict with communicative stance in foreign language teaching and learning, which emphasizes TL use in the language classroom and that the L1 (or L1s) should be avoided as much as possible.

3.2.4.2 Plurilingual approaches and awareness of languages

The multilingual turn in SLA has also entailed new pedagogical implications. Several researchers are of the opinion that a more holistic approach towards language learning and teaching, where the individual's linguistic repertoire is taken into account, could be accomplished also in the foreign language classroom. According to Cenoz (2013), plurilingual students who are allowed to use all their linguistic repertoires, become more efficient in their language learning than if each language was to be learnt separately. Melo-Pfeiffer (2018) states that language learning should start at an early age with more bilingual education and a plurilingual approach. Although this approach is widely recommended, there are few examples of successful implementations. An exception is Little and Kirwan (2019), who provide a successful example from Dublin, Ireland. In their study they describe the plurilingual approach adopted in a plurilingual elementary school where the immigrant children's home languages were included in the daily classroom work. The study shows that the children reached high levels of age-appropriate literacy in all languages involved, including their home languages.

Another important concept is 'awareness of languages' which concerns both teachers and students (Gajo, 2014; Meier, 2014). Awareness of languages means that the language learner is recognized as a competent learner who possesses knowledge about his or her specific learning process. This awareness is important also for the teacher, for example, awareness of how languages are learnt in a multilingual context and how teachers can recognize and best make use of the students' linguistic repertoires.

3.3 Assessment of young language learners' learning

One of the research questions of the thesis aims at knowing more about the assessments made during the students' first year of language learning. Assessment is an integral component of teaching and learning, and the three concepts are dependent on one another.

Good assessment practices are obviously valid for all age groups; what is beneficial for young learners is also likely to be beneficial for older students or adults. However, the prime focus here is to provide a brief overview of the current young language learners' (YLL) research area in relation to assessment.

For many decades, research on assessing language learning was mostly concerned with older students' language learning and the assessment of language proficiency of YLLs was a small research area. However, much has been accomplished in recent years, for example reported by Bailey et al. in 2014, Hasselgreen and Caudwell in 2016 and Nikolov in 2016. When language learning starts already in preschool, the need for other approaches in both teaching and assessment is required. Furthermore, the importance of learners' self-concept, sense of agency, identity, and motivation in language learning are emphasized by several researchers (Huang, 2011; Littlejohn, 2008; Norton, 2013), which strongly suggests that assessment in the beginning of language studies is of great significance.

In order to provide an overview of the current research field of assessment of YLLs' learning, the point of departure will be from the fundamental questions proposed by Erickson (2018): Why? What? How and when? Who? And, last, but not least, – And…? The *why*-question refers to the aims of assessment, the *what* refers to the content of the assessment, (i.e., the construct of assessment), the *how* involves the construction of the assessment material and the questions linked to the analysis of the results, and the *when* deals with timing and frequencies of assessment. The *who*-question relates to the persons involved in the assessment, (i.e., the agents in the process), and the final question – *and…?* refers to the consequences and the usefulness of the assessment. The last question highlights the consequential aspects of assessment (Messick, 1989, 1996), which might also be described as the consequential or ethical basis of validity (Bachman, 1990). All these questions have the same aim – to make sure that assessment maintains a high standard and quality (Erickson, 2018; Takala et al., 2016). The questions are closely linked to one another and the answer to one question often overlaps with another

one; when trying to seek the answer to *what*, one realizes immediately that the *why*-question and the *how*-question are interrelated.

3.3.1 Purpose of assessment

The purpose of assessment needs to be clear and justified, which Messick (1989) referred to as a unified view of construct validity, where the consequences, the use, and the ethics of testing are integrated. Language assessment refers to 'collecting information' about learners' language abilities' (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). This collection of information may be formal or informal and there are many ways of gathering the required information, for example, tests, classroom observations, self-assessment etc. Assessment is needed, for instance, in the classroom by teachers who assess and grade their students' knowledge and competences, by test developers who create large-scale tests for national purposes, and by academics in applied linguistics who conduct research in language teaching and learning. The categories mentioned above must all gather different sorts of information about their test-takers in order to evaluate their language knowledge and hence make adequate decisions about the result. The stakeholders are 'the individuals and programs in the educational and societal setting in which language assessment takes place' (Bachman & Palmer, 2010, p. 22). Bachman and Palmer stress the fact that all assessment should be beneficial for the stakeholders involved, that it is required out of fairness and justice, and that the measurements should show both validity and reliability. Under the best circumstances, assessment and evaluation also promote teaching and learning as they are all fundamental concepts to better understand the *why*-question (Bachman & Palmer, 2010, p. 27). In addition, the important aspect of assessment *for* learning, also referred to as formative assessment, has the purpose to raise awareness and thereby enhance further learning.

When assessment of language proficiency becomes increasingly important, not only in the educational context, but also at a societal level, the need for valid and reliable assessment is indisputable. Language policies play an important role in many societies and are indicative of a successful educational system. Further, when investing large sums into an educational reform, policy makers and politicians might see a need to evaluate the curriculum in order to make sure the money is well spent. However, assessing YLLs' learning often needs be done with extra care since these learners are in the beginning of their learning process and tests and evaluation might seem frightening for some students (Pinter, 2006). Consequently, to guarantee that learning takes place and that the curriculum is implement-

ed/followed, assessment and evaluation of language competences are needed also for young language learners.

3.3.2 The construct of assessment

The *what*-question deals with the content of the assessment, (i.e., the *learning content* or *construct*). In language learning, the core content in many syllabuses are skills in reading, listening (receptive skills) and writing and speaking (productive skills). All these skills are dependent on fundamental linguistic abilities and knowledge which cooperate when using one's linguistic repertoire. Bachman (1990) developed a framework for communicative language ability which was further developed by Bachman and Palmer (2010). The framework of 2010 divided the knowledge areas into two main categories – organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge, which then could be categorized into other sub-areas (grammatical and textual knowledge and functional and sociolinguistic knowledge). In 2004 the communicative language ability (CLA) was further adopted by Hasselgreen (2004) who simplified the model from Bachman and Palmer and divided the abilities into four categories: 1) microlinguistic ability; 2) textual ability; 3) sociolinguistic ability and 4) strategic ability (p. 15). Hasselgreen and Caudwell (2016) stress the fact that such knowledge or abilities are fundamentally linked to cognitive and emotional maturity. This means that certain linguistic proficiencies cannot be assessed at an early stage in the learning process and that there is a need to make both developmental and contextual considerations. As previously mentioned, the CEFR provides a set of scales and is an instrument for the assessment of language learners' abilities and proficiencies in a foreign language. The scale's descriptors were designed for adult learners and consequently not aimed to be adopted for YLLs. However, in 2018 a first version of the Companion Volume with New Descriptors was published by the Council of Europe, and following this updated version, descriptors for age groups 7-10 and 11-15 were provided, starting at pre-A1-level[56]. The CEFR scale can, therefore, be a useful tool in defining the *what*-question in relation to YLL.

As mentioned previously, the *what*-question is closely linked to the construct of validity, which means that the assessment (which could be in the form of a test) measures what it is supposed to measure. Messick (1989, 1996) highlights two main threats to construct validity, namely, *construct under-representation* and *construct irrelevant variance*. The former, *construct under-representation* implies that the balance of the

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[56] https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/bank-of-supplementary-descriptors

measured content is not in order, for example, that the test measures too little of something and too much of another thing. The latter, *construct irrelevant balance*, means that the measurement is measuring something it is not supposed to measure, for example, if a reading test in English is, in fact, measures the students' prior knowledge of a specific subject.

3.3.2.1 Assessment of skills and proficiencies

When assessing skills and proficiencies in language learning, the assessment needs to be both meaningful and contextualized. According to Bailey (2017), the assessment should be '[…] relevant to the young learner in terms of cognitive demands and cultural specificity.' (p. 332). Warm-up tasks, (i.e., tasks that familiarize the student with the format), are of great importance, as well as clear instructions with an appropriate language. The validity of the assessment is of course entirely dependent on the test-takers' ability to understand and make sense of the items and the instructions used, referred to as content and construct validity (Bachman, 1990). The answer to the *what-* question, (i.e., the content of the assessment), must be directly adjusted to the language ability and knowledge of the age group. The '*doability*' and '*interest*' of the test are fundamental for YLLs (Hasselgreen & Caudwell, 2016). Essential considerations and important issues are therefore involved when testing these four skills with YLLs. The first receptive skill, reading in a foreign language, demands basic literacy[57] skills, such as decoding, strategic competence and reading between the lines. Furthermore, the format and items need to be adopted to the age group where the length and difficulties of the items also need to be considered. A simple layout and the use of images could be useful when assessing reading with young learners. The other receptive skill, listening, might involve difficulties for YLLs in processing the information. The speed and difficulty of the spoken language must be adjusted to the age group, with the possibility to listen several times and answer with the help and support of pictures.

In terms of productive skills (i.e., writing and speaking), different layers of abilities or knowledge are involved in the process of assessment. For writing, abilities such as genre, structure of a text, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling are underlying features. Even adaptation, (i.e., the ability to adapt the writing in style and to the intended receiver), is considered a core ability in the Swedish national syllabuses

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57 Literacy is the ability to articulate one's thoughts, listen, read, and write. However, there are different types of skills and levels within these abilities. (Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development, see Williams, S.A.S., 2011).

of EFL[58] and of Modern languages but is not further elaborated in the lowest steps of the grading system.

Speaking comprises several aspects and is just as complex to assess as writing, or even more complex given the temporary and elusive in the assessment situation, where the participants are co-constructing the task. The CEFR levels divide abilities and knowledge into range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, and coherence. At an A1-level, the learner displays a very basic repertoire of these abilities but as the learner advances and matures, a higher complexity is expected to be shown. The topics need to be both relevant and adapted to the learners' age when testing writing and speaking in order to ensure that the test-taker feels that he or she has something to say and express.

3.3.3 Types of assessment

The *how*-question deals with the type or format of assessment. Many researchers stress the fact that an early start in language learning creates an increasing need of understanding – of effects, principles and practices involved in assessment of YLLs' learning. Inbar, Shohamy and Gordon (2005) mention three main areas of consideration: '(1) Format (whether individual, small group or whole class), (2) choice of item and task types and (3) choice of contextualized, age-appropriate stimuli' (in Bailey, 2017). Research also shows that assessment can have a direct impact on the motivation for learning. Demotivation and threats that lower the students' self-esteem are very important to avoid in all learning situations, but probably more in the beginning of the learning process; the field of assessment and motivation is, however, an under-researched field according to Lamb (2017). McKay (2009) states that children might be more vulnerable than older students and that negative feedback and criticism can have a devastating effect on YLLs.

There are several important principles involved in assessment, elaborated by and through the work of different testing associations, such as EALTA[59] and ALTE;[60] these might be useful for those involved in developing different types of assessment and testing procedures and materials. EALTA has developed guide-

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58 English as a Foreign Language.
59 EALTA (European Association for Language Testing and Assessment) is a professional association for language testers in Europe.
60 ALTE (Association for Language Testers in Europe) is an association of language test providers.

lines[61] that can be downloaded free of charge and that address both teachers and teacher educators.

Bailey (2017) discusses both summative and formative assessment in connection with different types of assessment for YLLs' learning. In many cases, summative assessment is instructional or diagnostic but could be in the form of a high-stakes test for young students as well, and sometimes used as an evaluation of the education and educators. Formative assessment might be more suitable for younger learners learning a foreign language since it offers many different types of non-standardized assessment, for example, self-assessment, teacher-assessment, and peer-assessment. Bailey (2017) argues that formative assessment is very much suited for young learners: 'Assessment for learning, such as formative assessment, is especially pertinent in the case of young learners still acquiring a new language' and that it '[…] may also include extra-child characteristics such as the classroom environment, parental involvement, home literacy habits etc. and may take many different forms' (p. 329). During the past decade, one of the main emphases in Swedish education has been on formative assessment drawing on the works of Black and William (1998) and William (2019). However, both summative and formative assessment are processes, as pointed out by Taras (2005) and '[…] it is not possible for assessment to be uniquely formative without having the summative judgement having preceded it.' (p. 468). Regardless of whether assessment used for YLLs' learning is formative or summative, validity and reliability are essential aspects of assessment.

As previously mentioned, the test format, the test items and the task content are important factors which need to be considered to ensure validity (Inbar et al., 2005). If the test format or test type are disadvantageous to some test takers, for example, if they are too cognitively demanding, then the test result will not be reliable. Hasselgreen & Caudwell (2016) emphasize that: 'At its core, validity can be regarded as the extent to which an assessment gathers evidence of the construct, or underlying abilities and knowledge it is supposed to be assessing, as well as the extent to which it does not measure other things.' (p. 45). They also point to the fact that *construct irrelevant variance* can take many shapes when assessing the learning of YLLs, for instance, in the choice of tasks which might involve cognitively, linguistically, or meta-linguistically demanding aspects.

The European Language Portfolio (ELP), (see also 2.2.2), suggests different types of assessment and it has several purposes. One purpose is to provide lan-

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61 Guidelines for Good Practice in Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA)
    http://www.ealta.eu.org/guidelines.htm

guage learners and language teachers with assessment materials which are learner-based in order to promote self-assessment and learner autonomy. The ELP consists of three parts – a *language passport*, a *language biography,* and a *dossier* in which '[…] the owner may keep work in progress and/or collect evidence of his or her achieved proficiency' (Little & Erickson, 2015). Furthermore, many countries in Europe have created their own ELP and it therefore exists in several languages. By providing the students with goals and checklist of what they can do with the language they are learning, the ELP promotes learners' agency and autonomy and a metacognitive awareness of how languages are learnt. In parallel with the ELP, there is also a junior version developed by the National Centre for Languages (CiLT) which encourages younger students to assess their own learning using statements that they 'can do' and suggestions: *Things I like doing*; *Things I am good at*; *Things I find difficult*; *I learn best when*…. (see CiLT website[62]). This kind of self-assessment might be a valuable complement to the feedback from the teacher. The ELP and the junior version also exist in a Swedish version [Europeiska språkportfolion], available on the webpage of the NAE.

In relation to learner-based assessment and self-assessment, Lamb (2017) suggests that these types of assessment can promote student motivation, pointing to research from Japan (Kato, 2009) and Iran (Birjandi & Tamjid, 2010), although these studies were conducted with older students. These are, however, important findings which encourage the use of self-assessment and assessment of a more formative kind.

3.3.4 Agents in assessment

The *who*-question relates both to the test-taker and the testers. In the case of YLLs, the assessment of their learning often takes place in the classroom and could be quite informal during their lessons' activities. Formal feedback could be after a specific test or task that has been planned in advance and where specific linguistic features are approached. However, summative and/or frequent assessment could also be stressful and a source of anxiety (Pulfry et al., 2013).

To make valid and fair assessment, the assessor needs to maintain a high degree of quality of the mechanisms of language learning and assessment (Lamb, 2017). Lamb also stresses the importance of involving both teachers and learners in research, which could be considered as teacher further education to improve both teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, when assessing children's language

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62 deniscousineau.pbworks.com/f/elementaryportfolio_revised.pdf

learning, legal guardians might be involved in the process; this involvement can contribute with valuable knowledge about a child's cognitive capacity and may ensure that the child's performance can be assessed under the best circumstances. Legal guardians' involvement is also important when a child is multilingual and the child's whole linguistic repertoire needs to be taken into account, for example, if a child needs additional support during assessment in their 'strongest' language, extra time or support of a bilingual dictionary or glossary (Baker & Wigglesworth, 2017; Abedi, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, self-assessment and peer-assessment are of value in the learning process. Little (2009) emphasizes that the function of the ELP is to promote assessment for learning: '[…] the ELP helps L2 learners to notice the form in which they are receiving - and giving themselves- feedback, to *organize*, *personalize* and *interpret* it, and to *integrate* it into the ongoing business of planning and monitoring the learning' (p. 6). This citation shows the importance of assessment for learning and the strong influence of feedback - both from teachers but also from themselves and peers. Children are seen as important actors and respondents in control of their own learning, (i.e., in the development of self-concept and agency). By using the ELP on a regular basis, learners are more likely to develop metacognitive skills when organizing the work done in their portfolio and when evaluating and choosing the accomplished tasks and assignments. The intention of the ELP is to promote autonomous learning (Council of Europe, 2009) and '[…] part of its function is to help learners manage their own learning, to support learning how to learn, and thus to foster the development of lifelong learning skills' (Little, 2009, p. 2).

Furthermore, the meta-learning ability is highlighted in the ELLiE-report (Enever, 2011) where results showed that YLLs' awareness of how they learn develops quite early. The project's result indicates a common trend, namely that attitudes, motivation, and perception of learning changed during the project, and that these changes were closely connected to their language achievement. These findings show the importance of good assessment practices where language achievement is conveyed with care and a sense of feed-forward, especially when the learners become older as this trend is stronger by the age of 10 to 11.

The *who*-question also entails questions of validity because whoever is doing the assessment needs to consider the purpose of the assessment, which takes us back to the *why*-question. The teacher needs to be aware of the purpose of the assessment, and further, make sure that this assessment is both fair and meaningful. In large-scale test, such as national tests, the high demand of reliability and

validity in the assessment process requires piloting, involvement from students and teachers in the construction process, and a high degree of standardization of the test (Erickson, 2018).

3.3.5 And…?

The final question *and…?* asked by Erickson (2018), relates to the consequences of the assessment. This is what Messick (1989, p. 13) discusses as '[…] an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment'. Bachman (1990) also discusses the consequences of testing and measurements of language abilities in relation to *construct validation* (that the test-takers' performance should be similar on another test, testing the same ability), *predictive validity* (that the test may speak of some future prediction) and that test developers need to consider several characteristics in order to avoid test bias, (e.g., sex, age, cultural background, and knowledge of subject matter).

Drawing on construct validation and predictive validation, the consequences of testing must be considered. The consequences might be both positive and negative. Furthermore, they might have a great impact on a person's future and therefore the need for transparency, accuracy and fairness is of the utmost importance. When assessing YLLs learning, the assessment requires care so that the child experiences the language assessment as something positive and that his or her future language learning is based on motivation, interest, and a willingness to learn more. One goal, out of many, for most teachers of languages, is that their students' language learning is experienced as enjoyable, motivating, and relevant. Another goal is to nurture the students' self-confidence and create a positive image of the language learner and language speaker, even at the beginning of the language learning (Nikolov, 2001; Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović (2019).

4 Methodology

The following chapter presents the methodology used and the rationale for the chosen research method design. It starts with a presentation of the methodological approach and then moves forward to describing the research context and how access was gained to the participating school. Thereafter, the different steps of the data collection are described. The justification of the methodology regarding reliability, validity and generalizability is considered. In addition, underlying ethical considerations are problematized and discussed.

4.1 A mixed method approach

This is a mixed method study. In addition, the study is ethnographically inspired, using traditional ethnographic methods such as observations and interviews in combination with quantitative data.

   The empirical study was conducted with the purpose of exploring the three main research questions in the thesis:

   1. What beliefs about their Language Choice do students hold prior to and during their first year of learning a Modern Language?

   2. What learning and teaching practices are manifested in the language classroom and how are these practices experienced by the students?

   3. How do students assess their own language learning and how do they experience their teacher's assessments, both the continuous assessment and that which is conducted at the end of the school year?

In order to find answers to these questions, a study was conducted in a Swedish compulsory school where three different groups of students learning a Modern Language (one group learning French, another learning German and a third learning Spanish) were monitored during one school year. The three groups were in year 6 (12 to 13 years old) and they were monitored during their first year of learn-

ing a Modern Language. The main empirical study was conducted during school year 2019/2020.

4.1.1 Ethnographic inspiration

In my study, I wanted to combine qualitative and quantitative methods in order to gain a deeper and more nuanced picture of the Modern Language classroom and its students and teachers. I was also inspired by ethnographic research (Davies, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019), thereby aiming to increase the potential to discover what is actually happening in the language classroom. In conjunction with traditional ethnographic methods such as observations and interviews, I also included three questionnaires, irrespective of the fact that statistical analysis normally plays a subordinate role in ethnographic research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). However, the use of questionnaires is frequent when investigating individual traits, such as learner beliefs, motivation, and anxiety (Wesely, 2012).

Although the use of ethnographic research is common in many research areas within social science, Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) state that there is no clear definition of what constitutes ethnography. Nevertheless, they try to define it from three perspectives: 1) what the ethnographer does, 2) what type of data an ethnographer collects, and 3) the sort of analysis which is undertaken. According to these three points of departure, the ethnographer spends a large amount of time in the research context. A paramount understanding within ethnography is that the field-work takes time, and that the time spent in the field is crucial for discerning a deep and broad understanding of the social setting and its participants. The research context is generally limited, such as a group of people in a restricted and defined setting. During the data collection phase, the ethnographer participates in the daily lives and routines of the people involved in the study. The data emerge through field-notes from observations and the ethnographer listens and observes when people are talking and discussing; artefacts and documents are also collected. Interviews could be both formal and informal and the goal is to collect a large amount of data which will generate 'thick descriptions' of the setting. The expression 'thick description' was first introduced in the 20th century by the British philosopher Ryle (1949), but later developed by the anthropologist Geertz and comprises a description which is not only physical, but also an interpretation of what is seen or experienced by someone who is observing (Geertz, 1973).

Ethnographic analyses comprise interpretation of meanings of actions, statements, artefacts that are gathered, as well as descriptions of the local setting. Fur-

ther, the analyses show how these meanings can be understood in the local context, but also in a wider context.

Ethnographic research within the educational context is common in an international perspective (Beach et al., 2018; Jeffrey and Troman, 2004), as well as in a Swedish context (Beach, 2010). It has proved to be a useful method to better understand and possibly explain the social and cultural dimensions of school and classroom settings, as well as the individual differences within a group of students. Furthermore, in SLA and applied linguistics, ethnographic methods are used to investigate the language learning context in, and sometimes outside of, the foreign language classroom (De Costa et al., 2022). To capture the whole school context, the ethnographic design comprises not only classroom observations but also other professional and social gatherings, for example, staff meetings, pauses in the staffroom, class visits and school journeys.

However, a long commitment in the research field is not easily achieved, not least due to changing demands from academia where research has become more intensive in relation to time and funding. Furthermore, many schools struggle with issues of target fulfilment, difficulties in finding certified teachers and a stressful work environment for both students and teachers; this could make long-term access to an educational setting difficult. Jeffrey and Troman (2004) therefore question the time-consuming ethnographical method in relation to educational research and suggest a more pragmatic view of the 'being on the field'. They describe 'a selective intermittent time mode', referring to the fact that the researcher's time spent on the field varies and is rather flexible, depending on the foci for the research study. The length of time could be two or three months or even years.

Following the sudden and unexpected emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020, the ethnographic approach became a less significant part of the methodology than initially planned. Due to travel restrictions and social distancing precautions, I could not visit the participating school, (i.e., get access to the research setting), during the remaining part of the spring term of 2020. I therefore reverted to my initial plan and decided on a mixed methods study, but still ethnographically inspired to the extent that was feasible.

Hence, the research design primarily changed for pragmatic reasons, but the change is also supported by a growing use of mixed methods within research fields investigating learner beliefs, motivation, and affectional parameters. Several researchers support the use of multiple methods, claiming that the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches is an obvious choice if one wishes to catch

the complexity of the motivational and affectional dimension in language learning (Dörnyei, 2007: Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Kalaja et al., 2015; Ushioda, 2019).

4.1.2 A mixed methods convergent design

Historically, research in SLA research and applied linguistics has developed considerably during the past few decades where both quantitative and qualitative methods, often in combination, have been used (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Raizi & Candlin, 2014). However, as several researchers have pointed out, the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods has been used in both natural and social science long before the emergence of the term *Mixed methods* (Maxwell, 2016; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Furthermore, there are critical voices claiming that the combination of the qualitative and the quantitative in a mixed methods study might be a concern as they derive from different ontological and epistemological worldviews (i.e., the fundamental view of knowledge and what knowledge is) (see Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). According to Maxwell (2016), it is important to understand the different philosophical views behind a method and that these views derive from different paradigms. However, different paradigms do not necessarily hinder a combination of the two, since many research fields contain traces of different philosophical assumptions, (e.g., social science). Maxwell (2016) states '[…] I consider a study "mixed methods" if it used strategies drawn from both approaches, regardless of how these were labeled, and used these strategies in ways that were mutually informative, rather than separate and compartmentalized' (p. 14). Further, Morgan (2018) argues that there are always traces of both 'qual' and 'quant' in all studies: '[…] we cannot create an airtight distinction between QUAL and QUANT research, so there will always be a degree of blurriness in the boundary between the two.' (p. 274). He therefore prefers to focus on the strengths and usefulness of different methods.

The mixed methods design in the current project is convergent as the two data sources were collected and analysed separately (i.e., the qualitative data and the quantitative)[63]. The convergent design is used when the results of the two datasets need to be compared and combined (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) in order to reach a more profound understanding, or '[…] to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic.' (Morse, 1991, p. 122). The design allows the re-

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63   The convergent design is one of the core designs within a mixed methods approach. The other two are the explanatory sequential design and, the exploratory sequential design. These two latter designs emphasize different phases of the data collection (i.e., the different sequences relate to the findings found in the preceding phase).

searcher to collect data concurrently and the data sets are regarded as equally important. The interpretation and analysis of the datasets are then conducted independently according to research standards, and after this phase, merged and compared (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The reason behind using a convergent design is often pragmatic, in the sense that the researcher adopts '[…] a pluralistic stance of gathering all kinds of data to best answer the research questions.' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 42), which was also the reason for choosing this design in the current research project. In the analyses of the study, the two categories of data were seen as complementing each other; the descriptive statistics constitute a background to observations and interviews, which in turn offer data for in-depth analysis.

In Table 1 below, an overview of the study design is provided, where the research questions are presented in relation to the different data generation modes.

Table 1 Research design

Research questions and pur-pose	Participants and time for data collection	Data generation mode
Research question 1 Aims to investigate the beliefs, attitudes and expectations young learners hold about their Language Choice prior to and during their first year of learning a Modern Language.	114 students in school year 5 (11 - 12 years old) Data collection in April 2019	Questionnaire no. 1[64] - Likert scales - Multiple choice questions - Open answers (Number of Questionnaires = 114)
Research question 1 + 2 Aim to investigate the beliefs and attitudes to language learning, to learning/teaching practices shown in the classroom, as well as the students' own experience of their individual learning processes.	49 students in year 6 [65] (12 - 13 years old) learning French, German, and Spanish Data collection during autumn 2019 and spring 2020 (until the beginning of March)	Questionnaire no. 2 - Likert scales - Open answers (Number of questionnaires = 38)[66] Classroom observations
Research question 1 + 2 Aim to gain a deeper understanding and knowledge concerning the students' beliefs and experiences in relation to Modern Languages.	6 students in French, 7 students in Spanish and 4 students in German Data collection in April and May 2020	Oral, semi-structured individual interviews[67] with students on Zoom.
Research question 3 Aims to investigate the learners' self-assessment and how they experience their teachers' assessments.	49 students in year 6 (12 - 13 years old) learning French, German, and Spanish Data collection in May and June 2020 Collection of register data (the students' grades) June 2020	Questionnaire no. 3 - Likert scales - Open answers of a more narrative kind (Number of questionnaires = 54)
Research question 2 + 3 Aim to gain knowledge about the learning process, the teaching practices, and the assessment activities from the teachers' perspective to better understand the students' perspectives.	3 language teachers Data collection in May and June 2020	Oral individual interviews on Zoom

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64 The three questionnaires were originally in Swedish, but they have been translated into English by the author of the thesis.

65 The 49 students also answered the first questionnaire and are part of the first sample of 114 students.

66 The students in the other French class were invited to answer the second and third question-

4.2 Research context

4.2.1 Gaining access

Gaining access to a school may not be easily accomplished (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Further, if a study is ethnographically inspired, it implies a longer commitment from the school, as the research project runs over a longer period of time. In the current study, the school was found through work-related contacts, and access was negotiated through a person who could be regarded as a gatekeeper. Being a language teacher myself and consequently having an inside perspective, facilitated the process, which is often the case when access is negotiated (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). The research project was introduced to the gatekeeper who subsequently contacted the principal and the head teacher in Modern Languages at the school. They were both positive to the school's participation in the study and a formal introduction and description of the research project was then presented. The choice of this particular school could, therefore, be regarded as a 'convenient choice' (Bryman, 2016). The school was also chosen due to its generic aspects (see below).

4.2.2 The research setting

The school – henceforward referred to as Meadow School – may be characterized as large enough and generic in the sense that it is an atypically average school in Sweden regarding parameters such as size of the school and socioeconomic background, where both urban and rural areas are represented. Meadow School is located in a rural area, however in the proximity of a larger city. According to the NAE school statistics, the parental education level is 2.42 (average level is 2.3). Meadow School is a municipal school with approximately 600 students from grade 7 to 9 and about 10 per cent of the students have a migrant background (Skolverket, 2019/2020). Even though the school could be described as a largely homogeneous school regarding language background, it should be borne in mind that many Swedish schools are still homogeneous since segregation of schools works both ways – many schools have a large percentage of migrant children, but there are also many schools with a low percentage and where the great majority of students have Swedish as their L1. Meadow School is of the latter kind.

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naires.

67   The semi-structured interview guides for both students and teachers are translated into English by the author (Appendices 7 and 8).

In order to learn a Modern Language, students in year 6 have to be transported to Meadow School once or twice a week[68]. Some students live near Meadow School and their own school is located nearby, while other students must travel by bus. For practical reasons, the students who come by bus have one lesson per week (80 minutes) in Modern Languages, whereas the students living nearby have two lessons per week, (40 minutes each lesson). Consequently, there are two different modes of learning a Modern Language in year 6 at Meadow School (mode (1): one lesson per week, and mode (2): two lessons per week). These different modes might have implications for the teaching context and the learning process. During school year 2019/2020, Meadow School received all together 161 year-6 students in Modern Languages –105 in Spanish, 32 in German and 24 in French. These students were divided into eight Modern Language classes at the school (four classes in Spanish, two in German and two in French). Out of these eight classes, only three classes participated in the main study. The Spanish class and the French class came once a week to Meadow School (i.e., mode 1) and the German class came twice (i.e., mode 2), (see below). According to school statistics, nine students chose extra Swedish and/or English instead of Modern Languages. These nine students could be provided with those extra lessons of Swedish and/or English in their own school, instead of going to Meadow School.

4.2.3 Participants

The main data collection involves the students in the three Modern Language classes chosen (French, German, and Spanish) and their language teachers. The students were all in school year 6 and they all had to come to Meadow School to take Modern Language classes. The French class comprised six students (four boys and two girls), the German class 17 students (8 boys and 9 girls) and the Spanish class 26 students (13 boys and 13 girls). As the French class was such a small group of students, some students in the other French class at the school ($N = 18$) also answered Questionnaires 2 and 3. The aim was to collect more survey data from students learning French. However, the students from the other French class were not involved in the classroom observations, nor were they interviewed, which on the one hand could be seen as a shortcoming in terms of validity. On the other

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68   This solution is common for many students in Swedish compulsory schools since language teachers normally teach at senior level of compulsory school (age 13 to 16) and therefore they are generally not employed at the intermediate level (age 10 to 12).

hand, their answers generated more data, which could be seen as an augmentation of validity.

The three teachers participating in the study are all certified language teachers with a teaching experience of 11 years, 17 years, and more than 20 years for the most experienced. All three have Swedish as their L1. Two of them have been teaching students in year 6 for many years, but for one teacher, this school year was the first year of teaching year 6 according to the National curriculum of 2011. They had all worked at Meadow School for a long time and based on six months of interaction, they could be described as committed language teachers and well acquainted with the school policies concerning Modern Languages.

4.3 Data collection

Once the research setting was decided, I started the data collection by joining the 'Modern Language road trip'. This trip was organized by the language teachers at Meadow School who visited their future students in year 5 and informed them about the Modern Language Choice, (for further information, see below). In August 2019, just before the school year began, I visited Meadow School and met the Modern Language teachers and the school principal. The choice of participants in the study (i.e., three Modern Language classes and three teachers) was decided by the principal in consultation with the teachers and me. After these initial visits to Meadow School, structured classroom observations were conducted and field-notes taken during the autumn term of 2019 until the early spring of 2020 when the pandemic restrictions were introduced. Besides attending the Modern Language lessons, I tried to mingle in the teacher staffroom before and after the lessons, as well as participating when the Modern Language teachers had their meetings. A more detailed description of the data collection procedures is provided in the following passages.

4.3.1 The Modern Language road trip

In March 2019, I had the possibility to start the data collection when the Modern Language teachers went on their annual so-called 'road trip' to inform the students in year 5 about the Language Choice in year 6[69]. The Modern Language road trip follows a planned programme with the aim to help the students in year 5 to make

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69 The Modern Language road trip was initiated by the language teachers at Meadow School in 2014. Hence, it was a local initiative and phenomenon. However, during the pandemic, the road trip was cancelled and has not yet been resumed, mainly due to organizational issues.

a more conscious and informed Language Choice. The teachers visited four different middle schools and each language teacher held a short presentation of 'their' language. In all, we visited eight classes in year 5. During this presentation, the teachers I accompanied used a Power Point presentation which showed maps and images from countries where the languages are spoken; the students could listen to the sound of the three languages, guess the meaning of some words, and they were also encouraged to pronounce a few phrases in the new language. The students were told to choose the language that *they* wanted to learn, and not choose their friends' choice: 'Choose the language *yo*u feel would be interesting and fun!'.

After the road trip, a letter was sent out to the class teachers at the four different schools, hoping that the teachers would forward the same letter of information to the parents of the future students in year 6.

Apart from observing and building field relations during the Modern Language road trip, another aim was to conduct the first questionnaire survey during these visits. However, the limited time allocated for the presentations at two schools meant that I had to return a few days later and introduce the research project more in detail to five of the eight classes. Furthermore, I needed parental consent to ask the students to answer the questionnaire. When I returned some days later, many students had brought their parental consent form (see Appendix 4) and answered Questionnaire 1.

All students were informed of the research project, why and how the questionnaire was conducted, and that it was voluntary (see Appendix 6); besides this information provided by me, the students also had the opportunity to ask further questions. The questionnaire was eventually answered by 114 students (total number of students in year 5 at the four schools was 170, hence, a response rate of 67%).

4.3.2 Classroom observations

The classroom observations were conducted during the autumn and early spring of 2019/2020. Three Modern Language classes at Meadow School were observed from September until March and in all I attended 14 Modern Language lessons (6 in Spanish, 5 in French[70] and 9 in German). As previously mentioned, the lessons in French and Spanish were 80 minutes long, while the lessons in German were

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70 The students' French class and Spanish class were scheduled once a week, Wednesday mornings between 8:00 and 9:20. Hence, one week I observed the Spanish class, and the other week, I observed the French class.

40 minutes, which is why the number of lessons in German is larger than for the other two languages. Considering the time spent in each language classroom, in total I attended 21 hours during the autumn and spring terms.

In order to get a more organized view of what was happening during the lessons, I followed an observation protocol (see Appendix 9) which was briefly filled in during class and then put together more thoroughly after the lesson. I also wrote field notes from before and after lessons. All in all, the fieldnotes and observation protocols comprised approximately 35 pages (7849 words) written on computer (the classroom observations were first written by hand and then rewritten in a protocol on the computer). Bryman (2016) points to the importance of putting together these preliminary notes in order to remember details, situations and conversations along with preliminary thoughts and reactions on the researcher's part. I tried to take notes as much as possible during class to avoid forgetting or not mentioning any activity, even if it seemed obvious or trivial. The purpose of the observation protocol was, as already mentioned, to capture all the activities during a lesson in Modern Languages. The protocol contained three foci - the activities of the students, the activities of the teacher and the researcher's personal thoughts about these activities (see Appendix 9). The protocol was created with inspiration from other research studies. However, notes were not taken during the entire time of the lessons. I tried to circulate in the classroom and observe the students participating in different classroom activities. Occasionally, I helped them with different tasks. From time to time, I also took part in different classroom activities, such as communicative practices where an extra teacher or participant was needed. As shown, my role in the Modern Language classrooms was both observatory and participatory. Atkinson (2015) points out that the distinction between the different degrees of participation is difficult to establish: '[…] in the course of practical fieldwork, the modes and intensity of participation are contingent and protean. Degrees of intimacy with or proximity to one's hosts are equally variable.' (p. 39).

Besides observing the classroom activities, my aim was to build necessary field relations for the study where I became familiar with the group of students and the three teachers, participated in some of the classroom activities and gained an inside perspective of the school. I had coffee in the morning in the staff room before the lesson started, and occasionally, I could sit down with the teacher after the lesson and talk for a while.

4.3.3 Interviews

According to the initial research design, the intention was to conduct semi-structured focus group interviews with students (approximately four students in each group). The semi-structured model would allow the interviews to be conversational and at the same time focused and structured (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The objective was to allow the participants to discuss rather freely in a group, where they would have more of a spontaneous discussion and, at the same time, minimize the influence of the researcher. However, the restrictions due to the pandemic changed this plan, and the interviews were instead held individually and recorded on the digital platform called Zoom. The interviews comprised questions formulated to capture the learners' experiences and beliefs about language learning (see Appendix 7). The questions also related to the classroom observations and to the students' own learning process which had been highlighted in the first two questionnaires. The interviews with the students were all conducted in April and May 2020, audio recorded, but with the video function turned off since video recordings were not included in the application for ethical approval (see 4.6). The students volunteered to be interviewed and the interviews were conducted during their Modern Language classes. The practical organization of the interviews, such as the preparation of digital devices, a schedule for the participating students, and finding a location at Meadow School where the students could talk privately with me on Zoom, was arranged by the teachers. In terms of length of the interviews, the range varied between 7 and 14 minutes. In all, 17 interviews were conducted, six students in the French class, four in the German class and seven students in the Spanish class.

In June 2020, the three language teachers were also interviewed on Zoom. One interview was recorded with the camera off (on the participating teacher's request), while the other two were recorded with camera (with consent). The interviews lasted about one hour each and followed a semi-structured model for questions which allowed further questions to be asked and expanded on (see Appendix 8).

4.3.4 Questionnaires

During spring 2019, I developed a first questionnaire for the research project in a doctoral course of test and instrument construction at the University of Gothenburg. Several pilot studies were conducted with the aim to investigate beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of the students prior to their beginning to learn a new language. In the piloting phase, two classes in year 5 answered the questionnaire

and they could also give written or oral comments on the questions asked or the layout of the form. The students' comments and reactions were very helpful and contributed to improving the final version of Questionnaire 1 (Q1). The main challenge in the construction phase was to ask questions and write statements in a clear and comprehensible way, adjusted to the age group (11-12 years old). Clear instructions and an easily recognizable layout may increase the number of respondents (Bryman, 2016). In addition, some of the students agreed to being interviewed in informal groups, where questions about their language use and beliefs prior to their Language Choice were discussed. These interviews were more of a conversation and were thus not audio recorded.

The three questionnaires were developed at different occasions during the project, the first before the main data collection started (i.e., where I observed the three Modern Language classes); the second questionnaire was developed in the middle of the school year in year 6 and the third and final one, at the end of the school year. They could therefore build upon each other, and different constructs could be investigated several times. Furthermore, students' input served an increasingly important function in the development process. In Table 2 the different constructs in the three questionnaires are presented.

Table 2 Constructs investigated in the Questionnaires by using Likert scales

Questionnaire	Construct/scale	No of items
1	**Interest in FLs**	9
1	**Motivation for learning FLs**	6
2	**Motivation for FLs[a]**	11
	(Extrinsic motivation)	6
	(Intrinsic motivation for learning FLs/ Attitudes towards FLs)	3
	(Parental engagement)	2
2	**Foreign Language Anxiety**	4
2	**Students' perception of difficulty**	4
3	**Motivation for FLs**	10
	(Extrinsic motivation)	6
	(Intrinsic motivation for learning FLs/ Attitudes towards FLs)	3
	(Parental engagement)	1
3	**Students' self-assessment**	7

Note. Questionnaire 1 used a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4. Questionnaires 2 and 3 used a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.

[a] Out of these 11 items, 10 are anchor items (i.e., the same items are used in both Questionnaire 2 and 3).

4.3.4.1 Questionnaire 1

The first questionnaire (Q1; Appendix 1) investigates the beliefs, attitudes and ex-pectations learners hold prior to their Modern Language learning experience (see Table 1 above).The questionnaire was inspired by Gardner and Lambert's AMTB scale[71] (Gardner, 1985) investigating attitudes towards language learning. Other inspiration came from a survey conducted by Henry and Apelgren (2008) focusing on the same age group and investigating young learners' attitudes towards learning an L3 as well as their interest towards languages other than English. The question-naire used by Henry and Apelgren was also inspired by Gardner and Lambert (1985) but accompanied with questions and items drawing on the *Motivational self-system* designed by Dörnyei and Csizér (2002).

Q1 contains the following areas: 1) background information, such as name, age, mother tongue and which Language Choice the students have chosen or not yet chosen, 2) interest in foreign languages, 3) the Language Choice and reasons behind the choice, 4) motivation for learning languages, 5) questions regarding attitudes towards French, German and Spanish and expectations about the Lan-guage Choice the following year, and finally 6) Language Choice of extra Swedish and/or English. Most items were answered using a Likert-scale (see below).

One experience from the use of Q1 was that even a short questionnaire may seem quite long and demanding for some of the students. Some respondents needed support to answer the questionnaire, while others did not. The time to complete the first questionnaire varied between 10 and 15 minutes. The intention was to let the students take the time they needed in order to answer the question-naire, but in some classes, the time allocated was limited.

Drawing on the results from the first questionnaire, the following two ques-tionnaires were changed in relation to the Likert-scale. Likert scales, first devel-oped by Rensis Likert in 1932, are frequently used when measuring attitudes. The typical Likert-scale has 5 or 7 ordinal steps where the respondents rate to what extent they agree or disagree with a statement. The distances between the steps can be ranked in an ordinal way, but the distance between the different points is not necessarily equidistant. In the Likert scale with five or seven steps, there is normally a middle alternative, which could be seen as a neutral alternative (Wilson, 2005).

In Q1 there were only four alternatives, namely, 1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) agree to some extent, and 4) disagree. The intention was to encourage the students

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71 Attitude/Motivation Test Battery

to take a clear position and I therefore removed the neutral alternative in the scale in the first questionnaire[72]. However, four alternatives proved to be insufficient for the analysis of the results. The test-takers' feedback indicated that many students did not have a clear opinion and they therefore put a cross in between two alternatives. Consequently, a fifth and neutral alternative was added in the following questionnaires (Neither agree, nor disagree). This is also in line with findings in other research studies, where the 5-point scale has generated higher reliability and a higher degree of acceptance among the respondents (Adelson & McCoach, 2010).

Q1 was answered by 114 respondents (62 girls, 51 boys and one student who chose not to state gender). The background information shows that a great majority of the respondents had Swedish as their L1 (88%) and that 12% had a mother tongue other than Swedish; most of the latter had two L1s, one of which was Swedish. The languages represent different language families, namely Indo-European, Semitic, and African.

4.3.4.2 Questionnaire 2

In the beginning of the spring term of 2020, 38 students (20 girls and 18 boys) from the three language classes answered Questionnaire 2 (Q2; Appendix 2). The questionnaire aimed to find answers to RQ1 and RQ2, by investigating the beliefs students hold about their Language Choice and their learning during their first year of studying a Modern Language, as well as the students' experiences of the teaching and learning practices in the language classroom. The following students answered Q2: 10 students in the Spanish class, 14 students in the German class and 14 students learning French (5 students from the French class participating in the research study and 9 students from the other French class at Meadow School). Out of these 38 students, 29 had Swedish as their L1 (76%) and 9 (24%) had another mother tongue (where 8 students reported having two L1s, Swedish being one of them).

In the section focusing on background information, the students were asked if they thought they had received the necessary information needed prior to their Language Choice in year 5. They were also asked about *what* or *who* might have influenced their Language Choice the most, and if they would make the same choice today and motivate why or why not.

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72 The original AMTB-scale uses seven-steps. Henry and Apelgren (2008) used a six-step scale in their survey, hence with no 'middle'/neutral alternative.

Furthermore, the questionnaire was divided into two sections where the first section addressed motivation and aimed to capture the students' attitudes to and interest in learning a foreign language; it consisted of 15 items where the respondents were to react to several statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'disagree' to 5 = 'agree' (see Appendix 2). 11 items attempted to measure an overall motivation out of different constructs: 1) attitudes towards foreign languages, 2) instrumental motivation (which I have chosen to refer to as extrinsic motivation)[73], and 3) parental encouragement (see Table 2). Out of these 11 items, 10 items were 'anchor items', meaning that the students responded to these items in the latter two questionnaires during the first year of learning. In addition to these 11 items, four items from the FLCAS[74] scale was used to measure foreign language anxiety (FLA), (Horowitz et al., 1986).

The second questionnaire highlighted the students' experiences of learning a Modern Language. Here, the students reflected on their own learning, their learning goals, and their experiences of classroom activities. Furthermore, the students' sense of agency and self-efficacy were touched upon when they reflected on their own Modern Language competence (expressed in open answers). Various aspects were addressed, such as learning activities, target language exposure inside and outside of school, attitudes to language learning, and learning goals. The students responded by ticking a box under the smiley (a happy, an indifferent, and a sad smiley) that they thought best corresponded to each language learning activity. There were 15 different activities, and the students could also add an activity, if they thought it should be included. Together with the items measured using the Likert scale, the questionnaire also consisted of some multiple-choice questions and open questions that the students could answer in their own words. Q2 was piloted in two Modern Language classes at another school which contributed to the final version.

4.3.4.3 Questionnaire 3

At the end of the spring term 2020, Questionnaire 3 (Q3; Appendix 3) was conducted in all three language classes with the help of the three teachers. In all, 54 respondents answered the questionnaire (24 students learning French[75], 15 stu-

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73 The notions of instrumental versus integrative motivation have been questioned, since this implies that the learner is either of the two concepts. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation should not be regarded as dichotomous, and there are often aspects and elements of both in relation to motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

74 Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (see 3.1.2)

75 18 students from the other French class at Meadow School also responded to Q3.

dents learning Spanish and 15 students learning German). Out of these 54 students, the majority were girls (33 girls and 21 boys). The linguistic background of the respondents shows that 6 of the respondents (11%) have another L1 other than Swedish; most have two L1s, one of which is Swedish.

Q3 focuses on assessment – both the students' self-assessment and the assessment conducted by their teacher. The 10 anchor items in Likert-scales from Q2 were also included in this questionnaire. The final questionnaire, similar to the second, highlights the students' sense of agency and self-efficacy using both Likert-scales and open questions, but it also covers a broad area of assessment, such as formative and summative assessment, assessment practices, assessment regarding different skills and the students' experiences of learning and achievement.

This last questionnaire is more of narrative in type and contains several open questions where there was plenty of space to write down the answers. This approach was a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the fact that visits to Meadow School were not possible. The intention was to encourage the students to write down and explain more of their personal experiences regarding language learning. When answering this third questionnaire, the students had not yet been informed of their final grades. Q3 was piloted in another Modern Language class at a different school before being conducted in Meadow School.

4.4 Data analysis

Because the data collection was ethnographically inspired, the analysis followed the analytical guidelines of ethnographic research. The data analysis was considered a continuous process during the entire research study, starting already at the piloting stage, through the data collection and formulation of research questions, which might change and develop during time and is eventually presented in an ethnographic text of some kind (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019).

4.4.1 The body of data

One of the challenges in this research project was to merge the quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data derive mainly from the fixed-answer questions in the three questionnaires. In addition, the students' grades at the end of the school year were collected (i.e., register data). The qualitative data collected include field notes, observation protocols, audio recorded (and in some cases also video-recorded) interviews and artefacts such as documents and exercises from lessons.

In addition, students' open responses in the questionnaires are treated as qualitative data.

According to Creswell & Plano Clark (2018), there are different variants of merging the two datasets, and the design chosen for this thesis is the fully integrated variant. This means that the researcher collects the data on different occasions, both the quantitative and the qualitative data, with the intent to make the two strands interact and hopefully provide a better image of a complex phenomenon. The two datasets are regarded as equally important, one dataset is not dependent on the other but should be seen as a complement to the other.

4.4.2 Analytical strategies

As previously mentioned, the analytical process was seen as a continuous process during the entire data collection. This process began already during the 'road trip' and continued when I started to visit Meadow School in the beginning of the autumn term. The first step of the analysis was a thorough re-reading of the observation protocols as well as the field notes. According to Adler and Adler (1987), the ethnographer needs to conceptualize the notes made during observation and '[…] search for the fullest generic implications of the work they write and read' (p. 3). Further, Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) point to the importance of getting to know one's data. This means that the researcher must repeatedly read and re-read the collected field notes, the protocols, the transcriptions, and in this case, also the data from the questionnaires, to get a full picture of the material. Consequently, I tried to work with one type of data at a time, using consecutive summarized descriptions of the collected data.

4.4.2.1 Qualitative analyses

Drawing on Braun and Clarke (2006), the first analytical step was to get familiarized with the data, which in this case meant transcribing the recorded interviews (see below) and a successive reading of the qualitative data corpus (e.g., field notes and observation protocols). The next step was to search for patterns and codes in the data. The analytic toolbox was broadened, following Saldaña (2021) who suggests that the analytic point of departure should be the identifiable actions that take place in the data. The aim was to obtain a comprehensive picture of what was going on in the three different language classrooms. The observation protocols could be seen as summarized descriptions, or even a personal narrative, of what I had seen, thought, and heard during the lessons. Already at this initial stage, I

searched for explanations for observations and comments I had noted in the protocols, why different actions took place, or why students or teachers reacted or behaved in a certain way or said something. I searched for similarities and differences in teaching practices, what seemed to work well and what did not seem to work quite as well, and possible explanations as to why that was the case. There were important details in these descriptions, as well as broader themes which served as a starting point when I moved on to analyse the other parts of the dataset.

In order to get to know more about the students' perceptions of the teaching practices, and their learning, a triangulation of different data sources was conducted. The questionnaires included open answers, which were treated as qualitative data, and thus organized into different categories of answers (in relation to key questions). These were compared with the data from the classroom observations and supplied further information and explanations to questions that came up during the analysis. In addition, the interviews with students were another important source, which was compared with the data derived from classroom observations and questionnaires.

In all, 17 interviews with students and three teacher interviews were conducted. These interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed with the help of the software program InqScribe[76]. The interviews were then summarized in 'analytic memos' (Saldaña, 2021) which helped to start a more thorough analysis. The 'analytic memo writing' builds on the first analytical departure mentioned above (starting from the actions that took place in the classroom) and follows a manual with several analytic questions which serve as a starting point to analytical coding; each interview was summarized with my own words (a descriptive summary) and then followed by the reflections of my personal emotions and reactions of what I had seen in the data. Further, I tried to reflect on relationships and possible values in the data, before moving on to reflect on the participants' actions, reactions, and interactions (Saldaña, 2021). I compared my first reactions (and analyses) with the transcriptions, and thereafter began my initial coding. I started broadly, coding everything that I found in the dataset, as a way of organizing the data into meaningful categories. For each interview, I followed the analytic questions asked by Saldaña, in relation to my data and my research questions. The questions that I found most useful were how I related to the participants and their reactions, and what I found intriguing, disturbing or surprising, and *why* (i.e., being aware of re-

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76 InqScribe is a software program for transcriptions and subtitling.

flexivity in the process). I tried to see links between the codes in the different interviews, searching for recurring codes and patterns within the different datasets.

In order to compare the different sources, I triangulated the codes (and patterns) from interviews and compared them with the data from the classroom observations and the questionnaires. The same procedure was carried out for the three teacher interviews, where I compared my observations with their statements and answers. During this analytic process, I searched for events, actions and verbal accounts that could elucidate what I had seen as an intriguing or interesting finding, wanting them to serve as key events for the analytic narrative and hopefully produce 'thick descriptions' of an ethnographic kind (Geertz, 1973). The triangulation of data generated themes which were further elaborated into main themes or sub-themes or dismissed; this procedure is often referred to as 'reviewing themes' (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The last part of the analysis aimed at compiling the generated patterns, to get a meta-view of the analysis, and to see the generic themes in the study. As Braun and Clarke (2006) state, at the end of the analytic process, '[…] you should have a fairly good idea of what your different themes are, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data.' (p. 92). Although the exact analytical steps suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006) were not followed, their approach to thematic analysis was very helpful during the analytical process of this study.

4.4.2.2 Quantitative analysis

The quantitative data from the three questionnaires were analysed using SPSS (version 26, 27, and 28). The survey questions are structured around different themes, which at an initial stage proved to be helpful when structuring the data. As always, the point of departure was the research questions, and these guided the analyses of different variables in the SPSS analysis. The questionnaires in this research project were answered by relatively few respondents (Q1 = 114; Q2 = 38 and Q3 = 54), a limited but valuable source of information. The SPSS analyses provided useful standard descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution and means in order to highlight tendencies in key questions among the responding students. In addition, a comparative analysis of the students' attitudes and beliefs during the first year of learning an FL was made possible since some respondents ($N = 29$) answered Q2 and Q3[77]. Thus, some response patterns could be made visible and

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77 Although most of the 29 students answered all three questionnaires, a strict comparison could not include the first questionnaire since the Likert scale was changed from four alternatives in Q1 to five alternatives in Q2 and Q3.)

correlation analyses were cautiously made between variables expressing attitudes and perceptions towards languages and language learning.

As presented in Chapter 3, previous research has often investigated motivation in language learning in relation to gender. In addition, several studies have sought to examine motivation over time. Consequently, to conduct a more thorough analysis and also a comparison between groups (i.e., gender and different Modern Language groups) the items aiming at measuring the same construct were calculated into one multi-item scale with a new mean score value (see Table 2).

To strengthen the use of the questionnaires and the results generated, the reliability of the different scales of the instrument were checked using a Chronbach's Alpha test. The alpha coefficients for each of the multi-item scales are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Cronbach's Alpha values for each multi-item scale

Quest-ionnaire	Multi-item scale	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Interest in languages (9 items)	.61
	Motivation in language learning (6 items)	.63
2	Motivation in language learning (10 items)	.87
	Extrinsic motivation (6 items)	.83
	Attitudes to FLs/Intrinsic motivation for FL learning (3 items)	.87
	Foreign language anxiety (4 items)	.74
	Students' perception of difficulty (4 items)	.75
3	Motivation in language learning (10 items)	.87
	Extrinsic motivation (6 items)	.86
	Attitudes to FLs/Intrinsic motivation for FL learning (3 items)	.80
	Students' self-assessment (7 items)	.86

When comparing with the study conducted by Henry and Apelgren (2008), the alpha levels are in line with their findings. All in all, the results of the Cronbach's Alpha test are satisfactory, with the exception of the two individual multi-item scales in the first questionnaire (alpha coefficients .61 and .63). These two scales also have some items with a lower inter-item coefficient (below .20), which indicates that there may be more than one construct involved. An alternative explanation might be that the respondents are young and not used to answering questionnaires; the questions/statements might have been perceived as rather abstract to them, since they had not yet begun learning a Modern Language. In addition, in some cases, the conditions for answering the questionnaires were not optimal, for example, in some of the classes, with a rather limited amount of time allocated to

the questionnaires. All these factors might have affected the reliability of the results.

As previously explained, Q2 and Q3 contain the same 10 anchor items and therefore enable some comparison over time. In order to conduct a more valid comparison, the responses of those respondents that answered both the second and the third questionnaire were put into the same dataset in SPSS (version 28) and thereafter compared over time. The aim was to see whether any change in motivation could be traced over time and if this change might be statistically significant. The alpha level of significance, for all tests, was set at $p = <.05$.

Given the small samples, especially for Q2 ($N = 38$), but also for Q3 ($N = 54$), the use of inferential statistics could, of course, be problematized. However, there were differences between the different groups of students as well as differences in time, which were interesting to analyse regarding aspects of verification and significance. Further, even if the differences observed are not statistically significant, they can still be interesting to show and to discuss, although great caution is needed when interpreting the data.

4.5 Reliability, validity, and generalizability

Every research project needs to justify its reliability, validity, and generalizability. Reliability concerns trustworthiness, for example regarding consistency of interpretations and transparency that enables possible replications. Drawing on Messick's multi-componential view of validity (Messick, 1989), validity integrates '[…] considerations of content, criteria and consequences into a construct framework for testing rational hypotheses and theoretically relevant relationships, including those of an applied as well as a scientific nature', referring to validity as 'appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness' (Messick, 1989, p. 5). Messick referred to language testing, but this view on validity can be seen as valid for other research areas as well, where decisions, actions and conclusions influence different stakeholders. Traditionally, when measuring a construct, validity involves the content of the measurement (content validity) and the criteria used (criterion validity). The content and criterion used in the process need to be aligned with the construct of the assessment, that is, the expectations and theories we want to measure (construct validity), (Bachman, 1990). Messick broadened the concept of construct validity to comprise the use and consequences of an assessment (or measurement) made, such as the washback effect (Messick, 1989, 1996). The washback effect means that results of assessments could have both positive and negative conse-

quences, which always need to be considered. In this research project, an important aim is to investigate learner beliefs that may not be the simplest phenomenon to assess, given the complexity and fluctuation of emotions and attitudes within the human species. However, other studies have shown that beliefs and motivation can be approached and assessed, although one must always consider to what extent they are possible to capture and what the limitations of the study design might be. Apart from investigating learner beliefs, the study also aims at describing learner activities which take place in the Modern Language classroom and how these activities are perceived by the students, and by the teachers.

4.5.1 Validity and reflexivity

One issue concerning both the validity and the reliability of the study is related to the classroom observations. The observations are made by one person; hence actions and reactions are seen through one lens, and the selection of what is being considered important during the observations is processed through the eyes of the researcher, in this case me, who is not a neutral person. I have my own experiences of teaching, learning and school context and therefore cannot be seen as someone with no prior knowledge or assumptions of the field.

This phenomenon is referred to as reflexivity, which means that the researcher has to '[…] turn a back on oneself, a process of self-reference' (Davies, 2008 p. 4). Davies emphasizes that the researcher constantly needs to question, reason about, and problematize his/her role; as a researcher, you are part of the social world you investigate, and you must constantly be aware of this reflexivity. According to Atkinson (2015), all research within social science is reflexive, and as a researcher you must try to be aware of this and always question, problematize, and seek to understand the question or issue from different angles, which might further augment the validity of a research study. Furthermore, Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) state that '[…] social science cannot be carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher, so that its findings will be unaffected by these factors.' (p. 16). This does not mean that you as a researcher should abandon attempts to try to be neutral and 'objective', but that you must be aware of the challenge of reflexivity. In an educational context, the attempt might be to observe like 'a fly on the wall', to cite the Chicago

school[78], but it is quite difficult to follow in practice, especially if you are familiar with the educational context.

Therefore, from the initial stage in the research process, external opinions were considered an important measure to validate the analyses of the findings. This external validation was conducted by a doctoral colleague who analysed approximately 25% of the interview data and 40% of the classroom observations. There proved to be a strong agreement regarding themes and concepts generated in the data and, furthermore, some themes could be redefined or elaborated on in the analysis. In addition, external validation was conducted, at least to some extent, when another colleague helped with her expertise in the analysis of the SPSS data files.

Furthermore, respondent validation, sometimes referred to as 'member checking', was conducted in June 2022, when the main findings from the study were presented to the Modern Language teachers at Meadow School, who provided confirmation and valuable comments on my observations and conclusions.

4.5.2 Validity – some concerns

The fact that someone is observing you and your actions might be an issue of validity of the results, simply because many people change their behaviour when being observed; this is referred to as the *reactive effect* (Bryman, 2013). Fortunately, empirical research has shown that this effect diminishes after some time when people tend to get used to the observer, especially in a classroom where several things are happening at the same time (Bryman, 2016). Since I frequently visited Meadow School and observed the lessons on several occasions during a few months, it is likely that the students and teachers participating in the study became accustomed to my presence and hopefully did not pay any, or too much, attention to the fact that what they did and said was being observed. The reactive effect can also have an impact on the interview situation, where the people participating might be more careful when they know that their answers are being audio recorded (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

The main participants in the current study were children, which requires extra considerations in relation to power and influence between the adult and the child. In terms of the language used in the questionnaires and during interviews, extra

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78 During the 1950s and 1960sm, the Chicago School introduced a sociological urban approach to ethnography, where the researcher observed the industrialised and modern city using several senses (e.g., sight and hearing). One of the most prominent ethnographers within the Chicago School was Herbert Blumer (1900 -1987), (Atkinson, 2015; Hammersley, 2007).

care must be taken to ensure that the respondents understand what is asked. Furthermore, awareness in the interview situation was required in order to avoid influencing the students' responses. A child might be keener to answer 'correctly' and willing to please the adult with expected answers, which of course might jeopardize the validity of the results (Hill, 1997; Punch, 2002). By piloting the questionnaires, I ensured that the language used was appropriate for the children's age and maturity. However, there may be other issues to consider concerning the validity of the results from the questionnaires, such as the length of the questionnaires and the fact the respondents should answer open questions. Some students might also have experienced the open questions as too demanding, which could have reduced the length of the answers or they might just have given up answering. This is indicated in a few cases where some respondents seem to have stopped answering towards the end of the questionnaire. Further, the restricted time allocated to Q1, at least in some classes, might have influenced the validity of the results.

The original intention was to co-construct the interviews with the respondents in group of fours, departing from a semi-structured question protocol (see Appendix 7). This would allow space for further questions and ideas and hopefully encourage the respondents to feel more involved in the interview. This set-up was not possible during the pandemic. Instead, the interviews had to be conducted individually. In terms of the internal validity of the interviews, it may be seen from two angles: on the one hand, the validity was enhanced by individual interviews since the participants were not influenced by the answers of their peers, but on the other hand, the respondents were interviewed alone with an adult which might have affected the way they answered. All interviews were audio recorded which helped to establish whether the participants seemed to give their opinions freely and without the influence of the interviewer. However, the fact that the camera function was switched off and there was no face-to-face interaction might also have influenced the interview procedures, for example, that you might misinterpret pauses or answers as you are not able to read the nonverbal signs (Fontana & Frey, 2000). However, the absence of face-to-face interaction could perhaps also be perceived as less intimidating for some respondents, who might have given their opinions more freely when the camera was off. In this sense, the interviews on Zoom could be compared with telephone interviews, which sometimes provide information that would not have been elicited face-to-face (Holt, 2010).

The sample of students who were interviewed might also be problematized. One concern might be the generalizability of the sample – how representative are

the students who are willing to talk to the researcher – were they perhaps more motivated and positive towards Modern Languages than those who were not interviewed? Were some students encouraged by their teacher to participate in the interview, while others were not asked? The selection of students was entirely arranged by the teachers since no physical presence of the researcher was allowed from March to June 2020 due to the pandemic. Had I been present, I might have talked to other students. However, it is difficult to establish whether the sample of students was more of a random type, or, as it is always to some extent, a clearly selected group.

4.5.3 Generalizability

When considering the possible generalizability of the results, it is always difficult to draw general conclusions from a limited sample. The study was conducted in one particular school, during one school year. The number of students in the three classes is 49, but the response rates of the questionnaires differ. Drop-outs are a major issue in almost every study, also in this one. In this study, only one student stated directly that (s)he did not want to participate in the study. However, when the second questionnaire was conducted in January/February 2020, several students were absent due to sickness or on holiday trips. In addition, in the Spanish class, the number of students who did not want to answer the second questionnaire increased. The questionnaires were answered during one lesson and the students were all informed once again that responding was optional. The result was that some of the students with parental consent and who were positive to participating in the beginning of the term chose not to answer Q2. This shows the importance of building field relations, which would most probably have been facilitated if I could have been more present. The drop-out rates are also due to some parental consent forms that were never returned to school. Even though several students stated that they wanted to answer the second questionnaire, they could not, due to ethical considerations, (i.e., lack of parental consent). When the third questionnaire was to be conducted at the end of the spring term, it was the teachers who carried out the distribution of questionnaires. Due to missing parental consent forms, some of the questionnaires (13%) could not be used for further analysis, even though the students had answered them willingly. To summarize, the response rate was 67% (114 respondents out of 170) for Q1, 57% (38 respondents

out of 67[79]) for Q2, and 81% (54 respondents out of 67) for Q3. However, for the Spanish group, the missing data are problematic, especially for the second questionnaire; only 10 respondents (out of 26) in the Spanish class answered Q2. The missing data obviously affect the possible generalizability of the study, and the statistical results therefore need to be interpreted with both the internal and external validity in mind.

The quantitative data provided by the questionnaires should be seen as descriptive indicators of the issues in focus. The aim was to compare the students' beliefs, attitudes, and motivation towards the new language before, during and after this first year of Modern Language learning, and one must of course be very careful not to draw any extensive conclusions from this comparative analysis, as the sample is limited. Furthermore, one must bear in mind that groups consist of individuals and that the whole group must be considered, not simply making a 'group mean', which is also highlighted by Ortega (2013a): 'The prevailing power of correlational survey methods and the emphasis on group tendencies can sometimes make research on individual differences dangerously faceless.' (p. 146). However, even if it is not possible to draw any general conclusions from a rather small study such as the current one, this does not mean that the results cannot be both interesting and worth considering. The qualitative part of the data collection, (i.e., classroom observations and interviews with both students and teachers), has provided a rich amount of data from an educational setting. The three classrooms can be seen as an ecological system of learning in the sense that they are natural settings where the individuals interact within the classroom's setting (van Lier, 2004). Taken together, the rich data provide highly interesting information that contributes to answering the research questions.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Atkinson (2015) claims that ethnography is the most ethical research since '[…] *ethnography derives from a very distinctive personal commitment on the part of the researcher.*' (p. 172). This may of course be discussed from several angles, but the main point is to emphasize that ethical perspectives need to be present from the very beginning of any research project, where the researcher has the responsibility to take ethical considerations into account and make sound judgements throughout the entire research process. Doing research with human subjects is always a matter of taking

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79 The second and third questionnaires were also administered in the other French class at Meadow school ($N = 18$ students).

other peoples' time and effort and the research needs to 'be worth it'. Accordingly, the researcher must always think of the best way to present the results in order to do justice to both the participants and the final results.

The research project follows the guidelines provided by the Swedish Research Council, labelled Good Research Practice (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). This encompasses confidentiality and anonymity to all participants, secure data management and to ensure that both legal and moral responsibilities are respected. An ethical approval was applied for, and granted, by the national Ethical Review Agency[80]. However, the fact that the research has an ethical approval is not a guarantee per se for good research practice, that is, a checklist to keep the project 'on the safe side', but something that needs to be considered throughout the whole research process.

As previously mentioned, the students in the three classes were informed about the research project, who I as the researcher was, why I was to observe their language lessons and what I intended to do with the data collected. I pointed to the fact that the school had given its permission for the study, that their teachers had also agreed to participate and the students were encouraged to ask questions. Besides the oral information in class, all students were informed in a letter where special effort was made to explain the project in a clear and understandable way in relation to the age group (see Appendix 6).

The parents/legal guardians were informed in an additional letter, along with the consent form which was to be signed and then returned to me (se Appendix 4). Furthermore, the parents/legal guardians were encouraged to ask questions if needed via telephone or e-mail. The letters of information to both students and legal guardians referred to the requirements for informed consent by the Swedish Research Council.

Out of the three classes, only one student declared that (s)he did not want to take part in the study, but (s)he did not mind the presence of a researcher in the classroom. Not participating in the interviews or answering the questionnaire could be easily solved practically, however, when it comes to classroom observations, there is obviously a risk that a participant feels observed in spite of having said no to participating. I therefore took extra care to avoid observing or making contact with this student during lessons and no data were collected which could relate to her/him.

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80 Etikprövningsmyndigheten

The interview situation is far from unproblematic from an ethical point of view. Already from the very beginning, there is a power asymmetry between the researcher conducting the interview and the interviewees providing the answers. Mishler (1986) states that most standard interviews are hierarchical in their nature since '[…] interviewers initiate topics, direct the flow of talk, decide when a response is adequate, and only interviewee disclose their views.' (p. 30). This could be even more relevant to keep in mind when the respondents are children being interviewed by an adult. The child might be eager to answer what he or she thinks that the adult wants to hear or what is expected to be the 'correct' answer (Punch, 2002). The fact that the interviews were conducted online made the interview situation somewhat unnatural. Some students might have felt a bit stressed about the whole interview situation, which is not surprising since they had not talked to me privately before. For me as a researcher, the main challenge was to keep quiet and just listen to the student and not get stressed when (s)he did not say much. This also shows the importance of building field relations so that the participants feel that they can trust the interviewer and share their thoughts about their learning. Equally important is the fact that the interviewer trusts the interviewee and feels confident that a reflective answer will eventually come. The interviews were audio recorded, which means that they could be listened to several times and where pauses and nuances in the answers might provide the researcher with more information, to capture the children's perspective. It was important to me that the students knew who I was (as 'the researcher'), and that I was seen as someone from the outside, who would not inform their teachers of what they said during the interviews. This was stressed orally several times during the data collection, but after the somewhat abrupt ending of classroom observations in March, I felt even more as an outsider.

As previously mentioned, the interviews proceeded according to a semi-structured question protocol. This document covered different domains and the questions were of a type that would encourage the participants to elaborate on their answers and where time was given to ask further questions in relation to the initial question. This was done to avoid some of the asymmetry of the interviews in an attempt to 'empower the respondents' (Mishler, 1986, p. 123), (i.e., acknowledging the respondents as competent observers of their own lives). Participatory methods where children are given the opportunity to express themselves are therefore suggested by many scholars (Clark et al., 2014; Hill, 1997).

Access to Meadow School was negotiated and successfully accepted by the school management and by the teachers. The three teachers were informed about

the project and accepted my presence as a researcher during the school year. Furthermore, the teachers are important gatekeepers but also a main data source (besides the students) and without them, there would be no research project. The fact that I observed them for quite a long period of time implied commitment from both me as the researcher and the participants taking part of the research project, where questions of loyalty might occur (Barbour, 2010). In addition, the teachers helped with practical tasks, such as collecting consent forms from students, and arranging the interviews and obliged the researcher with time during lessons. At times, the teaching practices and actions that took place in the Modern Language classrooms could of course be discussed. This phenomenon, that is, loyalty and gratitude towards participants combined with a critical eye, is part of the research role. I therefore lean on the conclusion that all research must not only be moral and ethical in its performance, but also true in its interest of producing knowledge (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012).

Finally, the research project follows the recommendations and requirements of the Swedish Research Council regarding data usage and storage where only the researchers and the supervisors have had access to the material. A data management plan was implemented and has successively been updated during the research process. All data material is anonymized and kept safely according to the regulations of the University of Gothenburg which are also in accordance with the Archives Act which stipulates that research data should be saved for 10 years[81].

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81 Arkivlag (SFS 1990:782)

5 Results

In the following chapter, the findings that are based on the three research questions will be presented. The results emanate from the multifaceted data collection used in the study, inspired by traditional ethnographic methodology and including both qualitative and quantitative data. The research questions refer to three domains: *Wanting to learn*, *Learning* and *Having learnt* and the chapter is structured around these domains. Data from the whole sample are presented and analysed. The questionnaires are analysed mainly using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS, and qualitative analyses (i.e., descriptive narratives and thematic analyses) conducted on the data from classroom observations and the student interviews. In addition, the profiles of three individual students with different perspectives and attitudes regarding language learning are outlined. The chapter concludes with a brief account of the participating teachers' perspective on teaching Modern Languages in year 6, captured in three individual interviews.

In the description of the analyses and results, the outcome of the thematic analyses is also presented. The analysis departed from attitudes and actions emerging from the various data types (questionnaires, observations, interviews) organised into different thematic categories, for example, regarding curriculum, school and classroom context, attitudes towards languages, and leaner influence, all of which were displayed in various ways in different data sets. These categories created patterns/themes which in turn created a number of sub-themes. Eventually, three main themes were identified, namely, (1) context (of the teaching and learning of a Modern Language), (2) learner agency, and (3) learner beliefs (i.e., belief in its most basic and literal form, namely, what students actually think and believe about languages and language learning). The sub-themes that emerged under the three main themes are displayed in thematic mind maps below:

Figure 1 Context of the Language Choice
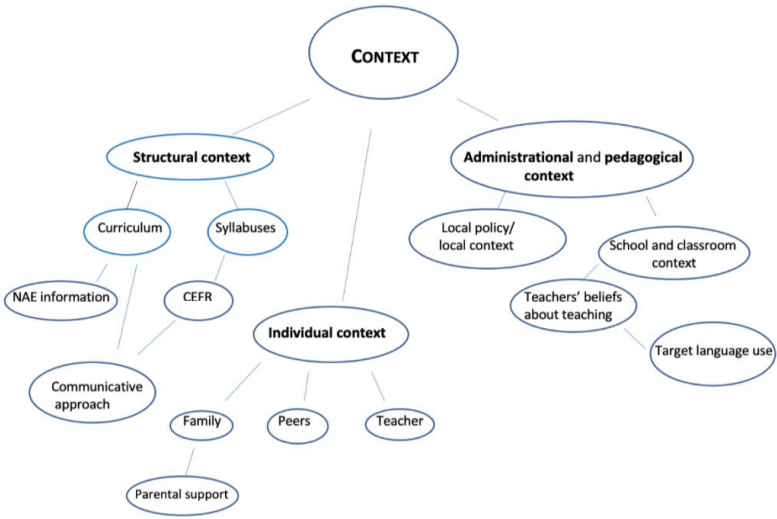
Thematic mind map: Context

Figure 2 Learner Agency
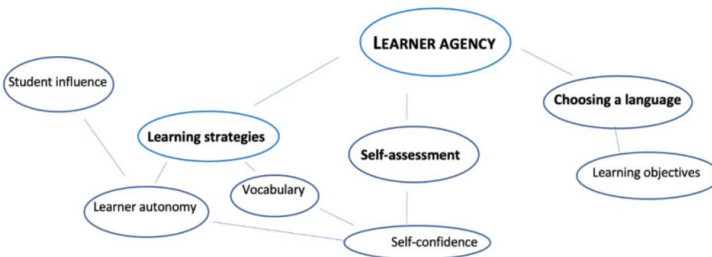
Thematic mind map: Learner agency

Figure 3 Learner Beliefs
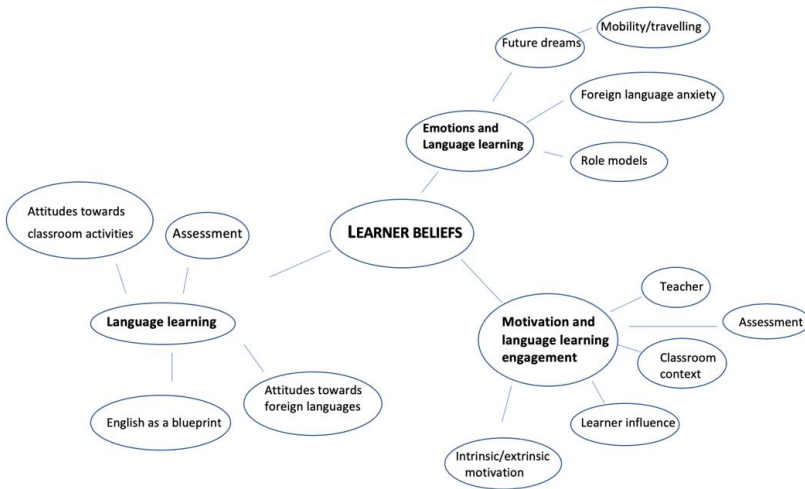
Thematic mind map: Learner beliefs

These thematic categories will be discussed in relation to the different results presented in this chapter. In some cases, certain interactions between the categories are obvious.

5.1 Wanting to learn

The first research question of the thesis is as follows: 'What beliefs about their Language Choice do students hold prior to and during their first year of learning a Modern Language?' To answer this question, not only are the three questionnaires important sources but also the interviews with students. As a complement to these two data sources, field notes and classroom observations were used to some extent to shed further light on the topic. Before looking into the reasons reported by the students for choosing a particular modern language, the information given to them before making the choice will be briefly touched upon. All three main themes mentioned above are relevant to approach this aspect and they are displayed in various ways in the data analysis.

5.1.1 An informed and conscious choice?

The Language Choice is the first choice made by students between subjects within the Swedish school system, thereby enabling students to exercise agency. In addition to agency, contextual features surrounding the Language Choice influenced the students' choice on both a structural level (i.e., curricula and syllabus), as well as on an administrative school level (i.e., implementation of the Language Choice at Meadow School).

As previously described, students make their Language Choice in year 5 and begin to learn the new language in year 6. One of the aims of the thesis is to investigate the conditions surrounding the Language Choice, and how this choice is manifested in one particular school in Sweden. For the participating students, the main source of information given to students and legal guardians about the Language Choice as such was normally provided by the language teachers at Meadow School, accompanied by information from the class teachers, educational advisers, and special educators[82]. For the up-coming year (i.e., 2020/2021), the plan was to send a folder about the Language Choice[83], provided by the NAE, to all legal guardians of students in year 5. However, at the time of the data collection, this folder had not been distributed, but some legal guardians might have read it since it could be easily downloaded from the NAE's website. As described in Chapter 3, the language teachers (accompanied by me as a researcher) informed the students in year 5 about the Language Choice during the 'Modern Language road trip'. The teachers went to four different middle schools (school year 4 to 6) and held a short presentation about the three languages to each class in year 5. However, the conditions for presenting at the different schools varied, and occasionally, the distribution of the information was even hindered.

During the first day of the road trip, we visited four classes in three different schools in the countryside. At the first stop/school, the class teacher participated and assisted during the presentations, although the time allocated to the visitors was limited. The class teacher showed an interest in the students' Language Choice, wanting them to get the information needed. At the second stop, the two class teachers had either forgotten about the visit or not received the correct information, which meant that the presentation had to be conducted very quickly with no time for questions or comments from the students. Furthermore, one class was

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82 Special educators (in Swedish specialpedagog) are teachers who support students with special needs at school.

83 https://www.skolverket.se/publikationsserier/ovrigt-material/2013/dags-for-sprakval?id=3016

supposed to have lunch at the same time, and therefore, the students were not very eager to listen to the presentation about the Language Choice. Finally, the three teachers from Meadow School had to discontinue, as most students were too unfocused (and probably hungry) to pay attention. At the last stop, the students were expecting us and they seemed both interested and enthusiastic about their Language Choice for the following school term, asking plenty of questions.

On the second day we visited a school that had four classes in year 5 and like the school from the previous day, the class teachers did not seem to have been informed about the visit from Meadow School; consequently, the Language Choice had to be presented quite hastily. Unfortunately, one class did not receive a presentation at all. This was due to the fact that it was Friday afternoon and the students normally finished school early; the prospect of listening to a presentation on the Language Choice did not appeal to them.

As shown, depending on contextual factors, some students received the presentation intended, whereas others received a very brief one, or even no presentation at all; these latter circumstances might have rendered the students' choice more difficult to make (i.e., having received little information) and will be further discussed in the following chapter.

5.1.2 Rationale for choosing a specific language

As previously described in Chapter 3, students from eight different classes ($N = 114$) responded to the first questionnaire (Q1, see Appendix 1). Results show that at the time of the road trip (i.e., in late March 2019), 84 students (74%) had already made up their minds about which language to choose (43 students had decided on Spanish, 18 on German and 16 on French). One student had decided not to study a modern language but to take extra English. Hence, three students out of four had decided on which Modern Language to choose, and for the remaining uncertain 25%, most students hesitated between Spanish and one of the other two languages[84].

The first questionnaire addressed the reasons behind the Language Choice (i.e., why students chose French, German, or Spanish). The students responded to ten different statements by ticking the box(es) for those that best corresponded with their thoughts and feelings. In Table 4, frequencies for the different statements are presented in descending order:

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84 Most students did not seem to know of other language options within the Language Choice (e.g., extra English/Swedish and mother tongue).

Table 4 Frequency Distributions for the Reasons behind a Specific Language Choice (Q1; *N* = 114)

Reasons	*Responses*	%
I want to travel to a country…	80	70
I like the sound of the language	76	67
I have been to a country where they speak…	66	58
One of my parents has studied the language	43	38
My friends will choose the same language	42	37
My brother/sister has chosen the same language	33	29
I know someone who speaks the language	33	29
My parents think I should choose…	29	25
I like music in the language	22	19
I have relatives who speak the language	20	18

Note: The students could mark several alternatives and percentage refers to the number of students who chose this alternative.

As shown, visits to countries where the language is spoken seemed to be an important incentive for choosing a specific Modern Language. Also, affective reasons, such as the sound of the language seemed to have mattered. However, according to the frequency distribution above, friends and parents did not seem to have had a very great impact for most students in relation to their Language Choice. This, however, is contradicted in other parts of the data collection where both friends and parents were mentioned as those who influenced students' choice the most (see below). The students could also add other reasons for their choice. Regarding Spanish, some of the respondents provided an explanation focusing on the language being spoken by many people in the world, their relatives/family living or owning a house in Spain, and often going there on holidays. In relation to all three languages, some students provided a very specific reason behind their choice, such as an interest in French Bugatti cars (i.e., a need to learn French), wanting to become a professional football player in the Spanish football league (i.e., a need to communicate on the football field), understanding more about French ballet words, or simply wanting to work in a specific country in the future (e.g., as a skiing instructor in Austria).

The Language Choice was also addressed in other parts of the data collection, for example, when talking to some of the students during class or during the interviews. Then, the students sometimes talked more about their reasons behind their choice; in relation to German and French, parental engagement seemed to

play an important role. The most common reason was that someone in their family had learnt, or knew, the same language and they could therefore get help in their learning. In some cases, these family members were also seen as role models for their learning. However, not only support seemed to be relevant, also the idea that knowing German or French mattered to their families and was perceived as something important to learn. Regular travels with families to Austria (foremost for skiing) and to France were mentioned by several students (Swedish original in footnote, translated into English by the author of this thesis):

> 'Because I don't see any use for the other languages. Because we usually travel to Austria and Germany.' [85]

> 'French culture is good' [86]

In relation to Spanish, more emphasis was placed on practical aspects such as the fact that Spanish being a language spoken by many people around the world and the usefulness of knowing some Spanish when travelling to Spain. In addition, Spanish seemed to be connected to holidays and travels:

> 'Because I feel it is the most useful language, for me… since we have a house in Spain, the best thing for me is to learn Spanish.' [87]

However, other reasons for choosing a foreign language were mentioned, such as the large groups in Spanish that seemed to be an issue for some students. One girl wrote that you might not learn as well in a large group, so she did not want to choose Spanish.

Some students stated that their choice of Modern Language would be an asset for their future career, for example this girl:

> '[…] I want to become a handball player when I grow up and the best handball teams are in France.' [88]

The language teachers who informed the students about the three languages influenced some students' choices, at least to some extent, as shown in the following example:

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85 "För de andra språken har jag ingen nytta av typ. För vi brukar åka till Österrike och Tyskland". (Interview with student T3)

86 "Fransk kultur är bra" (Q1)

87 "För att det känner jag är mest användbart, för mig. Eftersom jag har hus i Spanien så blir det bättre ifall jag lär mig det språket". (Interview with student S4)

88 "[…] så jag vill gärna bli handbollsspelare när jag blir stor och typ dom bästa lagen ligger i Frankrike." (Interview with student F5)

'Several of my older friends told me that it (German) was easy, and she who presented was nice.' [89]

Consequently, the rationale for choosing a specific Modern Language varies and the reasons behind the choice are numerous. Whether the participating students could make a well-informed choice or not can obviously be problematized and the question will be further discussed in the Discussion chapter.

5.1.2.1 Extra English and/or Swedish

During the road trip, it became clear that most students did not know of the alternative to choose extra English and/or Swedish. This alternative seemed to be restricted to newly arrived students who were encouraged to study Swedish or English, or to students with difficulties in other subjects or with special educational needs. Hence, both the structural context (curriculum) and the administrational context (local policy) affected students choosing Extra English/and or Swedish, albeit indirectly.

The last page of Q1 addressed students who intended to choose English and/or Swedish instead of a Modern Language. Out of 114 students, only two students responded to this section; it consisted of four statements using a Likert scale and two statements requiring open answers (see Appendix 1). In spite of this low number, these two students' responses divulged interesting information.

The first two statements concerned the rationale for choosing extra English and/or Swedish. Furthermore, the students were asked if they had been advised to choose Extra English/Swedish and if so, by whom. In addition, they could state if they wanted to study their mother tongue[90] instead of a new foreign language. The last question (an open question) asked why they did not intend to choose a Modern Language the following year.

The two respondents differed in their answers. The first one (a student with L1 Swedish) reported having been advised by the parents to choose extra English. When talking with this student, the reason behind the choice seemed to be difficulties in other school subjects. The other respondent (who had an L1 other than Swedish) stated a need to concentrate on English and learn more English because '*a lot of people speak English*'[91]. This student had, similar to the other respondent,

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89 "Många av mina äldre kompisar sa att det var lätt och hon som visade lite om tyska var snäll" (Q2, student T8)

90 "In this case, only one of the two students had another mother tongue than Swedish, and he/she did not want to study mother tongue within the Language Choice".

91 "Massa folk pratar engelska".

been advised by the parents to choose extra English. In addition to these two respondents, there were other students at the four schools who intended to choose extra English (or extra Swedish), but unfortunately, they did not answer Q1.

5.1.3 Beliefs about languages and language learning

One main theme in the analysis is students' beliefs – beliefs about and attitudes towards languages and places where languages are spoken, perceptions of language learning and expectations about what this learning might look like for the individual student. In order to investigate the beliefs that students hold in relation to languages and language learning, three questionnaires were used. These questionnaires generated a large amount of data. In the following, a selection made in relation to the research questions will be accounted for.

Besides investigating the rationale for the Language Choice, the first questionnaire aimed at covering students' interest in foreign languages as well as their attitudes towards language learning. The respondents answered using Likert scales ranging from 1 (disagree) to 4 (agree). Table 5 presents an overview of the nine items used in this domain and the results show an overall positive attitude towards language learning and an interest in foreign languages with mean values above 3 (i.e., most students agreed or agreed to some extent with the statement) for all items except one (the last item) as demonstrated below:

Table 5 Rank Order for Items Measuring Interest in Languages (Q1; *N* = 114)

Rank order	Items	*n*	*M*	StD
1	It will be fun learning a new language next year	114	3.79	.45
2	If I were to travel to other countries, I would want to understand…	114	3.76	.45
3	It would be fun to be able to speak several languages besides my mother tongue and English	114	3.68	.52
4	I would like to learn several foreign languages in the future	112	3.46	.66
5	It is fun to speak English	114	3.45	.64
6	I often watch videoclips in other languages than Swedish	114	3.20	.88
7	I admire people who can speak several different languages	113	3.19	.76
8	I believe learning English in school is enough [a]	112	3.16	.94
9	I think it's exciting watching films and listening to music in other languages than English and Swedish	113	2.84	.97

Note. Scores ranged from 1 (disagree) to 4 (agree).

Note. N stands for the entire sample, whilst *n* stands for the number of respondents for each item

ᵃ This item is reverse-coded, which means that the scale goes from 1 (agree) to 4 (disagree).

As can be seen, a majority of the students believed it would be fun to learn a new language the following year (the underlying item data show that as many as 81% of the students agreed to this statement) and nine out of ten would like to learn additional languages in the future. The majority (three out of four) did not think that learning English is enough in school. Their responses suggest an interest in and curiosity about foreign languages, also for languages other than English. However, the fact that the students only had four alternatives to choose from might have rendered results slightly too optimistic. Results from the other questionnaires showed that there were students who were more neutral in their expectations, and that some chose a Modern Language because they felt that they should or had to. These students might have ticked a more neutral box if the alternative had been given in Q1.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that foreign languages seem to be connected to positive experiences when travelling and many students stated that they regularly travel to other countries. The students' responses to the item 'It is fun to speak English' showed that 51% agreed with the statement and that 45% agreed to some extent. The statement concerns speaking English, and consequently it might not reflect what they think of learning English in school, but nevertheless, it mirrors a positive attitude towards English. This is further supported by the many respondents (82%) who claim that they regularly watch video clips on YouTube in other languages than Swedish. When asked in which language(s), the dominating answer was English (71%). In addition, when two languages were mentioned, English was one of them. The other languages mentioned were the mother tongues spoken by some of the students and Spanish, which was mentioned by 14 students. According to the open answers, an explanation for the amount of Spanish mentioned might be the fact that some students watch football clips on YouTube from the Spanish football league.

The last item 'I think it is exciting watching films and listening to music in other languages than English and Swedish' shows a somewhat lower mean value than for the other items. This could be explained by the fact that the young respondents might have had little experience of films and music in other languages, at least to date. Despite a fairly positive attitude towards media in foreign languages, very few seemed to watch or listen to music in other languages than Swedish and English. During the interviews, almost none of the students stated that they watched films, video clips or listened to music in the target language. Obviously, they might en-

counter languages other than French, German, or Spanish on social media, in films or in music, but none of the students mentioned any other languages in relation to this question. Another explanation might be the fairly homogeneous sample in which only few respondents have another L1 than Swedish.

Further, interest in languages can be shown in a desire to learn other foreign languages in the future, which was one of the questions asked in Q1. The students had a list of 12 languages to choose from, but they could also add languages that were not on the list. The 12 languages were all languages which are among the most studied languages in Swedish schools and universities and added to that list were the largest migrant languages in Sweden in spring 2019, namely Finnish, Arabic, Bosnian Serbian-Croatian, Kurdish, and Persian.[92]

Table 6 Distribution of Languages Students Want to Learn in the Future (Q1; *N* = 114)

Languages	*n*	%
Spanish	73	64
French	59	52
Italian	55	48
German	43	38
Japanese	25	22
Chinese (Mandarin)	25	22
Finnish	23	20
Russian	19	17
Arabic	12	11
Bosnian Serbian Croatian	10	9
Kurdish	7	6
Persian/Farsi	7	6
Other languages[93]	13	11

Note. The students could mark several languages on the list. Further, they could add other languages that they wished to learn in the future.

The languages most attractive to learn in the future appeared to be Spanish, French, Italian, and German. Three of these languages were the languages available at Meadow School, and they are the common languages within the subject of Mod-

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92 When Questionnaire 1 was constructed, the languages mentioned above were referred to as the largest migrant languages in Sweden (Swedish Language Council). For an updated ranking list, see 2.1.

93 Other languages mentioned are Norwegian (n=3), Latin (n=2), Portuguese (n=2), Albanian, Danish, Flemish, Greek, Irish and Lithuanian (all mentioned once).

ern Languages in the Swedish curricula, (i.e., French, German, and Spanish). The largest migrant languages, apart from Spanish, did not seem to attract the students participating in this study, possibly with the exception for Finnish, which was chosen by 20% of the students. When piloting the questionnaire in another school (*N* = 26), and in a group with a larger number of migrant children (62%), there were no sizeable differences between the pilot school and Meadow School in relation to which languages they wanted to learn. The students in the pilot group also wanted to learn Spanish (92%), French (70%) and Italian and German (50%). However, 27% of the students in that pilot group also wanted to learn Arabic.

The domain *Wanting to learn* also refers to the main theme of learner beliefs, that is, attitudes, affective influences, and expectations about languages and language learning that students hold prior to their Language Choice. Results from Q1 show that the large majority of students expect the new subject to be fun and interesting, but perhaps a bit difficult. Furthermore, the students were asked about their perceptions of the sound of French/German/Spanish to know more about the students' attitudes towards the three languages. The students marked the alternative(s) they believed were accurate in relation to the sound of the languages, choosing from four alternatives (nice, not nice, cool, strange) and they could also add their own comments. The students' attitudes are displayed in Table 7:

Table 7 Distribution of the Students Responses Regarding the Sound of the Languages (Q1; *N* = 114)

The sound of the language	'nice'	'not nice'	'cool'	'strange'	Different combinations of the four alternatives
The French language sounds (*n* = 102)	35%	2%	12%	22%	29%
The German language sounds (*n* = 96)	13%	10%	19%	37%	21%
The Spanish language sounds (*n* = 103)	35%	3%	17%	11%	34%

Note. The students could mark several alternatives.

From the table above, we can see that Spanish, which, by far, is the most popular Language Choice, is mostly accompanied by positive connotations regarding the sound of the language (only three students stated that Spanish did not sound nice).

As for French, only two students stated that they thought the language did not sound nice. When ticking several boxes, the students had mostly marked nice and strange, followed by cool. The sound of German was accompanied by several combinations of the adjectives among the students, such as being both nice, not nice, cool, and strange at the same time. The adjective marked with most crosses was strange (37%) followed by cool (19%). However, 15 students had marked 'not nice' for German (or marked a combination where 'not nice' was included). The students could also write their own opinions about the sound of the different languages, but very few made a comment. One comment which occurred for all the three languages was 'I do not know' (10 times).

5.1.4 Motivation

A recurring focal point in this study is motivation for language learning (see Figure 3), which may be seen as one aspect of the beliefs learners hold about their language learning. Hence, the motivational aspect was investigated in all three questionnaires with items deriving from the AMTB-scale (Gardner, 1985). However, there was a need to adapt the items and the size of the questionnaires in relation to the respondents' age and to the learning context. Consequently, the motivational construct was restricted to a few concepts (which to some extent also overlapped one another), namely, interest in languages, attitudes towards language learning, extrinsic motivation, and parental encouragement (see further details about the construct in Table 2, p. 93). Q1 was conducted with a larger sample than the following two; furthermore, the Likert scale was changed (from four alternatives to five), due to test-taker feedback. This change in the Likert scale complicates strict comparisons between the three questionnaires (see further Chapter 4).

5.1.4.1 Before the start

Q1 contained six items aiming at measuring the students' motivation prior to their learning in year 6. The rank order, mean values and standard deviations of the six items are displayed in Table 8:

Table 8 Rank Order for Items Measuring Motivation for Language Learning (Q1; *N* = 114)

Rank order	Items	*n*	*M*	*SD*
1	It is important to know languages if/when you travel abroad	108	3.51	.57
2	It is important to speak to different people in their own language	107	3.33	.66
3	It is important to know languages if you want to get a good job in the future	110	3.26	.74
4	I choose to learn a new language because I enjoy learning languages	106	3.18	.86
5	In the future I think it will be enough if I know Swedish and English [a]	106	2.98	1.01
6	My parents think it is important (encourage me) to learn a new language	95	2.87	1.07

Note. Scores ranged from 1 (disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

[a] This item was reverse-coded which means that the scale is reversed and goes from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (disagree).

Closer inspection of Table 8 shows rather high mean values (*M* = > 3), indicating a positive attitude towards languages and language learning. However, the last two items have mean values below three and a larger variation (standard deviation) within the answers; 30% of the respondents believed that it will probably suffice to know English and Swedish in the future and 32% stated that their parents did not encourage them to learn a new foreign language.

5.1.4.2 In the middle of the first year

Motivation in language learning was further investigated in the following question-naire that was answered at the beginning of the second term of year 6. In Q2 (*N* =38) the respondents were to react to several statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree). Hence, the Likert scale had been changed and had a neutral alternative in the middle (3 = 'neither agree, nor disa-gree'). 11 items aimed to measure motivation for language learning (including the following concepts: intrinsic motivation/attitudes towards FLs, extrinsic motiva-tion, and parental encouragement) and in addition, four items aimed to measure foreign language anxiety (see below). Out of the former 11 items, 10 items were anchor items, meaning that the students responded to these items in both Q2 and Q3. A reliability analysis of the 11 items gave a Cronbach's Alpha value of = .87

which is considered a good value for internal consistency (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Ranking order, mean values and standard deviations are summarized in Table 9:

Table 9 Rank Order for Items Measuring Motivation for Language Learning (Q2; *N* = 38)

Rank order	Items	*n*	*M*	*StD*
1	It is important to learn foreign languages if you will travel abroad	38	4.29	.90
2	If needed, I can get help with my French/German/Spanish homework	37	4.22	.98
3	I look forward to learning more French/German/Spanish	38	3.89	1.01
4	It is important to know foreign languages if you want to get a good job…	38	3.87	.91
5	Studying French/German/Spanish will be useful to me in the future	38	3.82	.96
6	I enjoy learning French/German/Spanish	37	3.81	1.02
7	It is important to be able to speak to different people…	38	3.61	.82
8	I chose to learn a new language because I enjoy learning languages	38	3.53	1.27
9	My parents believe it is important that I learn another foreign language...	36	3.36	1.07
10	French/German/Spanish is an important subject	38	3.16	1.00
11	In the future, I think it will be enough if I can speak Swedish and English[a]	38	2.34	1.12

[a] This item was reverse-coded, which means that the scale is reversed and goes from 1 (agree) to 5 (disagree).

As demonstrated in Table 9, the mean values are relatively high for almost all 11 items, indicating that most responding students were motivated in their learning of French/German/Spanish. The item that received the highest mean is 'It is important to know languages if you will travel abroad' which indicates that travelling seems to be a strong incentive for learning (Modern) Languages. Furthermore, out of 38 students, as many as 25 (66%) stated that knowing languages could be useful in the future, and 24 (63%) agreed or agreed to some extent with the statement that languages could be useful if you want to get a good job. These two statements could be seen as an example of extrinsic motivation (see Table 2, p. 93) and show that many students are motivated by external factors. On the one hand, they are

aware that it could be useful to succeed in languages in their schooling or in their future careers; on the other hand, roughly one out of three students did not seem to be motivated by this incentive.

Three items measured a positive attitude[94] but could also be referred to as language learner enjoyment. ('I enjoy learning French/German/Spanish'; 'I chose to learn a new language because I enjoy learning languages'; 'I look forward to learning more French/German/Spanish'). However, closer inspection of the underlying item data displays that as many as 18 students, (i.e., almost half of the sample) did not agree (or neither agreed nor disagreed) with the statement 'I chose to learn a new language because I enjoy learning languages'.

In relation to parental engagement and support, three out of four students stated that they could get help with their homework in Modern Languages. When asked by whom, most students declared that their parents could normally assist them, while others mentioned their siblings or classmates. The analysis of the item 'My parents think it is important that I learn another foreign language' shows that the majority of the respondents, 20 students (53%) did not agree or were neutral to this statement. Hence, most students in the current study did not seem to believe that their learning of French/German/Spanish was particularly important to their parents/legal guardians. This perception of low parental engagement is also supported by the last two items on the ranking list above ('French/German/Spanish is an important school subject' and 'In the future, I think it will be enough if I can speak Swedish and English'); 21 students (55%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and another 11 (29%) neither agreed nor disagreed. The seemingly low signs of parental engagement and the perception of the Modern Language as not very important may seem contradictory, given the positive attitudes to many of the previous statements, and will be further discussed in the following chapter.

In addition to the 11 items above, four items in Q2 aimed to measure foreign language anxiety (FLA). These items originate from the FLCAS scale (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, Horowitz et al., 1986) and were calculated into one variable measuring the mean score value of FLA with a Cronbach's Alpha value of $\alpha =.74$, which is considered an acceptable reliability value for internal consistency (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). In Table 10 below, the rank order for the four statements is presented.

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94   In the AMTB-scale (Gardner, 1985), these items were referred to attitudes towards learning a foreign language.

Table 10 Rank Order for Items Measuring FLA (Q2; *N* = 38)

Rank order	Items	*n*	*M*	*StD*
1	I am worried about saying or doing something wrong during lessons	38	2.87	1.19
2	I am worried when speaking in French, German, or Spanish class	38	2.86	1.16
3	I get nervous if I don't understand what my teacher is saying…	38	2.50	.89
4	I am worried that someone will laugh at me if I do or say something wrong…	38	2.47	1.27

Note. The scale ranged from 1 (disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

The table illustrates a rather low value of FLA in the Modern Language classrooms in this study. Most students stated that they were not anxious if they did not understand what the teacher said in the target language, and only four students in the sample expressed anxiety in relation to this statement. However, there were some students who responded that they felt anxious or nervous when speaking in the target language; one student out of four worried about speaking in the classroom, about saying or doing something wrong during Modern Language class or worried that someone would laugh if they did or said something wrong. When investigating the results for FLA further, the analysis shows that the girls in the sample seemed to be more anxious than the boys in the Modern Language classroom[95], as shown in Table 11 below:

Table 11 Anxiety – Gender Differences (Q2; *N* = 38)

	Girls (*n* = 20)		Boys (*n* = 18)		All students (*N* = 38)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Mean Anxiety	3.00	.69	2.33	.88	2.68	.85

This finding is in line with previous research which has shown that girls seem to be slightly more anxious than boys in the foreign language classroom (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele, 2017; Nikolov, 1999); this will be further discussed in the following chapter.

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95 Statistically checked using a Mann-Whitney U Test: Boys (Md= 2.13, *n* = 18) and girls (Md = 3.13, *n* = 20), U = 88.50, z = - 2.69, p = .006, r = -0.44. (NB: the small size of the sample (N = 38).

5.1.4.3 At the end of the second term

The last questionnaire (Q3) was conducted in May 2020. The respondents (N = 54) reacted to the same 10 anchor items which were used in Q2, and the same Likert scale was used (ranging from 1 'disagree' to 5 'agree'). The sample of respondents was extended by 18 students from the other French class at Meadow School. The statistical analysis of the 10 items measuring motivational aspects in relation to languages and language learning yielded a Cronbach's alpha of α = .87, which is considered a good value of internal consistency (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Table 12 gives an overview of the 10 items in descending order:

Table 12 Rank Order for Items Measuring Motivation for Language Learning (Q3; N = 54)

Rank order	Items	n	M	SD
1	It is important to learn foreign languages if you will travel abroad	54	4.02	.86
2	Studying French/German/Spanish will be useful to me in the future	54	3.65	1.18
3	It is important to know foreign languages if you want to get a good job…	54	3.59	.90
3	I look forward to learning more French/German/Spanish	54	3.59	1.04
5	I enjoy learning French/German/Spanish	54	3.54	.97
6	It is important to be able to speak to different people…	54	3.52	1.00
7	I chose to learn a new language because I enjoy learning languages	54	3.39	1.12
8	My parents believe it is important that I learn another foreign language...	54	3.07	1.16
9	French/German/Spanish is an important subject	53	3.06	1.06
10	In the future, I think it will be enough if I can speak Swedish and English [a]	54	2.50	1.12

Note. The scale ranged from 1 (disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Note. Two items are ranked as no. 3.

[a] This item was reverse-coded which means that the scale is reversed and goes from 1 (agree) to 5 (disagree)

The results in Table 12 are in line with the findings from the second questionnaire, following roughly the same rank order with one exception, namely the item 'Studying French/German/Spanish will be useful to me in the future' which changed

to second place (instead of fourth) in this third questionnaire. The last item 'In the future, I think it will be enough if I can speak Swedish and English' also showed a slight increase of students who believed that it will probably not be enough to know only these two languages in the future (26%), ($M = 2.34$ in Q2 compared to $M = 2.50$ in Q3)[96]. However, the majority (54%) still believed that knowing English and Swedish would suffice, whereas 20% neither agreed, nor disagreed with the statement.

5.1.4.4 *Further analyses in relation to motivation*

Although gender was not included in the research questions, the data made possible a cautious comparison between genders as well as comparison between the three Modern Language classes. In the first questionnaire, the boys seemed to be slightly more motivated than the girls. In the second questionnaire, the results were reversed (i.e., the mean score value for boys was higher than the mean score value for girls). In the last questionnaire, the boys displayed, once again, a slightly higher motivational mean value than the girls. Hence, findings from the three questionnaires show that there are no major differences in motivation between boys and girls in the current study. Further, statistical analyses comparing differences between the three Modern Language groups concluded that the differences were very small between the groups, that the motivational mean value was highest for the French group, followed by the German and Spanish group (in that order). However, given the small sample in all three questionnaires, the results need to be interpreted with great caution. These differences may very well be connected to contextual features, such as group dynamics and organisational issues and will be further discussed in the following chapter.

As pointed out previously, the respondents are not identical in Q2 and Q3. Therefore, only those students who answered Q2 and Q3 ($N = 29$) were compared in the analysis of motivational mean score values over time (i.e., after one term of learning and after two terms). In the sample of 29 students (16 girls and 13 boys), the distribution between the three languages was quite similar (11 students learning German, 10 students learning French and 8 students learning Spanish). As pointed out in the conceptual background, the motivational constructs investigated in the questionnaires derive from the original AMTB-scale (Gardner, 1985) and are shown in Table 13 below (see also Table 3, p. 101). The items used in each construct were computed into three mean score values to facilitate a comparison be-

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96 The item was reverse-coded, hence a higher mean value indicates that more students disagreed with the statement.

tween the two datasets. The mean values and standard deviation values are displayed in Table 13:

Table 13 Comparison Q2 and Q3 (*N* = 29)

	Q2		Q3	
	M	*StD*	*M*	*StD*
Motivation for language learning (items 1- 10)	3.58	.75	3.40	.66
Intrinsic motivation/Attitudes towards FLs (items 4, 8, 10)	3.76	1.03	3.55	.77
Extrinsic motivation (items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)	3.59	.72	3.41	.80
Parental engagement (item 7)	3.24	.89	3.14	.83

Note. The scale ranged from 1 (disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

The analysis shows that the mean score value in Q3 ($M = 3.40$, $SD = .66$) had decreased compared to the mean score value in Q2 ($M = 3.58$, $SD = .75$) and that this decline is rather small[97]. However, it shows that motivation for language learning dropped slightly during this first year on a general level, which is in line with the findings from Henry & Apelgren (2008). It is important, though, that on an individual level, motivation can both increase and decrease during this first year of learning; this fluctuation will be further returned to in section 5.4.

5.2 Learning

The second research question, 'What learning and teaching practices are manifested in the language classroom and how are these practices experienced by the students?' refers to the domain 'Learning'. All three main themes (i.e., context, agency, and beliefs) are relevant in this domain. The data derive from classroom observations, interviews, and Q2 and Q3. Initially, Meadow School will be presented more thoroughly in order to describe the learning setting and the three language classes (i.e., the local and pedagogical context). Thereafter, the teaching and learning activities (i.e., the pedagogical context) will be described and then followed with a final section with the students' perspective on learning a Modern Language (i.e., agency and beliefs).

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97   A Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to statistically check for significant difference. It revealed that the results were not statistically significant. (Questionnaire 2 median score was *Md* = 3.70 and the median score Questionnaire 3 *Md* = 3.50, z = -1.49, p = .14.).

5.2.1 Meadow School

Meadow School was built in the late 1970s and could probably be characterized as being out of date and quite timeworn. The atmosphere in the school is welcoming and open, both among teachers and students. There are several language teachers at Meadow School which means that every language teacher has at least one colleague teaching the same subject. In school year 2019/2020, there were four teachers of Spanish, two of German and two of French. All teachers were certified language teachers, except three in Spanish. The teachers of the same language cooperate to some extent (more in Spanish than in the other two languages), and there is also some collaboration among all language teachers. The year preceding the study, and supported by the school principals, the teachers of Modern Languages participated in an online course, initiated by the NAE implementing a teacher in-service material called 'Språksprånget' ('the Language Leap'). One of the teachers of Spanish (Ellenor), who is also one of the participants in this project, is the lead teacher ('förstelärare') of Modern Languages and she initiated and organized this in-service training.

The classrooms at Meadow School might be characterized as quite impersonal, where some rooms have been neglected and need a make-over, but they are all digitally equipped with projectors, whiteboards, loudspeakers and free wi-fi. All students in the municipality have their own laptops from year 4, which they are supposed to bring to each lesson. The classrooms used for Modern Languages in the study were ordinary classrooms and not especially equipped as a language classroom (e.g., with material such as posters, maps, and literature in the target languages). In the current study, the French group and the Spanish group had their lessons on Wednesday mornings between 8.00 to 9.20 and these lessons were located in the same classroom during the whole school year. The German group, however, had two lessons per week (40 minutes each), and this group changed classrooms over the school year. One of the German lessons took place in an ordinary classroom, whereas the other one was in a chemistry classroom or in a classroom for art education. These two latter classrooms were not ideal from a language teaching perspective, since the tables could not easily be moved when the teacher wanted the students to sit in small groups of four.

As previously mentioned, the students in school year 6 came from four different schools to attend their Modern Language classes. They were put into different groups which meant that they only knew some of the other students in the group and in some cases very few or none. Consequently, the three teachers wanted the

students to get to know each other in order to enhance a positive pedagogical environment for learning. One method was to arrange the tables into groups of four (also referred to as 'islands') and to change these groups a number of times during the school year. Furthermore, the arrangement of 'islands' was intended to facilitate collaborative work and oral exercises during class.

Further, the students were supposed to bring their laptops to all lessons, including Modern Language class. The digital tool used at Meadow School was called 'Classroom' and the language teachers had created their own digital classroom for their group. The tool offered possibilities to provide an overview for the coming week(s), planned homework, tasks which could be done online and digital links to educational tools. The students could also submit oral and written assignments to their teachers.

5.2.2 The three Modern Language classes

In the following section, based on the classroom observations and field notes, the three language classes will be presented, starting with the largest group (Spanish) followed by the second largest (German) and ending with the small group of French learners.

5.2.2.1 The Spanish class

The Spanish class consisted of 26 students (in the beginning of the autumn they were 28), 13 boys and 13 girls. The students came from three different classes at two different schools in rural areas and they took the bus to Meadow School on Wednesday mornings to have their Spanish lesson. There was hardly room for the students in the Spanish class as every seat was taken in the classroom.

The teacher of Spanish, referred to as Ellenor in the current study, has taught Spanish for 12 years. She is also the lead teacher of Modern languages at Meadow School. At the same time as Ellenor taught her group, another group had Spanish with their teacher in a classroom nearby. The other teacher allowed the group a short break in the middle of the lesson. This short break was, however, not allowed in Ellenor's group. She referred to the school regulations and the fact that the students are entitled to a certain amount of teaching; consequently, a break in the middle would lead to a lack of instruction time. This caused recurring discussions during the autumn term, often initiated by the same students.

Mixing students from different schools and classes seemed to have caused tension in the Spanish group, which was sometimes shown in difficulties to maintain

good discipline during lessons. Ellenor had arranged the students in groups of four and, from time to time, she changed the group constellations. Occasionally, the arrangement of groups was not easily accomplished. Some of the students protested and only wanted to sit with someone they already knew, but the protests were not fervent, and they eventually agreed to sit in the assigned places. Furthermore, there were some students who seemed to need extra support in their learning. Ellenor had, however, not received any specific information about these students, which was a concern to her.

The teaching material in the Spanish class was mainly distributed via computer. Ellenor used the 'Classroom' digital resource where she uploaded learning materials such as digital links, texts, and exercises. She also used paper copies (with different exercises), and all students had a notebook for vocabulary. However, the students forgot their computers from time to time, as well as their battery charger and notebook. They seldom brought pencils or paper, which were then distributed by Ellenor when needed. When students had forgotten their computers, Ellenor always had another solution which normally implied her bringing extra material, such as paper, pencils, erasers, and paper copies. When the students were supposed to listen individually, (e.g., to a listening exercise), she also brought a whole box of headphones, and sometimes the students could borrow iPads during class.

When meeting the Spanish students for the first time in September, they worked with vocabulary to describe their families. Ellenor presented her family in a short text on the projector, and the students could thereafter write a few sentences about their own family with the help of the phrases provided by Ellenor's text. In addition, they had just learnt how to count to ten in Spanish, and they continued to learn the numbers up to 20.

5.2.2.2 The German class

The German class consisted of 17 students (eight boys and nine girls). The teacher, henceforward referred to as Viveka, is an experienced language teacher who has taught German and English for many years. However, this was her first year of teaching Modern Languages to students in year 6 since the curricula changed in 2011. The German group had their lessons on Monday afternoons and on Friday mornings. The students came from four different classes, but from the same school which is located just a few minutes away from Meadow School. Consequently, the students could easily walk between the two schools. Although the schedule allowed the students plenty of time to get from their school to Meadow

School, some students were sometimes late and forgot to bring their computers, books, and pencils.

All the students in the group might not have known each other very well, but they seemed to know of each other by name and appearance. Viveka had divided the students into groups of four and these groups were re-arranged on a regular basis to allow the students to get to know each other better. The arrangement of tables was easily accomplished in the 'normal' classroom on Mondays, but on Friday mornings when the lesson was held in the classroom for art education, rearranging the tables was not easily done. The students could therefore, on some occasions, arrange the seating themselves, and sit with whoever they wanted. During the spring term, the Monday lesson was in a chemistry classroom which entailed the same difficulty of arranging tables of four.

Each student had his/her own combined text- and workbook. The students were supposed to use the computer when writing vocabulary, for example, and save their files in their personal folder for learning German in 'Classroom'. Occasionally, they forgot their computers and therefore Viveka brought pencils and papers to the lessons. The students also worked with exercises on paper and therefore needed to bring a pencil to class. In addition to extra books, paper and pencils, Viveka also brought a cd-player to all lessons since the textbook only had one cd-record (for the teacher) with all the texts and listening exercises.

When I first visited the German group in September 2019, the students were learning different colours in German. They were able to state which colour they preferred by saying '*Meine Lieblingsfarbe ist…*' and the colours of their clothes they were wearing that day.

5.2.2.3 *The French class*

The French class consisted of six students (four boys and two girls) who came from three different schools in rural areas. Hence, they came by bus to Meadow School every Wednesday morning to have their Modern Language class. The teacher, referred to as Charlotta, is an experienced teacher who has taught French for almost 20 years. When the first classroom observation took place, the students had learnt French for approximately one month. They started by telling me everything that they had learnt so far – and it was clear that they were quite proud of themselves. They were able to introduce themselves in French and they also asked me about my name and where I lived and how old I was (more or less in French).

The students sat together around one large table (where six tables were put together). They did not have a textbook, but Charlotta sometimes brought some

(old) textbooks to class. Furthermore, she used paper copies with different exercises and all students had their own notebook for writing down words or phrases. The 'Classroom' digital platform was also used in the French classroom where the students could find different kinds of learning materials. Charlotta always brought extra paper and pencils for those who might have forgotten to bring their own material or computer to class.

On some occasions, there was a student assistant who accompanied one of the students to French class. He was a former student of Charlotta's (not in French though) at Meadow School and he gladly participated in all learning activities during class. Charlotta had not received any information about why this student assistant was present and why the student needed help during class.

5.2.3 Teaching and learning

The two concepts of teaching and learning are interdependent and intertwined in an educational context where learning processes are mostly initiated, and hopefully developed, through teaching activities. The teaching practices are influenced by societal and cultural norms as well as educational standards which might change over time. Hence, both the structural context and the pedagogical context are visible in the activities in the language classrooms. In the current study, the three Modern Language classes obviously differed regarding language, size, and teacher, but there were also many similarities in relation to teaching and learning practices. These similarities were, for example, shown in the common teaching practices, in common learning content, and learning activities. In this section, fieldnotes taken during classroom observations and quotations from student interviews are combined with data emanating from the second questionnaire, conducted at the beginning of the spring term of year 6.

5.2.3.1 Learning a new language

In line with the syllabus in Modern Languages, the learning content in the three classrooms was centred around personal areas, such as family, interests, places, and the people in students' personal vicinity. The language learning started with phrases of introduction (i.e., how to introduce oneself and to ask someone else about their name and age) and was subsequently extended with other areas involving more vocabulary and phrases. Step by step, the students broadened their vocabulary with nouns for family and family members, animals and activities, adjectives for colours and quality and a few verbs expressing common everyday activi-

ties. Classroom vocabulary was introduced at an early stage of the learning and the students learnt to understand some frequent phrases used by the teacher for classroom management, for example '*sit down please*', '*please listen*', '*repeat after me*' etc. These common practices described above were visible in all three Modern Language groups. Further, the classroom observations showed that pronunciation played an important role during the entire first year. Focus was on listening and repeating after the teacher and pronouncing the new language, and less attention was paid on writing and spelling (which is in line with the syllabus(es) for school year 6)[98]. Charlotta, Ellenor, and Viveka consistently encouraged their students to repeat words and phrases, and they also asked their students to imitate and exaggerate the sound of the language. When the students pronounced and imitated, they were rewarded with a '*super*', '*muy bien'* or '*très bien'*!

The teachers often emphasized borrowings and related words in relation to Swedish, English and the target language. The students were encouraged to guess the meaning of new words and phrases and urged not to be afraid of answering or pronouncing incorrectly. The importance of 'trying and daring' to speak was stressed in all three classrooms.

In all three Modern Language classes, routines were important, for example, homework once a week. When arriving in class, Ellenor, Viveka and Charlotta always greeted and welcomed their students in Spanish, German, and French. The lessons normally started and ended in the same way when the teacher presented the content of the day's lesson (written either on the whiteboard or on the projector screen) and told the students how to work with this specific content.

Furthermore, the metacognitive skill of learning how to learn a language seemed to be important in all three classrooms. Hence, strategies for learning in general, as well as for learning languages, were discussed and exemplified. Examples of how to learn new vocabulary and to remember the homework were provided in all three classrooms.

5.2.3.2 Teaching young language learners

Teaching young students, such as the 12-year-olds in this study, requires an adaptation to the students' age and maturity. With this adaptation, openness and flexibility seemed to be expected skills from the teachers. When interacting during class, quite often the students were spontaneous and shared their reactions, thoughts, and reflections orally with everybody in the classroom. Sometimes their

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98 Curricula Lgr11 and Lgr22.

questions or comments moved the focus away from the teaching and lesson con‐
tent: '*How did you learn German, Viveka?*'; '*Whose classroom is this?*'; '*If I get everything
right on the vocabulary test, will I get an A?*' Charlotta, Ellenor and Viveka did not seem
bothered by these interruptions; on the contrary, they tried to accommodate the
students by answering and discussing their comments.

In addition, there was a playfulness in the language classrooms where several
of the senses were involved in the learning. At times, the students were engaged in
games, for example, throwing a ball to each other, asking a question in the target
language which the person receiving the ball needed to answer before throwing it
to another student; they competed when doing online quizzes and they presented
their written dialogues as roleplays. When learning new vocabulary, colour pencils
were used to colour their vocabulary, such as fruits, clothes, and maps. They also
used scissors to cut the vocabulary into small paper notes which were used in in‐
teraction. Furthermore, the students were constantly encouraged in their learning:
'*Do you realize how fast you learn new words! That's how your brain works!*'[99]

However, at times, the age and maturity of the students made teaching quite
demanding. For example, the students in year 6 did not normally have lessons
which were 80 minutes in duration, so the language teachers needed to vary the
learning activities to maintain their students' concentration and energy during
class. The students' energy often decreased after some 30 minutes, and some stu‐
dents started to move around in the classroom or even change places. In the Span‐
ish classroom where every seat was taken, this changing of places caused reoccur‐
ring disturbances. As shown in the following excerpt from the fieldnotes taken,
several students obviously did not want to sit where they were assigned to sit, and
they took every opportunity to change places or just to move their chair and sit
near another table.

> Ellenor (the teacher of Spanish) has assigned all students a specific seat. She
> circulates in the classroom, tries to check the homework, and helps the stu‐
> dents with their tasks (they are writing down vocabulary to describe their
> families in their notebook). She hands out pencils for those that have forgot‐
> ten their pencil. Suddenly, Ellenor realizes that there are several students who
> are not seated where they should be. They repeatedly leave their seats to find
> their friends in other seats in the classroom. Ellenor makes them go back to
> their seats and she explains why they are to sit at their assigned seat. 'It is
> important that you sit at your own seat. We should get to know everybody in
> the group'. (Field notes)

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99 "Märker ni vad fort ni lär er nya ord! Hjärnan är så bra!" (Charlotta)

This mostly happened towards the end of the lessons, when the students were supposed to work in groups or individually with a task. Ellenor sometimes gave up and probably pretended that she did not see the new seating. Students moving around in the classroom also happened in the German group even though their lessons were only 40 minutes long; some students needed to move about. Their excuses for moving around could, for example, include to sharpen their pencils or to go to the lavatories.

5.2.3.3 The computer as a tool for learning

As previously mentioned, the students in year 6 had their own laptops which they were supposed to bring to all classes, including their Modern Language class. The computer offered several advantages, for example when writing in a shared document or when practicing vocabulary using digital tools, which helped the students with pronunciation. In addition, assignments could be submitted both orally and in writing using the 'Classroom' digital tool. Further, the computer could provide the students with authentic material in the TL. However, the use of laptops also caused inconveniences in the Modern Language classrooms:

> The students enter the classroom, one after another, and when everyone seems to have arrived, Viveka greets them with a welcome. The learning content is presented on the whiteboard, mainly in Swedish, but with a few words in German. Thereafter, the students are requested to write down new vocabulary on their computer; this takes endless time – to start the computer, to find a working charger, to find a pen for those who have forgotten their computer and to sharpen their pencils. When all the students with a computer have finally succeeded to log in and have written down the new vocabulary, it is time to close the computer. (Field notes)

Even though the students at first seemed acquainted with the computer, quite a few of them had problems finding their way into and manoeuvring in the digital 'Classroom'. Quite often, just starting the laptops during class took a considerable amount of time, for example, logging into the computer, finding the right webpage, the laptop needing to be charged, a lack of working chargers and the seduction of surfing into other sites than the one presently assigned. These inconveniences are, however, not only true for year 6, but also applicable for older students.

5.2.3.4 The four skills

In the three classrooms observed, the teaching was based on the core content in the syllabus of Modern Languages with a focus on both receptive and productive

skills (i.e., listening, reading, speaking, and writing in the target language), and during most lessons there was normally time for each activity. Common practices when working with receptive skills in the Modern Language classes were short listening exercises, listening to (and repeating after) the teachers, listening to music in the target language or watching short TV series produced by Utbildningsradion[100] (UR) or on YouTube in the target language. The short series used are produced by UR and made for language learners in the beginning of their learning and they are subtitled in either Swedish or in the target language. Most students seemed to enjoy these programmes which are both informative and rather playful and humorous. One of the series appreciated by all three groups was 'Kamikaze', which has a French, a German, and a Spanish version. All episodes are between 5 and 7 minutes long and the protagonist (a young girl or boy) must accomplish a 'mission' in the target language without prior knowledge in French/German/Spanish. The mission could be to 'invite a guy to coffee' or 'go to a record store and buy your favourite music' and the protagonists always succeed in the end of each episode. The other receptive skill, reading, was at this stage of the learning process mostly performed when reading words, sentences, and short texts (often dialogues) in the target language. Sometimes, the students read authentic texts where they were encouraged to guess the meaning and reach a global comprehension of what the text might be about, for example, by trying to recognize words that might be the same or similar in other known languages.

In terms of productive skills of writing and speaking, there were many similarities in the teaching practices between the three classrooms; for example, at the beginning of the autumn, the focus was on copying words and phrases provided by the teacher, but also on writing sentences using short example texts. Reading served as inspiration for the students' own writing. In all three language classes, the students wrote a short text introducing themselves, which was expanded as they learnt more in the target language. These texts were about their families, where they lived, their interests and were gradually developed when more information (and vocabulary) were added. At times, the students produced text together in pairs, for example, a short dialogue or an interview. The excerpt below shows how two students in the French class created a dialogue set in a clothes shop:

> The students are to write a dialogue in a shared document. The dialogue is to
> involve some kind of buying and selling. They work in pairs; one student is

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100 Utbildningsradion (UR) is the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company.

> the buyer, and the other is the seller. Lisa and Joel decided on a shop for clothes. Charlotta shows them a site where they can find names for clothes, such as hoodies and flared trousers. The task is to present the dialogue as a roleplay and show it to me the next time I will be present (i.e., in two weeks). They can decide the content of the dialogue themselves. Lisa and Joel discuss the shopping scene, they laugh, and Lisa says that the customer will be really demanding. Meanwhile, Charlotta helps another student who is working on his own (his 'buyer' is not present). (Field notes)

The co-writing of the dialogue engaged the students and they tried to make it as authentic as possible. They seemed to enjoy the task and made sure that their sentences were comprehensible and that they could pronounce them correctly. In addition, they audio-recorded the dialogue and handed it in on 'Classroom' to Charlotta to be assessed. The Spanish group also made their own interviews, working in pairs; one student pretended to be a famous Spanish-speaking person being interviewed by the other student. In addition, the students wrote a text about their own municipality, where they started by reading an example text and then wrote a similar text of their own. In this text, the students could write in both Spanish and Swedish.

With respect to the oral production (i.e., speaking), the students were often encouraged to speak in the target language to each other during class. When having learnt a new phrase, they learnt how to ask each other a question which enabled them to use the new phrase when answering. Other opportunities for oral production and interaction were to check the homework orally in pairs, to mingle in the classroom with a set of prepared questions and to perform dialogues or role plays. These roleplays were sometimes performed in front of the class and/or recorded in a sound file which was put into 'Classroom' and later assessed by the teacher. The teachers tried to speak to each student during class by moving around in the classroom, and often by asking a question in the target language. Naturally, this was of more easily accomplished in the French and German classes where there were fewer students than in the Spanish class. However, despite plenty of opportunities to speak the target language during class, most students seemed rather reluctant to speak the foreign language. The teachers had to be persistent in their encouragement of oral activities, and most of the time the students reverted to speaking in Swedish after having pronounced a few words in the target language.

> After checking the homework with a short vocabulary test, the students are told to talk to each other in their groups of four. They should ask each other which colour is their favourite colour and hopefully succeed to ask one or two questions more in the TL. Ellenor has provided them with sentences to

> use. The students seem anxious about speaking, they say their sentence very quickly and whether their interlocutor actually understood their answer is hard to tell (probably not). Ellenor insists 'Do the exercise one more time' but most students have already reverted to talking in Swedish instead. (Field notes)

Sometimes the students were encouraged to mingle in the classroom, following a protocol which included several questions that they should ask their interlocutors:

> The students start to mingle with their protocols. They are to find someone who was born in January, February etc. and ask him/her on which date. Ellenor encourages them to dare to ask each other. At first, the mingle works surprisingly well, although some mingle more than others. Some students seem a bit reluctant to start talking with people they do not know. After a while, the majority talk more in Swedish than in Spanish. The sound level is rather high, and Ellenor tries to calm things down (some students even run around). The mingle eventually has to stop before everybody has had a chance to finish their protocol. (Field notes)

Hence, although there were numerous possibilities to speak in the target language, many students seemed rather reluctant to participate in various activities which involved speaking in the target language.

5.2.3.5 Target language use

When investigating the teaching practices in the three Modern Language classrooms, one important aspect is the language used as a medium of instruction. This is also part of the pedagogical context. Findings show that the main language used by both teachers and students was Swedish. The TL was primarily used in the beginning of the lessons when the teacher welcomed the students and/or introducing the content of the lesson. Furthermore, the TL was used when pronouncing or reading an instruction, when checking the homework or asking specific questions which the students were supposed to answer in French/German/Spanish. Apart from these activities, the classroom language was mainly Swedish. However, in one classroom, the TL was more frequently used during lessons. The teacher tried to explain words by drawing on the whiteboard or by using body language but translated into Swedish when it was considered necessary. The students in this classroom seemed more used to not understanding everything the teacher said, and they were constantly encouraged to guess the meaning of new words. When watching a short TV series or film during class, the students were asked to listen carefully for words or expressions in the TL; these expressions or words were discussed, written on the whiteboard, after which the students wrote

them down in their notebook. Furthermore, the students were encouraged to use the TL themselves, and the teacher stressed that getting it wrong did not matter.

In all three classrooms, there were students with another L1 than Swedish (in many cases, students with two L1s, one of them Swedish). Consequently, most of these multilingual students understood Swedish well, except one student who had recently arrived in Sweden and understood very little Swedish. This student was not helped by the fact that the main classroom language was Swedish, and that Swedish therefore was a requirement for learning the Modern language. Moreover, to my knowledge, these multilingual students' experiences and knowledge of other languages did not seem to be used either as examples or starting points for discussion of language learning in general. This also included references to vocabulary or general aspects of the TL. The issue of awareness of languages and a perspective of multilingual students in the Modern Language classroom will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

5.2.3.6 Learner influence

In the three Modern Language classrooms, most learning practices were initiated and directed by the teachers, and it was rare that the students were given an opportunity to influence or control the learning activities. However, there were signs of both learner agency and learner autonomy in the three classrooms. The first, agency, is described as the ability to act consciously and to deliberately engage (or not engage) in the learning process (Van Lier, 2008), (see further 3.1.4). In the current study, agency was primarily expressed during the interviews but could be found also in the classroom observations. Students engaged in activities in varying degrees of fervour and seemed to enjoy it when given an opportunity to control their learning. Students also displayed learner agency in other ways, for example, by deciding with whom they wanted to sit (e.g., when moving around in the classroom and causing disorder) and sometimes by not working at all during class. When waiting for others to finish a given task, they often started to talk, sent messages on their mobile phones (which sometimes appeared during class, taking from their pockets)[101], sharpened their pens, surfed on the internet, and went to the toilet. In one class, two students expressed both orally and with their body language that they did not feel comfortable in the group, or in their 'island of four'

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101   The students were not allowed to use their mobile phones during class, and they were not
required to hand them in to the teacher at the beginning of the lesson. Most students, however, seemed to keep their phones in their pockets or in their bags.

and they refused to say a word in the TL. Refusing to speak in the TL could obviously be a sign of foreign language anxiety (FLA), but these students also showed a resistance to the speaking task, which often implied that they should answer orally, one student at a time, and that the others listened and waited for their turn. This resistance could be interpreted as a sign of agency, albeit for negative reasons (also referred to as 'oppositional agency', Ahearn, 2015).

The second indicator of influence, learner autonomy, implies an ability to perform active involvement in the learning process, where the learner is able to shape his/her learning process out of personal interest and relevance (Little, 2004), (see further 3.1.4). In the current study, learner autonomy was displayed when students could occasionally decide which exercise that they wished to work with, for example if they preferred learning vocabulary with the help of quizlet[102] or doing a crossword. The interview data show that these activities were appreciated: '*I like it when we do quizlet, because then I can practice in my own pace*'[103]. As previously described, the students could also decide the content of their own dialogues, texts, or interviews. Several students expressed that they enjoyed being given the possibility to influence their learning content. However, results from the interview data also show that most students had not given much thought to the question about influence or active involvement. When asked specifically whether they felt that they could influence the learning activities during class, the question often seemed surprising:

> '–Er…how do you mean?
> I: *For example, if there are things that you would like to do … work with music, German cooking… Have you had the opportunity to decide what to work with?*
> – Er…no
> I: *Is there anything that you have missed or wanted to do?*
> – Er…no…not so far.'[104]

> '– No, it is mostly the teacher…
> I: *Do you feel that there are some learning activities that you miss or that would like to do?*

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102 Quizlet is a digital learning tool which is used to learn languages using flashcards and quizzes.
103 "Jag gillar när vi ska hålla på med quizlet för då får jag träna i min egen takt." (Interview with student F5)
104 "– Eh, hur menar du då?
      I: *Till exempel om det är så att nu skulle vi vilja jobba med musik, eller. Nu skulle vi vilja jobba med mat…tysk mat…Har ni fått vara med och bestämma vad ni ska jobba med?*
      – Eh…nej..
      I: *Finns det något du saknar? Eller som du tänker att det här skulle vi ha gjort?*
      – Eh nej, inte än så länge i alla fall." (Interview with student T1)

– No, I don't think so. I think it is fine.'[105]

'– I haven't tried.
I: Do you feel that there are some learning activities that you miss or
that would like to do?
– No…'[106]

'– Well, if I wanted to, I think that I could, but most of the time I do whatever the teacher says.
I: Yes, but do you feel that there are things that you miss or would like to do more of?
– Er… like listening exercises and stuff…so that you learn how people talk…because then you listen to real Spanish people talking.'[107]

As stated above, the students seem to be quite satisfied with the teacher deciding what should be done during class and many might not have given much thought to the possibility of their influencing learning activities. However, there were other examples too as can be seen in the latter example where there are students who have thoughts and ideas of what they would like to do (or what they would not like to do). This can be seen as indications of learner agency and an ability of meta-cognition of learning, which will be further discussed in the following chapter.

5.2.4 Expectations and reality

'It is as expected, but perhaps a bit more fun…actually'
(Male student in the German group)

Expectations, perceptions, and experiences of what it is like to learn a second foreign language, refer to the theme of beliefs. These beliefs were foremost captured

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105 "– Nej, det är nog mest läraren så…
    I: *Finns det något du saknar som du tänkt att det här skulle jag vilja göra?*
    – Nej, det tror jag inte. Jag tycker det är bra." (Interview with student T3)
106 "– Jag har inte prövat.
    I: *Finns det något som du saknar? Något som du tänker att det här skulle jag vilja testa på franska?*
    – Nej…"(Interview with student F3)
107 "– Ja alltså, om jag velat det, så hade jag väl kunnat göra det…men jag gör mest det som Ellenor säger att vi ska göra.
    I: *Ja… Finns det något som du saknar då, som du velat göra mer av?*
    – Alltså typ så här…hörövningar och sånt…för att man ska lära sig hur de andra pratar också…för man hör liksom hur riktiga spanjorer pratar." (Interview with student S4)

through the three questionnaires, but also the interviews and observations contributed with important data.

Prior to their learning, most students did not know what to expect. Findings from Q1 show that the students expected the new language to be fun, but a bit difficult at the same time. This is further supported by the interview data, which shows that most students were unable to state their actual expectations and did not seem to have any clear vision of what it would be like to learn an additional foreign language. In the second questionnaire (Q2), conducted at the beginning of the spring term, the students were asked 'Would you make the same Language Choice today? Please motivate why or why not.' Students generally stated that they were pleased with their Modern Language, although a few regretted their choice.

Table 14 Satisfaction with the Language Choice (Q2; *N* = 38)

Statement	*N* =38	Yes	No	Perhaps
Would you make the same choice today?	*n*	27	7	4
	%	71%	18%	11%

As shown, the majority (71%) answered positively to the question, whereas some students obviously regretted or were not convinced that they had made the right choice. There are probably several reasons behind these answers, but some students elaborated their perceptions of their Language Choice further in their open answers and during the interviews. In relation to German, the most frequent reason for choosing German over again was that the language was easy to learn and that they liked their teacher and group: '*Yes! My class is good, and my teacher is a nice and good teacher*'[108]; *Yes, because it is easier than (learning) Spanish and French*'[109].

As regards Spanish, two girls stated that they regretted their choice and that they should have chosen the language they actually wanted to learn: '*I first wanted to choose German… but no one in my class wanted to choose German, and I didn't want to go there by myself.*'[110] One girl wanted to learn French but did not dare choose the language on her own and also because she believed that French '[…] *is extremely hard*'[111].

Regarding difficulty, there are some differences between the languages. The students learning French seemed to have expected that learning French would be

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108 "Ja! Min klass är bra och vår fröken är snäll och bra" (Q2, student T8)
109 "Ja därför att det är enklare än spanska och franska" (Q2, student T9)
110 "Jag ville först välja tyska…men det var typ ingen i klassen som ville välja tyska, och då ville jag inte gå själv" (Interview with student S3)
111 "[…] är extremt svårt" (Interview with student S4)

quite difficult, and they especially mentioned spelling, pronunciation and that French people talk so fast. The students learning German thought it was pretty much what they had expected: '*Well… I guess it is a bit like when we started to learn English… it is similar*'[112]; '*Yes, but it is as expected, but perhaps a bit more fun…actually*'[113]. In the interviews with seven students learning Spanish, three students mentioned that it is more difficult than they had expected, and two said that Spanish is more difficult compared to English: '*No, I thought it would be a bit easier…*'[114]; '*But it was a bit more difficult than I had expected*'[115].

Furthermore, in Q2, the students were asked to consider how much they liked the Modern Language subject in relation to other subjects at school.

Table 15 Liking of the Subject (Q2; *N* = 38)

Statement	*N =38*	Less than other subjects	Neither more nor less	More than other subjects
Compared to other subjects, I like French/German/Spanish…	n	8	20	10
	%	21%	53%	26%

As can be seen, most students seemed quite neutral, not liking the subject more or less than other subjects. However, the liking of the new language is presumably connected to the learning environment and how students experience their Modern Language class. The students were therefore requested to answer if they felt comfortable in their French/German/Spanish class, and they were encouraged to explain their answer. Results show that all students in the French and German classes, with the exception of one or two students, felt comfortable in their class, often referring to the group: '*Good because I have my friends here*'[116]; '*Good, because it is often quiet when we are working, and the teacher is clear*'[117]. One student wrote that (s)he felt comfortable in the group because they were so few (i.e., referring to the French class with only six students). Bearing in mind that only 10 students in the Spanish class responded to Q2, these results need to be interpreted with great caution. However, out of these, four students stated that they did not feel comfortable in the Modern Language class. They explained that they experienced the learning environment (i.e., the pedagogical context) to be noisy when students ran around and

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112 "Ja, det var väl som när vi började lära oss engelska och så…det är lika." (Interview with Student T3)

113 "Ja, men… kanske lite mer roligare än jag tänkt…faktiskt."(Interview with student T4)

114 "Nej, jag trodde att det skulle bli lite lättare". (Interview with student S3)

115 "Men det var lite svårare än vad jag tänkt mig". (Interview with student S7)

116 "Bra eftersom jag har mina kompisar här." (Q2, student T6)

117 "Bra. För att det ofta är tyst när vi arbetar och läraren är tydlig." (Q2, student T7)

talked during class. Among the six students who stated that they felt comfortable in class, four also mentioned that the lessons could be noisy: '*I feel comfortable because I do not sit beside any of the students who are noisy during class'.*[118] '*Good, we are quite many in the group, but it is nice to get to know other people.'*[119]; '*Yes, but it is very noisy because everybody talks all the time.'*[120]; '*Awful, everybody except the kids from XX talk all the time. That's why I believe Ellenor (our teacher) needs to be stricter. Apart from that, everything is just fine!'*[121] . These findings are also supported by the classroom observations which showed that, at times, the Spanish lessons could be noisy. Several students also expressed their irritation about this during class.

5.2.5 Experiences of learning a Modern Language

The perceptions of learning a Modern Language, as well as the experiences involved, obviously vary among the participating students. This was focused upon in the second questionnaire, Q2, where the students' experiences, attitudes and thoughts about teaching and learning in the Modern Language classroom were highlighted.

5.2.5.1 Learning activities

The students were asked to react (using three different smileys) to 15 different learning activities which they might have encountered in the Modern Language classroom (see Appendix 2). Most activities were fairly appreciated or perceived as okay (neutral smiley), even though some were more popular than others:

Table 16 Perceptions of activities during Modern Language class (Q2; *N* = 38)

Activities	*N*	Happy smiley Frequency	Neutral smiley Frequency	Sad smiley Frequency
Listening exercises	38	15	19	4
Reading texts	38	14	22	2
Workbook exercises	37	18	18	1
Listening to music	36	19	13	4
Singing	35	4	12	19
Playing games	37	30	7	-

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118 "Jag trivs bra för jag sitter inte med de jobbiga." (Q2, student S2)
119 "Bra, rätt många i gruppen men kul att lära känna nytt folk." (Q2, student S7)
120 "Ja, men den är väldigt stökig för alla pratar hela tiden." (Q2, student S4)
121 "Hemskt, alla förutom barnen från XX pratar konstant. Därför tycker jag att Ellenor (vår lärare) måste bli strängare. Annars är allt bra!" (Q2, student S10).

Playing	38	26	9	3
Watching movies	38	28	10	-
Writing dialogues	37	8	20	9
Writing short stories	35	10	15	10
Role plays	38	13	15	9
Learning more about countries where the language is spoken	38	16	20	2
Learning new words	38	21	16	1
Speaking to/with a friend	38	23	12	3
Speak to the whole class	38	5	19	14

As shown, playing, playing games, and watching movies were most appreciated by the students. Other activities which scored many happy smileys were talking with a friend, learning new words, working in the workbook, and listening to music. The activities which generated most sad smileys were singing and speaking to the whole class. Not many students added any comments to the list, although some mentioned that they had not encountered some of the activities, for example, singing or speaking to the class (apparently these activities were experienced in other subjects). In their open answers, some students expressed that they did not like singing and playing games; this was also visible during the classroom observations, especially if these activities involved some kind of performance. There seems to be a thin line between activities that are playful and activities that are perceived as childish. For some students, these latter activities were experienced negatively.

Similar questions were addressed during the interviews (i.e., what they thought worked well or not so well in the language classroom). The most common answer was that everything worked well. Some students, however, related to their own learning and what they perceived as difficult to learn. When they had the chance to elaborate on their answers, there were some teaching practices that were less appreciated in relation to others. Their answers also show individual differences, as is shown in the excerpts below:

> 'I think it's the listening exercises, it gets so stressful when we are supposed to listen… you can't catch up and lose track of everything.'[122]

> '– I guess when we have to work in groups, and you end up with people you do not get along with that well.
> I: *So, it depends on with whom you end up working?*

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122 "Det är nog hörövningarna, det blir så stressig när man ska lyssna på dom…så hinner man inte med och tappar allting." (Interview with student F1)

– Yeah'[123]

' Er…well no, not directly… watching films perhaps, they talk so fast and
then you do not even realize what they are saying. […] No, they just keep
talking in German and then you end up with three words after one episode
that you haven't even thought about.'[124]

5.2.5.2 Perceived difficulty

> *'It is not easy to learn a new language, but it is still fun'*
> *(Male student in the Spanish group)*

In the second questionnaire, the students also responded to four statements about
their perceived difficulty in language learning measured on a Likert scale ranging
from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree). All in all, the analyses showed that most students
did not seem to find the learning of a new foreign language very difficult, as dis-
played in Table 17:

Table 17 Students' Perception of the Difficulty of the Target Language (Q2; *N* = 38)

Statements	Disagree	Disagree to some extent	Neutral	Agree to some extent	Agree
I find it easy to understand the texts we read in French/German/Spanish	-	10%	32%	42%	16%
I find it easy to understand when my teacher speaks French/German/Spanish	-	5.5%	47%	42%	5.5%
I find it easy to speak French/German/Spanish	-	10.5%	42%	37%	10.5%
I find it easy to make up my own sentences in French/German/Spanish	10%	13%	53%	24%	-

Note. The scale ranged from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree).

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123 ” – Det är väl när vi kör grupparbeten och man hamnar med någon som man inte kommer så
   bra överens med.
   I: *Så det är mycket beroende på vem man hamnar med?*
   – Ja” (Interview with student S2)
124 ”– Eh, asså, nej, inte direkt…filmerna kanske, som det går tjoff, tjoff, tjoff och jättesnabbt
   och man märker inte ens vad de säger […] Nej, de pratar bara tyska och så får man bara upp
   tre ord på ett avsnitt som man inte tänkt på.” (Interview with student T4)

Closer inspection of Table 17 shows that a majority of the students (58%) found it easy to understand the texts read in the Modern Language classroom. Most students were quite neutral in their evaluation of how easy or difficult they perceived speaking and understanding the new foreign language, marking 'neither agree, nor disagree' in the Likert scale. However, making up their own sentences in the target language was perceived as more difficult than understanding and speaking. This might seem a bit contradictory, given the fact that speaking also enhances making up one's own sentences, but could perhaps be explained by the speaking activities encountered in the Modern Language classroom, which were often rehearsed. In addition, the students are beginners and have a rather limited vocabulary which might explain the perceived easiness of the new language.

Furthermore, the students were asked if they listened more carefully if they heard someone talking or singing (in real life or on the radio/YouTube) in the target language.

Table 18 Target Language Outside of the Classroom (Q2; *N* = 38)

Statement	*N* = 38	I never hear the TL outside class	No	Sometimes	Yes, most of the time
If I hear someone talking or singing in the target language, do you listen more carefully?	*n*	9	4	18	7
	%	24%	11%	47%	18%

The majority of the respondents answered 'yes' or 'sometimes' (i.e., they listen more carefully) but one out of three responded negatively (either that they do not listen carefully or do not hear the target language outside the classroom). In addition, the students responded to which language they preferred their teacher to speak during class. They were given three alternatives:

Table 19 Language Use in the Classroom (*N* = 38)

Statement	*N* = 38	I prefer my teacher to speak as much in the TL as possible.	I prefer my teacher to speak both in the TL and Swedish.	I prefer my teacher to speak much in Swedish.
During the lessons…	*n*	4	32	2
	%	11%	84%	5%

From this data, we can see that most students ($n = 32$) preferred the teacher to speak in both languages, (i.e., both in Swedish and in French/German/Spanish), four students preferred the teacher to speak mostly in the TL and two students preferred the teacher to speak mostly in Swedish.

5.2.5.3 Learning objectives

> *'I want to be able to speak and understand what other people are saying'*
> *(Female student in the French group)*

In addition to the previous domains investigated in Q2, it also aimed at investigating the students' learning aims with learning French/German or Spanish, both the imminent and the future aims. These objectives refer to the theme of agency (i.e., being able to set an aim and consciously act to reach that aim), but they also relate to another theme, namely, beliefs (e.g., dreams and hopes associated with the new language learning). The students answered the following questions 'What is your aim with learning French/German/Spanish? Right now, my aim is…. and, In the future, my aim will be…' and they could write down their answers using their own words. In relation to these questions, they were asked how they thought they should reach their aim(s). Across the three language classes, the learning objectives converged and overlapped, both the imminent and the future aims. The imminent aims for most students were to be able to communicate better and to learn and understand more of the target language. Some students described their aim(s) as learning more words which they could use in sentences, wanting to improve their capacity to make up sentences and being able to spell and write better in the target language. Other students had specific learning aims, such as being able to buy food and ice-cream (in Spain), talk in German with a grandmother or being able to count to 100 in French. Only two students mentioned that their aim was to get a good grade.

Data from the questionnaires and interviews show that the most desired future aim was to be able to speak in the target language. More than half of the students in Q2 (20 out of 38) stated oral proficiency as their aim with learning French/German/Spanish. This result was further supported by the interview data; out of the 17 interviewed students, 12 stated that they wanted to be able to use the language in communication – they stressed oral communication, being able to speak and understand what people are saying. Some students also mentioned being able to

write and read in the new language. Being able to speak the TL fluently was a desirable learning outcome, as the following students stated during the interviews:

> '– Yes, I want to be able to speak fluently…and write fluently in German.
> I: *Do you think you will have good use of that, like in your future career?*
> – No, I don't think so…'[125]

> '– I want to… I would like to have a good conversation…
> I: *Do you think… that you will have any use of it, being able to have a conversation (in German), do you think you will have any use of it when applying for a job or if you want to study somewhere?*
> – No…I don't think so…'[126]

> 'I want to be able to go to the local supermarket by myself and buy groceries… while my parents are in the house… and like, order at restaurants.'[127]

> '– Well, most of all, I want to… it is to be able to speak and understand what other people are saying… that is the most important thing… well, if I am to become a professional handball player, then maybe I won't write in French, I will write in English.'[128]

As stated by the two students learning German, they did not believe that they would have any use of their knowledge in German in their future careers, even though they desired a high proficiency in the language. The last student above stated that English will probably be enough if (s)he would need to communicate in writing. However, not all students had a clear learning objective, after some reflection one student said: '*I just believe it is fun to learn...*'[129]

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125 "– Ja, jag vill kunna prata flytande och skriva flytande tyska..
 I: *Tror du att du kommer att ha användning för det i ditt jobb och så där eller?*
 – Nej, det tror jag inte." (Interview with student T3)

126 "– Jag vill kunna…ha en bra konversation, enna…
 I: *Tror du att du kommer…kunna ha användning för den, att du kan konversera, tror du att du kan ha nytta av det när du ska söka jobb eller så, eller om du ska plugga någonstans eller så?*
 – Nä…jag tror inte det." (Interview with student T4)

127 "Att jag själv ska kunna gå till mataffären och handla mat till mina föräldrar, medans dom fortfarande är kvar i huset… och liksom så här kunna beställa på restauranger." (Interview with student S4)

128 "Alltså helst vill jag…det är att kunna prata och förstå vad andra säger då… det är det viktigaste. Alltså om jag ska bli handbollsproffs, då skriver jag kanske inte på franska, då skriver jag på engelska." (Interview with student F5)

129 "Jag tycker bara att det är en kul grej att lära sig..." (Interview with student F1).

When asked how they planned to reach their aims, the most common answer was to study and practise a lot (16 out of 38), followed by being attentive during lessons. Some students mentioned speaking in the target language at home and some were quite specific: '*Try to speak at home or write. Singing songs in my head in French*'[130] or '*Learn as much as possible without feeling any pressure/stress. Having fun when learning*'[131].

5.2.5.4 Beliefs about learning strategies

The second questionnaire (Q2) also addressed the students' beliefs about the best way to learn a new foreign language, firstly in general and secondly in relation to their own personal learning. These answers also converged, diverged, and over-lapped between the first and second question, and between students and between the three classes. Findings show that many students believed that a good way to learn a new language is to listen to the language (37%) and to practise a lot (32%); it was, however, sometimes unclear what they meant by practising, but further comments clarified the statements, such as '*practise and practise until you know it by heart*'[132] or '*practise the word and the spelling*'[133] which in many cases seemed equivalent to learning vocabulary. Talking in the target language was also considered a good way to learn (26%), followed by reading (18%). A small number of students stated that they believed that you learn by writing or by reading books or by watching movies.

Most students seemed to know what to do when doing their homework and when learning new vocabulary. Several students had developed their own personal strategy, such as reading words over and over again, being checked by someone or, as one student learning German explained during the interview, she had differ-ent words associated with different rooms in her house and she walked around and learnt the word connected to each room. These examples show that many students had a sense of agency in their learning. Quite a few (26%) stated that they learn by speaking in the target language. Some students mentioned using flashcards on the computer to test vocabulary or that they preferred being tested by their parents or friends. This testing implied that words were tested back and forth be-tween the TL and Swedish (i.e., a common learning strategy influenced by the

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130 "Försöka prata mer hemma eller skriva. Sjunga låtar i mitt huvud på franska." (Q2, student F12)
131 "Lära mig så mycket som det går och inte ha stress. Ha kul när jag lär mig." (Q2, student F7)
132 "Öva och öva tills du kan det utantill" (Student T4)
133 "Träna på ordet och sen lära stavningen" (Student T11)

Grammar-Translation Method). A few students mentioned that they learn by listening to music and watching films, which is probably a comparison with how they have learnt English.

In conclusion, the students' responses show a diversity in preferences for learning activities, in learning objectives, and in learning strategies and most students had a clear mindset of how they preferred to learn. However, a few students stated that they did not know, either in general, or personally which learning strategies might be helpful when learning a foreign language.

5.3 Having learnt

The issue focused of the third research question, namely, 'How do students assess their own language learning and how do they experience their teacher's assessments, both the continuous assessment and that which is conducted at the end of the school year?' seeks to explore the students' perception of having learnt a foreign language during one school year. In this, their self-assessment as well as their beliefs about their teacher's assessment are investigated. The main themes underpinning this section are agency and beliefs. Agency is displayed in the students' self-assessment and, to some extent, self-confidence in the new subject, whereas beliefs are shown in students' experiences of, and emotions in relation to assessment. The data derive mainly from the third questionnaire, but also from the interviews that generated important, complementary information.

5.3.1 Perceptions of having learnt

At the end of May 2020, the students in the three participating Modern Language classes responded to the third and last questionnaire (Q3). In addition to these three classes, the other French class in school year 6 at Meadow School also responded. This questionnaire aimed to investigate the students' self-assessment interwoven with their general perceptions of their own learning. The students were asked to assess, on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, their learning regarding receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing), as well as their ability to pronounce and spell in the new language. The results are presented in Table 20:

Table 20 Students' Assessment of Learning (Q3; *N* = 54)

Statement	I think it is difficult to understand	I understand a little	I understand ok	I understand quite a lot	I understand most of it
When we listen…	-	9%	37%	41%	13%
When we read texts…	-	9%	30%	48%	13%

Statement	I find it difficult to express myself	I find it rather difficult to express myself	I manage (ok) to express myself	I can express myself quite well	I can express myself easily
When I speak… (answering or telling)	3.5%	16.5%	30%	43%	7%
When I speak with others…	4%	7.5%	35%	44.5%	9%
When I write …	2%	11%	22%	56%	9%

Statement	It is really difficult	It is rather difficult	Neutral	It is rather easy	It is easy
When we pronounce words and sentences…	-	26%	20%	41%	13%
When we spell words and sentences…	3.5%	24%	39%	30%	3.5%

Note. The scale ranged from 1 (I find it difficult) to 5 (I understand most of it/I find it easy)

As shown, most students seemed to assess their abilities in the new language rather positively, indicating a sense of self-confidence in the new subject. For the receptive skills, as many as 49 students out of 54 ticked a box between 'I understand ok' and I understand most of it'. As for productive skills, the perception of difficulty is higher. Here, 11 out of 54 respondents perceived that speaking (answering or telling something) was really difficult or rather difficult, while the number of respondents who had ticked the boxes to the left ('really difficult' or 'rather difficult') was seven (out of 54) in relation to writing. Hence, speaking seems to be perceived as somewhat more difficult than writing by the respondents in this sample. The bottom of the table presents the students' perception of their capacity to spell and pronounce in the new language. As shown, the majority did not seem to find these aspects too challenging, although approximately 25% of the respondents (14 or 15 students out of 54) experienced them as rather difficult.

5.3.2 Students' beliefs about their teacher's assessment

> 'I don't know, but maybe that she assesses a bit of everything?'
> (Female student in the German group)

A second aim of Q3 was to investigate the students' beliefs about their teacher's assessment. The students were therefore asked to write down which grade they believed they would get at the end of the spring term. They were encouraged to explain the grade they expected and discuss whether or not they thought that their teacher would agree with their estimate. All 54 students except one (who clearly wrote an over-optimistic and ironic mark of A++) took the task seriously, and they also explained why. The following chart shows the students' expected grades in blue columns (sometimes they hesitated between two grades); in contrast, the red columns are the grades awarded by their teachers at the end of year 6.

Figure 4 Expected and Awarded Grades in Modern Languages at the End of the School Year (*N* = 54)
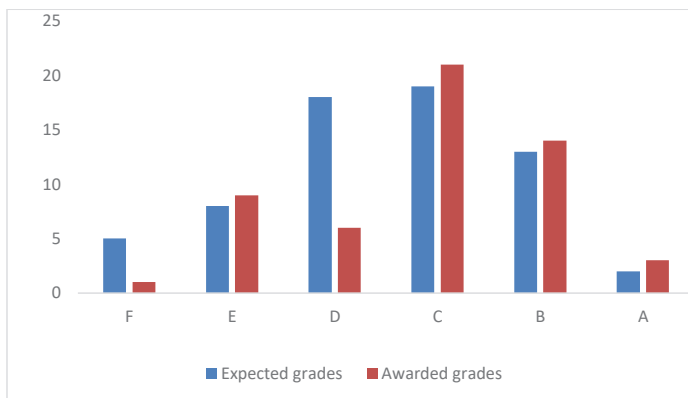
Note. The students often hesitated between two grades and in the diagram both the expected grades are included.

As shown, the teachers have used the entire scale in their grading (from F to A) awarding a considerable number of students (69%) a high grade (C or above). One student did not pass, (i.e., was awarded an F) and three students were awarded an A, which is the highest grade. In the table below, the awarded grades are compared with the students' estimates in percentages.

Table 21 Expected Grades and Awarded Grades (per cent)

	Grades corresponding with the teacher's grades	Lower grade than expected	Higher grade than expected
All students (*N* = 54)	48%	11%	41%
French (*N* = 24)	50%	12%	38%
German (*N* = 15)	27%	-	73%
Spanish (*N* = 15)	67%	20%	13%

The findings show, however, that there are differences between the teachers' grading of their students' language proficiency. Although some students had no idea about their teacher's grading of their learning, most of the respondents stated that they thought they would probably agree with their teachers. However, the agreement was not high in all four groups (most agreement seemed to be between the students and the two teachers, Charlotta and Ellenor). In the Spanish class, 10 grades (out of 15) corresponded to what the students expected, compared to what they were eventually awarded. For those that did not correspond, the difference was only one step on the grading scale, which was also the case in the small French class. In the other two classes (i.e., the German class and the other French class), the students seemed to have expected a lower grade than that which they eventually received. Eleven students in the German class expected a lower grade than they received, and three of them with more than one step on the grading scale. In the other French class, 10 grades (out of 18) did not correspond and two of these with more than one step. In the written comments, most students referred to their grade from the previous term; they believed they would probably get the same grade, or possibly one step above, since they had learnt some more at the end of the spring term:

> 'I got a B last term so I don't think I will get a higher or lower mark.'[134]

> 'I think I will get a B because I had some errors in the tests and I can't speak perfect French.'[135]

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134 "Jag fick B förra terminen så jag tror att jag inte kommer att höja eller sänka mig." (Q3, Student S11)

135 "Jag tror att jag kommer att få ett B för att jag har ju lite fel på tester och jag kan inte prata franska felfritt." (Q3, student F4)

> 'I think we agree because I have done everything that you are supposed to
> do, and I am better than I was last year (term) and then I got a B in Spanish.'[136]

> 'I think that I have performed consistently during lessons, but I have been
> sick quite often this school year, so maybe the grade will be lower.'[137]

Obviously, some of the students did not agree with their teachers' grading, or they
did not seem to know what the teacher thought of their learning. This might not
be surprising given that the Modern Language is a new subject and the students
have only received grades once before (at the end of the autumn term). However,
students seemed to have discussed their grades between themselves, as shown in
the following comment:

> 'It seems that language teachers grade differently. In our German class
> we only got E, D and perhaps C, but in the Spanish class several
> students got A and B. I think that is unfair.'[138]

As stated in this comment above, assessment practices varied between the teach-
ers, where two teachers used either most of the grading scale or the entire grading
scale when assessing the students' learning after the first term, whereas two teach-
ers seem to have been more reluctant to grade the students' knowledge with the
highest grades (i.e., B or A). The ways in which grades are communicated to the
students also seems to have varied between the groups. The teachers' assessment
will be further presented in the section comprising teacher interviews (see 5.5).

The last part of Q3 addressed the students' perception of their teacher's assess-
ment. The students were asked what they believe is important when their teacher
assesses their knowledge of French/German/Spanish. Their answers reflect the
teaching and assessment practices in each language classroom and their view on
learning; these findings were also supported by the classroom observations and in
the interviews with students. Consequently, the students' answers show that, to a
large extent, they were aware of both teaching and assessment practices and that
they had some ideas about what the basis for their teacher's assessment might be:

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136 "Jag tror att vi tänker lika för jag har gjort allt som man ska göra och jag är bättre än jag var
     förra året och då fick jag ett B i spanska." (Q3, student S12)
137 "Jag tycker själv att jag har presterat ganska lika på lektionerna men jag har varit ganska mycket
     sjuk det här läsåret så då kanske betyget sänks." (Q3, student S15)
138 "Det verkar som att språklärare sätter betyg på olika sätt. I tyskan fick vi bara E, D och kanske
     C medans i spanskan fick flera A och B. Tycker det verkar orättvist." (Q3, student T5)

'I think she assesses you if you dare to speak when she checks our homework, and other stuff, and like, how well you perform in tests.' [139]

'I think the tests matter a lot when it comes to grades.'[140]

'How you behave during class and how you write and speak.'[141]

'I think that it is important that the teacher sees that you are making an effort, and that you are present/active during class.'[142]

'We've had vocabulary every week. I think it's just to make us learn. I think she checks it sometimes, but not that much. Tests, on the other hand, I think those matter a lot because they show how much you are following the lessons etc. I also think pronunciation is important.' [143]

'I don't know, but maybe she assesses a bit of everything?' [144]

The comments above show that some students believed that being active during lessons was important, as well as talking and pronouncing well, whereas other students mentioned tests and vocabulary tests as important for their teacher's assessment. All these comments reflect the students' beliefs about their teachers' assessment practices, and to some extent, what they believe learning a foreign language in school is about. Furthermore, some students seemed to know what matters and what is important concerning the assessment, whereas others seemed rather unaware of being assessed.

The students' perceptions reflect the different classrooms practices, as well as different assessment practices. Although these practices (both teaching and assessment practices) showed many similarities between the four language classes, the students' comments make clear that there were also differences between practices; for some students, assessment was mainly associated with written tests, whereas for others, the assessment seemed connected to activities during class.

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139 "Jag tror hon bedömer om man vågar prata på läxförhören och annat, och hur man presterar på prov. Typ." (Q3, student T2)
140 "Jag tror proven spelar stor roll i betygen." (Q3, student S12)
141 "Hur man är på lektionerna och hur man skriver och pratar." (Q3, student T6)
142 "Jag tror det är viktigt att läraren ser att man försöker och att man är med på lektionerna." (Q3, student F5)"
143 "Vi har haft glosor varje vecka. Det tror jag är bara för att vi ska lära oss, jag tror att hon kollar lite på dem, men inte så mycket. Däremot proven, de tror jag att hon tar med mycket för där visar man hur mycket man hänger med på lektionerna osv. Uttalet är också viktigt tror jag." (Q3, student S8)
144 "Vet inte, men kanske att hon tar från allt?" (Q3, student T5)

The final open question asked in Q3 concerned whether the students believed that they had had the opportunity to show their teacher what they know and what they were capable of doing in their target language. Six students thought that they had not had the opportunity to do this, 11 answered 'yes and no', a few of which were slightly self-critical of their own behaviour, stating that they could have been more serious during lessons and/or worked a bit harder, as shown in the following comments: '*Most of it but I could show more*'[145]; '*Might have been a bit giggly*'[146]; '*More or less, I think that I could have shown and tried more*'[147] ;'*Yes, but sometimes I get a bit scared of saying something wrong, so I don't put my hand up, but I try the best I can.*'[148]

The last comment shows that some students feel anxious when talking in the Modern Language classroom, and that this anxiety could hamper students from showing their capacity. However, the majority of students in the sample, (38 students out of 54) responded positively, stating that they had had the opportunity to show their teacher what they knew and what they were capable of doing in the target language. One student stated: '*Yes, I think so. I even think that I have learnt more than I had expected*'.[149]

5.4 Three learners

In the following section, three students learning three different Modern Languages will be presented. Despite some similarities, they represent different perspectives on language learning in relation to the rationale for choosing a Modern Language, attitudes in relation to languages and language learning, engagement in the language learning process and, eventually, in their self-assessment of their learning.

5.4.1 Jonna – the reluctant learner

<center>'The only reason I chose Spanish was that no one else chose French'</center>

Jonna was hesitating between French and Spanish when she responded to the first questionnaire in March 2019. When talking with her during class in the autumn of

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145 "Det mesta men jag skulle kunna visa mer." Q3, student S7)
146 "Kanske har varit lite flamsigt…" (Q3, student F21)
147 "Nästan, jag tycker att jag kunde ha visat och försökt mer." (Q3, student T8)
148 "Ja, men ibland kan jag bli lite rädd att säga fel så jag räcker inte upp handen så mycket men jag försöker så gott jag kan." (Q3, student F7)
149 "Ja, det skulle jag nog säga. Tycke till och med att jag fått lära mig mer än vad jag trodde." (Q3, student T9)

2019, she stated that the Language Choice of Spanish was quite a negative choice. Jonna chose to learn Spanish, together with her best friend (who, on the contrary, was very pleased with her choice), and although Jonna did not seem to be discouraged during class, she never missed an opportunity to tell me that she would have preferred to learn French. She somehow blamed her choice on the school, stating that she did not receive the information she needed prior to her Language Choice. This might in fact be true as Jonna was one of those students that had to leave the information provided by the language teachers from Meadow School during the road trip because she and her classmates had to go for lunch. However, the main reason why Jonna chose Spanish seemed to be that she wanted to be in the same group as her friend. Hence, her choice was influenced by her peers/nearest context.

The reason why she would have preferred to learn French was that her cousins live in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, and she said that '*I want to be able to understand what my cousins are saying*'[150]. In the first questionnaire, she provided several strong incentives for choosing French, such as the sound of the language, relatives who speak the language, and trips to countries where the language is spoken. In addition, the analysis of Q1 showed that Jonna had a rather strong interest in foreign languages but at the same time, she did not think it would be fun to be able to speak several languages in the future. Her responses indicated a certain degree of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learning a second foreign language. However, in the future, Jonna believed that knowing English will probably be enough. Her motivational mean value (3.17) was high in Q1 (maximum was 4).

In the second questionnaire, conducted after one term of learning the new language, Jonna's mean value for motivation in language learning seemed lower (although a strict comparison is not possible due to the change in the Likert scale). In early February 2020, Jonna's mean value on the five-point scale was three, which means that she preferred the neutral alternative ('neither agree, nor disagree') for most of the ten statements. For the statement 'I think it is fun to learn Spanish' she had put a cross for 'disagree'. Furthermore, she declared that she liked Spanish less than other school subjects. In addition, Jonna's crosses displayed a high mean value for anxiety ($M = 4$), and she was especially worried about saying or doing something wrong in the Spanish classroom. Jonna stated that she did not feel comfortable in her Modern Language group. She did not explain why, but during the interview she said that she did not like it '*when like everybody talks at the same time and*

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150 "Jag vill förstå vad mina kusiner säger."

it's so… then it is hard to hear what Ellenor or anyone says'[151]. Neither did she like sitting on her own, with students that she did not know.

The third questionnaire, conducted in May, showed that the mean value of Jonna's motivation had dropped from $M = 3$ to $M = 2.5$. The analysis showed that items measuring the intrinsic motivation were lower than the items measuring extrinsic motivation. This was also confirmed during the interview when Jonna showed a clear ambiguity in relation to her learning of Spanish. Her mother and sister were supportive of her learning, and she stated that she always did her homework and that she wanted to learn more. Hence, Jonna seemed to do her best, she also seemed to concentrate and work hard during class, even if she found the subject both hard and boring. Her ambition was shown when she declared that she wanted to continue to learn Spanish now that she has started to learn the language. However, Jonna said that the best way to learn a new foreign language is *'by choosing the language you actually want'*[152].

In relation to learning and teaching practices in the Modern Language classroom, Jonna stated that there were several activities that she did not like. The activities least appreciated were speaking in front of others, speaking to a friend, reading texts, writing, learning new words, or learning about Spanish-speaking countries. She declared that there was too much writing in Spanish, and she wanted more variation in the learning activities. However, she appreciated it when they played games, watched movies, or did role plays. When asked if she thought that she could influence the activities during class, she said:

> 'J: Well, if I wanted to, I think that I could, but mostly I do what Ellenor tells us to do.
> I: *Do you think that there are some activities that YOU miss or would like to do more of?*
> J: Er… like listening exercises and such… so that you learn how other people speak… because then you listen to *real* Spanish people speaking.'[153]

However, Jonna was not only negative about learning Spanish. She has been to Spain several times, and she knew some Spanish words before starting to learn the new language. Prior to her learning of Spanish, she had no clear expectations, but

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151 "När alla liksom pratar samtidigt och det är så… och då är det lite jobbigt för då hör man inte vad Ellenor eller någon säger."

152 "Genom att välja det språk man själv vill ha."

153 "J: Alltså, om jag hade velat det. Så hade jag väl kunnat göra det… men jag gör mest det som Ellenor säger att vi ska göra.
I: *Finns det något som DU saknar då, som du velat göra mer av?*
J: Alltså, typ sådär hörövningar och sånt… för att man ska lära sig hur de andra pratar… för man hör liksom hur riktiga spanjorer pratar."

compared to English, she found Spanish a bit more difficult. In relation to her own learning, Jonna thought that she understood fairly well, although speaking and spelling were perceived as rather difficult. She also said that she had learnt a lot during this first year, for example '*I can speak, like questions, so that I can speak Spanish, order food and such things*'[154].

When Jonna was asked which grade she expected, she stated grade C, which turned out to be correct. In December, she was awarded grade B, but she seemed prepared that she might be awarded a lower grade: '[…] *but I haven't performed so well this last term. The presentations have been really bad because I hate speaking in front of others*'[155]. During the interview, Jonna stated that she could imagine learning another language during compulsory school, namely French, but then she added: '*French is extremely, extremely hard…to spell and to pronounce*'[156].

5.4.2 Albert – the conscious learner

'My dad has lived in Switzerland, so he can help me to learn French'

Albert had chosen French as a Modern Language already in March 2019, when the first questionnaire was conducted. He indicated several strong incentives behind his Language Choice; the main reason was that his father knows French and can help Albert, but also that his siblings know some French. Hence, Albert's father seemed to be a role model for Albert's learning of French. Other reasons were that Albert wants to travel to a country where the language is spoken, and furthermore, Albert's friend chose the same language.

The first questionnaire showed that Albert had a strong interest in foreign languages and that he would like to learn several foreign languages in the future (when asked which, he stated French and Italian). In relation to motivation, the mean score value indicated a rather high motivation for learning French ($M = 2.7$). He expected the new language to be fun and interesting, but rather difficult at the same time. In the future, Albert believed that it will probably be enough to know English.

When responding to the second questionnaire, Albert stated that he was content with his Language Choice and that he would have made the same choice if he was to choose again. Albert believed that learning French was both interesting and

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154 "Jag kan prata, alltså frågor, typ så att jag kan prata spanska, beställa mat och såna saker."
155 "Det har inte gått så bra denna terminen. Redovisningarna har gått skit för jag har scenskräck."
156 "Franska är extremt, extremt svårt…stava och uttala."

fun. He appreciated most activities in the Modern Language classroom, but preferred working on his own with exercises, listening to music or writing dialogues (which the group then presented in a role play or in a sound recording). He did not like singing or playing games (which were possibly perceived as rather childish). However, Albert's responses to the items measuring motivation show that the motivational mean value ($M = 2.40$) had decreased slightly when compared with the previous questionnaire (although the mean values cannot be strictly compared due to the change in the Likert scale). French was not perceived as an important school subject, nor did he think that he would have any real use of knowing French in the future. But, at the same time, Albert thought that knowing languages might be useful if you want to get a good job. As shown, his responses indicated some sort of ambiguity, also since he had ticked the box 'agree to some extent' to the statement 'I look forward to learning more French'. Further, the analysis of Q2 demonstrated that Albert did not like French more, or less, compared to other school subjects. He did not perceive the new language as difficult, and he liked and felt comfortable in his Modern Language group: '*Everybody is nice, they don't laugh if you say something wrong, so I like it*'[157]. The mean value for the four items measuring foreign language anxiety was very low.

During the classroom observations, it was clear that Albert perceived learning French as rather easy and that he felt self-confident in the new subject. He could work ahead of the others and continue on his own with different exercises. He stated that he did not like to rehearse repeatedly or do the same exercises several times. According to Alfred, the best way to learn a new language is to learn vocabulary (Albert uses quizlet) and to write texts in the language.

When Albert was interviewed in May 2020, his attitude towards French had changed slightly. Albert talked about the French lessons in a very positive way, stating that everything worked just fine, and that he appreciated the lessons and learning activities, which was supported by his open answers in the last questionnaire. Albert told me that he had been to France once and that he would very much like to go to Paris: '*There are many sports cars and things worth seeing*'[158]. When discussing his own motivation during the interview, Albert stated that he felt very motivated (5 out of 5) and that it was fun and that he had also got new friends in his French group. Further, homework in French was not perceived as demanding and did not take a lot of time to do, according to Albert. Regarding the learning activities during class, Albert saw no need to be given an influence, but he believed

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157   "Alla är trevliga, skrattar inte om säger fel, så jag trivs bra."
158   "Där finns det mycket sportbilar och andra sevärdheter."

that he could influence the activities, if needed. He also had an aim with learning French, he wanted to be able to use the language in his future business:

> 'Well, I have planned to start a business when I grow up. Then it's good to know languages like French. I am going to sell cars… and make cars… at least I think so. Then it's good to know languages. English is like a basic language and so is French. So, it is good to know…' [159]

As stated, Q3 showed a slight increase in motivation and engagement from Albert. The motivational mean value had increased to $M = 3.10$. In May, Albert wrote that he thought it was fun to speak French and that he had learnt a lot. He assessed his own learning positively and responded that he felt rather secure and competent when assessing the different language skills, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing. He perceived French pronunciation as rather easy, although spelling was rather difficult. Albert mentioned that his father sometimes helped him with the pronunciation. Albert thought that he himself was rather good at pronouncing French, but '*I want to get better at everything*',[160] Albert said.

In relation to grading in the end of the school year, Albert thought that he would get a D or C grade. He explained it to me as follows: '*I think that my teacher and I think the same* [regarding the grade]. *Often during class, I feel rather tired, but apart from that, I think that I have performed ok.*'[161] Albert was eventually awarded an A grade (the highest grade). Alfred stated, in relation to his teacher's assessment, that he thought that oral proficiency was important, '*that you are present/active during class and that you try. Pronouncing and how you express yourself.*'[162]

5.4.3 Gustav - the pragmatic learner

'German is pretty good to know'

Gustav had decided on German already in spring 2019, when the first questionnaire was conducted. The reason behind his choice can best be described as pragmatic, stating that both his brother and sister had chosen Spanish, and they had

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159 "Alltså, jag har tänkt starta ett företag när jag blir stor. Då är det ju bra att kunna olika språk som franska då. Jag ska jobba med att sälja bilar… och tillverka bilar… tror jag i alla fall. Då är det ju bra att kunna olika språk. Engelska är ju typ ett grundspråk och franska är också ett grundspråk. Så det är bra att kunna."

160 "Jag vill bli bättre på allting."

161 "Jag tror att jag och min lärare tänker ganska lika. Ofta på lektionerna är jag ganska trött, men annars tycker jag att jag gör hyfsat bra ifrån mig."

162 "Jag tror att hon tycker att det är viktigt att man är med på lektionerna och försöker. Uttalet och hur man uttrycker sig själv."

warned him about the large groups. Gustav wanted a group with fewer people, so he hesitated between French and German, but decided on the latter because '*German is pretty good to know*'[163]. In addition, his parents knew some German and could help him. Consequently, both the local pedagogical, and the individual/personal context influenced the choice of language.

The analyses from Q1 showed that Gustav had a rather strong interest in foreign languages, but he did not perceive music or film in other languages than English or Swedish as very interesting. In the future, Gustav could perhaps imagine learning Russian. In relation to motivation, Gustav seemed motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, stating that knowing languages might be good for one's future career and when travelling. However, in the future, he believed that he would probably get by with only knowing Swedish and English. Gustav's motivational mean value in Q1 was 2.83 indicating a rather positive attitude towards learning German (maximum was 4).

The second questionnaire showed that Gustav was pleased with his Language Choice. German was '*actually more fun than I had expected*'[164]. Although the motivational mean value cannot be directly compared (due to the different scales), his motivation seemed to have increased slightly compared to the Q1 ($M = 3.40$). The responses showed that learning German was perceived as fun and that he looked forward to learning more. However, Gustav still believed that knowing Swedish and English would probably suffice in the future. This was also confirmed in the interview where he stated that he would probably not have any real use of German in his future career:

> 'I: *What is your aim with learning German? What do you want to be able to do with the language?*
> G: I want to be able to … have like a good conversation.
> I: *Do you think… that you will have any use of it (German), of being able to talk, do you think that you will have any use of it when applying for a job, or…if you are going to study somewhere…?*
> G: No, I don't think so…'[165]

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163 "Tyska är rätt bra…"

164 "Kanske lite mer roligare än jag tänkt, faktiskt."

165 *I: Vad har du för mål med att lära dig tyska? Vad vill du kunna göra med språket?*
   G: Jag vill kunna… ha en bra konversation…enna….
   I: *Tror du att du kommer …kunna ha användning av den, att du kan konversera, tror du att du kan ha nytta av det när du ska söka jobb eller så, eller om du ska plugga någonstans eller så?*
   G: Nä… jag tror inte det."

He also stated that his parents did not think that his learning of German was very important, but at the same time, he wrote that both his mother and father helped him with his homework as they had both learnt the language at school (i.e., Gustav had parental support in his learning of German).

Gustav did not seem to experience any anxiousness in the Modern Language classroom. He was fine with most of the learning activities in the German classroom, but he did not like to sing. He stated that he never listens to German outside the Modern Language classroom, and he did not like German more or less than other subjects, hence German was perceived as one subject out of many in school. During the interview, Gustav stated that he always did his homework in German, but also added '*just so I remember the words*'[166]. He preferred to learn new vocabulary with the help of flashcards on the computer (quizlet) and his learning objective was to pass '*I don't aim for a specific good grade, but I don't want to get an F…*'[167].

The classroom observations showed that Gustav seemed to enjoy his Modern Language lessons. He knew many of the other students in the group and sometimes he talked a bit too much during lessons (in Swedish though), but he gladly participated in all the learning activities during class. Although he declared that he had a schedule of about two hours for doing his homework (learning how to spell a list of words) which he always followed, it seemed that the amount of time needed might have been a bit exaggerated. Gustav sometimes seemed to have forgotten about his homework.

Gustav had never been to a German-speaking country, and he was not particularly interested in knowing more about German-speaking countries. However, he could imagine going to one to '*check out some nice statues and go sun-bathing*'[168]. He wanted to be able to use the language and talk to people '*I want to be able… to have a good conversation…*'[169]. Consequently, he expressed a certain degree of agency when defining his learning objectives.

Furthermore, the interview data showed that Gustav was content with the learning and teaching practices, and he liked his teacher Viveka. He did not experience any need for influence in the Modern Language classroom since 'everything works just fine'. When asked how motivated he would say that he felt for learning more German, he stated 3.5 (out of 5). He thought that he will probably continue learning German in upper secondary school.

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166 "[…] bara så att jag kommer ihåg orden och så."
167 "Jag satsar inte direkt på ett jättehögt betyg men jag vill ju inte få F direkt…"
168 "Kolla på fina statyer och bada"
169 "Jag vill kunna…ha en bra konversation…enna"

The last questionnaire, which was conducted just before the spring term ended, showed that the motivational mean value for Gustav had decreased from $M = 3.40$ in Q2 to $M = 2.90$ in Q3. In the main, the mean value for items measuring intrinsic motivation had decreased. In line with the previous questionnaire, Gustav did not think that he would have much use of knowing German in the future.

In terms of self-assessment, Gustav believed that he had learnt a lot during this first year of learning. He experienced German as fairly easy to speak and to write. Pronunciation was perceived as easy, thus Gustav seemed to have fairly good self-confidence in the new subject. He wrote that he believed that he was doing alright in German, but that it was still rather difficult (mainly reading and listening). He compared his learning of German with his learning of English and stated that German is more difficult: '*I have known English almost my entire life, so I have practised that more*'[170]. He assumed that he would be awarded a grade E or D but was eventually awarded a C. When articulating what might be important in his teacher's assessment, he wrote '*that I am always present/active during lesson*s' [171] and that spelling and pronunciation mattered a great deal when his teacher assessed the students' knowledge of German.

5.5 Interviews with the three teachers

The three interviews with Ellenor, Charlotta and Viveka were conducted via Zoom in June 2020 (see further Chapter 4.3.3). The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that they followed a protocol but included time available for further questions and discussions (see Appendix 8). The interviews aimed at broadening the perspective and gaining deeper knowledge about teaching and assessment practices in the three language classes. The findings are presented with the point of departure in the different themes that were addressed during the three interviews.

Although the teacher interviews are not directly linked to the research questions of the study, they add insight by shedding further light on the domains of teaching, learning and assessment in the Modern Language classrooms, as well as contributing to explaining events, actions, and questions in relation to the other data collected.

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170 "Engelska har jag ju kunnat nästan hela mitt liv så det har jag övat mer."
171 "Att jag alltid är med på lektionerna." The Swedish expression "med på lektionerna" could refer to both being active and present during the lessons. It is hard to know exactly what Gustav meant when writing the sentence in Q3, but he was both present and active during the lessons observed.

As previously mentioned, the three teachers are all experienced and certified teachers, but their experience of teaching in year 6 differs; Viveka (the teacher of German, had not taught year 6 for quite some time, before school year 2019/2020, whereas Charlotta (the teacher of French) and Ellenor (the teacher of Spanish) had taught year 6 repeatedly during previous years.

5.5.1 Teaching Modern Languages in year 6

During the interviews, the teachers stated that teaching young language learners can be very rewarding but sometimes also challenging. All three enjoy teaching year 6, mentioning the students' curiosity and spontaneity and that they are often positive and motivated, and as one teacher says: '*They often agree to whatever activities you might suggest*'[172]. The teachers are positive about starting Modern Languages in year 6 (compared to year 7), saying that an earlier start is probably beneficial for the students' learning, because during this first year, the students are given time to adjust to the new language.

Challenges mentioned in relation to teaching Modern Languages in year 6 are that some teachers are not used to teaching students that are so young and sometimes they might not know how to present the learning content to young learners. In addition, students' spontaneity might be a bit tiresome, for example, when they interrupt, wanting to say something that they suddenly thought of, not always in relation to the learning content. However, as one of the teacher comments:

> '[…] Well, you cannot work the way you do with older students. You have to listen when they want to tell you something and you need to turn their questions into something which can motivate their learning further… but you might end up doing/talking about something completely different from what you intended.' [173]

Another challenge that was mentioned was seeing the students only once per week, during quite a long lesson (with the exception of the German class that had two lessons a week). Some students tire during these long lessons, and the teachers, therefore, emphasize the need to vary the learning activities during the lessons. However, Ellenor and Charlotta are not of the same opinion concerning the length of the lessons. Charlotta thinks that the long lessons work quite well, while Ellenor

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172 "De är ju med på det mesta man föreslår."
173 "Man kan inte riktigt köra som man gör med de äldre åldrarna. Lyssna när de vill berätta något och kunna vända det till att få dem med sig…men det innebär att man inte alltid hamnar där man trodde att man skulle hamna från början."

states that she would have preferred two lessons per week, preferably in their own school, (i.e., the teacher going to the students' school, not the reverse).

The three teachers have similar thoughts about what they want the learners to learn during this first year. A priority for all three teachers is to inspire the students for the coming years of Modern Language learning. They want their students to be motivated and continue wanting to learn by '*building a solid ground for further learning in year 7*'[174] as one teacher stated. One of the teachers claims that her priority during this first year is to show the students what it means to learn a new language; she would like her students to know that languages can be a joy in life, and she relates the learning of a new language to the learning of English and of other languages (known or still not known), meaning that they are all connected to one another.

Regarding the learning content, the three teachers agree that listening and oral proficiency is important. They stress that listening comprehension and the ability to express oneself in the target language are very important for the students in year 6. This is in line with the national learning targets for year 6, provided by NAE. One of the teachers exemplifies this during the interviews:

> 'I think that the oral…I mean understanding, oral understanding and being able to express oneself orally, that is the most important. But then you start to read and interpret, you need to interpret the written language as well, but it is important that they have the oral (understanding) first, to build on. […] you want to build up confidence, that they feel that they can understand a little and that they dare speak and what they learn to say…that it is meaningful.'[175]

One of the other teachers does this by providing the students with useful vocabulary of words and phrases that they pronounce so that the students feel that they can speak a little in the target language when they finish year 6.

The teachers were also encouraged to talk about what they thought worked well and what worked less well when teaching beginners in year 6. The teachers gave different examples of what they thought worked well, such as working quite traditionally with exercises that the students recognize and are familiar with from other subjects. One of the other teachers stated that working around a theme

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174 "En god grund, så att de är rustade för årskurs 7."

175 "Jag tycker att det muntliga, alltså förståelse, muntlig förståelse och att uttrycka sig muntligt, tycker jag är viktigast. Sedan börjar man ju läsa lite och tyda, man behöver ju också lära sig att tyda språket i skrift, men det är viktigt att det lite muntligt först för att ha något att hänga upp det på. […] man vill ju bygga upp ett självförtroende där de känner att de kan förstå lite och känner att de vågar prata och att det de lär sig säga, att det är meningsfullt."

worked very well, such as family words, colours or buying something, where the vocabulary is gradually enlarged together with the students through maps of words, short dialogues, and role plays. The third teacher thought it had a lot to do with 'timing' and that this can differ considerably between groups and lessons. She claimed, however, that she really appreciated the feeling when the students finished the lessons with the perception of having learnt, and especially when learning with the help of each other:

> 'What I believe is important and which also works quite well is when you repeat and reinforce things together, and the students really… that they realise that they learn partly from each other but that something happens during lessons… and that they leave with a feeling of having learnt a bit more compared to when they arrived, and if you get the message across every time… then they are with you…'[176]

All three teachers said that they think that adapting their instruction to the students' age is important for learning. Playing games such as bingo and other competitive exercises work well in this age group, but with older students as well, as one of the teachers stated.

According to the three teachers, things that might not work so well have a lot to do with organizational issues. The students coming from different schools in rural areas, and communication with the teacher at their 'normal' school did not always work smoothly. For example, there were students in need of special educational support, but the three language teachers had not received any, or very little, information about this.

Another issue mentioned by one of the teachers is the fact that some students need more time to get used to the new language. Therefore, she needs to keep in mind that the learning content must not be too extensive and that it must be adapted to the learners' capacity. At the same time, however, she would prefer the content to be as authentic as possible; this is not always easily accomplished or combined.

Ellenor is concerned that the size of the large groups in Spanish is an issue. She believes that it is difficult to address all the students' learning and to be able to see what each student needs. She states that it takes a lot of time and effort before you

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176 ”Det som jag tycker är viktigt och som fungerar ganska bra det är ju när man repeterar och befäster saker tillsammans, och eleverna verkligen, att de märker att de lär sig dels genom varandra men det händer något under lektionerna… att de kommer därifrån och att de har lärt sig lite mer, än när de kom… och får man fram det varje gång så tycker jag att… det fungerar bra för då får man dem med sig.”

can get the group to function, and the students can collaborate easily in their learning activities. According to Ellenor, students are often insecure in the beginning, and it takes time to build trust, mentioning the transitions during class (when the students go from one activity to another), which often take a lot of time.

> 'Well, it's sometimes with those transitions… in finding the group, and how this particular group works.'[177]

Ellenor states that, in such large groups, there are students who lose their concentration and start to focus on other things (since there is always somebody who is talking or someone who could easily be disturbed): '*you lose time, and it gets noisy and rowdy*'[178]. There are also practical issues that take some time, for example computers not working. Tuning in with the group could also be a challenge, if you only meet them once a week.

5.5.2 Assessing and grading Modern Languages in year 6

During the interviews, the assessment of the students' learning was also discussed. Grading of Modern Languages in school year 6 became mandatory in the school year of 2018/2019 and is, therefore, an important issue to investigate and discuss in this study. The teachers award grades twice during the school year, at the end of each term. They were asked what they thought about assessment in year 6 and how they approached the issue of assessment for this age group. The interviews show that the three teachers consider grading in year 6 as quite undramatic. The learning content is not particularly advanced, and the requirements are perceived as fairly generous. The teachers state that after just one term of teaching the beginners (and after, in total, only 24 hours of instruction), it is not easy to distinguish between levels of competence in the new language; this is something they believe is much easier at the end of the second term. In the assessment material provided by the NAE for teachers grading year 6 for the first time, the teachers are encouraged to use 'the whole grading scale' since the learning content is limited. One of the teachers discussed this during the interview:

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177   "Det är väl lite då de här övergångarna… att hitta gruppen där, just hur den gruppen fungerar."
178   "Man tappar tid och det blir stökigt och rörigt."

> 'But in year six, there is not much focus on writing, but of course…
> if you can do a short presentation of yourself and it is correct, then
> your grade is obviously high.'[179]

Obviously, there are differences in assessment practices between the three groups and teachers. When teaching a small group, a great deal of the assessment can be made during the lessons, compared to the assessment in a much larger group of students, which is also mentioned by Charlotta. Consequently, the assessment conditions differ due to practical reasons. The three teachers believe that the assessment material provided by the NAE for this age group of students has been very useful. One of the teachers expressed her beliefs about assessment in year 6 as follows:

> 'Well, people were worried before it started . . . and it isn't easy but at
> the same time you have to see it . . . in some way you have to adapt to
> the level you're at . . . how often you see the students, what I have time
> to see, what they have time to show me?' [180]

The continuous assessment during the lessons is often spontaneous, as one of the teachers explains, she can see how much the students understand and can respond to questions and instructions. The three teachers mention different assessment material, such as short and simple reading and listening exercises which are more generic in type but based on what they have worked with during lessons. A common tool for assessment is digital recordings, which the students record alone or together with a friend speaking in the target language, a short dialogue for example.

Although the assessment might be perceived as undramatic, it can still be quite difficult to grade your students' learning after just 24 hours of teaching. All the teachers interviewed expressed this difficulty, especially since the learning content is quite limited after such a short period of time. One way of overcoming this difficulty was to grade the students' knowledge with a low grade after the first term (or not using the two highest grades B and A); this was done to some extent in all the three classes and explained by one of the teachers:

> 'Yes, this autumn I thought it was really difficult, I thought you'd done
> a term and how can you award grades so I awarded grades E and D, I

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179 "Men i sexan så, det är inte jättemycket fokus på det skriftliga, men det är klart… kan man
göra en kort presentation av sig själv och det är korrekt…då ligger man ju högt i betyg."
180 "Alltså, man var ju väldigt bekymrad innan det startade… och det är inte lätt men samtidigt får
man ju se det…man får ju på något vis ta ned det på den nivå man har det på… hur mycket
träffar jag eleverna, vad hinner jag se, vad hinner de visa?"

> didn't award any higher . . it was much easier now when I have had them for a whole year, then I covered the whole scale from E to A, so I think you should be able to wait until the spring term of year 6, that it's too early to award grades in the autumn because they are learning a whole new subject and they don't have time to do very much in one term, sort of.'[181]

Grading in school year 6 is perceived as both negative and positive. It is considered difficult to assess the students' competences but at the same time, one teacher states that the students like to receive a grade at the end of the term as '*it gets more serious then*'[182].

Another topic that was addressed during the interviews was collaboration with colleagues when assessing students' language learning (in year 6). All three teachers collaborate to some extent with their colleagues, (mainly with those teaching the same language). However, collaboration in both teaching and assessment is much more prominent in Spanish at Meadow School, since Ellenor must sign her colleagues' grades, as she is the only certified teacher in Spanish. This has led to intensive collaboration in Spanish, where the four Spanish teachers meet once a week to discuss and plan their teaching, but also the continuous and the summative assessment. When talking with Ellenor about assessment practices, she says she would like her assessment to be more valid as it is difficult with the large groups in Spanish:

> 'Then I thought . . that. . . it would have been easier if you had been given more, more reliable observations if you'd met the students more. Because the observations you have, . . . you go back to what the students have handed in, such as sound files that they have handed in, but then they have the opportunity to prepare themselves. It is the written work, that's what you have to go on, I'm afraid, when the groups are so big.'[183]

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181 "Ja, i höstas tyckte jag att det var jättesvårt jag tyckte att man har gått en termin och hur ska man kunna sätta betyg då så då satte jag E och D, jag satte inte högre…det var mycket lättare nu när jag hade haft dem ett helt år då spann jag ändå från E till A, hela betygsskalan liksom, så jag tycker att man skulle kunna vänta till våren i sexan, att det är för tidigt att sätta betyg på hösten eftersom det är ett helt nytt ämne och de hinner ju inte göra så himla mycket på en termin liksom."

182 "Det blir mer på allvar då."

183 "Sen tänker jag nog… att …alltså det hade varit lättare om man hade fått mera, mera valida underlag om man hade träffat eleverna mer. För det blir ju lite så här att det underlaget man har, går ofta som man går tillbaka till det som eleverna kan lämna in, det är ju ljudfiler som de har lämnat in naturligtvis men där har de ju en chans att förbereda sig. Det är i skriftligt, det är ju mycket det man har att gå på tyvärr, när det är så stora grupper."

5.5.3 What do the teachers believe their students think about assessment?

During the interviews, the students' perceptions of assessment and grading were discussed. The teachers agree that the students seem to know that the grade in year 6 is only valid for the first year of learning, and that the learning outcomes change in year 7. Charlotta mentions that there was a concern that the students might be disappointed if they did not receive the same high grade in year 7 that they received in year 6; this concern, however, has not been realised.

> 'They understand that…it is not the same sort of knowledge requirement… that the learning content is much bigger…'184

Ellenor says that she tries to talk to the students about the assessment in year 6, exemplifying the criteria for each specific learning domain. She thinks that the students know that the learning content will increase the next year, and that she is not afraid of awarding high grades at the end of year 6:

> 'I think you mustn't be scared of awarding the higher grades because it can encourage someone to know that 'Wow I've got an A here and I want to keep it!' […] But I think it's more like those who get an A and B are more motivated to continue in year 7 . . .'185

The three teachers also agree that the students are not very interested in their grades, but that they get more interested and concerned in year 8 or 9. The teachers talk to their students about the assessment, although somewhat differently. One teacher uses an assessment matrix where she tries to assess the students' knowledge continuously during the school year, giving feedback on all assignments the students do. She wants to ensure that the grade is not a surprise to any of her students and she encourages the students to use self-assessment. The other teachers try to talk to the students during the lessons and after specific assignments or tests. The teachers believe that, at this stage of learning, assessment and grading are rather unimportant to their students.

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184 "De förstår att …det är inte samma slags kunskapskrav att…ja att stoffet blir mycket större så…"

185 "Man får ju inte vara rädd att sätta de höga betygen heller tänker jag för det kan ju peppa någon att veta att shit, jag har ett A här, det ska jag behålla! […] Men jag tror ju snarare att de som får ett A och B är mer motiverade att fortsätta i sjuan…"

5.5.4 Being a teacher of Modern Languages

The interviews allowed room for some further questions in relation to the teacher role. They were asked about the current status of Modern Languages at Meadow School, but also in a larger educational context.

5.5.4.1 Modern languages - obligatory subject?

In the interviews, the question of making Modern Languages an obligatory subject for all students in compulsory school was addressed and discussed with the three teachers. They all agreed that this was not an easy question, and that there would be both advantages and disadvantages to making Modern Languages obligatory. The main advantage mentioned was that it would strengthen the status of the subject, as explained by one of the teachers:

> 'I think it would be easier if it was given more status […] it's still the case that some students don't take it seriously . . . and it's the same when it comes to help and support and resources, I don't think it's got the same impact. Because you have the same right to resources in French as you have in mathematics . . . but it's like different subjects have different values and if it was the case that you couldn't swap subjects then it would have more status. But I'm aware that it could create huge problems for some students . . .'[186]

One of the other teachers is more reluctant to making the subject obligatory, pointing to the fact that many students will manage perfectly well with just English. However, she has mixed feelings about the issue:

> 'No, not really. Of course, we need to learn languages, and we live in a global world, but at the same time there are students who will manage perfectly well with English, who do not have the will, nor the energy or inclination to learn an additional language, without it becoming a burden, so I do not think so. But at the same time, I think that it is very important to learn languages and that we need it… for working life and so on, so yes, I have mixed feelings about this matter actually…' [187]

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186 ”Jag tror att det skulle bli lättare om det fick en sådan status […] det ju fortfarande så att en del det ju inte på allvar… och det blir också lite så att vad gäller stöd och stöttning och resurser, så har man inte heller samma genomslagskraft där tror inte jag. För man har ju rätt till lika mycket rätt till resurs i franska som man har i matte… men det är liksom olika värden på ämnena och kanske om det var så att man inte kunde byta bort det så skulle det bli en annan status. Sedan är jag medveten om att det kan ställa till med stora problem för vissa elever…”

187 ”Nej egentligen inte. Alltså visst vi behöver lära oss språk, och vi lever i en internationell värld, men samtidigt så finns det ju elever som kommer att klara sig utmärkt med engelska, och som

The third teacher does not believe that Modern Languages should be obligatory for all students, pointing to the fact that there will always be a few students who lag behind in their learning and who do not catch up with the others and who feel that they are failing:

> 'Because Modern Languages are based on earlier learning and that you have to keep up, you cannot become ill, you must have, MUST, have a certain ability to memorize and build on prior knowledge. Because I can see that in each group, there are two to three students who do not have that capacity, and because there are never any 'fresh starts' […] I don't see that in other subjects, this obvious falling behind […] Of course you want everybody to learn a modern language but . . . perhaps it should be obligatory… but with certain exceptions then…' [188]

5.5.4.2 In-service training

The last question asked in the teacher interviews related to the in-service training that the three teachers had been offered during the past two years. They all have the opinion that in-service training is seldom offered. However, all three mention *Språksprånget*, the digital course offered by the NAE that all teachers in Modern Languages at Meadow School participate in during their allocated time for professional development. They have also had the opportunity to attend special events arranged by the NAE for language teachers, such as the language teacher conference *Språklärargalan*[189]. However, most in-service training at Meadow School is designed for all teachers in the school and is not specific for the different subjects.

The teachers mention that they would very much appreciate being able to visit a country where the target language is spoken, to develop their knowledge about the country/countries, to become familiar with recent linguistic developments including recent events and cultural changes. They do not believe they will be given the opportunity to participate in that kind of in-service training financed by their

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inte vill och som inte har kraft och lust att lära sig ett språk till utan det blir bara betungande, så på ett vis tycker jag nog inte det. Samtidigt som jag tycker att absolut, det är jätteviktigt att lära sig språk och vi behöver det...så i arbetslivet och så, ja, lite kluven där faktiskt."

188 "I och med att moderna språk bygger så mycket tidigare på … att man hela tiden måste hänga med, alltså du kan inte vara sjuk, du måste, MÅSTE ha en viss förmåga till minnesträning och befästa det man arbetar med. För att jag märker ju att det är kanske två tre elever i varje grupp som inte har den förmågan och i och med att det aldrig är nystart. […] Men…jag märker ju inte det med andra ämnen att det blir så TYDLIG efterhalkning. […] alltså jag vill ju naturligtvis att alla ska lära sig ett modernt språk men … det skulle kanske på att sätt vara obligatoriskt fast med vissa undantag"

189 Språklärargalan is an education event for language teachers, arranged by the NAE in several different cities in Sweden. The first event started in 2017 and has reoccurred several times thereafter.

employer; they will have to pay themselves. Viveka, Ellenor and Charlotta try to visit countries where the target language is spoken on a regular basis, mostly funded by themselves or by an external teacher grant. Viveka and Charlotta also take many of their students to Germany and France in the exchange programmes that are organized at Meadow School. These exchanges are maintained because they believe that using the language in authentic situations is a very important way to motivate students to continue learning foreign languages.

6 Discussion

The overall purpose of this thesis is to contribute to an increased understanding of young language learners' learning of a second foreign language (i.e., an SFL) in a Swedish compulsory school. More specifically, the study aims at investigating the young language learners' beliefs, attitudes, and expectations before and throughout their first year of Modern Language learning.

The empirical study was conducted during the school year of 2019/2020 and entailed monitoring three Modern Language classes in school year 6 using a mixed methods approach. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in combination, namely classroom observations, field notes, interviews, questionnaires, and register data. The theoretical point of departure lies within the socio-cognitive perspective on how languages are learnt in a school context.

The discussion will be structured round the three conceptual domains: 1) *Wanting to learn*, 2) *Learning* and 3) *Having learnt*.

6.1 Wanting to learn a Modern Language

The first concept domain *Wanting to learn* starts with the concept of choice in relation to the Language Choice before discussing YLLs' beliefs about languages and language learning, as well as motivational aspects of learning. This domain encompasses all three main themes (see Results 5.1), namely, (1) context (i.e., structural context, administrational and pedagogical context, and personal context), (2) learner agency, and (3) learner beliefs, where several sub-themes, such as beliefs about languages and language learning, motivation, and emotions are included.

6.1.1 Context – School policy surrounding the Language Choice

The rationale behind the Language Choice implies that there is a 'real' choice involved. To some extent, obviously there is. However, as shown in the preceding chapter, the conditions for choosing a Modern Language varied between the different middle schools in the study, and even between the classes. Further, some students seem to have been advised not to choose an SFL (e.g., students with a

migrant background who had recently arrived in Sweden). When the teachers from Meadow School conducted their road trip, their ambitions and hopes were that all students in school year 5 from the four schools located nearby would receive the information they needed and thereafter would make an informed and well reflected choice. They were obviously aware of the fact that many students might choose the same language as their friends, or that families and other reasons would probably influence the choice. However, the intention of undertaking the trip was to enhance the students' chances of making a well-informed choice by ensuring that they got both the information they needed and the same information. However, the road trip demonstrates the complexity of collaboration between schools, where several parameters interact, such as time and schedule allocated for the presentation, as well as preparing the students for the visit. Given the stressful schedule for some of these presentations, better preparation would probably have improved the information and the road trip as such, and some students might have had the possibility to make a choice that was carefully considered.

The issues concerning the road trip (described in Chapter 5) were mainly due to practical administrative factors such as lack of time and lack of information between schools. Those students who missed the road trip had to rely on other sources of information (i.e., other persons). Consequently, their choice might have depended on how well informed these persons were. As pointed out, information about the Language Choice in year 6 is also provided by the NAE, and their folder can easily be downloaded from the NAE's website. However, if legal guardians are not aware of this possibility, or well acquainted with the Language Choice as such, there is a risk that their children might not make a well-informed choice. Further, by choosing a Modern Language in year 6, access to prestigious and extremely coveted programmes in upper secondary schools is facilitated, as Modern Languages entail extra qualification points, both when accessing upper secondary schools, as well as university later in life. Hence, the choice made already in year 5, at the age of 11 or 12, could have an impact on students' future careers.

Based on the large-scale TAL study, Granfeldt et al. (2019) showed that the policy surrounding the Language Choice (e.g., informing students who are to choose a Modern Language) varied between schools and stakeholders. Information was mainly distributed on Parents' Day (when parents/ legal guardians visit schools), by e-mails or in meetings scheduled between the student's legal guardians and the teacher (in Swedish *utvecklingssamtal*). In the current study, the students were probably informed by their class teachers and their legal guardians (in addition to being informed by the language teachers from Meadow School).

It is also worth mentioning that the large majority of the participating students who answered the first questionnaire (i.e., prior to their choice) did not seem to be aware of the alternative of Extra English when making their Language Choice. This is somewhat surprising, since the alternative actually exists and attracts a relatively large number of students in the country. The school policy might entail that by not mentioning the choice of Extra English, fewer students would choose this alternative. Extra English seemed primarily restricted to newly arrived students with a migrant background or to students with special educational needs. However, the reason behind not encouraging these latter groups to study a Modern Language could be questioned. In the current study, there were students from both categories who seemed to enjoy their Modern Language learning, and, in relation to the expected learning outcomes, seemed to manage quite well.

None of the respondents had ticked the box for Mother Tongue instruction within the Language Choice when responding to Q1, which could be explained by the fact that Mother Tongue instruction within the Language Choice was not an option at Meadow School, mainly due to organisational issues. In a study investigating language practices and ideologies in multilingual urban settings, Bylund (2022) found that several respondents (of the same age as those in the current study) expressed a positive attitude towards studying their mother tongue within the Language Choice. Hence, if Mother Tongue instruction had been an alternative, there is a possibility that some students would have chosen that option.

6.1.2 Personal context

The main reasons behind the choice of Modern Language, as stated by the participating students, were travels to countries where the language is spoken, the sound of the language, and their families' opinions about which language to choose. Further, when interviewing the students, the rationales behind the language choice were further elaborated; the importance of having a friend in the same group was mentioned as an important factor when deciding which Modern Language to choose. As a result, some students chose the same language as their friend(s). Although most students stated that they were content with their choice, some regretted not having chosen the language they had really wanted to study. This was the case with the student called Jonna who stated that she did not want to choose French, but if she had, she would have been the only one from her class and she would not have known anyone in that group.

The interviews also showed that, in most cases, the family's opinions about languages were the most important reason behind the students' Language Choice. This also accords with the findings reported by Cardelús (2015) who found that family and friends played a significant role in the initial choice of a Modern Language. The attitudes expressed by the students in the current study were probably mainly influenced by their families' attitudes towards languages. Parental support was also mentioned when choosing a particular language, that is, having the possibility to ask someone in the family for help with homework if needed. These findings are also supported by Krigh (2019) who concluded that the family background and families' views on languages, travelling, and other countries had a great influence on the Language Choice. Students with a middle-class background are more inclined to choose French (especially girls) or German, whereas boys from a lower socio-economic background are more likely to choose Spanish. The latter group of students perceive the *usefulness* of the language as most important, whereas the former perceive languages as a *cultural and transnational investment* which helps you navigate in a global world. This conclusion is also supported by Granfeldt et al. (2021) who, drawing on data from the TAL study, concluded that there is an increasing social differentiation between those who choose to study a Modern Language, and those who do not, or choose to drop their Modern Language. Hence, issues of inclusion and exclusion need to be considered regarding the Language Choice; more importantly, possible measures must be considered and discussed and implemented to enhance inclusion in a school aiming for 'everyone'.

6.1.3 Beliefs in relation to language learning

Another theme which emerged in the analyses was beliefs in relation to language learning. These beliefs encompass several affectional dimensions which were shown already in the students' expectations and attitudes prior to their learning, in their perceived motivation for learning languages, as well as in relation to the learning, teaching and assessment practices.

6.1.3.1 Expectations prior to the learning

Little has been found in the literature about the YLLs' expectations prior to their second foreign language studies. This study aims to shed some relevant light on the issue. In the Swedish context, Henry and Apelgren (2008) found that their participants, who were the same age as those in this study, were positive towards

learning a new language and expected it to be fun. The current study has shown similar results, for example, that most of the students expected the new subject to be fun and interesting, but perhaps also rather difficult at the same time. On the one hand, when interviewed, they seemed to have rather vague expectations about the new language subject, not knowing what to expect. On the other hand, many students had clear ideas about what they wanted to learn during this first year, where more than half of them stated that they wanted to learn to speak the language. Bearing in mind the strong position of oral communication in the syllabuses and in the objectives for both English and Modern languages, this was perhaps not a surprising result. The students stated that they wanted to use the language for communication. It is, however, difficult to know how much of this desired competence (and expectation) was their own personal desire, or if they were influenced by their oral proficiency in English or by their peers or perhaps by their language teachers.

6.1.3.2 Attitudes towards foreign languages

Interest in foreign languages as well as attitudes towards languages also include affectional aspects of language learning. In the current study, these features were explored, and the results showed that many students had positive attitudes towards languages and language learning, but mostly for the languages they had a relation to, had heard of, or had encountered previously in their lives. When asked which language, or languages, they could imagine learning in the future, their answers revealed that they thought of the languages that are traditionally learnt in the Swedish school context, namely Spanish, French, Italian, and German. It is noteworthy that Italian was chosen by more respondents than German (48% stated that they could imagine learning Italian in the future, compared to 38% for German, see Table 6, p. 123). Italian is very seldom a Language Choice option in lower secondary school, but it is sometimes offered in upper secondary school. Furthermore, German seemed to be slightly more negatively perceived than the other two languages. For example, this was shown in the students' perceptions of the sound of the languages. Whilst both French and Spanish were mostly connected with positive adjectives (see Table 7, p. 124), the sound of German was perceived as strange by 37% of the students and only 13% thought it sounded nice[190]. Presumably, there are several reasons behind the students' attitudes towards languages, where trends and status of languages are likely to have a great influence. Such trends in

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190 In Swedish the word "fint" was used.

attitudes can be assumed to relate to the declining numbers of students who have chosen to learn German in Swedish schools during the last twenty years; German has lost its position as the most studied Modern Language in Swedish schools to Spanish (Tholin, 2019). In the current study, the popularity of Spanish was shown in the many open answers in Q1. Spanish seemed to be associated with holidays on the Spanish mainland or in the Canary Islands or Majorca. This is also supported by the many Swedish tourists who prefer to spend their holidays in Spain[191]. Furthermore, several students stated that they chose Spanish because it is an easier language to learn, 'easier than French or German'. Few students mentioned other languages beside the traditional school languages mentioned above. For other languages that are spoken by many people in the world, or popular for other reasons (e.g., Japanese), only a few students seemed to be interested in learning those in the future; only 11% mentioned that they would like to learn Arabic, 22% mentioned Chinese or Japanese and 17% mentioned Russian. This could perhaps be explained by the homogeneous sample of students where only approximately 10% had a multilingual background, and very few had a relation to other languages besides Swedish and English. Further, it must be kept in mind – again, that the students in the study are quite young, which inevitably limits their experiences and affects their perceptions and beliefs.

6.1.3.3 Motivation for language learning

The vast majority of the participating students in this study were highly motivated learners, and their motivation for language learning was also high at the end of their first year of learning. However, analyses of the data revealed that motivation for language learning seemed to slightly decrease among the YLLs during the first year (see Table 13, p. 132). Consequently, these results confirm the observations by Henry & Apelgren (2008). In this study, the decrease in motivation is small, and it is likely that there are several interacting factors which influence this result. It is not surprising that the initial thrill of learning a new foreign language changes into some kind of familiarity and that the motivation fluctuates during this first year of learning. The three students presented, Jonna, Alfred and Gustav showed different motivational patterns which changed during the first year of learning. Furthermore, teaching and learning took place in three different classrooms with three

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191 Swedish tourists prefer to spend their holidays in Spain. Barcelona is the number 1 weekend holiday destination while the Canary Islands is the most popular for charter tourism. About 1.5 million Swedes visit Spain every year (before the pandemic) and about 90 000 Swedes live in Spain (Regeringen.se).

different teachers, each with their own pedagogical context. These variables are likely to be interconnected and to interact with the students' motivation for learning. Hence, the findings in this study are in line with current research in motivation for language learning, pointing to the complexity within motivational theories, where a simple causal relationship between motivation and learning is rarely found (Dörnyei, 2020). Further, it is important to note that not all students were highly motivated to learn a new foreign language (e.g., in Q1, 16% of the respondents stated that they did not think it was important to know several languages). Consequently, some students probably chose a modern language because they felt that they had to and that it was expected of them.

The concepts of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2017) were included in the study. The statistical analyses showed that the items investigating extrinsic motivation rendered high mean values; many students ticked the boxes for 'Knowing foreign languages could be useful in the future' or 'It is important to know foreign languages if you want to get a good job'. Analysis of the last questionnaire showed that the utility aspect seemed to become more important after one year of learning (see Table 12, p. 130), where the usefulness of the new language moved to second place in the ranking. Hence, by learning more, some students seemed to have experienced increased usefulness of learning a Modern Language. It is possible that many of the respondents felt that these statements prompted a positive answer; consequently, these results should not be over-interpreted. There are probably not many students who think of future studies or careers already at the age of 12. However, some students showed far-reaching future dreams, such as wanting to become a professional handball or football player in France or in Spain or setting up their own business in a European country. As is normally the case in studies at the group level, homogeneity cannot be taken for granted. Hence, also the category of young learners can be assumed to be heterogeneous, which should prevent far-reaching interpretations or conclusions.

In relation to intrinsic motivation, three anchor items were used in Q2 and Q3: 'I look forward to learning more French/German/Spanish'; 'I enjoy learning French/ German/Spanish' and 'I choose to learn a new language because I enjoy learning languages'. The concept of language learner enjoyment addressed by Mercer & Dörnyei (2020) is closely related to intrinsic motivation, meaning that the learner feels motivated by a desire to learn more, for the sake of learning. The three items generated high mean values in both questionnaires and several students clearly appreciated the new subject and enjoyed learning a new foreign language.

Furthermore, aspects of integrative motivation (Gardner and Lambert, 1959) were observed in the current study; students mentioned relatives that speak the language and that they want to speak it when they stay or live in a country where the language is spoken[192]. While Gardner and Lambert focused on a desire to be integrated into a language community (i.e., the French-speaking community in Canada), globalization has possibly broadened the concept into being integrated into a global community. English, as a lingua franca, is most certainly perceived as the most important tool to become a global citizen (cf. Yashima, 2002) and the concept of international posture, see p. 52), but globalization has made it visible that there are other languages that might be important, useful, and interesting to know in the future, and that some students are aware of this already at a young age. Conversely, many students in the current study did not think that they would have any real use of their Modern Language in the future, stating that they would probably manage well with only knowing English.

Results from this study (emerging from interviews and shown during classroom observations) showed that the pedagogical context plays a decisive role in motivating students and making them feel engaged in their learning. Most students stated that they felt comfortable in their Modern Language group. However, some students in the Spanish group stated that the group dynamics were disturbing and that this was mentioned as an issue. According to Ellenor, the Spanish teacher, the group dynamics improved when the students were allowed to influence the learning content and choose with whom they wanted to collaborate during class; as a result, the students became more engaged in their learning. Hence, what happens in the classroom, who you are to work with and sit beside are all important aspects of the learning context. This is also supported by Hivers et al. (2021) who stress the situational and relational aspect of language learner engagement. Hence, the social dimension of learning (Mercer, 2019; Svalberg, 2018) seems fundamental for students' engagement and is also shown in this study.

6.1.3.4 Motivation in relation to gender

Previous research (Carr & Pauwels, 2006; Williams et al., 2002) investigating parts of the Anglo-Saxon context (Australia, New Zealand, and the UK) has shown that many boys consider language learning mainly something for girls, and that 'real boys don't do languages' (Carr & Pauwels, 2006). This is supported by other re-

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192 Obviously, it needs to be considered that the Swedish context of today is far from the Canadian context in the 1950s when the concept was first developed (Gardner and Lambert, 1959).

searchers who have shown that motivation for language learning differs between boys and girls, where the latter tend to be more motivated in their foreign language learning (Henry & Apelgren, 2008; Julkunen & Borzova, 1997; Sayehli et al., 2022). The results of the current study are both in line with and contrary to these previous results; in two of the three questionnaires, the results are the opposite; differences are small, but boys seem to be slightly more motivated in the first and last questionnaires. However, the respondents are not identical in all three questionnaires, which might have influenced the results; the variance is larger among the girls, meaning that the girls have ranked their motivation both higher and lower than the boys. Further, the number of girls answering the questionnaires surpassed the number of boys, and there is always a certain degree of self-selection in the sample of respondents, which might have also influenced the results. Nevertheless, the findings are contradictory in relation to gender and one explanation might be that in the initial stage of language learning, the differences in motivation are small. This is also supported by the three students Jonna, Alfred and Gustav who showed that their motivation changed and could both increase and decrease during the first year. Jonna was highly positive and motivated prior to her learning but then stated that she had made a bad choice, and her motivational mean value dropped. Gustav showed more consistency in his motivational ranking for learning German, stating that he was mostly pleased with his Modern Language group, his teacher, and that the new subject was not found too difficult. Also, for Alfred, the perceived motivation changed from highly motivated, to a drop in the middle of the school year and back to high mean values at the end of the first year of learning. Alfred also liked his group and his teacher, and he believed that he had learnt a lot during this first year. Hence, contextual parameters seem to be an important factor for students' perceived motivation for language learning and the results show that motivation is not static but fluctuating, in line with previous research findings (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2012, 2015), as well as open to changes and situated in the learning context (Ushioda, 2017).

6.1.3.5 Emotional aspects in language learning

Throughout the analysis, it is apparent that language learning is closely connected to both positive and negative emotions (Dewaele et al., 2017). The results showed that many students felt intrinsically motivated and that they related to affectional features when speaking of their language learning, such as future hopes and dreams (e.g., wanting to study German in Austria or playing handball in France), or being able to speak the language with 'real' French-, German- or Spanish-speaking peo-

ple. There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by the students in the current study and those described in the study by Rocher Hahlin (2020). The latter students also reported hopes and dreams of using the language in authentic and 'real' situations, and that their so-called *future self* increased their motivation for learning the Modern Language. The thrill of learning more about other places, people and cultures seemed to be highly connected to the intrinsic motivational aspect of language learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2017). Travelling (or future hopes of travels) seemed to be a very strong motivating factor for language learning and the item 'It is important to learn foreign languages if you will travel abroad' scored the highest mean value in all three questionnaires. The question did not specifically mention foreign languages other than English, and students may have thought of English, maybe as a lingua franca, when ticking the box for this statement. However, the data from interviews as well as open answers showed that many students wanted to be able to use their Modern Language in communication when travelling, and they gave examples of being able to ask questions and to understand the answers, that is, being able to manage in a foreign country. These findings indicate that many YLLs are clearly motivated by the positive feelings and emotions that travelling evokes. Those students who travelled regularly had had the opportunity to speak the language in an authentic situation (e.g., some students had been skiing during the winter holidays) stated that this was a positive experience, which is, therefore, likely to be motivating for further learning. These findings corroborate those of Cardelús (2015) who also found that visiting countries where the target language is spoken was an important motivational factor. The possibility to travel, however, is also a selective variable connected to students' socio-economic background. This finding is supported by Krigh (2019) who also found that Modern Language learning was a socially differentiated practice, where more resource-rich families invested in their children's learning of a foreign language (other than English) as a reinforcement of cultural, educational, and transnational capital.

Further, in relation to foreign language anxiety (FLA), quantitative analyses showed that most students did not seem to experience high anxiety in the Modern Language classroom. Nevertheless, some students expressed feelings of anxiety, especially when they were supposed to speak the target language (26%) and that some worried about saying or doing something wrong (29%). In the current study, the analysis showed that the girls were more anxious than the boys, and that this difference was statistically significant (see Table 11, p. 127). This finding is in line with previous research investigating FLA in relation to gender (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2017; Sayehli et al., 2022). However, it might be diffi-

cult to know how to interpret the students' responses to the statements, namely how they interpret the words 'anxious' or 'worried'[193]. Previous research has shown that female students are more inclined to report emotional features in their learning (both positive and negative) than their male peers (Dewaele et al., 2017, 2018). Further, the classroom observations supported the statistical analyses and showed that some students felt insecure and not at ease when they were supposed to speak to each other or supposed to answer a question in the target language (i.e., performance anxiety). Hence, it is possible to assume that FLA is very much connected to the learning environment in the classroom, and to practices which engage students into producing the target language orally in class. These assumptions are supported by MacIntyre (2017) and Nilsson (2020) who concluded that many learners find it stressful to express themselves in the foreign language, especially in front of others. It must be noted that communication and oral presentations are common in almost every subject in Swedish schools; consequently, it may be claimed that there is no difference between language learning and, for example, learning social sciences. However, in the other subjects, most students speak in their L1 (which is often the majority language), and not in their SFL.

6.1.3.6 English as a blueprint for language learning

The omnipresence of English as well as the general status of this language in Swedish society has been discussed in the contextual background (see Chapter 2), and several researchers have pointed to the fact that the constant comparison between learning English and learning other foreign languages could be a demotivating factor for other foreign languages and has led to the assumption among many learners that 'knowing English is enough' (Henry, 2011; Ushioda, 2013a). This relationship between English and Modern Languages has also been addressed by the NAE (Skolverket 2018a). In the current study, many examples of students comparing their learning of French/German/Spanish with their learning of English were found, and this comparison was not always advantageous for the SFL. On the one hand, results from Q2 and Q3 showed that many students thought that they would have good use of their Modern Language in the future; on the other hand, many students believed that they would probably manage well without knowing any other foreign languages besides English. This mismatch was also shown when the respondents stated that language learning was fun and that they looked forward to

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193 In the questionnaire, the four items were translated into Swedish from the FLCAS-scale (see Appendix 2). The expressions in Swedish were: "Jag blir nervös…; jag är osäker när jag ska prata…; jag är orolig över…; jag är rädd att någon ska skratta…".

learning more, but at the same time, did not consider their Modern Language as a very important school subject. In addition, the optional status of Modern Languages as a school subject is likely to influence the perceived importance; the fact that there is a possibility to drop the subject after some time of learning probably sends a message to many stakeholders, also outside the school context (e.g., students, legal guardians and policymakers).

Another comparison between the Modern Language and English was the learning goal expressed by several respondents, that is, what they want to be able to do with their language. Many students expressed a strong desire for fluency also in the target language. It might seem both surprising and unrealistic that students hoped to learn to speak the new language fluently after only one year of learning. However, in the last questionnaire, results showed that students were more realistic about their desired learning outcomes, stating fluency as one of their *future* learning goals. They seemed to have realized that speaking in a new language is rather difficult, especially if their vocabulary is limited. Here also, the comparison with English is disadvantageous for the Modern Language. Many students have a large vocabulary in English already at a young age, understanding a lot of English as a result of using social media, listening to music and watching films and TV series (Sylvén, 2022). The current study shows that the majority of students regularly watch video clips in other languages than Swedish, mostly in English. This massive input of English has presumably enhanced the students' verbal proficiency in English, which is also confirmed by results provided by national tests in English where Swedish students in school year 6 perform very well in their oral exams (Resultatrapport, Jochens & Jonsson, 2019)[194]. It might, therefore, be discouraging to compare this oral proficiency in English with the oral proficiency in the new foreign language.

Interestingly, although many students stated that they think it is exciting to watch films and listen to music in other languages than Swedish or English, not many seem to do so (65% of the respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement in Q1, see Chapter 5). Further, many students expressed an interest in foreign languages and that they wanted to learn more about other cultures. However, their foreign language world seems very limited to English and the Anglo-American culture. Findings show that very few of the respondents encountered the target language outside the classroom, except when travelling. New

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194 Resultatrapport om det nationella provet i engelska åk 6 läsåret 2018/2019. [Results of the National test in year 6 school year 2018/2019]. Projektet Nationella prov i främmande språk (Nafs), University of Gothenburg.

technology has made access to foreign languages easy, but despite this, very few students seem to encounter their Modern Language by using digital technology.

6.2 Learning

The second domain in the thesis, *Learning*, investigates the learning and teaching practices in the Modern Language classroom and how these practices are experienced by the students. Three themes in relation to language learning are addressed in this section, namely, (1) the contextual dimension of language learning (i.e., structural and pedagogical context) (2) beliefs about the teaching and learning context and (3) learner agency.

6.2.1 Context – the organisation of the Language Choice

The organisation of the Language Choice in year 6 at Meadow School is probably not unique. Since many schools in Sweden are organized from preschool to middle school (i.e., up to school year 6), one implication is that many students all over Sweden need to be transported, one way or another, between schools in order to have their lessons in Modern Languages in year 6. At Meadow School, there were two different modes of learning a Modern Language in year 6: the first mode implied one lessons per week (80 minutes) and the other implied two lessons per week (each 40 minutes). For the first mode, students from three middle schools had to go by bus back and forth. Although this transportation of students seemed to work smoothly from a logistic perspective, it implied several organisational issues, for example having only one lesson per week, as well as the length of the lesson. However, this was mainly perceived as demanding by the teachers who stated that mode 1 was demanding for their students. Further, the Language Choice also implied that students were put into different groups where they did not know each other. Obviously, this practice is rather common in the school context, especially when the students are slightly older. However, when students only meet their group constellation once a week, it takes time to get to know the teacher and the other participants in the group. Also from a teacher's perspective, it takes time and effort to build relationships and get to know everyone in the group. There were also issues for those students who could easily walk between the two schools; despite (or because of) the close proximity between the two schools, students were sometimes late for class. Although the German group in the current study had two lessons per week, it often implied that some 10 minutes were devoted to starting up the lesson. However, meeting the students twice a week facilitated the process

of getting to know each other in the group and enhanced the creation of a supportive learning atmosphere.

Another issue with students being transported to another school was that learning material was easily forgotten, for example, the computer, the charger, books, paper and pencils, which meant that the teachers had to have a backup plan that entailed bringing a lot of material with them to class. Classrooms which are intended and adjusted for Modern Language classes seem to have disappeared during the past few decades, in favour of so-called 'home classrooms' (i.e., each class has their assigned classroom and the teachers come to their classroom, instead of the students going to different classrooms during the school day). Bearing in mind the nature of Modern Languages as a subject, this seems to be a disadvantageous development, since classrooms intended for language learning are often motivating settings in themselves. They often include signs such as maps, photos, posters and art from places and countries where the language is spoken as well as authentic materials (newspapers, magazines, books). In addition, some classrooms were not idealistic from a language teaching perspective, as shown in the current study (e.g., arrangement of tables).

Another contextual dimension of learning practices in the language classrooms at Meadow School was the use of computers. As described in the previous chapter, all students were supplied with their own laptop which they were supposed to bring to language class. By using digital technology, learning was obviously facilitated in many ways, also bridging the gap between the classroom and authentic language use. However, quite often, the computer disturbed the learning processes, for example, when the laptop was not charged, or the charger was at home. On some occasions, the students had to wait for each other to log in and start an exercise (which sometimes took a great deal of time), and when the student eventually succeeded in logging in, (s)he could not find the right web page. Some students also used the computer to surf on the internet during class. Hence, having access to a computer (or a smart phone) during class, often resulted in an interruption during the lesson. As several researchers have pointed out, technology use in the language classroom can both distract and hinder learning and engagement (Stockwell & Reinders, 2019; Ushioda, 2013b) and the findings from this study support this rather pessimistic view on technology, or rather the use of technology, at least to some extent.

6.2.2 Target language use in the Modern language classroom

Drawing on previous research that underlines the importance of target language input for enhancing language proficiency (ESLC report, 2012; JRC report, 2013; Pinter, 2006), and on the Swedish syllabus for Modern Languages, which to a large extent is inspired by the communicative approach in foreign language learning (see 2.2.1), it is somewhat surprising that the target language is not used to a greater extent in the current study. During most lessons, the TL was mainly used for classroom management (e.g., greeting the students when they arrived and saying goodbye when they left, checking the attendance, and for small talk). These results are supported by Skolinspektionen (2010a) and Stoltz (2011) who found similar results in their studies. Furthermore, two recent studies (Erickson et al., 2022 and Vold & Brkan, 2020) investigating teachers' target language use also support the impression of low target language use in many Modern Language classrooms. Firstly, the TAL research study (Erickson et al., 2022) found an ambiguity in the teachers' answers concerning target language use in their analyses of the teacher questionnaire. Although many teachers declared that they felt competent and confident in their professional target language use, their reported use of the TL was low, especially when the learners were beginners. It was, however, more frequently used when their students reached a higher proficiency level. Secondly, instances of low target language use are also supported in a recent Norwegian study in lower secondary school (Vold & Brkan, 2020), showing that most instruction during lessons (in this case French lessons) was conducted in the majority language (i.e., Norwegian). It is reasonable to assume that the teaching and learning context is quite similar in the Nordic contexts, and that a considerable amount of the teaching in Modern Languages is conducted in the majority language. In addition, in a recently published report from the Swedish Schools inspectorate [Skolinpektionen], it is stated that the TL is not used sufficiently to improve communicative competence in the Modern Language classrooms. Although the conditions for TL input obviously differ between English and SFLs in the Swedish context, Nilsson (2020) also found that TL use varied in the English classrooms in her study investigating FLA in school years 2 to 5.

When addressing the question of TL use with the teachers at Meadow School, they seemed to be concerned not to 'frighten' the students with too much TL. They expressed a fear of making the students anxious if they did not understand what was said, explained or expected of them. This concern may be understanda-

ble and research into FLA has reported that there are students who feel anxious and stressed when not understanding the teacher's instructions (e.g., Nilsson, 2020), that is, a sort of anxiety which is related to the teacher, and/or the peers in the classroom. In addition, the view of the TL as the main language in teaching within the communicative approach has been questioned in recent years, especially regarding YLLs (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Macaro & Lee, 2013). However, given the low TL input for the SFLs in the Swedish context, the students would probably need to listen to much more of French, German, and Spanish in order to develop communicative skills and reach a higher language proficiency, also in their second foreign language. As shown in the ESLC report (European Commission, 2012), Swedish students' performances in Spanish were weak (80% of the students' performances were assessed as pre-A1 or A1). The TAL study reported similar results, namely that Swedish students in general were unaccustomed to speaking in the TL, and that more (authentic) communicative activities in the Modern Language classroom are needed to develop this capacity (Bardel et al., 2019; Vetenskapsrådet, 2019).

Considering the results mentioned above, it is plausible that the classrooms with low TL use in the current study are more representative of Swedish language classrooms, and that high exposure to TL use is more uncommon. In general, several reasons behind low use of TL can be found, for example, teachers' oral proficiency or lack of confidence in the TL and teachers' general teaching skills (Pinter, 2006; Schröter et al., 2016). In addition, it may be perceived as more demanding to teach a foreign language to a group of students in the foreign language, because the teacher must make use of his/her whole teaching repertoire to make sure that the students understand sufficiently (in order to perform different tasks). Previous research, as well as my own experience of teaching, has shown that most students revert to speaking in their L1, which might be in the majority language or in their mother tongue, (i.e., L1 is not synonymous with the majority language), when and if they have the possibility, and that students rarely initiate speaking in the target language themselves (Carless, 2007; Meiring & Norman, 2002). Hence, when students repeatedly reply in the majority language (in the current study, Swedish) or ask questions in the majority language, it takes considerable perseverance from the teacher to continue speaking in the TL. However, it is perhaps not surprising that students revert to speaking the majority language in the Modern Language classroom, when the teacher also speaks that language to a large extent during lessons.

In the current study, the learners are beginners and relatively young, which might have influenced the low use of TL, as expressed by the one of the teachers. However, the teacher who managed to use the target language to a larger extent in her Modern Language classroom shows that there is no contradiction between beginners and target language use and that there are many ways in which communication and understanding can be achieved. The teacher stressed that the students did not need to understand everything that was said in the TL, as this is an important experience in relation to an authentic language learning situation.

When asking the students about TL use during class, findings from Q2 showed that most students (84%) preferred their teacher to speak both in Swedish and in the TL. Very few (11%) preferred the teacher to mostly speak in the TL. Most students seem to support the teaching practices that they encounter; further, they are influenced by the teaching and learning agenda of their teacher. These findings are in line with those of Nilsson (2020) who found that YLLs (of English) strongly relied on their teacher and that the teaching practices they encountered were usually accepted and supported. Furthermore, many YLLs may not have encountered other different ways of teaching and learning (i.e., during the English lessons).

Another implication of the rather low use of the TL in the Modern Language classroom, and thus, a high use of Swedish, entails that Swedish is more or less a prerequisite for learning a Modern Language, since most communication in the classroom is through the dominant L1. It is possible that most Swedish language teachers assume that their students are all monolingual L1 speakers (i.e., the monolingual bias) and accordingly, they use Swedish in order to explain and manage the classroom activities. This is also supported by Erickson et al. (2022) who found that Swedish was generally seen 'as a necessary means to understand both in general and, in particular, regarding formal aspects of the language' (p. 192). However, as shown in the previous chapter, approximately 10% of the students in the current study had another L1 than Swedish, although most of them considered Swedish as their second L1 (or L2). Their linguistic resources were, however, not used as an example or as a comparison in the Modern Language classroom, at least not during the lessons which were observed. The only language which was used as a comparison was English. These results are in line with those reported by Skolinspektionen (2022), indicating that students' linguistic repertoires (with the exception of English) are seldom seen as an asset in the Modern Language classroom. Further, one student had just recently arrived in Sweden and had little knowledge of Swedish. Hence, the learning of a Modern Language was not facilitated by the fact that the medium of instruction was Swedish. This student often used English

when talking with friends in the classroom, and it is possible that his/her learning would have been made easier if more code-switching and/or translanguaging had been used.

6.2.3 Students' beliefs about teaching and learning practices

The second research question of the study sought to investigate the students' beliefs in relation to the teaching and learning of a Modern Language. Regarding this question, one person is perceived as fundamental, namely the teacher. She, (in this case), initiated the learning activities in the language classroom and results showed that to a large extent, most students were content with the teaching and learning activities they encountered. The activities which seemed to be most appreciated were playing games, watching films, talking with a friend, and learning new words. These results corroborate with the findings of previous work (Mihaljević Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019), showing that the activities most appreciated by YLLs are role plays, watching videos, free conversations, and games. Further, many other students stated that homework was important for their learning. However, most students considered homework to entail learning vocabulary. They also gave examples of individual strategies for learning vocabulary. These strategies often seemed to be translating a word or an expression back and forth between Swedish and the target language, often using a digital tool. Less attention was paid to knowing how to pronounce the word or how to use it in a sentence. However, some students mentioned other strategies for learning, for example, listening to the target language, especially from films and music, which had apparently been a successful way for them to learn English. Therefore, other types of homework which could involve more listening to and production in the TL would probably be beneficial from a didactic perspective and could also broaden the students' perception of homework.

Further, observations, interviews, and open answers showed that most students strongly relied on their teacher and trusted her way of teaching. However, learner agency is still needed for learning to happen, although this realization might be difficult to grasp for many learners (i.e., the fact that it is *you*, the learner/yourself, who must learn).

6.2.4 Learner agency and learner autonomy

As previously shown, the learning practices in the Modern Language classrooms were mainly teacher directed. Furthermore, the students seemed surprised by the

question asked during the interviews, namely if they felt that they could influence the learning activates in the Modern Language classroom. They seemed to be content with their teacher deciding what to do, and they trusted her ability to decide what to do and when to undertake the planned activities. These results are in line with those of Nilsson (2020), showing that YLLs strongly relied on their teacher's capacity to organize lessons and learning activities.

One interesting finding in the study is the few instances of both learner agency and learner autonomy displayed in the three classrooms. However, this may not be surprising, given that neither the learning objectives, nor the core content in the current syllabus specifically address these two concepts as something for teachers to practise and develop. However, the syllabus for Modern Languages for years 4 - 6 states that 'students should be given the opportunity to develop their skills (i.e., all-round communicative skills) in relating content to their own experiences, living conditions and interest' (Curriculum for Compulsory school, revised 2018, p. 66)[195]. This sentence in the syllabus can be related to learner autonomy, whereas learner agency can be found in several learning objectives, such as developing skills for searching, evaluating, and choosing content of both spoken and written language, and developing the skill to use different tools for learning. As previously mentioned, the Swedish syllabus from 2011, as well as the revised (2018) and current (2022) version, draw on the functional view of language learning and they are influenced by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), where the learner is encouraged to become independent and autonomous in his or her language learning.

However, indications of learner autonomy were found in the three classrooms, as shown in the previous chapter (see 5.2.3.6). This shows that there are possibilities to apply learner autonomy also for YLLs in the beginning of their learning process. The students commented positively on these activities, stating that they found it rewarding and fun to work with exercises that they themselves could choose, such as creating their own dialogues or writing their own texts. Many students appreciated the ability to choose their learning activity, for example by choosing a digital tool or by doing a more traditional exercise. Hence, the opportunity to influence (i.e., autonomously decide over one's learning) seemed to be a motivational factor, which also promoted a better learning context in the Spanish classroom, as expressed by both the teacher and the students in the interviews. Hence, the possibility to influence had an impact on the learners' engagement, and the findings are in line with those of Reeve (2006) and Svalberg (2018), the latter

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195 In the new Curriculum Lgr22, this sentence has not been changed (Skolverket, 2022).

stating that for YLLs, the utility and meaningfulness of the task are fundamental. Furthermore, the results show the importance of the teacher, both on a relational level, but also on a pedagogical level since the teacher needs to maintain the learners' engagement in the classroom (Mihaljević Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019).

Previous research has shown that young language learners can express what and how they want to learn, as well as a capacity of awareness of how they learnt, and that this process begins early in the learning process (Enever, 2011). The view of the learner as an agent who is capable of autonomously deciding and regulating his or her learning process is supported in the current study. Findings (emanating from interviews and demonstrated during classroom observations) show that learner agency was shown in several ways, for example, during lessons when students decided to participate (or not participate) in different learning activities. In addition, they were able to express which learning activities they liked best, which they disliked, and which methods they preferred when learning, as shown in the following example:

> 'I: *Do you have any strategy in your learning of German?*
> – Yes, I do. If I have vocabulary to learn, I go into different rooms and in each room, I have to learn one word. And then I remember which word is associated with which room.
> I: *And it works?*
> – Yes…'[196]

This student had obviously found a strategy that worked well for learning vocabulary, and it may be assumed that she came up with this strategy herself. As previously stated, the students had little opportunity to influence their learning in the classroom, but they had the possibility to decide how and when to work with their homework. This is something that almost every student exemplified individually during the interviews. Several strategies were mentioned, which they considered worked well in their learning process, such as making their individual schedule for doing homework with the use of flashcards on the computer (i.e., learning vocabulary). There were also differences in time and effort invested in the learning process, which could also be seen as a sign of learner agency.

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196 "I: *Har du någon speciell strategi för att lära dig tyska?*
– Ja, det har jag. Om jag får glosor så går jag in i olika rum… och i varje rum så har jag en glosa. Och sen så kommer jag ihåg vilken glosa det var i varje rum så…
I: *Och det funkar?*
– Ja…"

6.2.5 Learning Spanish: Modern Languages – on equal terms?

Since the Curriculum reform of 1994, when Spanish became an official option within the Language Choice, Spanish has increased in popularity among students and is now the language chosen by most Swedish students in compulsory school (52% of the students learning a Modern Language in 2021 chose to learn Spanish)[197]. Francia and Riis (2013) suggested several possible reasons behind the popularity of Spanish, such as Spanish being perceived as an important language in the world, the language being connected to holidays in Spanish-speaking countries, and Latin-American culture becoming more and more popular among young people. Furthermore, Spanish seems to be perceived as the easiest Modern Language to learn, compared to French and German. Findings from the current study support the suggestions made by Francia and Riis, as many students gave the same suggestions for their Language Choice. When the students learning Spanish were interviewed, 4 out of 7 stated that they thought the language was more difficult to learn than anticipated, and they seemed to be somewhat surprised by this.

The increasing number of students wanting to learn Spanish has not been unproblematic, primarily because many schools have had (and still have) difficulties recruiting certified teachers of Spanish (Francia & Riis, 2013). At Meadow School, Ellenor, the Spanish teacher was the only certified Spanish teacher during school year 2019/20120 and consequently she had to first discuss with her colleagues and thereafter sign her three colleagues' grades as well, in all four school years (i.e., year 6 to year 9)[198]. Ellenor was used to being the only certified Spanish teacher as this had been the case for several years at Meadow School; some years she would have a certified colleague in Spanish, but as teacher turn-over is high, the following year she could be on her own again. Previous studies have shown that this shortage of certified teachers in Spanish is not an unusual situation in many Swedish compulsory schools (Francia & Riis, 2013; Granfeldt et al., 2021). Furthermore, as a teacher of Spanish you automatically have a larger number of students compared to your colleagues in French and German, which also increases the workload for

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197 Skolverket, 2021/2022a.

198 Only certified teachers are allowed to award grades. As a result, a certified teacher must discuss and sign the grades of an uncertified colleague and must rely on the colleague's observations that underpin the grade.
https://www.skolverket.se/regler-och-ansvar/lararlegitimation-och-forskollararlegitimation/regler-och-krav-for-lararlegitimation/larar--och-forskollararlegitimation-och-krav-for-att-fa-satta-betyg

many teachers of Spanish (e.g., having to support, monitor and assess the learning of a larger number of students).

Findings from the current study showed that the learning context (i.e., the pedagogical context) differed between the three groups. Hence, the conditions for learning Spanish seemed to be more problematic than those for the other two languages. This was mainly due to the large group of students in the class learning Spanish (normally around 30, even though the number of students in the participating group was 26). The students came from three different schools, and they did not know each other previously, which seemed to have caused some tension and stress among students. This made teaching more difficult not only from a teacher's perspective, but also from a student's perspective as large groups could be perceived as challenging, for example, in relation to foreign language anxiety (FLA). The group dynamics and learning context are, therefore, important when students are to speak in the target language. In addition, it might be an extra challenge for the teacher to create a relaxed and positive learning environment in a large group, especially in year 6 when the teacher often meets the students only once per week.

In the current study, a few students in all three language classes needed extra support in their learning, but the language teachers at Meadow School had not been informed about these students or their specific needs. It is reasonable to assume that this is the case also in many other schools since communication between schools might not easily be accomplished. Although this lack of information between schools was problematic in all Modern Language groups, the group size of the Spanish class made it more difficult for the teacher to help and support all students. The numerous large groups in Spanish is addressed by Granfeldt et al. (2021), speculating on the possibility that Spanish might have attracted groups of students who traditionally do not choose to learn a Modern Language. It may be difficult to know which students they are referring to, but it may include students who are in need of extra support. However, helping students in need of extra support is probably more difficult, given the size of many Spanish groups. In the current study, Ellenor, the Spanish teacher, mentioned her frustration with students that fall behind in their language learning, and how difficult it is to help and support these students. Ellenor stated that she as a teacher, or the school, can offer very limited support, as Modern Languages is not an obligatory subject. The curricular status of Modern Languages was investigated in the TAL study in a teacher questionnaire where the lack of special resources for Modern Languages was mentioned as an issue; students are rarely entitled to extra support if needed, as they

are in other mandatory subjects (Erikson et al., 2022). The students who fall behind in Modern languages can therefore be advised to drop the language and instead focus on extra English or Swedish, an observation supported by the results of Tholin and Lindqvist (2009).

The demanding conditions for learning Spanish can also render assessment more difficult. This was specifically addressed during the interview with Ellenor, who stated that from time to time she was concerned about the validity of her assessment (see 5.5.2). The time available to listen to or talk to each student is obviously less in a large group, which also decreases teachers' possibility to assess continuously. When discussing with Ellenor, she stated that one lesson a week is not always sufficient to help and support all students, which further affects the possibility to use formative assessment. Therefore, according to Ellenor, the teacher must, to a large extent, rely on tests or on tasks which are produced by the students on their own, which was perceived as less satisfactory.

At Meadow School, the principal stated that more students dropped Spanish in relation to French or German. This is also supported when checking the internal records of Meadow School comparing the students who started their Modern Language in 2019 with those that remain in year 2022. Also, in proportion to the different numbers of students in the three languages, the drop from Spanish was larger than for the other two languages: 20 students had dropped the subject of Spanish (approximately 20%), in comparison with three for both German and French (approximately 10%). Most of these students dropped the subject during school year 8. On a national level, the reduction from Modern Languages seems to be proportional between the three languages, but there were regional differences (Krigh, 2019; Francia & Riis, 2013).

These findings suggest that not all students are offered equal learning circumstances and that there is a risk that some might fall behind already from the start. On a national level, few students seem to get extra support if needed in Modern Languages (Skolinspektionen, 2022). The current study showed that the pedagogical context was different between the three languages, primarily related to the group sizes in Spanish. From a teacher perspective, individual adaptations seemed more problematic in the large group of Spanish. In addition, three out of four Spanish teachers were not certified at Meadow School. These findings are not unique, indicating that this is a rather common educational situation in many Swedish schools, as previously shown by Granfeldt et al. (2021) and Francia and Riis, (2013). Hence, one might ask if the subject of Modern Languages is a subject for all students, or intended for only some?

6.3 Having learnt

The last concept domain, *Having learnt*, aimed to answer the research question 'How do students assess their own language learning and how do they experience their teacher's assessments, both the continuous assessment and the assessment made at the end of the school year?'. This part of the Discussion chapter starts with the students' experiences of having learnt and their thoughts about assessment, and then moves to the teachers' perspective of assessment. The themes that are addressed in this domain is agency, which involves students' sense of capacity and meta-language awareness, and beliefs.

6.3.1 Students' sense of learning and capacity

The feeling of having learnt seems to be an important factor for further learning, which was evident both in the interviews and in the open answers in the questionnaires. Many students were able to state what they were good at what they had learnt, and that they had many ideas about what they wanted to improve. In addition, when evaluating their own understanding and ability to express themselves (i.e., both receptive and productive skills) the results were very positive (see Table 20, p. 157) showing that they experienced a sense of capacity, or learner confidence, in the new language. However, making up sentences in the TL was perceived as rather difficult, more difficult than speaking and understanding. This might seem somewhat contradictory, given the fact that speaking also implies making up one's own sentences, but could be explained by the speaking activities encountered in the Modern Language classroom, which were often rehearsed.

The quantitative analyses showed that in this study, the girls perceived learning a bit more difficult than the boys, although these results need to be interpreted with caution, given the small sample. Hence, in relation to learning, it seems that the girls reported both higher levels of anxiety and that they were more modest in their self-assessment.

Further, findings from the interviews showed that several students compared their learning of the Modern Language to their learning of English, which (most) students have previous experience of learning. In this comparison, they reflected on their own learning, strategies used and capacity for learning. One boy contemplated on his learning of Spanish and compared it to English:

> '– Well, Spanish is a completely new language… and automatically… it is not like learning English, it is much harder…I thought the same when I started to learn English…before I got good at it, it took like three years…

I: *Do you believe it is the spelling, or that it sounds strange or…what do you believe is harder?*
- No, it's just…
I: *…you need time to get used to it?*
- Yeah, it takes time for me to learn a new language'[199]

The example above shows that he had a very realistic view on language learning, namely that learning a new language entails hard work since it is 'a completely new language'; learning Spanish was obviously perceived as more difficult than learning English. This student had also realized that language learning takes time, as shown in the last sentence: '*It takes time for me to learn a language*', which he also experienced in his learning of English. Furthermore, the example displays a meta-learning ability, where this student shows an awareness of the learning process, which is also in line with previous research stating that this ability begins early (Enever, 2011; Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore, 2011; Muñoz, 2011, 2014).

6.3.2 Students' beliefs about assessment

The current study found that most students did not seem concerned about receiving a grade in Modern Languages in year 6. They knew that their learning was being assessed but as grading starts from year 6 in the Swedish curriculum, they have little experience of explicit assessment. During this first year of learning, most students seemed to have perceived their teacher's assessment as quite undramatic and several stated that their teacher knew how to best assess their learning. In the beginning, mostly vocabulary checks were mentioned in relation to assessment, but at the end of the first year, other types of assessment were also referred to, for example, tests, students' own oral recordings, or short written texts.

In the literature on language assessment literacy, the importance of relevance and adaptation to the learners' level of ability is stressed (Bailey, 2017). The interpretation of the results from Q3 and the interviews indicate that most students

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199 " – Alltså… spanska är ju ett helt nytt språk … då blir det automatiskt, det är ju inte samma som att lära sig engelska… det blir ju ganska mycket jobbigare… det tyckte jag samma med engelska också när jag började… innan jag blev bra på det, det tog typ tre år innan jag blev bra på det…
I: *Ja… är det stavningen du tycker, eller är det att det låter konstigt eller som du tycker är svårt eller…*
– Ah, det är bara… ja
I: *Man behöver vänja sig liksom…*
– Mm… det tar tid för mig att lära mig ett språk." (Interview with student S6)

experienced their teacher's assessment as fair, believing that the grade their teacher awarded would correspond with their own imagined grade. This result seems to support both relevance and adaption of the assessment made during the first year of learning, which is an important assessment principle as stated by Inbar et al. (2005). A majority of the students (70%) stated that they had had the opportunity to show their teacher what they knew and could do in the target language.

There were, however, indications of negative emotions concerning certain assessment practices. For example, the fact that the teachers graded differently between the three languages (e.g., the use or non-use of the entire grading scale after the first term), or that some students felt that they had not been given the opportunity to show their capacity to their teacher. Why some of the students thought they had not been given this opportunity is obviously difficult to know and even though some blamed their own behaviour (i.e., being self-critical), these findings indicate the importance of variety in assessment practices, as well as involving the students. Self-assessment and peer-assessment might promote the learner's motivation for learning, which is also stressed in the language assessment literature (Erickson, 2020; Lamb, 2017).

In relation to assessment practices, some students mentioned that they did not like written tests or listening exercises as they were perceived as stressful. They seemed more at ease with short vocabulary checks, which many students considered equivalent to learning a new language and to having their learning assessed. Vocabulary checks may, indeed, be an effective tool to measure students' ability to learn new words, and they might also efficiently enhance communication (i.e., adding more words which can be used in phrases, and lead to further development of syntax and grammar). Erickson (2020) refers to these 'building blocks' of the language as indispensable, 'but they are not the goals per se of your building venture' (p. 34); it is the use of the language that is stressed in the communicative approach, that is, the ability to use the language as a mean of communication (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001). Erickson and Åberg-Bengtsson (2012) point to the risk of 'a pedagogical practice where what is easily measurable becomes the most important', meaning that there is a risk that knowledge which is easy to measure, in this case memorizing new vocabulary, is perceived as the most important feature of language learning, at least from the students' view. Therefore, the use of vocabulary checks, and what they actually mean in relation to a more holistic view on learning a language, probably needs to be discussed with students, not only with those in school year 6, but also with older students who to a large extent, seem to connect language learning with learning vocabulary from vocabulary lists.

However, some students were more aware of their teachers' assessment than others, as shown in the following excerpt: (example shown before)

> 'We've had vocabulary every week. I think it's just to make us learn, I think she checks it sometimes but not very much. Tests, on the other hand, I think those matter a lot because they show how much you are following the lessons etc. I also think pronunciation is important.'[200]

The example shows that this student has 'cracked the code' of how the teacher assesses the students' learning. This girl has learnt, perhaps through experience of learning English, that tests are often considered important tools for teachers to know how well their students learn during class (and at home) and that in the end, it is not the vocabulary checks that matter most, but what you are able to do with the language.

6.3.3 Teacher's assessment of language learning

The three participating teachers in the current study seemed to be pragmatic about their assessment, seeing both positive and negative sides of grading in year 6. This was shown in the three teacher interviews, and expressed by Charlotta: '*How often do I meet the students, how much do I get to see and how much do the students get to show?*'[201]

As shown, grading is not easily accomplished after a short period of instruction, and with a limited learning content. However, the participating teachers seem to have accepted and adjusted their assessment practices to the new regulation. Charlotta has adopted a pragmatic view on assessment and grading, although she might not be enthusiastic about the conditions for her grading. Further, the interviews showed that the teachers were concerned about the validity of their assessment, which is also shown in the quotation above. The teachers stated that they understood the rationale, but they were ambivalent regarding the whole issue of grading, stating that it was particularly challenging to award individual grades after only 24 hours of instruction (after the first term), which resulted in quite modest grading (i.e., only a few levels in the grading scale were used, most often the lower ones).

As a result of the interrupted classroom observations due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to observe the assessment practices at the end of the

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200 "Vi har haft glosor varje vecka. Det tror jag är bara för att vi ska lära oss, jag tror att hon kollar lite på dem, men inte så mycket. Däremot proven, de tror jag att hon tar med mycket för där visar man hur mycket man hänger med på lektionerna osv. Uttalet är också viktigt tror jag." (Q3, student S8)

201 "Hur mycket träffar jag eleverna, vad hinner jag se, vad hinner de visa?"

school year, which is obviously a limitation of the study. I therefore had to rely on the interviews with students and teachers in order to investigate these practices used at the end of the first year. There were no indications of peer-assessment or self-assessment used during this first year of learning, although it might have been practised without my knowledge.

7 Summary and conclusions

This study set out to investigate the Language Choice in school year 6 from a broad perspective. The focus was to gain an increased understanding of young language learners' beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and perceptions before and throughout their first year of leaning a Modern Language. Furthermore, the study aimed to examine contextual issues, such as policy and organization, which may also influence young learners in their Language Choice. The mixed methods approach generated both quantitative and qualitative data, which facilitated multifaceted answers to the research questions.

In conclusion, the study indicates that a majority of students were content with their Language Choice and that they would have made the same choice one year later. However, contextual factors affected their choice, such as information provided prior to the Language Choice, which differed between the schools in year 5, indicating that collaboration between schools is not always easily accomplished. Further, students were familiar with the Language Choice between French, German, or Spanish but most students seemed unaware of other alternatives that were available.

The students' Language Choice was primarily inspired by their families, by visits to a country where the target language is spoken and by the comfort of having a friend in the Modern Language group. Furthermore, it was found that among the participating young language learners, motivation for learning a Modern Language in year 6 was high prior to their Language Choice (in year 5), as well as during and after their first year of learning. However, a small decrease in motivation was noticeable at the end of the first year. In addition, it is important to stress that not all young learners are motivated to learn a Modern Language; in this study, 14% of the students in year 5 responded negatively to the statement that they choose a Modern Language because they enjoy learning languages. There seem to be several contextual parameters that are interrelated and interfere with students' motivation, such as group dynamics, learning conditions, peers, and parents/legal guardians. Furthermore, results indicate that emotions are closely connected to language learning and that these emotions can be motivational (e.g., joy and engagement in the learning process, hopes and dreams of future travelling or careers)

as well as demotivational (e.g., regret of having made the wrong Language Choice or experiences of foreign language anxiety in the Modern Language classroom).

In terms of gender, the analyses generated no conclusive results to indicate that motivation for language learning differs between the girls and boys participating in the study. This finding is contrary to previous research that has found that girls are generally more motivated in their language learning than boys. However, on an individual level, students' motivation for SFL learning changes and fluctuates during the first year of learning, which is in line with previous research, showing that motivation is dynamic and fluctuating (Dörnyei et al., 2015; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2015).

The study has also shown an ambiguity in students' attitudes towards languages and language learning. Although many young language learners stated that they enjoyed learning a second foreign language and believed the language would be useful in the future, a considerable number (54%) responded in Q3 that knowing English would probably suffice in the future.

In relation to support, the results obtained indicated that parental support and engagement were important for many students, although not all of them seemed to have given parental engagement much consideration. However, the possibility to get help with homework in the new subject seemed important for some students, and when discussing their Language Choice, it was clear that their choice was influenced by their legal guardians. These findings are in line with those of Krigh (2019) and Skolinspektionen (2022) pointing to family background and socio-economic factors in relation to the Language Choice (i.e., which students choose to learn a Modern Language, which students continue to study the language throughout compulsory school and which students can get help and support in their learning at home). This social differentiation is also supported by Granfeldt et al. (2021).

In general, students appreciated their teacher and the learning practices they encountered in the Modern Language classroom. The observations showed a variety in the learning practices in each specific class, and that this variety was appreciated by the students. The learning practices were mainly teacher directed, and there were only limited examples of learner influence or learner autonomy. Interestingly, when asked during interviews, the students did not express any desire for more influence over their own learning and they seemed rather surprised by the question. Their answers indicate that they were not used to setting their own goals or choosing learning activities themselves. However, they seemed to appreciate it when they were given the opportunity to decide what and how they wanted to

learn. The much-coveted learning goal, as expressed by many students in this study, was to be able to speak in the target language, preferably fluently. However, during class, most students were reluctant to speak in the target language and the main language used in the Modern Language classrooms in this study was Swedish, which coincides with previous observations (Erikson et al., 2022; Skolinspektionen, 2010a; 2022).

In relation to learning, findings show that for many students in this study, learning a language was equivalent to learning vocabulary from a list. These vocabulary lists were synonymous with homework in the Modern Language subject, and they were checked the following lesson. Further, strategies for learning vocabulary, as well as language learning strategies in general, were exemplified by many of the students. This indicates some degree of learner agency. In addition, most students stated what they wanted to learn and what they needed to improve; they could express which strategies for learning they believed worked best for them, and they were able to set their own future learning goals. A majority of the students stated that they had learnt a lot during this first year of instruction, giving examples of what they thought was easy or difficult to grasp with the new language. However, quite a few students compared their learning of French, German, and Spanish with their learning of English, and that in this comparison, the learning of a Modern Language was not perceived as easy or similar to learning English.

The students were awarded grades twice during this first year of learning, and most of them did not seem particularly concerned about their teacher's grading of their language learning. They trusted their teacher's ability to award grades and believed that their teacher and themselves would agree on the awarded grade. The participating teachers stated that grading after only 24 hours of instruction (i.e., after just one term) was not easy, but that they had adopted a pragmatic view of grading in year 6, given the limited learning content as well as the requirements in the national syllabus, which were perceived as quite generous. When comparing the students' estimated grades with the grades they were eventually awarded, results show that the teacher-awarded grades were higher than those anticipated by the students.

Another clear observation was that the conditions for learning a Modern Language varied depending on contextual factors. Transportation between schools is quite common for many students in year 6, and for the students at Meadow School, this transportation resulted in two different modes of studying a Modern Language in year 6 at Meadow School. Another contextual factor was the group size for the three languages which differed noticeably. This factor was also supported by other

studies and reports (Granfeldt et al., 2021; Skolinspektionen, 2022). Consequently, organisational factors, as well as contextual factors affected the implementation of the Language Choice at Meadow School, and, in addition, it affected the practices in the classroom.

At a national level, the increasing number of students wanting to learn Spanish has resulted in large groups, where the number of students in a class is normally approximately 30, as compared to the other two languages where the groups are usually fewer than 20 students. In addition, many schools have difficulties in finding teachers of Spanish, let alone certified teachers (Skolverket, 2021b)[202.] With a large number of uncertified teachers, the need for in-service education is obvious. In addition to the current shortage of teachers, not only in Spanish, there is also an ongoing trend among teachers of changing posts and employers, often for a salary increase (Lindvall, 2022). In the current study, Meadow School had experienced difficulties in recruiting teachers of Spanish for many years, which resulted in three (out of four) uncertified Spanish teachers, and a constant change of teachers. These results reflect those of Francia and Riis (2013) who concluded that political action should be taken on a municipality level, and they further recommended in-service training for many teachers of Spanish to enable them to obtain a formal qualification.

The differences mentioned above have implications for the teaching, for the students' learning, and for the teachers' assessment in many of the groups learning Spanish and could be seen as problematic in relation to quality and equity. With the explicit political goal in Sweden of an inclusive school for all students, this inequality between the three languages should be a concern for all stakeholders.

7.1 Limitations of the study

As previously stated, the study is ethnographically inspired using traditional methods such as classroom observations and interviews, which, in combination with the three questionnaires, contributed to more in-depth knowledge about young language learners' learning of a second foreign language. The mixed methods approach is both a strength and a limitation of the study. The study was set in one particular school and the results are thus valid in this specific research context. As previously stated, the study is ethnographically inspired and the traditional methods used in ethnographic research are also used in this study, namely classroom

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202 Lärarprognos 2021 [Teacher Forecast 2021].

observations and interviews, which, in combination with three questionnaires, contributed to more in-depth knowledge about young language learners' learning of a second foreign language. Consequently, even if general conclusions may be difficult to draw from this study, it contributes with a considerable amount of data from an authentic educational setting. In addition, the restricted scope of the sample in Questionnaire 2 and 3 is a limitation that makes statistical inferences problematic. However, the descriptive statistical analyses showed several interesting and important tendencies, which in the future could be further investigated with larger randomized control groups.

The unfortunate interruption of classroom observations due to the pandemic is another limitation of the study (see post-scriptum). The fact that observations and participation in the classroom during the last two and a half months were not possible entailed greater reliance on the interviews with students and teachers, which were, however, also affected by the pandemic and resulted in digital interviews. The assessment practices which took place during the last part of the spring term of 2020 are, therefore, not observed, but merely discussed with the teachers, and mentioned by the students in the third questionnaire. In terms of validity, this could be problematic, as it cannot be taken for granted that saying and doing are equivalent. However, the combination of narratives and observations is considered a strength regarding validity (Atkinson, 2015).

7.2 Implications and future research

Previous research has shown that as many as 20% of all students drop their Modern Language before year 9 in Swedish compulsory school and that boys are generally more likely to give up their Modern Language. However, the current national tendency is that fewer students drop the subject (approximately 15% in year 2022). There are several possible reasons behind this reduction, such as schools being more reluctant to let students drop their Modern Language and also the introduction of extra qualification points ("meritpoäng") in compulsory school (2014). Nevertheless, one of the questions raised by this study is what could be done to prevent the seemingly declining interest in Modern Languages. When talking to teachers, most of them report that students who decide to drop their language generally do so in year 8. More research investigating school year 7 and 8 would therefore help to gain more knowledge concerning the interacting motivational mechanisms during compulsory school. The study also raises questions on how leaner autonomy can strengthen students' sense of purpose with foreign language

learning (i.e., other languages than English). When the students in the current study were able to influence their learning, they expressed a learning engagement that could be further developed, if they were given more opportunities to autonomously decide the content and means of their learning.

The current study has found that the conditions for learning Spanish seem to be more demanding than those for the other two languages, partly due to large groups of students in Spanish. It may be assumed that the conditions for learning Spanish are similar in many other Swedish schools, which is supported by Francia and Riis, (2013) and Granfeldt et al. (2021). Further research could assess the long-term effects of the conditions for learning Spanish in relation to the other two languages. In addition, the lack of extra support for students who fall behind or who need extra help in Modern Languages is probably more obvious in the Spanish groups where there are many students, and the teacher has, therefore, limited time to help all students.

Approximately 25% of all students in Swedish compulsory school have another linguistic background other than Swedish (Statistics Sweden, 2020). How these students' linguistic resources could be better acknowledged is an important matter for all school subjects, not only for the subject of Modern Languages. In the current study, the awareness of other linguistic resources, besides English, seemed very low, which is also supported by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate in their latest report (Skolinspektionen, 2022). How to better make use of other linguistic resources in the language classroom is therefore an important issue for further research.

During the past 20 years and on several occasions (for example in 2007 and 2018), the NAE has raised the question whether Modern Languages should be a compulsory subject in lower secondary school. To date, no decision has been taken and opinions seem to be divided in the matter. The most recent study investigating this issue is TAL, in which 68% of the participating teachers were positive to making the subject compulsory (Erickson et al., 2022). The question was also raised in this study, and although the teachers were somewhat ambivalent towards the curricula status of the subject, the issues of status, as well as extra support for students in Modern Languages, were mentioned as advantages, if the subject was made compulsory. Further research investigating teacher beliefs concerning advantages and disadvantages of the Language Choice would shed more light on this complex issue.

8 Post-scriptum in relation to Covid-19

As previously mentioned, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic at the beginning of spring 2020 had a decisive impact on the data collection of the research project. Little did I, or anyone else, anticipate the impact of the virus on all societal levels, which unfortunately also included the current study. The design of the study had to be changed and partly modified methods were therefore used to collect the necessary data.

Primarily, I did not have the possibility to visit Meadow School from the middle of March 2020. Although Swedish compulsory schools did not shut down and there was no official lockdown, the university did not allow its employees to visit any schools due to travel restrictions and the risk of spreading the virus. This restriction meant that the classroom observations had to be cancelled and contact with the research setting was lost, entailing that it was not possible to maintain important field relations with the students and the teachers. My role as a researcher therefore became both distant and somewhat less important, in relation to the fact that the world was upside down and people in a state of shock concerning the impact of the pandemic. At first, the extent of the loss of classroom observations was not evident, as these had been conducted during the autumn term. However, it was not until the beginning of the second term that the observations had become a stable routine for me and the participating students and teachers. The pandemic also entailed that no observations took place during the end of the first year of learning. Consequently, I had to rely on the questionnaires and the interviews in order to capture the students' experiences of learning and assessment. As a result, all this has obviously affected the methodology used in the study a considerable way.

The negative effect of not being 'in the field' also became evident during the interviews with the students. If I could have been physically present, I believe I would have managed to interview and talk to more students, as well as talk to some of the students who were more reluctant to be interviewed on Zoom. In the Modern Language classes, there were students who seemed discouraged in their learn-

ing of a Modern Language, and I would have liked to talk to them to learn more about their thoughts and experiences. Unfortunately, the pandemic prevented these conversations.

Questionnaire 3 had to be sent by post to Meadow School and the three teachers helped to administer it during one of their Modern Language lessons. This probably increased the response rate (54 students answered Q3 compared to only 38 for Q2). The teachers handed out the questionnaire and the students responded, and there does not seem to have been any issues with students not wanting to respond, since almost every student in these classes answered (although some of the responses were invalid due to lack of parental consent). However, the anonymity of the respondents could not be guaranteed since it was the teachers that conducted the procedure, and this may obviously have affected the students' responses in different ways. Nevertheless, the response rate increased, which was a positive effect. The explanation is simple – as a researcher, I must point out to the students that it is entirely optional to answer the questionnaires, which reduced the answering rate for the two previous questionnaires. From an ethical perspective, this is obviously the right way to proceed, but from a research perspective, the augmentation of respondents was very welcome.

Furthermore, and as previously explained, I interviewed one student at a time, and conditioned by the ethical approval, which only allowed audio recordings, I had to record the interviews with the camera function off. During the interviews, the students could therefore see me, but I could not see the student I was interviewing. The intention was to let the students talk as much as possible, but this was more difficult than expected. I sometimes found myself talking instead of the student, especially if (s)he seemed reluctant to speak. Both I, as the interviewer, and probably the students as well, experienced the situation as a bit awkward and unnatural. I felt that the loss of visual contact with my interlocuter prevented me from feeling at ease during the interviews. Interviews with the camera function on might therefore have led to a more relaxed conversation. In addition, the unequal relationship between a child and an adult was, perhaps, even more evident during these interviews, where I asked the questions and they (not all, but most of them) gave rather short answers. Some of them even seemed to experience the interview almost as an 'interrogation', in the sense that I asked the questions and the interviewee tried to answer as quickly as possible. The focused group interviews would probably have generated another type of data, but this is of course impossible to know for certain.

Finally, the emergence of the pandemic rendered the attempted ethnographic approach more difficult in terms of data collection as well as data analysis, since ethnography entails access to the research setting, as well as long-term commitment to both the educational setting and the participants. However, despite the many negative effects of the pandemic, the study generated numerous findings which contribute to shed further light on young students' Language Choice and their first encounter with a Modern Language in Swedish compulsory school.

9 Swedish summary

9.1 Bakgrund och syfte

Detta avhandlingsprojekt handlar om språkvalet i årskurs 6, närmare bestämt om elevers val av ytterligare ett främmande språk (franska, spanska eller tyska). Projektet syftar till att öka kunskapen och förståelsen för unga elevers motivation för att lära sig ett nytt främmande språk och om deras förväntningar, upplevelser och attityder kring språk, lärande och bedömning i början av sin språkinlärning. Projektet vill även belysa hur språkvalet kan gå till rent organisatoriskt och vilka förutsättningar elever har för att göra ett språkval. Studiens fokus har ett elevperspektiv, men även kontext (skola, klassrum och grupp) och undervisningspraktiker i klassrummen är viktiga delar i studien, där även lärarnas perspektiv bidrar till en djupare förståelse.

Studien genomfördes med syfte att svara på följande tre forskningsfrågor:

1. Vilka förväntningar, uppfattningar och attityder har elever före och under sitt första år med lärande av ett modernt språk?

2. Vilka undervisningspraktiker blir synliga i språkklassrummet och hur upplevs dessa praktiker av eleverna?

3. Hur ser eleverna på sitt eget lärande och hur upplever de lärarens bedömning, både i relation till den egna bedömningen samt den bedömning som gjorts av läraren under läsåret.

Språkvalet påbörjas senast i årskurs 6, vilket innebär att eleverna måste göra sitt val i årskurs 5. De allra flesta elever väljer att lära sig ett nytt främmande språk, ett så kallat modernt språk, vilket vanligtvis är franska, spanska eller tyska. Språkvalet är obligatoriskt men behöver inte nödvändigtvis innebära att elever väljer ett nytt främmande språk – de kan också välja modersmål (om modersmålet är annat än svenska), svenska som andraspråk, teckenspråk för hörande eller extra engelska

och/eller svenska. Läsåret 2021/2022 valde 87 % av eleverna i årskurs 6 antingen franska, spanska eller tyska som språkval. Avhoppen från ämnet moderna språk är emellertid många och i slutet av högstadiet är det mellan 25 % och 30 % av alla elever som inte läser ett modernt språk. Dessa elever har antingen slutat med sitt språk, ofta för att i stället läsa extra engelska och/eller svenska, eller aldrig börjat lära sig ett modernt språk (Skolverket 2021/2022a). När språkvalet infördes i läroplanen 1994 (Lpo94) blev det möjligt för elever med ett annat modersmål än svenska att välja sitt modersmål som språkval, medan tillägget av extra engelska och/eller svenska inom ramen för språkvalet i första hand var avsett för elever som hade svårigheter i just dessa två ämnen. I praktiken har emellertid många skolor låtit elever välja bort sitt moderna språk när de uppgett att ämnet varit för svårt, krävande eller motivationen brustit (Lärarnas Riksförbund, 2016; Skolverket, 2018a; Skolinspektionen, 2022; Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009). Många lärare vittnar om ett bristande intresse bland elever för att lära sig ett modernt språk och svårigheter med att förhindra att elever väljer bort sitt språk i slutet av högstadiet.

Under de senaste två decennierna har man sett ett minskat intresse för språklärande (förutom för engelska), främst på gymnasiet och i eftergymnasial utbildning. Få elever läser de högre stegen i gymnasiet (steg 4 och 5) och ännu färre går vidare till universitetsstudier i språket. Dessutom råder det brist på lärare i moderna språk, framför allt i mindre städer och på landsbygden (Granfeldt, Sayehli & Ågren, 2021). Denna brist ser ut att bli mer allvarlig framgent eftersom många språklärare närmar sig pensionsåldern och få studenter väljer att utbilda sig till lärare i moderna språk (Bardel, Erickson & Österberg, 2019).

Beslutsfattare inom skola och utbildning har gjort flera förändringar för att stärka ämnets status i svensk skola, bland annat infördes de så kallade meritpoängen för moderna språk 2007 (Tholin, 2019). Meritpoängen ger elever som fortsätter med sina språkstudier på högstadiet och i gymnasiet ett högre meritvärde då de söker utbildning vidare. Studier visar att meritpoängen bidragit till viss ökning av elever som studerar moderna språk, men främst i urbana miljöer och främst i tyska och franska (Granfeldt, Sayehli & Ågren, 2021). Vidare kan man via Skolverkets statistik se att avhoppen från moderna språk minskat något (se nedan). Huruvida meritpoängen ligger bakom att färre elever hoppar av från sitt moderna språk under högstadietiden är ännu inte fastställt (systemet med meritpoäng i moderna språk på högstadiet infördes 2014), men förklaringen torde inte vara långsökt.

9.2 Tidigare studier

Merparten av de studier som undersökt elevers motivation i samband med språkinlärning i den svenska skolkontexten har undersökt äldre elever, till exempel Österberg (2008), Cardelús (2015) och Rocher Hahlin (2020), medan studier med fokus på yngre språkinlärare har varit mer sällsynt. Ett undantag är en studie av Henry och Apelgren (2008) som undersökte elever i årskurs 4, 5 och 6. Resultaten visade att de deltagande eleverna var positiva till att lära sig ett modernt språk, och att denna entusiasm visserligen hade minskat efter ett år av lärande, men ändå var fortsatt hög hos både pojkar och flickor. Andra studier har fokuserat på orsaker till att elever slutar med sitt moderna språk. Tholin och Lindqvist (2009) kunde konstatera att många elever på högstadiet hoppade av sitt moderna språk eftersom ämnet upplevdes krävande och, dessutom, att möjligheten fanns att hoppa av från ämnet för att i stället läsa extra engelska och/eller svenska. Sedan Tholin och Lindqvists studie publicerades har emellertid många skolor gjort det svårare för elever att avbryta studierna i moderna språk, samtidigt som meritpoängen för högstadiet infördes 2014, vilket gjort att avhoppen är lägre (runt 15 % mot tidigare 20 %) (Skolverket, 2020/2021). Ytterligare en studie som belyser ämnet moderna språk under högstadietiden är Tholins (2019) genomgång av statlig styrning av ämnet moderna språk mellan 1996 och 2011. Tholin konstaterar att trots att förändringar gjort i både kursplan och timplan för att stärka ämnet moderna språk, har dessa förändringar inte lett till några tydliga resultat. Dessutom finns det indikationer på betygsinflation i ämnet, det vill säga att betygen har höjts, men att kunskaperna inte har ökat i samma grad, utan snarare tvärtom (Tholin, 2019).

Ytterligare en studie som behandlar de moderna språkens ställning i den svenska skolkontexten är Krighs doktorsavhandling från 2019. Krigh konstaterar att valet att läsa ett modernt språk är kopplat till socio-ekonomiska faktorer och att språkkunskaper ses om en möjlighet för en välutbildad medelklass att stärka sitt utbildningsmässiga och kulturella kapital.

Under de senaste decennierna har frågan om moderna språks status som valbart ämne diskuterats vid flera tillfällen, och trots att förslag har lagts fram för att göra ett modernt språk obligatoriskt, senaste gången 2018 (Skolverket, 2018a), har ännu inga beslut fattats i frågan. Man kan dock konstatera att fler lärare i moderna språk verkar vara mer positiva till obligatoriet än tidigare. I projektet TAL ställdes frågan till lärare (Erikson, Bardel, Österberg & Rosén, 2022) och så många som 68 % av lärarna i denna studie ställde sig positiva till obligatoriet, mot endast 12 % 1991 (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1991).

9.3 Teoretiska utgångspunkter

Avhandlingsprojektet baseras på tre aspekter – lärande, undervisning och bedömning – vilka hänger samman med studiens forskningsfrågor. I avhandlingsprojektet undersöks yngre elevers lärande av ett modernt språk där elevernas motivation, intresse, attityder och uppfattningar är själva utgångspunkten för studiens genomförande. Studiens teoretiska utgångspunkt är ett sociokognitivt perspektiv på språk och språkinlärning där lärande är beroende av både kognitiva och sociala aspekter (Atkinson, 2011; Ellis, 2010). Denna syn på språkinlärning innebär att varken sociokulturella eller kognitiva teorier ensamma anses kunna förklara ett komplext fenomen som språkinlärning, utan att en kombination av de båda perspektiven ger en bredare och bättre förståelse.

Ett annat viktigt begrepp för att förstå elevers motivation för lärande är *learner beliefs* som undersöker elevers förväntningar, attityder och upplevelser av att lära sig ett språk. *Learner beliefs* är brett forskningsfält som gränsar till motivationsforskningen, och som under de senaste decennierna utvecklats i en riktning där man ser att dessa *beliefs* är både dynamiska och komplexa; de är beroende av en mängd olika faktorer och kan snabbt ändras, och i en lärsituation kan de både samverka och motverka varandra (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011).

Vidare är begrepp som agens och självständigt lärande viktiga för denna studies teoretiska och begreppsliga ram. Med agens avses att vi som mänskliga varelser aktivt väljer att agera, och att vi sedan kan utvärdera dessa handlingar. I en inlärningskontext märks inlärarens agens då han eller hon aktivt deltar i sin egen inlärning, och att denna delaktighet (agens) alltid är beroende av både individuella, sociala och kontextuella faktorer som samverkar (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). Hur elever ges delaktighet i sin egen lärprocess är en viktig pusselbit för att förstå elevers engagemang och motivation för att lära.

Studiens andra utgångspunkt är undervisning och undervisningspraktiker, vilka analyseras utifrån det senaste seklets teoretiska synsätt på hur undervisning i språk på bästa sätt ska bedrivas. Här har den nu rådande kommunikativa språksynen gett en teoretisk grund för hur man kan se på de olika praktiker som präglar dagens undervisning i språkklassrum.

Studiens tredje del avser bedömning och den teoretiska utgångspunkten är en bred genomgång av god bedömningspraxis utifrån rådande bedömningsforskning (Erickson, 2018; Takala, Erickson, Figueras, & Gustafsson, 2016). Bedömningsavsnittet i avhandlingen har ett fokus på bedömning av yngre språkinlärares kunskaper i språk där viktiga frågor som *varför*, *vad*, *vem* och *hur* utgör grunden för den

avslutande teoridelen. Utöver dessa frågor diskuteras även frågan *och…?*, dvs bedömningens användning och konsekvenser, det senare med fokus på vilka effekter beslut och handlingar grundade på provresultat kan få för de inblandade i bedömningen (Messick, 1989; 1996).

9.4 Metod och data

Studien är en flermetodsstudie där både kvantitativa och kvalitativa data har använts. Studien är till viss del etnografiskt inspirerad, på så sätt att traditionella etnografiska metoder som observationer, intervjuer och fältanteckningar använts (kvalitativa data), men i kombination med tre enkäter (kvantitativa data). Flermetodsstudiens design är så kallat konvergent (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), vilket innebär att de båda datamängderna, som samlas in vid olika tillfällen, ses som lika viktiga och som ett komplement till varandra.

Studien genomfördes på en skola där tre grupper i årskurs 6 i moderna språk följdes under ett läsår. Datainsamlingen genomfördes under läsåret 2019/2020 i en kommunal högstadieskola (här kallad Ängsskolan) belägen inte alltför långt från en större stad, men med ett upptagningsområde som kan beskrivas som en blandning av både stad och landsbygd. På Ängsskolan går omkring 600 elever i årskurs 7 till 9 och ungefär 10 procent av eleverna har utländsk bakgrund[203] (Skolverket 2019/2020). Eleverna i årskurs 6 behövde komma till Ängsskolan en eller två gånger i veckan (beroende på schema) för att ha sina lektioner i moderna språk. Detta innebar för vissa en kort promenad, för andra en resa med buss.

Datainsamlingen påbörjades redan under våren 2019 då eleverna gick i årskurs 5 och skulle göra sitt språkval inför kommande år. Språklärarna på Ängsskolan (och även jag i egenskap av forskare) åkte ut till kommunens grundskolor och informerade om de tre moderna språk som eleverna kunde välja mellan, nämligen franska, spanska och tyska. Modersmål inom ramen för språkval kan inte erbjudas på Ängsskolan och inte heller teckenspråk. Under denna presentationstur till skolorna besvarade 114 elever (av totalt 170 elever i åk 5) en första enkät om sitt val av språk och sina förväntningar på det nya ämnet.

Läsåret 2019/2020 startade med ett flertal besök på Ängsskolan för att lära känna skolan och de deltagande lärarna. Tre olika språkklasser med respektive lärare valdes ut för deltagande i studien under läsåret. Klasserna var olika i storlek; spanskgruppen bestod av 26 elever (från början 28), i tyskgruppen var det 17 elever

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203 Skolverket använder i sin statistik "utländsk bakgrund" där man menar att barn med utländsk bakgrund är antingen födda utomlands eller har två föräldrar som är födda utomlands.

och i franskgruppen endast 6 (sammanlagt 49 elever i de tre olika grupperna). Föresatsen var att följa undervisningen i så hög grad som möjligt, men eftersom spanskgruppen och franskgruppen hade sina lektioner samtidigt, besöktes deras lektion varannan vecka, medan tyskgruppen hade sina två lektioner på andra tider och således var lättare att följa varje vecka.

Strax efter terminsstart påbörjades klassrumsobservationer i de olika språkgrupperna och pågick från september 2019 till mars 2020. Den sammanlagda tiden för klassrumsobservationer är 480 minuter i spanskgruppen och 400 minuter i respektive fransk- och tyskgrupp (cirka 22 timmar sammanlagt). Empirin från klassrumsobservationerna består av fältanteckningar och lektionsprotokoll, vilka fylldes i under lektionens gång och renskrevs i så nära tidsmässig anslutning som möjligt. Under lektionsbesöken valdes ett så kallat deltagande perspektiv, vilket innebär att man som forskare varvar mellan observerande och deltagande. Klassrumsobservationerna fick tyvärr avbrytas i början av mars 2020 på grund av pandemin Covid-19, vilket medförde ett beslut av Göteborgs universitet att skolbesök inte fick genomföras.

När studien påbörjades var avsikten att genomföra semi-strukturerade intervjuer med elever i fokusgrupper. Dessa planer ändrades i och med utbrottet av Covid-19, och intervjuerna genomfördes i stället digitalt via Zoom. Intervjuerna blev således individuella, men genomfördes utifrån ett semi-strukturerat intervjuprotokoll som varit avsikten att använda vid fokusgruppsintervjuerna (Bilaga 7). Intervjuerna varade mellan 7 och 14 minuter och sammanlagt intervjuades 17 elever. Intervjuerna spelades in med ljud, men inte med bild (se 9.6.1), under april och maj månad 2020. Förutom intervjuer med elever genomfördes även intervjuer med de tre lärarna, även dessa på Zoom. Dessa intervjuer skedde i juni efter det att eleverna slutat och varade ca en timma var. Även här utgick intervjun från ett semi-strukturerat intervjuprotokoll, vilket gav utrymme till fördjupning av olika frågor och svar (Bilaga 8).

De kvalitativa data (observationsprotokoll, fältanteckningar, intervjuer, öppna svar i enkäterna) som samlats in sammanställdes och organiserades utifrån studiens forskningsfrågor. Analysprocessen startade redan under datainsamlingens början där fältanteckningar och observationsprotokoll renskrevs och lästes igenom efter varje lektionsbesök. Utifrån dessa protokoll startade en deskriptiv fas för att få en överblick över de data som insamlats och koder genererades för att kunna organisera data i tematiska delar (Saldaña, 2021). Därefter genomfördes en mer strukturerad analys för att finna samband och övergripande tema med utgångspunkt från Braun och Clarkes analysmodell (2006). Två kollegor har dessutom bidragit med

extern validering, den ena har läst och validerat delar av transkriptioner från elev-intervjuer samt lektionsprotokoll, medan den andra har varit behjälplig med sin expertis inom det kvantitativa analysområdet (se nedan).

Den kvantitativa delen av data består av tre enkäter (se Bilaga 1, 2 och 3). Dessa har prövats ut i mindre skala på andra skolor och av andra elever innan eleverna i Ängsskolan besvarade dem. Den första enkäten besvarades, som tidigare nämnts, i april 2019 innan eleverna gjort sitt definitiva språkval. Enkät 2 kunde genomföras innan datainsamlingen avbröts i mars och besvarades av 38 elever, medan den sista enkäten fick skickas med post till Ängsskolan och genomföras med hjälp av de tre lärarna (enkät 3 besvarades av 54 elever). Enkäterna utgår i stor utsträckning från befintliga mätinstrument och har därefter anpassats efter syfte och målgrupp samt prövats ut i relevanta grupper. Enkäterna sammanställdes med utgångspunkt i forskningsfrågorna och analyserades därefter med hjälp av programmet SPSS, vilket gav ett omfattande statistiskt underlag av deskriptiv typ, som kunde användas för vidare analys och jämförelse. Efter att de båda datamängderna analyserats, dvs både kvalitativa och kvantitativa data, jämfördes och sammanfördes resultaten för att skapa en djupare och bredare bild av Språkvalet i årskurs 6 och studiens forskningsfrågor.

Studien, vilken genomgått etisk prövning, följer de riktlinjer som Vetenskapsrådet har formulerat i God Forskningssed (2017), där integritetsskydd och säker datahantering är grundläggande aspekter som ska säkerställas. Eleverna blev informerade om studiens syfte och genomförande vid ett flertal tillfällen då det påpekades att deltagandet var helt frivilligt och kunde avbrytas när som helt under studiens gång. För att eleverna skulle kunna medverka i studien behövdes förutom deras egna aktiva medgivande, även deras vårdnadshavares medgivande, vilka samlades in skriftligt.

9.5 Resultat

Avhandlingsprojektet har, som beskrivits ovan, genererat data med hjälp av flera tillvägagångssätt. Resultaten kommer från enkäter, observationer och intervjuer och bidrar alla till att besvara de tre forskningsfrågorna.

Den första forskningsfrågan avser att undersöka vilka attityder elever har till främmande språk samt vilka förväntningar de har innan de påbörjar sina moderna språkstudier i årskurs 6. Vidare syftade studien till att undersöka varför elever väljer just franska, spanska eller tyska som modernt språk, samt hur språkvalet kan gå till rent organisatoriskt. Resultaten från den första enkäten visar att de allra flesta ele-

ver såg fram emot att lära sig ett nytt språk och tyckte att det skulle bli roligt. Generellt hade de en positiv inställning till språk och språkinlärning och de var nyfikna på att få lära sig mer om länder där språket talades. Majoriteten av eleverna i studien uppgav att de regelbundet tittat på exempelvis YouTube på andra språk än svenska, främst på engelska men även andra språk förekom. De främsta orsakerna bakom vilket språk man valde i årskurs 6 uppgavs vara resor (att man rest eller vill resa), att man varit i ett land där språket talas, att man tycker om hur språket låter, samt att någon hemma kan eller har läst språket. Studiens samlade empiri visar dock att familjen spelar stor roll i förhållande till vilket språk man väljer, men även kompisarnas val påverkar. Viss skillnad mellan språken kunde skönjas; bland de eleverna som valt franska eller tyska, uppgav de flesta att föräldrar eller syskon hade bidragit till att man valt språket. De flesta elever som valt spanska uppgav resor till Spanien eller att man ville resa till spansktalande länder som bakomliggande orsak till språkvalet.

Eleverna hade ingen klar uppfattning av hur det skulle vara att lära sig ett nytt språk, men några var förvånade över att det var svårare än de tänkt (främst eleverna i spanska). Av de elever som valde extra engelska och/eller svenska svarade endast ett fåtal. Dock verkade flertalet elever inte känna till att alternativet fanns, utan extra engelska och/eller svenska verkade främst ämnat för relativt nykomna elever eller för elever med svårigheter i andra skolämnen.

Elevernas motivation undersöktes i alla tre enkäter, men även under intervjuerna. Resultaten visar att elevernas motivation för att lära sig ett modernt språk på ett generellt plan var hög. Majoriteten av eleverna uppgav att språk är viktigt att kunna om man ska resa, att språkkunskaper kan vara bra för ett framtida jobb och de såg fram emot att lära sig mer. Flera elever uppgav att de ville kunna använda språket "på riktigt". Emellertid uppgav en fjärdedel att de inte höll med om påståendet att moderna språk var ett viktigt ämne i skolan, och så många som 40 % var neutrala i frågan (de varken höll med om eller inte höll med om påståendet). Mer än hälften av eleverna tyckte dessutom att det räcker att kunna prata svenska och engelska i framtiden. Med beaktande av att urvalet är litet och att inga generaliserbara slutsatser därför kan dras, kan man ändå konstatera att tendensen är att de flesta elever är fortsatt positiva till sitt moderna språk och vill lära sig mer, men att en för gruppen svag minskning i motivationen går att urskilja. På ett individuellt plan visar studiens resultat att för många elever går motivationen både upp och ner under detta första läsår. Vidare fann studien inga större skillnader mellan pojkar och flickors uppvisade motivation.

Den andra forskningsfrågan avsåg undervisningspraktiker i de tre olika språk-klassrummen och hur dessa praktiker upplevdes av eleverna. Klassrumsobservationerna visade på många likheter i de tre klassrummens undervisningspraktiker. Likheterna bestod i en stor variation av aktiviteter under språklektionerna, där språkets olika färdigheter tränades på olika sätt, vilket uppskattades av eleverna. Muntlig språkfärdighet var viktig i alla tre klassrum och eleverna gavs många tillfällen att träna på det nya språkets uttal och intonation. Lärarna arbetade med att successivt bredda elevernas ordförråd kring olika teman och stor vikt lades vid att skapa ett tryggt klassrumsklimat. En annan anpassning till åldersgruppen var en viss lekfullhet i lärandepraktiker och en lyhördhet till att anpassa aktiviteter efter elevernas ålder och mognad. Undervisningen var i hög grad lärarstyrd och eleverna gavs liten aktiv chans till att påverka sin eget lärande. Ytterligare ett resultat var att målspråket, om än med viss variation, användes i relativt låg grad i språkklassrummen, och när det användes var det främst för att hälsa eleverna välkomna i början av lektionen, ge instruktioner eller ställa en specifik fråga. Det språk som talades mest i språkklassrummen var svenska.

Intervjuer och enkäter visade att majoriteten av eleverna är nöjda med sin språkundervisning och sin lärare och att de har stort förtroende för att läraren vet bäst hur och vad man ska lära sig. Eleverna verkar inte ha funderat på att själva påverka undervisningen och verkade närmast förvånade när de fick frågan. Men elevsvaren visar ändå på att många elever har en klar uppfattning kring vad de vill lära sig och en medvetenhet om hur de bäst lär sig, och många jämför sitt lärande av franska/spansk/tyska med lärandet av engelska.

Den sista forskningsfrågan rör bedömning och undersöker elevernas självbedömning men även hur de upplever sin lärares bedömning. Vad gäller elevernas bedömning av sin egen kompetens visar studiens resultat att en majoritet av eleverna tyckte att de lärt sig mycket under detta första år. De upplevde även att de förstår bra och lyckas uttrycka sig bra i förhållande till de krav som de mött. Det som eleverna uppgav som något svårare var att prata med andra på målspråket, samt att stava. De flesta eleverna uppgav emellertid att det mest eftertraktade lärandemålet var att kunna prata på målspråket, helst flytande. Även när det gäller elevernas självbedömning behöver man dock vara medveten om att elevurvalet är litet och att man därför får se studiens resultat snarast som indikationer på det som efterfrågas, inte som något som kan generaliseras.

Vad gäller lärarens bedömning verkade många elever ha förväntat sig ett lägre betyg än det som de slutligen fick i slutet av vårterminen. På ett generellt plan verkade elever inte ha haft en klar bild av vad som var viktigt för lärarens bedöm-

ning, utan hänvisade oftast till främst läxförhör (glosor), men även andra prov ansågs som viktiga. De flesta elever uppgav att de fått möjlighet att visa sina kunskaper och vad de kan göra med språket för sin lärare.

Undervisning, lärande och bedömning i moderna språk diskuterades även i de tre lärarintervjuerna. Fokus för intervjuerna var årskurs 6 och alla tre lärarna upplevde att det var roligt och motiverande att undervisa i denna årskurs, men att en utmaning kunde vara att anpassa undervisningen till elevernas ålder och mognad. En annan utmaning som uppgavs var att de inte träffade eleverna så ofta (ibland bara en gång i veckan). Bedömning och betygssättning upplevdes som relativt odramatiskt av de tre lärarna, även om motstridiga känslor inför att sätta betyg efter så kort tid av lärande också uttrycktes under intervjuerna.

9.6 Diskussion och slutsatser

Avhandlingens resultat bidrar till en inblick i hur yngre elever upplever sin språkinlärning i en konkret undervisningskontext. Studien har därmed gett ökad kunskap om elevers förväntningar, attityder och uppfattningar kring språk, språkinlärning, undervisning och bedömning. Fokus har genom hela avhandlingsprojektet varit att fånga elevernas perspektiv.

Studien visar att elevernas val av språk i hög grad är beroende av kontextuella faktorer. Den information som eleverna fick innan de gjorde sitt språkval varierade mellan skolor och klasser där även den lokala policyn påverkade, till exempel vilka elever som skulle välja extra engelska eller extra svenska. Språkvalet verkar även i hög grad bero på den individuella kontexten, dvs familj och vänner.

Att motivation för att lära sig ett främmande språk är ett komplext fenomen har bekräftats av tidigare studier och forskare (Dörnyei, 2020; Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry, 2015), och så även av denna studie. Flera aspekter, både individuella och kontextuella, bidrar till att höja motivationen för att lära sig ett modernt språk, och dessvärre tycks vissa aspekter kunna minska motivation. De flesta elever i studien var mycket positiva till språk och såg fram emot att lära sig ett nytt språk i årskurs 6, men resultaten visar att motivationen minskade något, även om den fortsatt var hög efter ett år av lärande av franska, spanska eller tyska. I motsats till tidigare studier visade denna undersökning inte på några större skillnader mellan motivationen hos pojkar och flickor. Kontexten var också viktig för att bibehålla motivationen, till exempel vad gäller språkgruppen, läraren och undervisningspraktiken.

Vidare bekräftar studien att känslomässiga aspekter är nära förknippade med språk och språkinlärning, där både positiva och negativa känslor kan påverka

(Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017). Resor nämndes som en viktig och känslomässig aspekt i förhållande till språkinlärning, där resor förknippades med positiva minnen eller framtida drömmar om resor. Här stödjer studiens empiri de slutsatser Krigh drar i sin avhandling (2019), nämligen att moderna språk är ett ämne för en medveten medelklass att investera i sina barns kulturella och utbildningsmässiga kapital där bland annat resor är en del av bildningskapitalet.

Studien bekräftar tidigare resultat som pekat på att engelskan kan ha en negativ inverkan på elevers attityd till moderna språk (Skolverket, 2018a). Engelskans starka ställning i Sverige bekräftades även genom att många elever visserligen gav uttryck för att det är kul att lära sig ett andra främmande språk, men samtidigt tycker att det räcker med att kunna engelska i framtiden. Språkinlärningen skiljer sig åt mellan engelska och moderna språk eftersom engelskan ständigt är närvarande i många ungdomars liv från en tidig ålder (Sylvén, 2022), medan flertalet elever inte verkar höra sitt moderna språk någon annanstans än i språkklassrummet. Då elever jämför sitt lärande av engelska med sitt lärande av franska, spanska eller tyska, blir det inte alltid till det moderna språkets fördel.

Ett annat resultat var att användningen av målspråket i undervisningen skiftar, och tidigare studier, både i Sverige och i Norge har visat att målspråksanvändningen är låg i många klassrum (Erickson, Bardel, Österberg & Rosén, 2022; Skolinspektionen, 2010a, 2022; Stoltz, 2011; Vold & Brkan, 2020). Med tanke på den kommunikativa språksyn som genomsyrar den svenska kursplanen för moderna språk kan det förefalla förvånande att svenska används i så hög grad i många klassrum. Vad detta beror på och hur man skulle kunna höja graden av målspråksanvändning i språkundervisningen är viktiga frågor att undersöka och diskutera vidare.

Ett annat resultat i studien var att undervisningspraktiken i hög grad var lärarstyrd och att det gavs litet utrymme för eleverna att påverka sitt lärande. Emellertid, när eleverna gavs möjlighet till visst inflytande, som att välja innehåll eller utformning av en uppgift, var detta något som uppskattades av eleverna och verkade öka deras motivation. Vidare gav studien stöd för att även unga inlärare ger uttryck för agens och medvetenhet kring sitt lärande och att många elever även kan bedöma sitt eget lärande, något som tidigare studier också visat (Enever, 2011; Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore, 2011; Muñoz, 2011, 2014).

I studien jämfördes tre klassrum i moderna språk, och en tydlig bild som trädde fram var att villkoren för att lära sig ett modernt språk ser olika ut beroende på vilket språk eleven väljer. Sedan spanska infördes som ett alternativ inom språkvalet (Lpo94) har spanska ökat i popularitet och mer än hälften av eleverna som

väljer att lära sig ett modernt språk i grundskolan väljer just spanska. De många
elever som vill lära sig spanska har resulterat i stora grupper med ibland dubbelt så
många elever som i de andra språken. De stora grupperna (inte sällan runt 30 ele-
ver) får konsekvenser för lärarens möjlighet att se och lyssna på alla elever under
lektionen, att hjälpa och stötta de elever som behöver, samt bedöma och betygsätta
på ett likvärdigt sätt. I ett större perspektiv brottas många skolor med att hitta
behöriga lärare i spanska, vilket ytterligare riskerar att påverka likvärdigheten mel-
lan språken. Implikationer från studien är att likvärdigheten mellan de tre språken
behöver ökas, vilket även påpekats i en tidigare studie (Francia & Riis, 2013).

Avhandlingen synliggör även att elevers engagemang ökar när de har möjlighet
att påverka sin inlärning. Att låta elever ta mer ansvar för sin egen inlärning, både
vad gäller val och metod för lärande, samt sätta sina egna mål, ger en ökad moti-
vation för lärande (Benson, 2011; Legenhausen, 2002; Mihaljević Djigunović &
Nikolov, 2019; Ushioda, 2011) och vilket uttryckligen står skrivet i kursplanen för
moderna språk. Studien visar att unga elever går in med nyfikenhet och lust att lära
sig ett nytt språk, samt att många svar till hur man kan bevara denna lust och en-
gagemang för språkinlärning finns att finna bland elevernas svar.

9.6.1 Pandemins påverkan på studien

Som tidigare nämnts påbörjades den huvudsakliga datainsamlingen höstterminen
2019. Tanken var att utifrån ett etnografiskt inspirerat förhållningssätt följa tre
språkgrupper under deras första läsår med moderna språk. Grupperna skulle följas
genom klassrumsobservationer, fältarbete (närvaro på skolan), samt intervjuer
med eleverna i grupp. När Covid-19 dök upp i början av 2020 var det få som anade
de stora konsekvenser denna pandemi skulle få för både individer och samhälle.
För forskningsprojektet innebar pandemin visserligen förändringar, men dessa får
ändå ses som ringa i det stora perspektivet. Det är emellertid viktigt att påpeka att
studiens design, och till viss del sannolikt även dess resultat, sett annorlunda ut om
pandemin inte brutit ut. Klassrumsobservationerna fick avbrytas i början av mars
2020, och inga besök på skolan kunde heller ske eftersom reserestriktioner förelåg
för att minska smittspridningen. Således kunde jag inte observera den sista delen
av vårterminen 2020, då mycket av lärarnas bedömning skedde. I stället för klass-
rumsobservationer fick jag förlita mig på den sista enkäten som blev mer narrativ
i sin utformning, samt elevintervjuerna som fick ske digitalt och individuellt via
Zoom i stället för i grupp. Eftersom etikprövningen inte inkluderat att spela in
eleverna med bild beslutade jag att stänga av kameran i Zoom och endast spela in

ljud. Denna lösning fungerade, men själva intervjusituationen hade förmodligen blivit mer naturlig och avslappnad om eleverna och jag kunnat se varandra under intervjun. Det faktum att jag inte kunde närvara på skolan under våren medförde också att viktiga relationer med elever, lärare och övriga på skolan inte kunde upprätthållas. Skulle jag ha varit närvarande, hade jag förmodligen kunnat intervjua fler elever, och kanske även andra elever, än de som jag nu slutligen intervjuade.

Trots dessa högst påtagliga effekter av en förödande pandemi, fungerade studien väl och många intressanta resultat genererades för att ytterligare belysa frågan om unga elevers val av, och första kontakt med, ett modernt språk i den svenska grundskolan.

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Student questionnaire - Language Choice in year 6 (nr 1)
_____

Name: _____

School: _____

I was born in year: _____ Month: _____

Gender: Girl ☐   Boy ☐   I do not want to say ☐

What language(s) do you speak at home? _____

What language(s) is/are your mother tongue(s)? (e.g. the language(s) you spoke first).

_____

Which language will you choose next year? (If you haven't decided yet, you can mark two languages)

French ☐   German ☐   Spanish ☐

English ☐   Swedish ☐   Mother tongue (other than Swedish) ☐

A. Interest in foreign languages

The following questions concerns your interest in language learning.

	Agree	Agree to some extent	Disagree to some extent	Disagree
1. It would be fun/ I would like to be able to speak several languages beside my mother tongue(s) and English.				
2. I admire (am impressed by) people who can speak several different languages.				
3. I would like to learn several foreign languages in the future.				
4. If I were to travel to other countries, I want to understand what people are saying.				
5. It is fun to speak English.				
6. I believe learning English in school is enough (beside Swedish/or my mother tongue).				
7. It will be fun learning a new language next year.				
8. a) I often watch videoclips (for example on YouTube) on other languages than Swedish.				
b) If that is the case, in what languages? _____				
9. I think it's exiting watching films and listening to music in other languages than English and Swedish.				

In the future I would like to learn one or several/more of the languages below:

Mark with a cross the language(s) you would like to learn.

Arabic	
Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian	
French	
Finnish	
Italian	
Japanese	
Chinese (Mandarin)	
Kurdish	
Persian/Farsi	
Russian	
Spanish	
German	
Another language, such as:	

You who will **not** choose French, German or Spanish, please continue to answer the questions below **E**. on the last page.

B. The Language choice

The following questions concern the reasons behind your language choice.

Why do you intend to choose French, German or Spanish? You can mark with a cross (or several cross) in the list below)

I like the sound of the language. ☐

I have been to a country where the language is spoken. ☐

I have relatives who speak the language. ☐

One of my parents has learnt the language in school. ☐

My parents think I should choose the language. ☐

My brother/sister has chosen the same language. ☐

I know someone who speaks the language. ☐

My friend(s) will choose the same language. ☐

I want to travel to a country where the language is spoken. ☐

I like music in the language. ☐

Any other reason? _____

C. Motivation for learning a new language

The following questions concerns your motivation for learning a new language.

	Agree	Agree to some extent	Disagree to some extent	Disagree
1. It is important to know languages if you want to get a good job in the future.				
2. It is important to know languages when/if you travel abroad.				
3. It is important to be able to speak to different people in their own languages.				
4. I choose to learn a new language because I enjoy learning languages.				
5. In the future I think it will be enough if I know Swedish and English.				
6. My parents think it is important (encourage me) to learn a new language.				

D. Some more questions about your language choice:

The following questions and statements concern attitudes, emotions and expectations about the language choice.

Mark the alternative(s) you believe is right for you:

1. I believe I will find that learning a new language is …

a) <u>easy</u>   <u>difficult</u>

Appendix 1

b) <u>fun   boring</u>

c) <u>interesting   not so interesting</u>

d) Anything else? _____

Mark the alternative(s) you believe is (are) right for you:

2. The French language sounds: nice   not nice   cool   bizarre

   Anything else? _____

3. The Spanish language sounds: nice   not nice   cool   bizarre

   Anything else? _____

4. The German language sounds: nice   not nice   cool   bizarre

   Anything else? _____

5. What do you hope to learn of the new language during school year 6?

   Ex. "*I hope I will learn to speak a bit in the new language*" or "*I hope I will understand lyrics in the new language better when I watch YouTube*."

   _____

   Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire!
   /Ingela

E. Language choice - English and/or Swedish

The following questions addresses the language choice of extra English and/or Swedish.

	Agree	Agree to some extent	Disagree to some extent	Disagree
1.I want to concentrate on learning English and/or Swedish.				
2. I want to learn more English and/or Swedish.				
3. a) I have been advised to choose extra English and/or Swedish instead of choosing a new language.				
b) By whom were you advised to choose English and/or Swedish? My teachers　　　　My parents　　　　Student counselling Anyone else?				
4. I want to choose mother tongue as Language choice.				
5. Why do you choose not to start learning a new language next year?				

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire!
/Ingela

Questionnaire 2 - Language Choice in year 6

Name: _____

Language Choice in year 6: _____

What language(s) do you speak at home? _____

Prior to your Language Choice last year, do you believe that you got the information you needed?

Yes ☐   No ☐   I do not know ☐

What or **who,** do you believe**,** influenced your Language Choice the most?

_____

_____

Would you make the same Language Choice today? Please motivate why or why not.

_____

A. **The following questions concern attitudes and interest in learning a new language.**

	Agree	Agree to some extent	Neither agree, nor disagree	Disagree to some extent	Disagree
1. It is important to know foreign languages if you want to get a good job in the future.					
2. It is important to learn foreign languages if you will travel abroad.					

Appendix 2

	Agree	Agree to some extent	Neither agree, nor disagree	Disagree to some extent	Disagree
3. It is important to be able to speak to different people in their own languages.					
4. I chose to learn a new language because I enjoy learning languages.					
5. Studying German will be useful to me in the future.					
6. In the future I think it will be enough if I can speak Swedish and English.					
7. My parents think it is important that learn another foreign language, besides English.					
8. I enjoy learning German.					
9. German is an important school subject.					
10. I look forward to learning more German.					
11. If needed, I can get help with my German homework.					
If that is the case, help by whom?					
12. I get nervous if I do not understand what my teacher is saying in German.					
13. I am worried when speaking German in class.					

Appendix 2

	Agree	Agree to some extent	Neither agree, nor disagree	Disagree to some extent	Disagree
14. I am worried about doing or saying something wrong during the lessons in German.					
15. I am worried that someone will laugh at me if I do or say something wrong during the German lessons.					

B. The following questions are about learning German:

1. How do you feel about the following activities during your German classes?
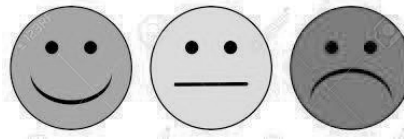
	🙂	😐	🙁
Listening exercises	☐	☐	☐
Reading texts	☐	☐	☐
Work book exercises	☐	☐	☐
Listening to music	☐	☐	☐
Singing	☐	☐	☐
Playing games	☐	☐	☐
Playing	☐	☐	☐
Watching movies	☐	☐	☐
Writing dialogues	☐	☐	☐
Writing short stories	☐	☐	☐
Role plays	☐	☐	☐
Learning more about the countries where the language is spoken	☐	☐	☐
Learning new words	☐	☐	☐
Speaking to a friend	☐	☐	☐
Speak to the whole class	☐	☐	☐

Is there something else you do during classes? In that case, please tell me!

……..

Appendix 2

2. How easy or how difficult do you believe it is to learn a new language?

	Agree	Agree to some extent	Neither agree, nor disagree	Disgree to some extent	Disagree
I find it easy to understand when my teacher speaks German.					
I find it is easy to speak German.					
I find it is easy to make up my own sentences in German.					
I find it easy to understand the texts we read in German.					

3. If you hear someone talking or singing in German (in real life or on the radio/ YouTube) - do you listen more carefully?

    a) Yes, most of the time

    b) Sometimes

    c) No

    d) I never hear the language outside class.

4. Compared to other subjects, I like German…

    a) More than other subjects

    b) Neither more nor less than other subjects

    c) Less than other subjects

5. What is your goal with learning German?

a) Right now, my goal is …………………………………………………………………………………

b) In the future, my goal will be …………………………………………………………………………..

6. How do you plan to reach your goals?

    ……

    ……

7. Do you feel comfortable in your German class? Please explain.

    ……

    ……

8. During lessons,

a) I prefer my teacher to speak as much German as possible.

b) I prefer my teacher to speak much in Swedish.

c) I prefer my teacher to speak both German and Swedish.

9. What do believe is the best way to learn a new language?

…….

……

………..

10. What is the best way for *you* to learn languages?

……

………..

………..

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer my questionnaire!

Ingela

Questionnaire 3 - Language Choice in year 6

_____

Name: _____

Language choice: French   ☐

Spanish   ☐

German   ☐

A. The following 10 statements concern languages and language learning

Please mark with a cross the statement you believe is most right for you.

	Agree	Agree to some extemt	Neither agree, nor disagree	Disagree to some extent	Disagree
1. It is important to know foreign languages if you want to get a good job in the future.					
2. It is important to learn foreign languages if you will travel abroad.					
3. It is important to be able to speak to different people in their own languages.					
4. I chose to learn a new language because I enjoy learning languages.					
5. Studying French will be useful to me in the future.					

Appendix 3

	Agree	Agree to some extent	Neither agree, nor disagree	Disagree to some extent	Disagree
6. In the future I think it will be enough if I can speak Swedish and English.					
7. My parents think it is important that I learn another foreign language, besides English.					
8. I enjoy learning French.					
9. French is an important school subject.					
10. I look forward to learning more French.					

B. How do you asses your own learning?

During this first year of learning French - how would you assess your learning when it comes to:

	5 …I understand most of it	4 … I understand quite a lot	3 … I understand ok	2 … I understand a little	1 … it is difficult to understand
LISTENING When we listen to someone/people talking French, I believe …					
READING When we read texts in French, I believe …					
	… I can express myself easily	… I can express myself quite well	… I manage (ok) to express myself	… I find it quite difficult to express myself	… I find it difficult to express myself
WHEN I SPEAK When I speak French (answering or telling something) I believe…					
SPEAKING WITH OTHERS When we speak with each other in French, I believe…					
WRITING When we write in French, I believe …					

	… it is easy	… it is quite easy	… it is neither easy, nor difficult	… it is quite difficult	… it is really difficult

PRONUNCIATION When we pronounce words and sentences in French, I believe …					
SPELLING When we spell words and sentences in French, I believe …					

During this year you have probably learnt more about countries where people speak French. Would you like to learn more about these countries? Would you like to go there? What would you like to do there? Please tell me!

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is there something else you would like to tell me concerning *what* you have learnt and *how* you have learnt French?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 3

Please tell me what you believe you can do well in French!

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is fun about learning French? Is there something that is not that fun?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What would you like to do better in French? Please motivate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What grade do you believe you will get in French this year?

Grade:

Please write something about why you think you will get that specific grade and if you believe that you and your teacher agree concerning your grade.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

C. The assessment by your teacher

What do you believe your teacher thinks is important when assessing your knowledge in French?

For example, is it what you do during class, how well you have performed on tests and presentations or something else? Do you believe that there is something that is really important for the assessment? Please tell me about it and explain!

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you think that you have had the opportunity to show your teacher what you know and can do in French during this year?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for your help in answering this questionnaire!

Ingela

INSTITUTIONEN FÖR PEDAGOGIK
OCH SPECIALPEDAGOGIK

GÖTEBORGS
UNIVERSITET

Institutionen för pedagogik och specialpedagogik
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Vårdnadshavare för elev i årskurs 6

Information till vårdnadshavare angående elevs deltagande i forskningsstudien *Språkvalet i årskurs 6*

Jag heter Ingela Finndahl och är doktorand vid Göteborgs universitet. Under läsåret 2019 - 2020 genomför jag en studie kring Språkvalet i årskurs 6. Min studie handlar om elevers förväntningar och attityder inför Språkvalet, samt deras upplevelser av att lära sig ett nytt språk. Ditt barn går i en språkgrupp som planeras delta i studien.

Studien äger rum under ordinarie lektionstid. Under höst- och vårtermin planerar jag att vara med i språkklassrummet (i alla tre språken) med jämna mellanrum. Jag planerar också att vid något eller några tillfällen samtala med elever i mindre grupper om deras upplever av att lära sig ett nytt språk i skolan. De kommer också att under läsåret få besvara två enkäter. Under och efter lektionerna kommer jag att föra anteckningar över vad som sker i klassrummet, medan samtalen kommer att spelas in med ljudupptagning.

Studien följer alla de etiska krav som ställs på forskning i Sverige, vilket innebär att alla de uppgifter som samlas in om elever och skolan kommer att behandlas på så sätt att inga obehöriga kan ta del av dem. Allt material kommer att avidentifieras, vilket innebär att de riktiga namnen på ort, skola och elev aldrig kommer att användas när studiens resultat presenteras. För att minderåriga ska kunna delta i forskningsstudier krävs alltid medgivande av vårdnadshavare. Detta medgivande är samtidigt en bekräftelse på att vårdnadshavare tagit del av informationen. Deltagande i studien är frivilligt, men jag hoppas givetvis att du samtycker till att ditt barn deltar. Jag kommer dessutom bara att samtala med de elever som meddelar att de vill samtala med mig i mindre grupp. Du har rätt att när som helst dra tillbaka ditt medgivande. De uppgifter som samlats in om ditt barn kommer då att helt tas bort från studien.

Blanketten lämnas till undervisande språklärare (NN, NN eller NN). Om du vill veta mer om studien får du gärna kontakta mig.

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1 (2)

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Huvudhandledare:
Gudrun Erickson
Senior professor i pedagogik
gudrun.erickson@gu.se

Med vänliga hälsningar

☐ Jag godkänner att mitt barn medverkar i studien

☐ Jag godkänner **inte** att mitt barn medverkar i studien

Barnets namn (texta) …………………………………………………………..

Underskrift vårdnadshavare 1 …………………………………………………….

Underskrift vårdnadshavare 2 …………………………………………………….

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OCH SPECIALPEDAGOGIK**

**Institutionen för pedagogik och
specialpedagogik**
Ingela Finndahl
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Information till deltagande forskningspersoner -
undervisande lärare, rektor och studie- och yrkesvägledare

Vi vill fråga dig om du vill delta i ett forskningsprojekt. I det här dokumentet får du information om forskningsprojektet "Språkvalet i årskurs 6 - förväntningar, lärande och bedömningar" och vad det innebär att delta.

Vad är det för projekt och varför är du tillfrågad om deltagande?

Forskningsprojekt "Språkvalet i årskurs 6 - förväntningar, lärande och bedömningar" handlar om elevers attityder och förväntningar inför språkvalet, deras upplevelser av att lära sig ett nytt språk samt hur de bedömer sitt eget lärande. Syftet med studien är att bidra med mer kunskap kring språkvalet i svensk grundskola, eftersom få tidigare studier har undersökt yngre elevers språkinlärning. Studien kommer att belysa såväl attityder och motivation till språk och språkinlärning, som undervisning och bedömning. Din skola har valt att delta i projektet som en del av fortbildningsarbetet i Moderna språk och därför är du tillfrågad.

Huvudman för projektet är Göteborgs universitet.

Hur går studien till?

Studien kommer att genomföras under läsåret 2019/2020 i tre olika språkklassrum, där tre grupper i moderna språk kommer att följas - en i franska, en i spanska och en i tyska i årskurs 6. Data kommer att samlas in i form av elevenkäter, klassrumsobservationer samt intervjuer. Klassrumsobservationerna kommer att ske under läsåret och medverkande forskare kommer att närvara vid ca 10 lektioner i varje språk. För att ytterligare fånga Språkvalets organisatoriska bredd planerar vi också att intervjua lärare, rektor och studie- och yrkesvägledare. Dessa intervjuer planeras att spelas in med ljud.

Möjliga följder och risker med att delta i studien

De undersökningar som utförs inom projektet medför erfarenhetsmässigt inga risker för deltagarna. Forskningsprojektet kommer att bedrivas i klassrum med ordinarie

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1 (3)

undervisning och ordinarie lärare så risken för skador och olyckor bedöms som minimal.

Vad händer med mina uppgifter?

Projektet kommer att samla in och registrera information från observationer och intervjuer. Intervjuerna kommer skyndsamt att transkriberas och anonymiseras för att därefter lagras enligt gällande arkivlag. Tillgång till materialet har endast doktorand och handledare. De uppgifter som projektet samlar in om deltagande kommun, skola och forskningspersoner kommer att behandlas helt konfidentiellt och intervjusvaren kommer att behandlas så att inte obehöriga kan ta del av dem, eftersom insamlat materialet avidentifieras och kodas. Ansvarig för personuppgifter är forskningshuvudmannen, i detta fall Göteborgs universitet.

Enligt EU:s dataskyddsförordning har deltagande forskningspersoner rätt att kostnadsfritt ta del av de uppgifter om dem som hanteras i studien och vid behov få eventuella fel rättade. Man kan också begära att individuella uppgifter raderas samt att behandlingen av personuppgifter begränsas. Om du vill ta del av uppgifter kan du kontakta Ingela Finndahl (ingela.finndahl@gu.se) eller Gudrun Erickson (gudrun.erickson@ped.gu.se). Dataskyddsombud vid Göteborgs universitet, XX som kan nås på XX. Om du är missnöjd med hur dina personuppgifter behandlas har du rätt att ge in klagomål till Datainspektionen, som är tillsynsmyndighet.

Hur får jag information om resultatet av studien?

Forskningsprojektet är ett doktorandprojekt där studien och dess resultat kommer att redovisas i en avhandling. Efter avslutad datainsamling kommer, om deltagande skola och forskningspersoner så vill, återkoppling ges till medverkande i studien.

Deltagandet är frivilligt

Deltagande är frivilligt och kan när som helst avbrytas. Om du väljer att delta eller vill avbryta ditt deltagande behöver du inte uppge varför och det kommer inte att påverka dig på något sätt. Om du vill avbryta ditt deltagande ska du kontakta någon av de ansvariga för studien (se nedan).

Har du några övriga frågor är du välkommen att kontakta någon av oss:

Ansvariga för studien:

Ingela Finndahl
Doktorand i språkdidaktik
Göteborgs universitet, IPS
ingela.finndahl@gu.se

Huvudhandledare:
Gudrun Erickson
Senior professor i pedagogik
gudrun.erickson@ped.gu.se

Samtycke till att delta i studien *Språkvalet i årskurs 6*

Jag har fått muntlig och skriftlig information om studien och haft möjlighet att ställa frågor. Jag får behålla den skriftliga informationen.

☐ Jag samtycker till att delta i studien *Språkvalet i årskurs 6*

☐ Jag samtycker till att uppgifter om mig behandlas på det sätt som beskrivs i *Information till deltagande forskningsperson*.

Plats och datum	Underskrift

Information till deltagande elever i årskurs 6

Hej,
Vi vill fråga dig om du vill delta i ett forskningsprojekt. I det här brevet får du information om forskningsprojektet som kommer att pågå i din språkgrupp under det här läsåret. Eftersom du och dina klasskamrater är huvudpersoner i min undersökning, så är det viktigt att du känner till vad mitt projekt handlar om.

Vad är det för projekt?

Jag heter Ingela Finndahl och jag arbetar på Göteborgs universitet. Mitt forskningsprojekt handlar om Språkvalet i årskurs 6. Jag skulle vilja veta mer om hur valet går till, varför elever väljer just franska, spanska eller tyska och vilka förväntningar elever har på det nya språkämnet. Det är också viktigt att få veta mer om hur elever lär sig ett nytt språk och vad som kan vara lätt, svårt, roligt eller utmanande. Din skola har valt att medverka i projektet och därför är du tillfrågad om du vill vara med.

Hur går studien till?

Jag kommer att vara med i klassrummet tillsammans med er och er lärare under några lektioner under både hösten och våren. Oftast sitter jag och lyssnar och jag kommer att anteckna - det gör jag för att bättre komma ihåg vad som händer. Jag skriver ner vad ni gör under lektionerna, tex att "nu förhörs läxan" och "nu lyssnar de och sjunger med i en sång". Ibland kommer jag att gå runt och titta när ni jobbar under lektionerna.

Jag kommer även att intervjua några av er i mindre grupp (3 - 4 personer). Jag har också tänkt att ni ska få besvara två enkäter, liknande den som ni besvarade i våras. Det är helt frivilligt att vara med i intervjuerna och besvara enkäterna.

Vad händer med mina uppgifter?

I projektet kommer vi att samla in och spara viss information om ditt språklärande, bland annat vad du tycker om ditt språkval, ditt lärande och ditt språkbetyg i årskurs 6. Dessa uppgifter kommer dock ingen annan än jag och min handledare att kunna se. När mitt projekt är klart kommer mina resultat att redovisas i en bok, men som läsare kommer man inte att veta någonting om vilken skola jag varit på eller vilka klasser, lärare och elever som varit med. All sådan information kommer att vara borttagen och inga obehöriga kommer att kunna ta del av mitt insamlade material.

Hur får jag information om resultatet av studien?

När projektet är klart vill jag gärna komma tillbaka till skolan, om intresse finns, och berätta vad jag kommit fram till i mitt projekt. Det är förstås helt frivilligt att ta del av studiens resultat.

Deltagandet är frivilligt

Det är frivilligt att delta i projektet och du kan när som helst välja att avbryta deltagandet. Om du väljer att inte delta eller vill avbryta ditt deltagande behöver du inte uppge varför. För att du ska kunna vara med behöver din vårdnadshavare skriva på en blankett, men det är givetvis du som bestämmer om du vill vara med.

Om du vill avbryta ditt deltagande ska du kontakta någon av de ansvariga för studien (se nedan).

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Senior professor i pedagogik
gudrun.erickson@ped.gu.se

Om du har frågor, tveka inte att prata med mig! Du kan också maila, eller be en vårdnadshavare att mejla eventuella frågor.

Vänliga hälsningar

Ingela

Mer information:

De uppgifter som projektet samlar in om deltagande kommun, skola och forskningspersoner kommer att behandlas helt konfidentiellt och intervjusvaren kommer att behandlas så att inte obehöriga kan ta del av dem, eftersom insamlat materialet avidentifieras och kodas. Ansvarig för personuppgifter är forskningshuvudmannen, i detta fall Göteborgs universitet.

Enligt EU:s dataskyddsförordning har deltagande forskningspersoner rätt att kostnadsfritt ta del av de uppgifter om dem som hanteras i studien och vid behov få eventuella fel rättade. Man kan också begära att individuella uppgifter raderas samt att behandlingen av personuppgifter begränsas. Om du vill ta del av uppgifter kan du kontakta min handledare Gudrun Erickson, gudrun.erickson@ped.gu.se . Dataskyddsombud vid Göteborgs universitet, XX, kan nås på XX. Om du är missnöjd med hur dina personuppgifter behandlas har du rätt att ge in klagomål till Datainspektionen, som är tillsynsmyndighet.

Interview guide for students in year 6

- Why did you choose French/German/Spanish as your Language Choice?

- Now that you have learnt French/German/Spanish for some time, is it like you expected it to be, to learn a new foreign language?

- During the lessons in French/German/Spanish, you do many different things. Are there any activities that you think work well, or perhaps, do not work so well? Any examples of such activities?

- How do you do your French/German/Spanish homework?

- How much time do you think you put into your homework in French/German/Spanish in a week? Do you have someone at home who can help you with your homework in French/German/Spanish?

- Do you sometimes hear the language outside your Modern Language class? If yes, where, and when?

- Are there any activities that you miss during your Modern Language classes, or that you would like to do differently?

- What are your goals with (learning) French/German/Spanish? What do you want to be able to do?

- How do you feel about talking in French/German/Spanish in class?

- What do you think about the timetable for Modern Language class? Are the lessons too short, too long or would you like it differently?

- When learning French/German/Spanish, have you experienced anything to be extra difficult, so far?

- What do you think about your own learning? Have you learnt a lot pr little; what is your own assessment?

- On a scale from one to five, how motivated would you say that you are to learn more French/German/Spanish?

- If you had the possibility, would you like to learn one more foreign language in senior level of compulsory school (Swedish *högstadiet*)?

Interview guide for teachers

- For how long have you been teaching Modern Languages and what is your experience of teaching in year 6?

- What do you feel about teaching Modern Languages in year 6? Advantages? Challenges?

- What do you feel is the most important when teaching Modern Languages in year 6? Do you have any priorities?

- How do you feel about the procedures prior to the Language Choice and the organization of Modern Languages at your school?

- If you could, is there anything that you would like to change about your school's organization of Modern Languages?

- Do you believe that Modern Languages should be obligatory for all students in compulsory school? Why/why not?

- Is there anything that you would like to change about the National Curricula for Modern Languages?

- What do you think works well/the best in your Modern Language teaching in year 6? Why?

- Is there anything that does not work so well? If that is the case, please explain.

- What are your thoughts about assessment and grading in Modern Languages in year 6?

- If needed, do you think that there is support available for assessment (at the school or in documents provided by the NAE)?

- Do you collaborate with other Modern Language teachers at your school? Do you collaborate in Modern Languages in school year 6?

- What kind of in-service training has been offered to you during the last five years?

- If you could wish, what kind of in-service training would you like to be offered in Modern Languages?

- Anything else that you would like to discuss?

Detta hände	Eleven gör	Läraren gör	Mina tankar/reflektioner
Introduktion	Eleverna sätter sig på sina bestämda platser. Någon svarar läraren.	L hälsar välkomna "Guten Tag"; Wie geht's heute? Dagens planering gås igenom på projektorn.	Tekniken strular, det går ca 5 min innan projektorn är igång. Eleverna småpratar, de är inte så koncentrerade. Lite oroligt/stökigt i gruppen.
Förhör av läxan	Eleverna har läst på läxan. De som får frågan svarar, förutom NN som inte vill säga eftersom hon inte vet hur man uttalar ordet bror. V uttalas f - lite svårt tycker någon.	Läxan (släktorden) förhörs, L frågar en elev i taget, slumpmässigt. Medan eleverna säger ordet, trycker L fram ordet på PPt.	
Prata	Eleverna går runt och frågar varandra om deras familj och vad de heter. De använder boken som mall.	L går också runt och deltar och lyssnar.	Jag deltar. Detta moment fungerar bra, de minglar och frågar på och de kan.
Högläsning (ur boken)	Två flickor försvinner ut under lektionen - Vart? De pratar en hel del - L tillrättavisar vänligt. En elev vill inte läsa högt hon säger "jag vill inte läsa, jag vet inte var vi är" jag kan inte läsa, jag kommer att säga fel" - men säger till slut en mening.	Ber dem ta fram boken och läsa högt en text. Väljer 'random' elever som ska läsa högt. Lyssnar och kommenterar uttalet. L ger sig inte och till sist läser tjejen upp meningen. "Läs den första meningen", en annan elev tar de övriga meningarna som tjejen skulle läst. Berömmer dem.	Högläsning en och en – eleverna skulle (också) kunna läsa högt för varandra. Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Jag skulle gärna prata med henne.
Räkneorden (21 – 29)	Några elever ser snabbt att man räknar "tvärtom". Uttalar efter L.	L har skrivit ner alla räkneord med bokstäver och ber dem fundera på hur man räknar på tyska. Läser upp talen, eleverna säger efter. De ska öppna datorn och skriva ner alla räkneorden i tyskmappen.	

			De gör en hel del annat på datorn också…
Skriva ner räkneorden på datorn.	Skriver av på tyska på datorn. Alla har inte med sig dator, de får skriva för hand. Eleverna lyssnar inte så noga…	Ber eleverna skriva av alla talen. Har ni skrivit ner alla tal? Dessa är läxa till nästa vecka (men de ska inte kunna stava dem utan bara räkna muntligt). Avslutar lektionen.	L går runt och pratar, hjälper, bygger relationer. NN säger plötsligt "Idag, är du svart och vit (till läraren)" ☺. Spontanitet hos eleverna.

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This doctoral thesis explores the attitudes, perceptions and experiences that young language learners hold prior to and during their first year of learning French, German or Spanish (i.e., a Modern Language) within the so-called Language Choice in a Swedish compulsory school. In addition, the study investigates the rationales behind the students' choice of language. Three Modern Language classes were followed during one school year, focusing on the students' perspectives concerning language learning, teaching and assessment.

Results show that the students' Language Choice was primarily inspired by families and friends and by visits to a country where the language is spoken. Motivation for learning a Modern Language was high prior to the students' Language Choice, as well as during and after their first year of learning. An overall finding is that contextual parameters play a significant role in relation to the Language Choice. Organizational and administrational features influenced teaching and learning practices as well as assessment. The conditions for learning a Modern Language also varied between the three languages, mainly due to the large groups of students learning Spanish. These differences can be considered problematic from a comparability perspective.

Ingela Finndahl has a background in language teaching and development of national assessment materials for French. Her research interests focus on learning, teaching and assessment of languages.