Motivation, vision, and future-self L2 images among students of Nordic and Baltic languages

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Motivational factors and students’ capability to visualize the future usage of the language skills to-be-acquired have been shown to play an important role in language learning processes. However, there may be differences between the ideal self – the person we would like to become – and the ought-to self – the person we think other people expect us to become. This study investigates the reasons for studying foreign languages, as well as the ways the students depict themselves to use the skills, and how these factors correlate with the effort and the success. We are also interested in associations between these factors and students’ learning styles and imagery capacity.

Earlier studies have demonstrated associations between the different L2 self-guides on the one hand, and the intended effort, the achieved grades, and certain learning styles on the other. Unlike the earlier studies, this paper focuses on less-widely spoken languages by studying North American university students of Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, and Swedish. In addition, we link the family heritage and other possible reasons for studying the respective foreign language with the motivation and vision.

The results of this study concur with the previous studies, supports the language-independent nature of the motivational self-guides. The results also suggest that while family heritage important in attracting students, it does not affect the learning or the effort made. Furthermore, the results support a more detailed formalization of the future ideal L2 self, so that it would distinguish the different kinds of future visions, such as personal and professional factors, and their associations with the effort and the success in learning.

Keywords: Motivation, Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, Heritage Learner.