

Swedish students' beliefs about learning a Modern Language in year 6 and 9

Ingela Finndahl, Gothenburg University, Department of Education and Special Education

This presentation focuses on students' experiences of learning a second foreign language (called Modern Languages) in Swedish compulsory school. With the aim of investigating students' beliefs about languages and language learning, the current presentation emphasizes students' motivation for learning, as well as their experiences of learning and having learnt a Modern Language. This follow-up study, conducted at the end of school year 9 (with 15- to 16-year-old students), builds upon data collected in school year 6 (students 12 to 13 years old). The data include qualitative (interviews) as well as quantitative (questionnaire) methods. Three language groups, at the same school (i.e., where the previous study was conducted) answered a questionnaire ($n = 50$) and seven students were interviewed. The three groups studied French, German and Spanish as a Modern Language.

Preliminary findings indicate that the students in year 9 have a lower motivational level and a more negative sense of capability in the Modern Language, in comparison with the findings from year 6. In addition, the students expressed a rather instrumental view of learning. Several students stated that the main reason for learning a Modern Language was the extra qualification points which are added to the grade point average for those students who continue to study their Modern Language in upper secondary school. These qualification points can also enhance access to university. Hence, the students' engagement shown in school year 6 seems to have changed into considering Modern language learning as a transition to higher education and future careers. These findings hold significant implications for language education and educators, and support strategies to enhance students' motivation and proficiency in learning modern languages.

Key words: learner beliefs, Modern Languages, language learning, language learning engagement