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Strengthening L3 French Motivation: The Differential Impact of Vision-Enhancing Activities

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Abstract: Even though the European Union has long promoted multilingualism, it has proven difficult to achieve widespread multilingual language competence beyond English through formal education in Europe. In Sweden, high dropout rates have been recorded in second foreign language (SFL) classes, and French is currently the most vulnerable language among the major SFLs with respect to the number of pupils and availability across the country. Therefore, an important question is how to increase the motivation for studying foreign languages other than English (LOTE), especially French. This paper reports on a semester-long quasi-experimental intervention study, with three activities designed to enhance pupils' ideal L3 self (IL3S) and increase their intended effort (IE) to learn French. Data were collected in two grade 9 intervention classes (n = 45) and in a control class (n = 14) in Sweden using questionnaires and focus group interviews. We measured the effect of the intervention through pre- and post-tests in both groups and additionally after each activity in the intervention classes. The results showed no overall significant effect of the intervention, but a positive effect on IE among the students with the highest level of IL3S prior to the intervention. Moreover, gender differences were found for the initial activity on both IL3S and on IE. The results are discussed in relation to the ease of accessing the self-image and characteristics of IL3S that enhance activities and gender effects. Methodological challenges involved in intervention studies with intact classes are also highlighted.

Keywords: motivation; LOTEs; French as a foreign language; ideal self; intervention

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1. Introduction

Despite high political ambitions and a long-standing policy to promote multilingualism in Europe (European Commission 1995), the teaching of languages other than English (LOTEs) is facing major challenges in many European educational systems (European Commission 2014). Among young Europeans across different European countries, the status of global English has been found to have a negative effect on the interest in learning LOTEs (Busse 2017).

Sweden is no exception and stands out in a European comparison, with a strong and widespread proficiency in the first foreign language, English (European Commission 2011) and with a lack of motivation as the main reason for the disinterest in learning a second foreign language (SFL) (Eurobarometer 2012). Moreover, among Swedish pupils who decide to start studying a SFL in lower-secondary school, about one in four abandons their studies before the end of school (Tholin 2017).

In some European contexts, French as a foreign language might be particularly affected by the trend described above (Busse 2017; Gayton 2016). In the UK, a recent study reports that French has seen the highest drop in A-level entries between 1997–2017 in terms of numbers (British Council 2018). In Sweden, the national average of pupils choosing French in lower secondary school has dropped from around 20% in 2000 to around 14% in 2018. Moreover, the number of municipalities in the country without registered pupils in French

in lower secondary school has seen a dramatic increase in the same period. In 2000, there were no such municipalities, whereas this number was 41 (out of 290) in 2018 (Granfeldt et al. 2020; Granfeldt and Ågren 2019) (see below for discussion).

In reaction to the current trend, governments typically acknowledge the importance of learning LOTEs, and different policy measures have been introduced in order to increase the interest in learning languages like French, German and Spanish. Educational policy measures typically target pupils who have not yet chosen to study a foreign language, but for pupils already studying a SFL, pedagogical measures in order to prevent them from dropping out would seem particularly relevant. However, despite research demonstrating that motivation is a key factor for success in language learning (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011; Ushioda 2020), the strategies used by teachers to enhance learner motivation have rarely been empirically researched (Karimi and Zade 2019). There is also very little research on the possible effects of such strategies in a formal learning context, especially for LOTEs. About ten years ago, Dörnyei (2009, p. 34) conjectured that "it is possible to devise creative ideal-self-generating activities drawing on past adventures, on the exotic nature of encounters with a foreign culture, and on role models of successful L2 learning achievers". Indeed, a few years later, Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013) proposed 99 different teaching activities aimed at enhancing the learners' "ideal future language self". The activities are designed to build pupils' vision of themselves as future successful language learners and users.

However, we still know very little about the possibility of enhancing pupils' ideal future language self by introducing specially designed teaching activities in the curriculum of if such intervention works better with some pupils than others. So far, only a few intervention studies have been conducted, and they almost exclusively involve speakers of L1 Chinese or Japanese learning English at university (Boo et al. 2015; Al-Hoorie 2018). As Wang (2020) points out, one significant difference between English and LOTEs might be the learners' attitudes towards the importance of learning the target language; LOTEs are often judged less important to learn. In their study, Busse et al. (2020) discuss the possibility that working with vision-enhancing activities stimulates plurilingual ideal self-aspirations in students and "may be beneficial to promote foreign language learning at school beyond EFL learning" (p. 411).

The present study therefore aims to fill several gaps. We will study the possible effects of learning activities with the same objectives as the ones developed by Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013), targeting the enhancement of the ideal future self through an intervention study in intact classes. We will focus on the learning of a second foreign language, French, in Sweden. The participants in our study are 15-year-old students learning French in Sweden as an L3. We will also investigate more momentary effects of various activities at different stages of the intervention and for different sub-groups of pupils in order to study potentially differential effects of the intervention.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a literature review, where we first focus on the situation for SFLs in Sweden in general and French in particular, followed by a theoretical overview of the L2 motivational self system (L2MSS) and previous studies. Section 3 presents in some detail the design of the intervention study and the participants. The results are presented in Section 4, followed by a discussion (Section 5), which also highlights some limitations of the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Second Foreign Language Learning in Swedish Schools[1]

The study of a second foreign language (SFL) is not compulsory in the Swedish educational system. However, it is compulsory to make a "language choice" (*språkval*) at the latest in the year preceding year 6 (age 12 years). The language choice can be one of the

[1] A note on terminology. We refer to French as a Second Foreign Language (SFL) when we talk about the implementation of French in the Swedish educational system. When we talk about the learners in this study, we will label French an L3, as in the third language to be acquired (after L1 Swedish and L2 English).

SFLs offered by the respective school. Schools are required by law (School ordinance) to offer at least two of the three languages of French, German and Spanish. As an alternative to an SFL, pupils can choose mother tongue instruction (if other than Swedish), remedial Swedish or English (or a combination of both, now labelled SV/EN) or Swedish sign language. Consequently, the choice of an SFL is optional. As of 2018, all teaching of SFLs must start in year 6 at the latest, but at the time of collection of data for this study, municipalities could still choose between starting in year 6 (age 12 years) or in year 7 (age 13 years). Today, French is the smallest among the three major SFLs, with about 14% of all pupils in year 9 (German 20% and Spanish 41%). French is most popular in urban areas, in particular in large cities (Granfeldt and Ågren 2019) and the least popular in smaller municipalities in rural areas of the country. This trend is evident over the last 20 years and has led to a situation where French is disappearing from an increasingly large number of smaller municipalities.

2.2. Learner Psychology and Language Learning

2.2.1. Motivation, the Self and Intended Effort

As a theoretical construct, "motivation" is both multifaceted and notoriously difficult to define. However, three dimensions of motivation are often cited, i.e., the choice of a particular action, the persistence with which it is carried out, and the effort spent on it (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011, p. 4). Regarding language learning, an important motivational factor is learners' identity and identity goals (Ushioda 2011). Within research on language learning psychology, aspects of identity have been conceptualized within the "self-concept". According to the psychologists, Markus and Nurius (1987, p. 157), "possible selves" represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming. In an attempt to better understand foreign language learning motivation, Dörnyei proposed the L2 motivational self system (L2MSS) (Csizér 2019; Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009) with theoretical roots in Markus and Nurius's (1987) "possible selves" theory and in Higgins's (1987) self-discrepancy theory. L2MSS is based on three dimensions:

- the ideal L2 self (IL2S) (i.e., the representation of the L2 user a person would like to become),
- the L2 ought-to self (i.e., the representation of what the L2 user feels others want him or her to become), and
- the L2 learning experience (related to the immediate learning environment and experience, for example, the teacher, the curriculum, the experience of success and failure).

In L2MSS, the learners' perception of a manageable discrepancy between their actual self and IL2S represents a motivational catalyst to improve their language learning (see Higgins 1987; Dörnyei 2009). Since its introduction more than a decade ago, the L2MSS has found empirical support in a large number of studies (for an overview, see Boo et al. 2015). Many studies have also shown a positive correlation between the IL2S and the learners' intended effort (IE), where IE is defined as an indicator of the amount of effort that the participants are prepared to put into learning a language. However, when studies in different learning contexts have applied the L2MSS, the results reveal a rather complex picture that will be illustrated in the next section (see Al-Hoorie 2018). Moreover, some research areas have been neglected in previous research. In a systematic review of 416 papers and book chapters about L2 motivation over the last 15 years, Boo et al. (2015) show a clear dominance of studies focused on motivation as a theoretical construct (67% of the publications), a weak interest in learners from the primary (5%) and secondary (20%) level of education as opposed to the university level (51%), a geographical focus on East Asia and a clear majority of studies on L2 English (72.6%).

2.2.2. Factors Affecting the Ideal L2 Self and Links to Intended Effort

The IL2S has been acknowledged as a central part of the motivational process and as an important key to understand the degree of effort learners are willing to invest in language learning (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009, 2011; Henry 2012). However, for the future self to become and stay a strong and efficient motivational variable, some conditions must be met (Dörnyei 2009, pp. 20–21). The current and future self should be sufficiently different from each other without implying "a clash between a learner's personal and social identity". The future self-image should be vivid, elaborate, and plausible and encourage the effort needed to reach the ideal vision. These conditions could be a reason why the ideal L2 self literature has produced conflicting results, as identified by Al-Hoorie (2018, p. 723) in his meta-analysis. Many studies demonstrate that the IL2S is a highly valid variable for measuring learners' motivation to learn a language and a good predictor of IE (Al-Hoorie 2018; Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011), but some studies are inconclusive. Kim and Kim (2011) could not, for example, establish a clear connection between a vivid IL2S and academic achievement. Lamb (2012) also found that the IL2S could not predict proficiency and concluded that "what makes them [the learners] more likely to invest effort in learning is whether they feel positive about the process of learning" (p. 1014). His study also highlights a significant effect of the IL2S on the learning effort for learners from a cosmopolitan context, but no such effect on learners from a provincial or rural context. Hessel (2015) notes that the conditions for the IL2S motivational capacity "remains largely unexplored in empirical studies" (p. 103). In their two studies, Hessel (2015) and Cho (2020) investigate how IL2S properties are associated with its motivational effect, conceptualized as IE. In Hessel's (2015) study, the frequency of activation of the IL2S was the most significant predictor of the 97 German university students' IE, followed by their perception of a discrepancy between their current self and IL2S and the strength of the desirability of the IL2S. For the 44 Korean college students learning English in Cho's (2020) study, the two most important properties of the IL2S were "accessibility" (i.e., the ease with which learners could access their IL2S) and "plausibility" (i.e., the perceived likelihood of the IL2S becoming a reality). With respect to IE, the only significant predictor was the centrality of the students' ideal self, i.e., the importance of the L2 self in relation to the general ideal self (Cho 2020). A final condition concerns the status of the foreign language itself in the learning context. In a study set in Sweden, Henry and Cliffordson (2013) looked at gender differences with respect to IL2S (English) but failed to find any such differences. The authors argue that English has lost its status as foreign language in Sweden and has become more of general educational priority, like mathematics or (L1) Swedish. Consequently, L2 English in the Swedish context is much less associated with the personal identity projects that the ideal L2 self-construct taps into. However, Henry and Cliffordson did find gender differences with respect to the third language (L3 French, German or Spanish), with girls scoring higher on the IL3S scale. Henry's (2012) research has established that multilingual learners have different language-specific images of themselves, and differentiating between IL2S and IL3S is now common.

2.2.3. Enhancing the Ideal L2 Self—Intervention Studies

The vast majority of IL2S studies have attempted to measure levels of IL2S in a specific group of learners at a specific point in time and correlate the results with other variables, such as IE (see Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009). Considerably fewer studies have attempted to build learners' IL2S through the use of ideal-self enhancing activities and vision-building techniques in the classroom (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 2014). Magid and Chan (2012) were among the first to study the effects of two intervention programs, one in England and one in Hong Kong, with learners of L2 English. The program in England consisted of a series of four workshops focusing on the English language, western culture and careers as well as two counselling sessions over four months. The intervention in Hong Kong was integrated into a self-access language learning course and included two language counselling meetings over three months. Magid and Chan (2012) concluded that both

programs increased the participants' level of IL2S significantly and their confidence and motivation to learn and use English. Moreover, the clarity of the participants' goals after the programs was positively affected. In an action research study conducted in an EFL Japanese university context, Sampson (2012) analyzed the relationship between learners' possible self-images and language-learning motivation. As a data collection method, Sampson used a free-writing exercise, detailing the participants' "best-possible English self" image. The analysis showed that very few students had a clear and developed vision of their English-using self. This lack of a detailed vision could prevent or slow down the language learning process, since vision is seen as "one of the highest-order motivational forces" (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 2014, p. 4). Mackay (2019) studied 2766 full-time university students learning English at the B2.1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference in Spain. Her study aimed at developing the learners' L2-self-images through mental imagery and incorporated the practical activities presented in Hadfield and Dörnyei's book (2013) with the same focus. Her design included two intervention groups (n = 22 and n = 25) and two control groups (n = 23 and n = 28). The intervention included visualization training, consisting of visualizations and activities designed to develop an action plan to realize the vision. The data gathered via semi-structured interviews showed that, in the intervention group, a larger number of learners "quoted intrinsic motives and the enjoyment of learning as a reason for studying English"; they also "verbalized their mental images without hesitation or need for clarification and often provided specific detail" (Mackay 2019, p. 56). In another intervention study, Wang (2020) chose to use "near peer role models" to develop an ideal French self and multilingual selves among 17 undergraduate learners. Open questionnaires, interviews and written journals were used to measure the effects of the intervention. Wang's findings show that the learners' French ideal self and their multilingual self became stronger and more concrete. He also observed a higher level of effort in French learning after the intervention.

As is the case with IL2S studies generally, the majority of the intervention studies reported so far in the literature have targeted adult learners studying English at university as an L2. This is an obvious bias in the research. As Wang (2020) points out, "research on how to foster learners' motivation towards learning a language other than English (LOTE) is still scarce". This is especially important since, according to Wang (2020), "one major barrier to the development of individuals' LOTE learning motivation is the weakening or even disappearance of their ideal LOTE self in the course of learning" (p. 2).

3. The Present Study

Taking stock of previous research, the present study attempts to fill a number of gaps. It is a mixed-method quasi-experimental study with both quantitative and qualitative analyses, but we are only reporting here on the quantitative results (see Rocher Hahlin (2020) for a full account of the qualitative data). The present study focuses on the results from an intervention over four months consisting of three IL3S enhancing pedagogical activities. The learners were pupils studying French as a second foreign language (an L3) in Sweden. So far, few intervention studies have been carried out in the field and even fewer targeting LOTE learners. We analyze the relationship between IL3S and IE, the overall effects of the intervention and momentary effects of specific activities. In addition to possible gender differences, we also consider the vitality of pupils' IL3S prior to the intervention as a possible factor for success. We also investigate to what extent the effects of the activities are the same in two different intact classes. For both theoretical and educational reasons, it is important to understand if there are differential effects of intervention programs depending on the learning context and to what extent the learners had a vivid IL3S at the outset.

3.1. Research Questions and Hypotheses

We ask the following research questions:

1. To what extent is there a correlation between the level of vividness of the ideal L3 self and the level of intended effort before, during and after the intervention?

Based on previous research on L2 English, we hypothesized that there should be a strong positive correlation between IL3S and IE.

2. In relation to the effect of the intervention,
    a. To what extent does the whole intervention increase the level of vividness of the ideal L3 self and the level of intended effort among the pupils as compared to the control group?
    b. To what extent do gender, level of vividness of ideal L3 self prior to the intervention and class moderate the effect of the intervention?

Based on previous intervention studies, our hypothesis was that the activities should enhance and develop the learners' IL3S positively compared to the control group (question 2a).

Gender effects along with level of IL3S have not been studied in intervention studies of this type previously, but IL3S has been shown to be dependent on gender, with girls scoring higher than boys (e.g., Henry and Cliffordson 2013). The level of vividness of IL3S has not yet been researched as a moderating variable, and no specific hypothesis is put forward. Finally, the same intervention was carried out in two intact classes taught by two different teachers (see below), and we ask the exploratory question if the effects are the same in both classes.

3. To what extent do the respective activities increase the level of vividness of the ideal L3 self and the level of intended effort among the pupils within the intervention group?

This research question is exploratory and carries no specific hypothesis.

3.2. Participants and Context

The data were collected in three schools in three medium-sized cities in Sweden. The school populations were mixed in terms of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The learners were 15-year-old pupils learning English as their first foreign language (L2) in the last nine years and French as a SFL (L3) for the previous three or four years at the time of the intervention. The pupils had started the last year of lower-secondary school, and their expected exit level in French was A2.1.

The study involved three intact classes and 58 pupils. There were two intervention classes (class 1, $n = 30$ and class 2, $n = 15$) and a control class ($n = 14$). Participation in the study was voluntary, and we relied on the agreement of school leaders, teachers and pupils in order to conduct the study. No power analysis was carried out.

Prior to the start of the intervention, baseline values for the two main dependent variables, IL3S and IE, were established in the intervention classes and in the control class. One pupil did not participate in the baseline measurement. An ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between the classes with respect to IL3S [$F(2, 55) = 1.052$, $p = 0.356$] or with respect to IE [$F(2, 55) = 1.232$, $p = 0.300$] at the start of the intervention. When the two intervention classes were grouped together to form the "intervention group", an independent sample t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the intervention group and the control group with respect to IL3S [$t(55) = -1.409$, $p = 0.164$] or with respect to IE [$t(55) = 1.405$, $p = 0.166$].

In the next step, all pupils were classified according to their IL3S baseline level (see Questionnaire, Appendix A). Since no previous research has considered the level of IL3S as a variable, there were no previous results to base the classification on. Therefore, cut-off points for the different levels were decided using a combination of inspection of the data and heuristics. Three levels were identified in the data, and an ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference between the three resulting groups [$F(2, 55) = 160.289$, $p = 0.000$]. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD revealed significant differences between the High group (M = 3.46 SD = 0.26 Max = 4.0 Min = 3.11), the Intermediate group (M =

2.62 SD = 0.27 Max = 3.0 Min = 2.11) and the Low group (M = 1.59 SD = 0.27 Max = 2.0 Min = 1.22). A high level means that the pupil had a very vivid IL3S prior to the intervention. Table 1 below shows the distribution of boys and girls across levels and classes. One pupil did not wish to answer the gender question.

Table 1. Gender and baseline level of ideal L3 self (IL3S) in the three classes.

Gender	Level IL3S	Intervention Class 1	Intervention Class 2	Control Class
Boys	High	1	1	2
	Intermediate	3	2	3
	Low	5	2	0
Girls	High	8	4	4
	Intermediate	10	5	5
	Low	1	1	0

The distribution of gender and level of IL3S is relatively even and in accordance with what could be expected when working with intact classes. However, it should be noted that no pupil in the control class was classified as having a low level of IL3S at baseline and only four boys were placed in the High group compared to 16 girls. At group level, an ANOVA showed that there were no significant differences between the classes with respect to IL3S prior to the intervention.

3.3. Design, Activities and Measurements

The study took place over four months and involved three activities and four measurements in the intervention classes. In the control class, no IL3S enhancing activities took place, and two measurements were carried out (see Table 2). Only measurements based on the close-ended questionnaire (see Appendix A) are reported on here. In the intervention classes, additional instruments were also used (see Table 2), but the results from these are not reported here (see Rocher Hahlin 2020).

Table 2. Activities and measurements in intervention and control classes

Period	August		September		October		November	
Activities			Act. 1 'Dream'		Act. 3 'Forum'		Act. 3 'Webquest'	
Instruments	Text + Inter	Close	Open + Inter	Close	Open + Inter	Close	Open + Inter	Close
Measurement		BL		M1		M2		M3
Intervention class 1&class 2	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Control class	-	✔	-	-	-	-	-	✔

Legend: Close = close-ended questionnaire; Open = open-ended questionnaire; Inter = Interview; BL = Baseline; M = Measurement.

Three pedagogical activities were developed for the purpose of this study to enhance the learners' IL3S (see details below). The work with the activities in the respective classes was led by the pupils' regular French teachers. To minimize the teacher effect, specific criteria were used to select the three teachers: the teachers were active, qualified and experienced French teachers, dedicated to their work and had a student-centered teaching approach. In addition, the activities had been talked through with the intervention teachers during the term preceding the intervention; the procedure of the intervention was discussed, and a protocol for each activity was written collectively. While the intervention classes worked with the exact same IL3S enhancing activities, the control class worked with cultural activities based on songs or films connected to French-speaking cultures but without explicit connection to the learners' IL3S. The researcher visited the control class as often as the intervention classes to minimize the Hawthorne effect between the intervention

and control groups. After each activity, data were collected through the triangulation of three instruments: a questionnaire with close-ended questions targeting IL3S and IE, an open questionnaire (eight questions) and semi-structured interviews (eight questions), but we report only on the results from the close-ended questionnaire here (see Rocher Hahlin (2020) for a full account of the data). The pupils in the intervention classes and the control class individually completed the same questionnaire, with close-ended questions measuring IL3S and IE. This means that there were three measurements in the intervention classes (M1, M2 and M3) in addition to the baseline measure (see Table 2). The pupils in the control class completed the questionnaire only in the beginning (Baseline) and at the end of the study (corresponding to Measurement 3 in the intervention classes) (see Table 2).

- Activity 1 (duration: 3 lessons): The pupils were introduced to the French-speaking world and asked, as a concluding activity, to imagine a situation in which they were almost fluent in French and got their "dream summer job" in a French-speaking country. They were asked to describe in Swedish or in French what the experience felt like. This vision-building activity (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 2014) was inspired by Sampson's (2012) study and adapted to teenagers.
- Activity 2 (duration: 5 lessons): This consisted of interactions in French between the Swedish pupils and French teenagers on a French-speaking online forum. The topics of the forum were films and television series. The pupils were first introduced to French expressions commonly used in chats, SMS or forums. During the next lessons, they read several messages and responded to some of them. They also created new threads on the forum to discuss in French films or series that were not already mentioned. The second activity aimed at creating an authentic contact with native speakers and hence reducing learners' potential feelings of a high level of discrepancy between their actual and ideal French selves (Higgins 1987).
- Activity 3 (duration: 10 lessons): The last activity was a webquest (i.e., an inquiry-oriented activity in which most information can be found on the Internet (Dodge 1995)), where the pupils' intercultural competence was challenged. Pupils were presented with four proposed missions: to organize a sports camp, to plan a trip to Paris for a demanding family, to open a restaurant in a French-speaking country and to organize a concert for an 18-year-old's birthday party with French-language music. French was the working language, and the goal was to help learners visualize and project themselves using French in credible French-speaking environments.

3.4. Instruments and Analysis

In this study, we focus on the results from the close-ended questionnaires targeting IL3S and IE. The close-ended questionnaire targeting IL3S had nine Likert-scale items, which were developed on the basis of a previous scale (Ryan 2009; Taguchi et al. 2009) but adapted to the context of the present study. Internal consistency was very high throughout all measurements (Cronbach's alpha > 0.90). The questionnaire targeting IE had five Likert-scale items, which were developed on the basis of Ryan (2009) and Taguchi et al. (2009) but adapted to the context of the present study. Internal consistency was high throughout all measurements (Cronbach's alpha > 0.80, but on one occasion 0.78). All alpha values are reported in Table A1 in Appendix B. Effect sizes were computed as partial eta-squared (η_p^2) for repeated measures ANOVAs and ANCOVAs. Following Cohen (1969), we interpreted small, medium, and large effects corresponding to values equal to 0.10, 0.25, and 0.40, respectively. Shapiro-Wilks tests were used to determine that criteria for normality were met for the dependent variables (IL3S and IE).

4. Results

4.1. Overall Correlation between Ideal L3 Self and Intended Effort

In relation to our first research question (see above), we analyzed the overall relationship between IL3S and IE at the different measurements. As Table 3 shows, the two constructs are highly correlated at all times in the intervention group.

Table 3. Correlations between ideal L3 self (IL3S) and intended effort (IE) (Pearson's r)—Intervention group.

	IE Baseline	IE Measurement 1	IE Measurement 2	IE Measurement 3
IL3S Baseline	0.590 **			
IL3S Measurement 1		0.698 **		
IL3S Measurement 2			0.613 **	
IL3S Measurement 3				0.706 **

Legend: ** = $p \leq 0.01$.

In the intervention group, the strength of the association between IL3S and IE increased considerably from Baseline (0.590 **) to Measurement 3 (0.706 **) at the end of intervention (see Table 3). The corresponding figures for the control group are 0.425 * at Baseline and 0.474 * at Measurement 3. Even though the two constructs were highly correlated from the start in both the intervention group and the control group, a possible interpretation of these results is that the intervention had the effect of tightening the association even further. Another observation is that the increase is not linear across the intervention period. The highest increase takes place between Baseline and Measurement 1, i.e., after Activity 1, but at Measurement 2, the strength of the association is nearly back to the Baseline level again.

4.2. Development of the Learners' Ideal L3 Self and Intended Effort during the Intervention

In the second phase, we considered the effect of the whole intervention (see research question 2a). Table 4 reports descriptive statistics for the two dependent variables, IL3S and IE, at Baseline and after each of the following measurements.

Table 4. Mean and SD for ideal L3 self and intended effort in the two groups.

Measurement	Ideal L3 Self		Intended Effort	
	Intervention Group	Control Group	Intervention Group	Control Group
Baseline	2.69 (0.73)	2.99 (0.49)	2.55 (0.63)	2.29 (0.54)
Measurement1	2.70 (0.80)	n/a	2.43 (0.74)	n/a
Measurement 2	2.73 (0.81)	n/a	2.54 (0.69)	n/a
Measurement 3	2.82 (0.83)	2.90 (0.61)	2.53 (0.82)	2.29 (0.47)

With respect to IL3S, the intervention group showed increasingly higher means throughout the intervention, whereas the control group showed a slight decrease between Baseline and Measurement 3 (note that there were no intermediate measurements in the control group). The picture is less clear with respect to IE, where the intervention group did not display any clear development. A repeated measures ANOVA comparing the Baseline measurement to Measurement 3 with Measurement (BL/M3) as the within-subjects factor and Intervention (yes/no) as the between-subjects factor showed no main effect of intervention on IL3S [$F(1, 52) = 0.567$, $p = 0.455$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.011$] or on IE [$F(1, 52) = 1.701$, $p = 0.198$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.033$]. There was no significant interaction between Measurement and Intervention with respect to IL3S [$F(1, 52) = 1.142$, $p = 0.0290$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.022$] nor with respect to IE [$F(1, 52) = 0.072$, $p = 0.790$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$]. There was no significant interaction between Intervention and Level of IL3S prior to the intervention (see Table 1) for IL3S [$F(1, 51) = 0.407$, $p = 0.527$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.009$] nor for IE [$F(1, 51) = 0.314$, $p = 0.578$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.007$]. Likewise, there was no significant interaction between Intervention and Gender for IL3S [$F(1, 51) = 1.392$, $p = 0.244$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.029$] or for IE [$F(1, 51) = 1.198$, $p = 0.279$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.025$].

Next, we looked separately at possible main effects of the intervention in each of the IL3S groups (High, Intermediate and Low; see Table 1). We carried out this analysis since there were no pupils in the Low group in the control class, and this bias might have affected the results of the interaction between Intervention and Level of IL3S prior to the intervention reported on above. We found a significant small main effect on IE in the High IL3S group [$F(1, 20) = 4.832$, $p = 0.041$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.203$] but not on IL3S [$F(1, 20) = 0.013$, $p = 0.909$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$]. No other significant main effects of the intervention were found.

As a response to research questions 2a and 2b, it can thus be observed that with respect to the quantitative measurements of IL3S and IE, there was no overall significant effect of the whole intervention apart from a small effect on IE in the group with the highest level of IL3S prior to the intervention.

In a next step and in order to study possible momentary effects of different activities within the intervention group (see research question 3), mean gain scores between measurements were computed. The mean and standard deviation of gains scores are presented in Tables 5 and 6 according to gender and to prior level of IL3S, respectively (see Tables A2 and A3 in Appendix B for the corresponding mean scores). A negative gain score in the tables implies that the mean has decreased since the preceding measurement, whereas a positive gain score implies that the mean for the variable increased in the group.

Table 5. Means and SD for gain scores of ideal L3 self and intended effort according to Gender.

Comparison	Ideal L3 Self			Intended Effort		
	All	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls
M1 vs. BL	0.01 (0.32)	−0.14 (0.37)	0.10 (0.26)	−0.11 (0.47)	−0.39 (0.49)	0.05 (0.38)
M2 vs. BL	0.02 (0.39)	−0.17 (0.34)	0.11 (0.40)	−0.03 (0.40)	−0.25 (0.49)	0.08 (0.42)
M2 vs. M1	−0.02 (0.32)	−0.03 (0.24)	−0.02(0.37)	0.08 (0.33)	0.14 (0.33)	0.04 (0.34)
M3 vs. M1	0.04 (0.31)	0.09 (0.37)	0.00 (0.28)	0.04 (0.44)	0.17 (0.31)	−0.02 (0.49)
M3 vs. M2	0.02 (0.37)	0.06 (0.45)	0.00 (0.34)	−0.04 (0.36)	−0.02 (0.37)	−0.05 (0.36)

Legend: BL = Baseline; M = Measurement.

Table 6. Means and SD for gain scores of ideal L3 self and intended effort according to prior Level of ideal L3 self.

Comparison	Ideal L3 Self			Intended Effort		
	Low	Inter	High	Low	Inter	High
M1 vs. BL	−0.07 (0.28)	0.13 (0.28)	−0.12 (0.37)	−0.29 (0.28)	−0.09 (0.51)	−0.02 (0.50)
M2 vs. BL	0.04 (0.32)	0.06 (0.45)	−0.06 (0.39)	−0.09 (0.25)	−0.09 (0.44)	0.09 (0.41)
M2 vs. M1	0.08 (0.40)	−0.10 (0.34)	−0.02 (0.22)	0.20 (0.28)	−0.04 (0.40)	0.13 (0.23)
M3 vs. M1	0.16 (0.44)	−0.02 (0.32)	0.03 (0.22)	0.25 (0.21)	−0.21 (0.56)	0.18 (0.22)
M3 vs. M2	−0.04 (0.61)	0.04 (0.34)	0.05 (0.25)	0.00 (0.41)	−0.17 (0.42)	0.07 (0.22)

Legend: BL = Baseline; M = Measurement.

Table 5 shows that for both IL3S and for IE there is an initial systematic increase in gain scores among the girls at Measurement 1 (M1) as compared to Baseline (BL) and at Measurement 2 (M2) as compared to BL. At the same time, there is an equally systematic decrease among the boys for the same measurements. We ran a series of ANCOVAs with the different gain scores as DVs, Gender as IVs and baseline scores as covariate. Results showed that the difference between the boys and the girls is significant for IL3S at Measurement 1 compared to BL [$F(1,11) = 7.539$, $p = 0.010$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.181$] and at Measurement 2 compared to BL [$F(1,11) = 4.432$, $p = 0.019$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.189$]. The same comparisons are also significant for IE at Measurement 1 compared to BL [$F(1,11) = 4.039$, $p = 0.026$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.188$] and for Measurement 2 compared to BL [$F(1,11) = 4.028$, $p = 0.026$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.175$]. No other comparisons of gain scores between boys and girls turned out to be significant.

In contrast to Table 5, Table 6 does not show any clear pattern with respect to the dependent variables IL3S and IE. Descriptively, there are both initial increases in IL3S (Intermediate group) and decreases (High group and Low group), but neither of these turned out to be significant when Measurements 1 and 2 were compared to Baseline. The Intermediate group is the group that displayed the most positive gain scores after Measurement 1. We return to the observations in the discussion.

Lastly, we considered the effect of class on the gain scores in order to understand if the activities had different effects in the two classes. The descriptive results are presented in Table 7 (see Table A4 in Appendix B for the corresponding mean scores).

Table 7. Mean and SD for gain scores of ideal L3 self and intended effort according to class.

Comparison	Ideal L3 Self		Intended Effort	
	Intervention Class 1	Intervention Class 2	Intervention Class 1	Intervention Class 2
M1 vs. BL	0.7 (0.24)	−0.10 (0.42)	0.00 (0.38)	−0.30 (0.54)
M2 vs. BL	0.8 (0.29)	−0.11 (0.54)	0.08 (0.35)	−0.24 (0.41)
M2 vs. M1	−0.03 (0.21)	−0.01 (0.47)	0.09 (0.27)	0.06 (0.43)
M3 vs. M1	0.10 (0.30)	−0.06 (0.30)	0.08 (0.43)	−0.01 (0.46)
M3 vs. M2	0.06 (0.29)	−0.04 (0.48)	−0.01 (0.40)	−0.08 (0.30)

Descriptively, there is an initial systematic increase in gain scores in Class 1 when BL and Measurement 1 and Measurement 2 are compared, both for IL3S and for IE. Conversely, there is an initial systematic decrease in gain scores for the same comparisons and for both variables in Class 2. However, the differences between the two classes are only significant for the two comparisons of the IE variable $F(1, 38) = 4.778$, $p = 0.035$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.117$ (Measurement 1 compared to BL) and $F(1, 38) = 7.322$, $p = 0.010$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.158$ (Measurement 2 compared to BL).

5. Discussion

Previous research has pointed to a strong positive relation between adult learners' ideal L2 self and their intended effort to learn the language (Dörnyei and Chan 2013). Dörnyei and Chan (2013) found a correlation of 0.68 for the ideal English self and 0.67 for the ideal Mandarin self. The correlation coefficients found in the present study are very similar (ranging from 0.59 at Baseline to 0.71 at Measurement 3) and show that this relationship is equally valid and strong in adolescent learners learning French as their L3 (see research question 1). The results of the present study can thus be seen as a validation of a positive relationship between the two constructs, but with data from L3 and in an entirely different setting. The correlation coefficients in the intervention group show that the strength of the association between IL3S and IE is higher after the intervention than before. However, the increase is not linear, and one possible interpretation is that some activities (e.g., Activity 1) could lead to an even tighter association between IL3S and IE. In our interpretation this seems logical. The activities targeted the enhancement of the pupils' vision of themselves as successful future learners and users of French as a foreign language, but they also lead to a closer association between their language self and the amount of work they are prepared to do in order to learn the language. After a "successful" IL3S activity, the two dimensions become more integrated in the pupils' minds. However, the issue has not been studied before, and it is also possible that the observed varying strength of the association between IL3S and IE is an artefact of the method used in this study. More research is needed to better understand which factors modulate the strength of this association over time.

Even though only the intervention group saw steadily increasing means of IL3S during the semester, the intervention as a whole did not significantly affect the learners' IL3S (see research question 2a). Students' lack of "future-self-immersion" experiences (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 2014, p. 47) and the comparatively low intensity of the activities may have contributed to a weak global effect of the intervention program. The design of the intervention was chosen in order to disturb the regular teaching flow as little as possible. The activities demanded up to ten lessons per month (Activity 3), which seemed to be the limit to what we could ask of the teachers. However, Dörnyei (2009) stresses the role of a regular and repeated activation of the ideal language self to "keep the vision alive" (p. 37), and according to Hessel's (2015) data, the frequency of the IL2S activation is the most significant predictor of the students' IE. A high intensity of ideal L3 self enhancing activities might therefore be especially important for learners with a low level of IL3S, who may think of themselves as future L3 language users for the first time. Dörnyei and Chan (2013) emphasized the fact that motivation also depends on learners' ability to create

mental imagery. This process is obviously not automatic. In our study, we did not find any significant interaction between intervention and level of IL3S prior to the intervention when looking at all the participants, but we did find a significant effect of the intervention (on intended effort) when considering the group with the highest level of IL3S prior to the intervention (High group) (see research question 2b). Following Higgins (1987), the discrepancy between a learner's current self and ideal self should not be too large to avoid feeling demotivated. Although the results are not clear-cut in our study, it seems reasonable to believe that the "gap" between the current self and the ideal self was too important in the Low group for the IL3S intervention to have any effect, and consequently their intentions to work harder did not change either during the intervention period. Interpreting these results along the lines of Cho (2020), it could be that "access" to the IL3S was too difficult for the learners in the Low group, who at the start were too far from engaging with their ideal French self. Working with three IL3S enhancing activities was not enough to see a significant positive change in the quantitative data. However, since the data are not clear, more research on this issue is needed.

As a complement to looking at the cumulative effect of the whole intervention, we also considered momentary effects of each activity by computing and comparing gain scores between measurements (see research question 3). A finding in this analysis was the observation that the activities seemed to have different effects. The strongest positive effect resulted arguably from the first activity, which was a vision-building activity where the pupils were asked to envision their dream summer job in a French-speaking environment and where they were interacting fluently in French with co-workers, etc. Writing an individual text about a desired future French self in a self-chosen language gave pupils the opportunity to immerse themselves in a positive vision. Adolescence is a time when young people try different identities, and this first activity may have stimulated particularly well a new, plausible and desired French future self, partly because it was an individual task where the pupils could focus on themselves. In contrast, the pupils worked in pairs or small groups during the second and third activity. Moreover, the fact that the second and third activities were in French, with the intention of enhancing the perception among the pupils that their level of French proficiency was already sufficient in order to carry out complex tasks, might also have been a distracting feature, leading to more resources being allocated to linguistic issues than expected. This could in turn have had the consequence that some of the intended effect of enhancing IL3S was lost in Activities 2 and 3.

It is also interesting to see that the effect of the first activity was clearly mediated by gender. The results show that gain scores for both IL3S and IE at Measurement 1 increased significantly compared to the baseline among the girls and decreased among the boys. When studying the effects of gender on ideal language self, Henry and Cliffordson (2013) found gender differences in the ideal L3 self of Swedish learners. The authors suggest that "females are more likely to imagine themselves involved in relationship with others and because of it, their IL3S may be more likely to feature imagined instances of reciprocated interaction with target language speakers" (Henry and Cliffordson 2013, p. 286). In fact, Activity 1 targeted exactly such instances in the feature where the pupils would be working in a French-speaking environment and interacting with different people in French.

Overall, the results of this study suggest a relationship between the Swedish pupils' ideal French self and their desire to put in more effort to improve their knowledge of French. The findings also suggest that girls, and probably in particular those with a prior vivid ideal French self, benefited the most from the intervention. Visualizing French future selves may be key to enhancing pupils' motivation to learn French. Since gender and the prior level of IL3S seem to be significant variables, visualization training could be introduced to the learners as a possible motivational strategy for foreign language learning, with particular attention to boys and learners with a low ability to imagine themselves as future speakers of the target language, since these pupils may not gain immediately as much as others. They also may need to practice visualization techniques first. By encouraging students to explore their own visions through guided imagery techniques, language teachers could

help pupils with limited connections to French-speaking cultures outside the classroom to create a stronger tie with French and possibly prevent pupils from dropping out of their second foreign language classes. Adaptable imagery workouts could be integrated into language teaching to guide learners towards goals, strategies and tasks and hopefully transform their visions into concrete learning actions (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 2014; Hadfield and Dörnyei 2013). The strategy of stimulating desired future states and linking the target language to what students privately wish to become could complement other motivational strategies used by the language teacher (Dörnyei 2001). For the future study of French in Sweden, a language that currently suffers from a popularity deficit, this seems very important.

Limitations of the Present Study

The most important limitations of this quasi-experimental study are associated with the choice of working with three intact language classes. Due to practical reasons, we could not randomly assign the pupils to the intervention group or the control group, and we had to limit the number of intervention activities so as not to disturb the regular teaching too much. One consequence was that there were no learners with a low level of IL3S prior to the intervention in the control class. The difference between the intervention and the control groups after the intervention might have been clearer and more important if all three classes had pupils from each IL3S group. Another shortcoming is that the High group consisted almost exclusively of girls. With the current data, it is therefore difficult to disentangle the effect of level of IL3S prior to the intervention from gender.

6. Conclusions and Direction for Future Research

This study examined the effects of an intervention program consisting of three IL3S enhancing activities with 15-year-old pupils studying French as an L3 in Sweden. Few intervention studies have been carried out in the field and very few target LOTEs. The study confirms previous research on L2 English: that IL3S and IE are closely associated. However, compared to a control group, the pupils in the intervention group did not significantly increase the vividness of their IL3S during the intervention, nor did we find an overall effect on IE. Instead, one of the main contributions of the study is evidence pointing to a number of differential effects of the intervention program. First, our results suggest that pupils with high levels of IL3S benefitted the most from the intervention, but the data are not conclusive. We argue that learners with a low level of IL3S had difficulty accessing their self-images, meaning that their IL3S could not be stimulated with the relatively few activities used in the intervention. Future studies should be conducted to confirm the role of the level of IL3S as a factor in intervention studies. Moreover, the length and the intensity of future intervention programs should be increased to see if it is indeed possible to "reach" learners who are far from having a vivid IL3S prior to an intervention or who have no visualization experience. A second result shows that the first activity carried out in the L1 of the pupils (Swedish) had the largest effect. We argue that, for some of these A2.1-level learners of French, working in the target language (which was the case in the subsequent activities) might have put too much emphasis on linguistic aspects, leading to a reduced effect on IL3S enhancement. Future research should look for possible trade-off effects between working in the target language and enhancement of the IL3S, preferably with learners at different levels of proficiency. This result could also be an effect of order, with the first activity having a greater impact than the following ones; order effects should also be addressed in future studies. Finally, we also found a gender effect, where girls seemed to have benefitted the most from the first activity. This result is in line with previous research on IL3S, but is a new finding in intervention studies.

Overall, the quantitative data presented in this paper provide some support to the idea that creating opportunities for language students to explore and strengthen their possible language selves can enhance motivation among them. Female students and students with a vivid ideal language self seem to be the most able to benefit from the activities, which

in turn might prevent them from abandoning their second foreign language studies. This paper shows that researchers and teachers alike should probably not expect a homogenous effect across all pupils. However, the reasons why male students and students with a weak ideal French self do not seem to benefit from the intervention in the way we would have hoped requires further research.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire
You and the French Language

We would like to ask for your help in order to better understand students' learning of French. It would help us a lot if you could answer the following questions. It is not a test; therefore, there are no correct or incorrect answers, just yours. The most important thing is that you answer honestly so that your answer is as close to reality as possible. Thank you very much for your help!

You answer the questions by choosing a number between 1 and 4.

1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree and 4 = Strongly agree.

	☹			😆	IL3S/IE
A—I can easily imagine situations, abroad or in Sweden, where I could use French.	1	2	3	4	IL3S
B—I like the image of myself where, in a few years, I discuss with international friends or colleagues without problems in French.	1	2	3	4	IL3S
C—I put a lot of effort into developing my skills in French.	1	2	3	4	IE
D—I would love to go on a language exchange with my class to a French-speaking country to get to know French-speaking teenagers.	1	2	3	4	IL3S
E—I would like to watch movies, listen to music, surf the web in French more often (outside the classroom).	1	2	3	4	IE
F—I can see myself as a person who can talk and understand French in the future.	1	2	3	4	IL3S
G—If I knew French very well, I could imagine studying or working for a certain period in a French-speaking country.	1	2	3	4	IL3S
H—I often listen to French in my spare time (music, movies...).	1	2	3	4	IE
I—I can see myself living abroad in the future and speaking French with the people who live there.	1	2	3	4	IL3S
J—I really want to continue with French in high school.	1	2	3	4	IE
K—I really like the idea that in the future I could use French as easily as my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	IL3S
L—I think it would be cool if I could easily take some university courses in a French-speaking country.	1	2	3	4	IL3S
M—I think it is worth putting in a lot of work to be better in French and be able to use that language more.	1	2	3	4	IE
N—I like the idea that people around me see me as a person who will be able to use French fluently in the future.	1	2	3	4	IL3S

Thank you very much for your help!

Appendix B

Table A1. Cronbach's alpha for ideal L3 self and intended effort at different measurements.

	Ideal L3 Self (9 Items)	Intended Effort (5 Items)
Baseline	0.902	0.766
M 1	0.928	0.863
M 2	0.935	0.823
M 3	0.933	0.860

Legend: M = Measurement.

Table A2. Mean and SD of ideal L3 self and intended effort according to gender.

Measurement	Ideal L3 Self			Intended Effort		
	All	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls
Baseline	2.68 (0.74)	2.24 (0.77)	2.89 (0.59)	2.55 (0.64)	2.30 (0.62)	2.66 (0.62)
M 1	2.70 (0.80)	2.10 (0.73)	3.05 (0.63)	2.41 (0.74)	1.91 (0.60)	2.69 (0.67)
M 2	2.73 (0.82)	2.07 (0.79)	3.06 (0.61)	2.52 (0.69)	2.06 (0.54)	2.76 (0.65)
M 3	2.81 (0.84)	2.20 (0.80)	3.09 (0.72)	2.52 (0.83)	2.05 (0.61)	2.74 (0.83)

Legend: M = Measurement.

Table A3. Mean and SD for ideal L3 self and intended effort according to level of IL3S.

Measurement	Ideal L3 Self			Intended Effort		
	Low	Intermediate	High	Low	Intermediate	High
Baseline	1.59 (0.27)	2.61 (0.26)	3.48 (0.28)	1.78 (0.25)	2.55 (0.44)	3.04 (0.55)
M 1	1.47 (0.35)	2.77 (0.38)	3.37 (0.50)	1.49 (0.38)	2.48(0.46)	3.02 (0.59)
M 2	1.63 (0.38)	2.68 (0.48)	3.42 (0.52)	1.69 (0.43)	2.47(0.42)	3.13 (0.54)
M 3	1.61 (0.52)	2.80 (0.40)	3.47 (0.57)	1.70 (0.47)	2.32 (0.66)	3.20 (0.64)

Legend: M = Measurement.

Table A4. Mean and SD for ideal L3 self and intended effort according to class.

Measurement	Ideal L3 Self		Intended Effort	
	Intervention Class 1	Intervention Class 2	Intervention Class 1	Intervention Class 2
Baseline	2.70 (0.68)	2.64 (0.85)	2.59 (0.55)	2.46 (0.78)
M 1	2.77 (0.71)	2.58 (0.96)	2.54 (0.64)	2.19 (0.88)
M 2	2.81 (0.80)	2.57 (0.86)	2.66 (0.60)	2.25 (0.81)
M 3	2.98 (0.74)	2.52 (0.96)	2.73 (0.71)	2.17 (0.92)

Legend: M = Measurement.

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