

Schauer, Elisabeth. 2009. *Austrian and Spanish learners' motivation(s) to communicate in English*. MA Thesis, University of Vienna.

Abstract

This study examines the types of motivation shown by students when using English in their leisure time and compares perceptions of Lower Austrian and Galician learners. The aim of this paper is to find out what motivates learners of English to use the language outside the classroom, which factors affect them negatively and result in a reluctance to speak, how learners in Lower Austria and Galicia perceive their linguistic competence and whether they have the same types of motivation to speak English in their leisure time.

Previous research has shown that motivation to learn a second/foreign language is a decisive factor when it comes to success and achievement. Also, it has been proven that positive experiences in the target language increase 'Willingness to communicate' and encourage learners to actually use what they have learnt at school. The present study tries to combine different theoretical approaches and apply them to a specific context.

Data was primarily obtained from an analysis of responses given in a questionnaire designed for this purpose. Participants were students aged between 16 and 18 from Lower Austria and from Galicia ($n=192$). Furthermore, local English teachers were briefly interviewed to give an understanding of the specific educational circumstances of the students.

The data analysis clearly shows that participants from both countries mainly use English as a lingua franca in situations where they cannot make use of their mother tongue. Austrian and Spanish students mostly use English in communication with non-native speakers and acknowledge the importance English has as a language for international communication. Also, it was found that communication with tourists who visit their countries and chatting on the Internet and communication in foreign countries are the most frequent uses of the target language. A key finding of this study is that Galician learners, compared to their Austrian peers, use the English language in fewer situations for communication in their free time. Galician participants have fewer experiences of anglophone countries and do not use English as frequently as Austrian learners. Concerning the use of 'English media', results clearly show that participants from Krems have more frequent contact with English literature, films and music. An important finding is that Galician participants are very unsure about their linguistic competence. 47.9% of them state that they do not know enough to communicate successfully in their leisure time and 44.8% say that they are not understood when speaking English. In comparison, their Austrian peers feel much more confident when using this language: the average student feels capable of coping with ordinary speaking situations.

Galician students' low assessment of their linguistic competence could be explained by a lack of positive experiences in the target language, a considerably high grade of language anxiety and teaching methods and curriculum. In order to prove these presumptions, further research is necessary.