

A Comparative Study of Learners' Attitudes Toward Foreign Language Communities

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigated the attitudes of American college learners of “strategic” less commonly taught languages, specifically Arabic and Persian as well as of local heritage languages, i.e., Scandinavian languages (Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish) toward foreign language communities, specifically native speakers. A total of 68 students (19 learners of Arabic, 16 learners of Persian, and 33 learners of Scandinavian languages) participated in the study. Results revealed that all learner groups held positive attitudes toward native speakers of their respective foreign language, although learners of Persian were comparatively less familiar with Persian native speakers and require help to generate an Ideal L2 Self in terms of the target-language community. Also, all learner groups tended to reproduce common discourses when they described particular qualities of the native speakers, which indicated a lack of complexity and depth in their perceptions and a need for real-life interactions with target language communities.

Introduction

Learners' attitudes toward and perceptions of the foreign language (FL) community can have a strong impact on their language learning and motivation (Gardner, 2006; Pavlenko & Norton 2007; Dörnyei, 2009). The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) acknowledged the importance of FL communities via its inclusion of Communities as one of the five goal areas (or Five Cs) in its National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (NSFLEP, 1996). Furthermore, Magnan, Murphy, Sahakyan, and Kim (2012) found that 83% of participants in their study agreed that the Communities Standard was the most valuable personal goal for language learning. Similarly, in a more recent study on the communities orientations of learners of German, White (2016) found that in their view, only a community in which the majority of speakers are native speakers (NSs), constitutes a true FL community. When choosing a language to study, students most probably will take into account the attributes of the FL communities that they could or might be part of. However, students of some languages have little opportunity to establish direct connections with NS communities; this means they have to imagine these FL communities (Chavez, 2017). How students imagine the FL communities might affect their language learning motivation.

This study explored how American college learners of Arabic, Persian, and Scandinavian languages (Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish) - all less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) - describe language communities, specifically native speakers. Another purpose of the study was to investigate the role that students' attitudes and imagination play as learners choose to affiliate or not to affiliate with FL communities. Although Persian is much less commonly studied than Arabic, both languages have been designated by the U.S. State Department as 'strategic' i.e., as languages that should be learned for the sake of U.S. national security. In other words, although other motivations to study Arabic or Persian certainly must be assumed to exist, the motivation to study these languages for a specific utilitarian reason (i.e., U.S. national interests) has been suggested at a high administrative level. The Scandinavian languages, however, represent

countries with which the United States entertains largely unproblematic relations. They are further spoken by a relatively small number of people¹. Utilitarian reasons to study these languages are not immediately evident. However, Scandinavian languages, in the geographic location of the study, are considered heritage languages – or languages that establish or maintain personal affinities.

Only a limited number of studies have dealt with attitudes and motivation on LCTLs in comparison to commonly taught languages (CTLs) (e.g. Wen, 1997; Yang, 2003; Husseinali, 2006; Winke & Weger, 2006; Liu & Shibata, 2008; Brosh, 2013). In addition, studies conducted on LCTLs have mostly focused on American or heritage learners' reasons for taking different languages, which Gardner (2006, p.234) denounces as not really investigating true motivation. In Gardner's view, motivation is a complex phenomenon with different aspects that cannot be assessed by only one scale, i.e., asking students why they think a language is important to them. He also mentions two classes of variables as an underlying foundation for motivation, one of which is integrativeness, which involves language learners' attitudes toward FL communities. Dörnyei (2005) in his L2 Motivational Self System, also talks about Ideal L2 Self which is the "L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self'" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 106). According to him, for a language learner the ultimate Ideal Self is identical to the NS of the L2, so if there is a positive attitude toward these speakers, the idealization of the L2 Self is broader (Dörnyei, 2014). Equally, if there is not such a positive attitude toward the L2 community, then it will be unlikely for the language learner to develop a strong L2 self. In several other studies, Dörnyei and his colleagues stressed that the key aspect of L2 Motivational Self System is imagery. They particularly emphasized that learners' capability to imagine themselves as well as the FL communities is a predictor of their motivational intensity (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Dörnyei & Chen, 2013).

However, students' attitudes toward FL communities, their imaginations of these communities and the way these attitudes and imagination could influence their motivation, have been neglected in

¹ The number of the native speakers of Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish is 4, 6.5, and 10 million, respectively.

research to-date. This study looks at how learners of three LCTL (i.e., Persian, Arabic, and Scandinavian languages) groups describe their language community that encompasses NSs. The larger purpose is to consider the role that attitudes and imagination play as learners choose to affiliate or not to affiliate with FL communities. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no empirical research that attempted to investigate attitudes of learners of Persian or Scandinavian languages toward their respective FL communities.

This study can help researchers gain insight into learners' perceptions of the FL communities in select and diverse LCTLs. It can also assist policymakers and instructors in dispelling unwarranted misconceptions about what influences students to pursue or not pursue the study of a specific LCTL.

The study

The study presented here is part of a larger mixed-methods study at a large public Midwestern research university in the United States that aims at comparing the attitudes of learners of three LCTLs groups, i.e., “strategic” less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), specifically Arabic and Persian as well as of local heritage languages, i.e., Scandinavian languages (Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish) toward foreign language communities, specifically native speakers (NSs), cultures, and countries related to their respective foreign languages. However, in this particular study we will only focus on attitudes and beliefs toward foreign language communities that encompass native speakers and we will tackle the following research questions:

- 1). What are the beliefs and attitudes of learners of Persian toward NSs of Persian?
- 2). What are the beliefs and attitudes of learners of Arabic toward NSs of Arabic?
- 3). What are the beliefs and attitudes of learners of Scandinavian languages toward NSs of Scandinavian languages?
- 4). How do the beliefs and attitudes toward NSs of Persian of learners of Persian compare with the beliefs and attitudes of

learners of Arabic and Scandinavian languages toward the NSs of their respective foreign language?

Participants

In order to raise the number of participants, students were recruited from all levels of Arabic, Persian, and Scandinavian languages, i.e., from elementary, intermediate, and advanced classes. Each of the three participating language groups is characterized by low-enrollment classes. The total enrollments for Arabic, Persian, and Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish) were 19, 16, and 33 respectively.

While learners of Arabic and Persian were kept as separate groups because of the study's conceptual objectives, learners of the three Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish) were treated as one group. Several reasons accounted for this decision: (1) the languages' shared status as heritage languages at the study location; (2) their administrative unity, i.e., they were housed in the same academic department at the institution at which the study was conducted; (3) their conceptual unity in the minds of residents of the state in which the study took place as representing 'Scandinavian' or 'Nordic' culture & heritage; and (4) the achievement of a larger study population so as to enable a greater array of statistical exploration

Data collection

Data were collected using a questionnaire and by follow-up interviews.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire (Appendix A) contained 116 closed/quantitative items, ten open-ended/qualitative items, and eight questions about the participants' personal background. Not all of the items included in the questionnaire are addressed or analyzed in the present study. The portions of the questionnaire that were analyzed in this study pertain to beliefs about and attitudes toward FL communities, specifically, NSs associated with respondents' respective foreign language. In order to address suggested research questions, i.e., participants' attitudes toward NSs of their respective foreign language, five out of the 116 closed/Likert-scale questionnaire items asked students to rate on a scale from 1-8 how much they agree with the

statements about NSs of their respective foreign languages. Two of these items were adapted from Gardner's Attitude Motivation Test Battery (1985). I chose to create three additional items in order to find out more about students' attitudes toward NSs. The following items were the ones that attempted to capture students' attitudes toward NSs of their respective FL: Item 7, people who are native speakers of the foreign language are friendly; Item 8, people who are native speakers of the foreign languages are mostly educated; Item 78, I have a positive attitude toward people who are native speakers of the foreign language; Item 79, I like the way people who are native speakers of the foreign language behave; and Item 85, I see qualities in the people who are native speakers of the foreign language that I want to have as part of my life. Students used an eight-point Likert scale to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The scale ranged from "totally disagree" (1) to "totally agree" (8). Furthermore, one subset of an open-ended question asked students to describe NSs in single words or phrases.

Interviews

On the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate if they were interested in participating in individual interviews. Participants were awarded a \$10 Starbucks gift card for participating in an individual interview. In total, ten learners of Persian, six learners of Arabic, and four learners of Scandinavian languages participated in individual interviews.

The individual interview used a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix B). The individual interview protocol contained 14 questions. To address the current research questions, only one question that asked participants to express their feeling about NSs of their respective FL was analysed.

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (mean and overall mean) of Items 7, 8, 78, 79, and 85 in the questionnaire that assessed attitudes of learners of Persian (n=16), Arabic (n=19) and Scandinavian languages (n=33) toward NSs of their respective language.

Table 1. Attitudes of learners of Persian, Arabic and Scandinavian languages toward native Speakers of their respective languages

Items for attitudes toward native speakers	Mean		
	Persian n=16	Arabic n=19	Scand. Langs. n=33
7. People who are native speakers of the foreign language are friendly.	7.25	6.95	6.45
8. People who are native speakers of the foreign languages are mostly educated.	7.05	6.05	7.00
78. I have a positive attitude toward people who are native speakers of the foreign language	7.70	6.95	6.88
79. I like the way people who are native speakers of the foreign language behave.	6.56	6.16	6.39
85. I see qualities in the people who are native speakers of the foreign language that I want to have as part of my life.	6.08	5.79	6.15
Total mean	6.93	6.38	6.68

Table 1 reveals that learners of all three languages in general held a positive attitude toward NSs of their respective target language as the overall means reported for all three groups placed between points 6 (*rather agree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*).

Of the three groups, learners of Persian reported having the most positive attitude toward NSs of their target language. The scores they yielded for their attitudes toward NSs of Persian ranged from 6.08 to 7.70 with the overall average of 6.93. This group was followed by learners of Scandinavian languages, with an overall average of 6.68 and mean scores ranging from 6.15 to 7. Learners of Arabic with the mean scores ranging from 5.79 to 6.95 and an overall average of 6.38 showed the least positive attitudes of the three groups.

Inferential statistical tests were also conducted. First, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed to identify whether there were any significant differences. The alpha level of significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$. Significant p-values are marked with an asterisk.

Table 2. Differences in the attitudes of learners of Persian, Arabic, and Scandinavian languages toward native speakers of their respective languages

Items		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig. P-value
7. People who are native speakers of the foreign language are friendly	Between Groups	7.562	2	3.781	3.146	.050*
	Within Groups	78.129	65	1.202		
	Total	85.691	67			
8. People who are native speakers of the foreign languages are mostly educated.	Between Groups	12.865	2	6.433	5.234	.008*
	Within Groups	79.885	65	1.229		
	Total	92.750	67			

Significance: (*) $p \leq 0.05$

According to the one-way ANOVA, only items that explored attitudes toward NSs being friendly and educated, i.e., Items 7 and 8, showed significant differences between groups.

Three two-sample t-tests were performed for these two items to determine where the differences occurred. Results of the two-sample t-tests are presented in Table 10. Please note that the difference in means between groups could be expressed with either negative or positive values. A positive difference in means shows that the first group of the pair received higher ratings than the second group. Conversely, a negative difference reflects the opposite, i.e., the second group of the pair was rated higher than the first group.

Table 3. Differences between learners of Persian, Arabic, and Scandinavian languages in their attitudes of learners toward native speakers of their respective languages

Items		Difference in means between groups	P-value
7. People who are native speakers of the foreign language are friendly	Persian vs Scandinavian languages	.80	0.02*
	Persian vs Arabic	.30	0.419
	Arabic vs Scandinavian languages	.49	0.123
8. People who are native speakers of the foreign languages are mostly educated.	Persian vs Scandinavian languages	.06	0.854
	Persian vs Arabic	1.01	0.009*
	Arabic vs Scandinavian languages	-.95	0.004*

Significance: (*) $p \leq 0.05$

The series of t-test comparisons revealed that learners of Persian were more likely than learners of Scandinavian languages to believe that NSs of their language are friendly with a mean difference of 0.80 ($p = .02$) between the two groups. The results also showed that learners of Persian are more likely than learners of Arabic to believe that NSs of their respective target language are mostly educated (mean difference = 1.01; $p = .009$). In a similar vein, learners of Scandinavian languages were more likely than learners of Arabic to believe NSs of their respective language are mostly educated, with a mean difference of - .95 ($p = .004$) between the two groups. In sum, differences between respondent groups focused on a narrow subset of items (friendliness and education) and in each comparison, learners of Persian expressed more favorable attitudes than the comparison group (learners of Scandinavian languages and Arabic). In addition, in one comparison (education) learners of Scandinavian languages expressed more positive attitude than the Arabic learners.

Discussion

Statistical analysis showed that generally learners of all three language groups held a positive attitude toward NSs of their respective FL (a total average of 6.93, 6.38, 6.68 out of a maximum of 8 for the attitudes of learners of Persian, Arabic, and Scandinavian languages toward their FL speakers, respectively). Inferential statistical analyses, however, showed that learners of Persian were significantly more likely than learners of Arabic to believe that NSs of their respective target language are mostly educated (more than 50% of the students *totally agreed* about NSs of Persian being education); and significantly more likely than learners of Scandinavian languages to believe that NSs of their respective languages are friendly (50% of the students *totally agreed*). Learners of Scandinavian languages, too, were significantly more likely than learners of Arabic to believe that NSs of their FL are mostly educated. In fact, 85% of Scandinavian languages respondents believed that Scandinavian NSs are educated. I will point to students' responses in the qualitative questionnaire and interviews to confirm both the students' positive attitude toward NSs in all three language groups as well as instances of disparity between their attitudes based on the inferential statistics.

Qualitative data collected from an open-ended questionnaire item (“*Please tell us what comes to your mind when thinking of the native speakers of the foreign languages living in the foreign language country.*”) and individual interviews provided evidence in support of the quantitative findings. For the open-ended questionnaire item, first, the researcher tabulated the number of respondents and responses by language. The number of responses were calculated every time that a respondent provided an answer, even if the answer was a non-response. The non-responses were when the respondents did not give any answer, either because they said they did not know anything about the NSs, or because they stated that they preferred not to mention anything. These non-responses were categorized in subsequent steps. Table 4 shows the number of respondents, responses, non-respondents, and non-responses in each language group.

Table 4. Respondents, responses and nonresponses about common images that learners of Persian, Arabic, and Scandinavian languages have of NSs of their respective languages

	Language that respondents were enrolled in			
	Persian	Arabic	Scandinavian languages	All
N, respondents	16	19	33	68
N, responses, including 'non-responses'	30	25	58	113
N, non-response, "Don't believe in stereotypes"	1	2	0	3
N, non-response, "Don't know any"	3	0	0	3
N, respondents without reported images	2	4	1	7
% of respondents without reported images	12.5	21.05	3.03	10.29
N, respondents with reported stereotypes	14	15	32	61
N, responses with 'nonresponses' excluded	26	23	58	107
% of responses by respondents, with 'non-responses' excluded	1.62	1.21	1.75	1.57

According to Table 4, of all three language groups, students of Scandinavian languages were the least reluctant to describe NSs of their languages, with only 3.03% not offering a response. At 1.75 responses per respondent (excluding the non-responses) they also

provided the most elaborate accounts. It can be assumed that learners of Scandinavian languages due to their heritage background imagined their possible FL community more clearly and therefore they could describe them articulately.

Students' responses to the mentioned questionnaire item are presented in four emergent umbrella categories (Table 5). In addition, an "other" category collected uncategorizable responses. As Table 5 shows, a single respondent could provide several responses for each category.

Table 5. Distribution of 4+1 umbrella categories of images about native speakers of students' respective languages

Categories	Language that respondents were enrolled in		
	Persian	Arabic	Scandinavian Languages
	26 responses	23 responses	58 responses
Individual characteristics and behavior	38.4	39.1	67.2
Political views	30.7	26.08	0
Appearance	0	0	17.2
Unfamiliar	19.2	17.3	0
Other	11.5	17.3	15.5

As can be seen in Table 5, all three language groups' references to the *individual characteristics and behavior* was the largest category. However, when comparing the percentages across the language groups, it is obvious that learners of Scandinavian languages (67.2) were more likely than learners of Persian (38.4) and Arabic (39.1) to emphasize the *individual characteristics and behavior*. Table 6 displays a sample of students' responses for each category. I have bolded those

images that were mentioned by at least two of the language groups. These images were also the ones that reported the significant difference based on the inferential data.

Table 6. Images that learners of Persian, Arabic, and Scandinavian languages have of NSs of their respective language

Categories	NSs of Persian	NSs of Arabic	NSs of Scandinavian Languages
Individual characteristics and behavior	educated , ambitious, generous and polite, cultured, persevering, proud, respectful, kind, friendly	kind , gentle, and friendly , hospitable, proud, strong	smart, introverted, opinionated, educated , happy, humorous, laidback, outdoorsy, a little condescending yet willing to help, diverse and nationalistic, multilingual, nice
Political views	disassociated from the government, stifled by the government, oppressed by theocracy, constrained lifestyles, Gov. pressure	suffering, Israeli-Palestinian conflict (only one person)	0
Appearance	0	0	blonde hair, blue eyes, fair hair, tall, fit
Unfamiliar	I do not know much about this, I don't know any, not familiar	Don't know much, not familiar, I've never met one	0
Other	Khamenei, Mousavi, Rajavi, Persians, different,	diverse, natural, normal	grandparents, few, drink a lot

According to Table 6, being “educated” was mentioned both about NSs of Persian and Scandinavian languages, but not about the NSs of Arabic. In addition, students of Persian referred to this characteristic when they were asked to describe people who speak Persian natively in individual interviews. To exemplify, Sabrina stated:

I guess it is hard, I would not use any blanket term to describe native speakers of Persian, but I tend to associate them with a sort of idealized version of myself. Of course, I will never be a native speaker of Persian, but I tend to greatly respect the native speakers that I have interacted with. In my case, many of the native speakers of Persian that I have interacted with have served in some capacity as an educator of said language. So I tend to connect native speakers with images of education. Most native speakers of Persian that I encounter are either college students or professionals with advanced degrees.

It is noteworthy that according to a report published by UNESCO Institute² for Statistics in 2015, the adult literacy for Iran was 93%, which compares favorably with the overall adult literacy rate for the Arabic-speaking countries at 78%. In fact, the literacy rate for Arabic-speaking countries ranges from 55.6% in Morocco to 94.5% in Kuwait. Therefore, depending on which country a respondent was thinking of, the distance between Arabic- and Persian-speaking countries may be smaller or larger. Myhill (2014) compared the adult literacy of 16 Arabic-speaking countries with that of 180 other countries; he concluded the literacy rate for 14 Arabic-speaking countries was “lower than the average for the 180 countries listed” (p. 198). Myhill noted of the wealthier countries that most of them happen to be small countries, have more money to spend on education and therefore are expected to have a higher rate of literacy. In addition, according to the same report, the literacy rate for Norway is 100% and around 99% for both Denmark and Sweden.

As mentioned earlier, the quantitative results suggest that students of Persian were significantly more likely than learners of Scandinavian languages to believe that NSs of their language are

² <http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Documents/fs32-2015-literacy.pdf>

friendly; the qualitative data underscore one component of this comparison, i.e., that students of Persian think that NSs of Persian are nice and friendly.

When during individual interviews, students of Persian were asked to describe a NS of Persian to an American college student, two interviewees referred to the fact that they really do not know many Persian native speakers, but they think they are “really friendly”. In an individual interview, Alex, said, “I would say they are warm and friendly people. Usually, they are interested in other people; they care about what happens to other people. They generally ask you how you are doing and are interested in the answer.”

In response to the same prompt (i.e., describe a NS of [the Scandinavian languages] to an American student), among students of Scandinavian languages, only one student mentioned the attribute “nice”. In fact, none of the students of Scandinavian languages talked about Scandinavian NSs being warm or friendly in the individual interviews. It is possible that these students were reluctant to offer “kind” and “friendly” as descriptors Scandinavians to their stereotypical perceptions as being cold or indifferent (e.g., Swedish³ and Norwegians⁴). If so, it is interesting that learners of Scandinavian languages would hold stereotypes that resemble those common in the general population or that they would have chosen to study these languages in the face of negative stereotypes. However, students of Scandinavian languages offered some positive characteristics, such as, “smart” and “happy”.

The disparity between perceptions of students of Persian and the Scandinavian languages of the degree of friendliness of the NSs of their respective languages could be also explained in another way. People grow up with variety of images about their own culture and other cultural groups. When they enter the language classroom, they have already created “prefabricated and preconceived ideas” about the

³ <https://www.thelocal.se/20160829/unfriendly-swedes-give-expats-the-cold-shoulder>

⁴ <http://blogs.transparent.com/norwegian/are-norwegians-cold-people/>

TL people and carry those into the classroom (Drewelow, 2011, p.751). These beliefs and assumptions “originate in their collective history and have been shaped by their own experiences, their peers, past and present instructors, family, friends, instructional material, and the media” (p.751). However, these ideas are often limited to cultural clichés and stereotypes (Nikitina, 2017). Stereotypes about Scandinavians⁵ in the US in general, and in the geographic location of the study in particular, are prevalent in comparison to the ones about Persians. In fact, stereotypes about Persians in the US is mostly portrayed through media and politics and little attention is paid to their personal characteristics (Daha, 2011). Therefore, in this case, students of Scandinavian languages reach their classroom with an array of stereotypes about FL people, including Scandinavians not being friendly or kind. However, ‘kind’ and ‘friendly’ in the responses of the students of Persian might have appeared due to the absence of other stereotypes that are available. For example, Cherie said, “Obviously I don’t know many people from Iran because I have never been there, but I guess they are nice. I really have a very limited knowledge, but yeah.”

Results of this study revealed that all learner groups have positive attitudes toward NSs of their respective FL, although it seems that learners of Persian were less familiar with Persian NSs and could benefit from their teachers’ help to get real-life experiences of members of the Persian communities, helping the learners generate an Ideal L2 Self. In fact, teachers in the learning environment, i.e., classroom, could encourage learners to construct and regularly revisit vivid mental images of an Ideal L2 Self, which will enhance their motivational behaviors as they continue to reduce the discrepancies between their current L2 and their imagined Ideal L2 Self or Ought-to L2 Self (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Pedagogical implications

Several pedagogical suggestions can be drawn from the findings of this study. First and foremost, teachers should find ways for learners to be able to engage with FL Communities, especially when study

⁵ <https://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/assc/article/viewFile/4636/5064>

abroad is not an option, which by and large is the case for learners of Persian. Teachers need to guide students in the use of digital technologies for connecting to available online FL communities. Ennis (2011, p. 25) emphasizes the importance of the use of technology and states

If [...] we view our classrooms as portals to the world and the languages we teach, we
will discover that technology allows our students to break out
of the physical constraints
of the textbook and the classroom, enabling them to
communicate with others, connect
with different disciplines, compare and contrast unfamiliar
cultures with their own, and
reach into their world communities in meaningful and
exciting ways.

However, White (2016b) found that although we might consider our students “digital natives”, they do not use technology to establish connections with FL communities but rather they use it only to maintain connections they already have. She then emphasized the roles of teachers in training students to use online resources, as they do not know how to find access without guidance from their teachers.

Teachers should increase students' exposure to the variety of discourse options available in online communication environments through assigning tasks that require communicating with these online communities. In addition, the students could publish their assignments on a blog or wiki and engage with online communities that could even comment and assess their work. It is also necessary that teachers help the students recognize potential communities among themselves and in the classroom.

Teachers should also encourage students to recognize and appreciate the classroom as a community. They should facilitate genuine interaction among students in class. When the students get to know each other's talents and interests (e.g. Persian literature or Arabic cuisine), they develop a sense of community, which they could further explore through shared projects. Such collaborations allow learners to

ultimately reach out to communities in the countries of their respective FL with whom they not only share a language but also concrete personal interests. In fact, if students are able to perceive a sense of community with their classmates, their learning will be more purposeful. They will be more likely to organize FL related activities together and use the FL beyond class.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the findings from this study are better considered with some limitations. This study was conducted with a small sample of participants at one institution. Whether the same findings would be found at other universities remain unknown. In addition, the small sample size played a limiting role in data analysis in that it precluded the use of several statistical tests that could have proven useful. Therefore, a replication of this study with different population and possibly a larger sample size is suggested.

Another limitation of this study is related to the fact that it was based on a single administration of the questionnaire, i.e., it did not capture any change in attitudes or motivation. Individuals' attitudes and motivation are not necessarily static and they could change over time (Baker, 2011). Due to the limited time for data collection, this study can only describe the attitudes of participants within a specified period.

Conclusion

The findings of this study did not align with my expectations. When I started data analysis, I expected that students of the two strategic languages, i.e., Arabic and Persian, would express more negative attitudes toward their respective FL communities when compared to the learners of Scandinavian languages. I had formed this expectation because the Scandinavian countries and the United States have a long tradition of positive relations, and Scandinavian languages, in the geographic location of the study, are considered heritage or affinity languages. However, I found that students of all three language groups showed positive attitudes toward their respective FL communities. Therefore, it seems that friendly or unfriendly political

relationships with the FL countries neither strongly influences students' attitudes toward FL communities nor prevents them from imagining their Future L2 Self. In fact, in the qualitative portion of the questionnaire, several students referred to Arabic and Persian-speaking countries as being "misrepresented in the U.S." Their reason for language study was precisely to communicate with the NSs and "introduce different aspects of these countries and people" to their fellow Americans. However, it is worth mentioning that learners did not always hold positive attitudes towards FL communities. For example, as reported in Results, Arabic learners did not believe that Arab NSs are educated. Therefore, it could be concluded that students can have views that may be considered less than positive in details but still have an overall positive outlook.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

I. Background survey

Please tell us about your background. This information will be used to group students so we can assess whether (and how) a student's background corresponds with specific response patterns on later questions. Some questions may seem strange – the questionnaire has been designed to accommodate learners of a variety of languages and responses need to be cross-comparable. However, some questions work better for some languages than others.

Arrows →→ indicate where you are asked to type in responses.

With multiple choices, choose a way of indicating your selection, such as highlighting, boldfacing, or deleting or crossing out other options.

IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE COMMENT ON THIS FOREIGN LANGUAGE: Swedish

1. Which course level are you enrolled in:

- a. First semester b. Second Semester c. Third Semester
d. Fourth Semester e. Fifth Semester f. Other →→

2. What is your university class standing?

- a. Freshman b. Sophomore c. Junior
d. Senior e. Graduate student f.
Other/special →→

3. Are you a member of the FIG program? If yes, please mention the name of the class you are participating in.

4. What is your possible or declared major? →→

5. What is your sex? a. Female b. Male

6. How old are you? →→

7. In what country were you born? →→

8. Do you consider yourself an international student (a student from a country other than the U.S)? a. Yes b. No

9. Reasons for language study

(1) List ALL reasons that YOU can think of for studying FL – whether they apply to you or not.

(2). Assign each reason a score to indicate how strong a role it (a) played in YOUR decision to study INITIALLY (when you first decided to study FL) and (b) plays CURRENTLY (that you are actually studying FL). Use this scale for rating both INITIAL and CURRENT REASONS: 0 = played/plays no role for ME at all, 1 = a marginal reason for ME; 2 = a minor reason for ME; 3 = a major reason for ME; 4 = a decisive reason for ME.

All reasons why one could study FL □	Importance of this reason to you, initially 0-4 □	Importance of reason to you, currently 0-4 □

10. In which country/countries, do you think, FL is used? →→

11. Is there a country/are there countries among the ones that you just named that you are particularly interested in or that you feel a particular affinity for?

a If yes, please name the country/countries →→

b If yes, please explain your interest or affinity. →→

II. Your opinions about and experiences in learning FL in your own words.

12. Please tell us what comes to your mind when thinking of:
 a. the cultural practices (e.g., celebrations, daily life, etc.) associated with the country/countries in which FL is used. →→

b. the cultural products(e.g., goods, artistic accomplishments, food, clothing, etc.)associated with the country/countries in which FL is used.→→

c. the cultural perspectives (e.g., worldviews, common themes discussed in public discourse, taboos, social conventions etc.)associated with the country/countries in which FL is used. →→

13. Please tell us how YOU would describe these peoples, places, and concepts associated with FL. Single words and phrases suffice.

How would you describe these people, places, and concepts?	
The FL	
Country/countries in which FL is used	
Native speakers of FL	
Learners of FL in the US	
Teachers of FL in the US	
Courses in FL on this campus	

14. Please tell us what might come to the minds of OTHERS when thinking of:

a. the cultural practices (e.g., celebrations, daily life, etc.) associated with the country/countries in which FL is used. .→→

b. the cultural products (e.g., goods, artistic accomplishments, food, clothing, etc.) associated with the country/countries in which FL is used. .→→

c. the cultural perspectives (e.g., worldviews, common themes discussed in public discourse, taboos, social conventions etc.) associated with the country/countries in which FL is used. .→→

15. Please tell us how you have heard OTHERS describe these peoples, places, and concepts associated with FL, perhaps stereotypically. Single words and phrases suffice.

How have you heard OTHERS describe these people, places, and concepts	
Foreign language itself	
Country/countries in which FL is used	
Native speakers of FL	
Learners of FL in the US	
Teachers of FL in the US	
Courses in FL on this campus	

16. Please tell us about your attitude about those students who are taking/not taking FL might take it or might be successful/unsuccessful at it. Please write your answers into the following two boxes/tables.

a. What type of student (NOT necessarily including YOU) is. →→	likely to be good/successful at studying FL?
	likely to study FL ? Why?
	<u>un</u> likely to study FL? Why?
	likely to be unsuccessful at studying FL? Why?

b. For students who have **not** chosen FL, what considerations might have prevented them or discouraged them from studying it? →→

17. a. How would you assess the global importance of FL? →→

b. What considerations shaped your judgment? →→

18. Please describe your feelings when you speak FL:

a. What physical sensation do you experience when you move your lips, tongue, body, etc. when you speak FL? →→

b. How do you believe many Americans might perceive you when you speak FL? →→

c. How do you believe many native speakers of Swedish might perceive you when you speak FL? →→

d. How do you perceive yourself when you speak FL? →→

17. Please mark on the following scales where you would place yourself in terms of your **current language ability** in FL relative to the following people/scenarios. Use a scale from 0% (far from it/not even started) to 100% (exactly the same/already there).

your current language ability relative to <input type="checkbox"/>	
a. the ability of a FL native speaker	<u>0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%</u>
b. the ability of the best student in your class	<u>0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%</u>

c. what you need for basic oral communication	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
d. where you would like to be at this time in your studies	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
e. where you would like to be by the end of your studies	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
f. where you believe you will be by the end of your studies	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
g. where you'd need to be so you can say you have reached your goal	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%

18. Please mark on the following scales where you would place yourself in terms of your **current cultural ability** in FL relative to the following people/scenarios. Use a scale from 0% (far from it/not even started) to 100% (exactly the same/already there).

Your current cultural ability relative to <input type="checkbox"/>	
a. the ability of a native speaker of FL	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
b. the ability of the best student in your class	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
c. what you need for basic oral communication	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
d. where you would like to be at this time of your studies	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
e. yourself where you would like to be at the end of your studies	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
f. where you believe you will be by the end of your studies	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%
g. where you'd need to be to say you have reached your goal	0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%

19. Please mark on the following scales where **your teacher** would place you in terms of your **current language and cultural ability, respectively**, in F relative to the following people/scenarios Use a scale from 0% (far from it/not even started) to 100%.

your teacher's assessment about your current language ability relative to <input type="checkbox"/>	
a. the ability of a FL native speaker	<u>0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%</u>
b. the ability of the best student in the class	<u>0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%</u>
c. where he/she would like for you to be at the moment	<u>0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%</u>
your teacher's assessment about your current cultural ability relative to <input type="checkbox"/>	
a. the ability of a FL native speaker	<u>0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%</u>
b. the ability of the best student in the class	<u>0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%</u>
c. where he/she would like for you to be at the moment	<u>0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80% - 90% - 100%</u>

III. Your opinions and experiences expressed in scores.

Please read the statements listed below and, and from a sliding scale of 1-8 mark **the degree of disagreement (1-4) or disagreement (5-8)** with each statement. 'Foreign language country/countries' always refers to the country/countries in which the language is used.

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Rather disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly agree	Rather agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

1. I am interested in the pop music of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. I am interested in the traditional music of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3. I like the rhythm of the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4. I am interested in the politics of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. I think the foreign language country/countries has/have an ancient history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6. When initially choosing this language, I was aiming to contribute to the security of the U.S.								
7. People who are native speakers of the foreign language are friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
8. People who are native speakers the foreign languages are mostly educated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9. I am interested in the history of the foreign language county/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10. I like the writing system of this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11. I think that learning this foreign language is boring.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12. I am losing my desire to learn this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
13. I like the atmosphere of my language class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
14. I always look forward to my language class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15. When I speak this foreign language, I have the feeling that I am losing my identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
16. I could imagine myself dating a native speaker of this foreign language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

17. When I speak this foreign language, I feel like I am entering a culture I don't really like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
18. I could imagine marrying a native speaker of this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
19. When initially choosing this foreign language, I thought it would be academically challenging to study this language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
20. I want to be a world citizen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
21. When initially choosing this foreign language, I wanted to learn a language that is different from what I had in high school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
22. I'd like to travel to a country in which this foreign language is used as a tourist	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
23. I took the course as a means for fulfilling academic requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
24. At least one family member encouraged me to study this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
25. I'd like to work in a country in which foreign language is used.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
26. At least one family member discouraged me from studying this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
27. I find foreign languages appealing in general.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
28. When initially choosing this foreign language, I wanted to learn a language that not many others attempt to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
29. When initially choosing this foreign language, I thought it would be easy to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
30. When I speak this foreign language, I feel like I am entering a culture in which I don't really belong.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
31. I am interested in the art of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
32. When initially choosing this foreign language, it was the only language class open.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
33. When I speak this foreign language I feel like another person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

34. I would like to make friends with native speakers of this foreign language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
35. I think the foreign language country/countries is/are politically important in the world in general.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
36. I am interested in the movies of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
37. I like the grammar of the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
38. I am interested in the traditions and folklore of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
39. When I speak this foreign language, I feel good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
40. I can imagine moving to a country where the foreign language is spoken.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
41. When initially choosing this foreign language, the offered time of the class fit my schedule.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
42. When initially choosing this foreign language, I had heard positive comments about the language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
43. When initially choosing this language, I had heard positive comments about the people who speak this language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
44. I find this foreign language appealing in particular.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
45. I need the language for study abroad in a country in which foreign language is used.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
46. At least one friend encouraged me to study this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
47. When initially choosing this foreign language, I had heard positive comments about the culture associated with this language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
48. Now that I am studying this foreign language, I think it is academically challenging to study this language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
49. When initially choosing this foreign language, I thought I would get good grades.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

50. At least one friend discouraged me from studying this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
51. When initially choosing this foreign language, I thought I would have a good ability to learn this language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
52. When initially choosing this foreign language, I thought I would find the difference between the vocabulary of this language and my native language interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
53. I need the foreign language course for my research.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
54. I generally believe if one visits a foreign country, one should be able to speak the language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
55. I think learning this foreign language is good for my personal development.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
56. Now that I am studying this foreign language, I think it is not a language that many others attempt to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
57. Now that I am studying this foreign language, I think it is easy to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
58. I want to study my cultural heritage.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
59. I need the course for my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
60. Now that I am studying this foreign language, I think I have a good ability to learn this language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
61. At least one friend has studied or studies this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
62. Now that I am studying this foreign language, I think it is a language that not many others attempt to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
63. Now that I am studying this foreign language, I hear positive comments about the people who speak this language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
64. At least one family member has studied this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
65. Now that I am studying this foreign language, I hear positive comments about the culture associated with this language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

66. I have it as a personal goal to speak the language of as many countries that I'll visit as possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
67. I believe that to understand a foreign culture, one needs to speak the language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
68. I want to study my linguistic heritage.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
69. By studying this foreign language, I would like to develop new aspects of my identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
70. Now that I am studying this foreign language, I find the difference between the vocabulary of this language and my native language interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
71. I want to talk with speakers of this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
72. When I speak this foreign language, I feel excited.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
73. When I speak this foreign language, I become more aware of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
74. I like my teacher in the foreign language class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
75. If there were a major in learning this foreign language, I would like to major in it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
76. I like the sounds of the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
77. I like the vocabulary of the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
78. I have a positive attitude toward people who are native speakers of the foreign language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
79. I like the way people who are native speakers of the foreign language behave.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
80. I think the foreign language country/ countries has/have many cool things to share with the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
81. I am interested in the architecture of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
82. I am interested in the religion/s of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

83. I am interested in the literature of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
84. I think the foreign language country/countries is/are particularly politically important to the US.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
85. I see qualities in the people who are native speakers of the foreign language that I want to have as part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
86. I like the social conventions that say how the foreign language is to be used.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
87. If there were a minor or certificate in this foreign language, I would like to minor or earn the certificate in it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
88. I like the other students in the foreign language class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
89. When I speak this foreign language, I feel like I am exploring interesting new aspects of myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
90. When I speak this foreign language, I feel close to the people who are native speakers of the foreign language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
91. I want to understand what speakers of this foreign language say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
92. I want to write to speakers of this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
93. When I speak this foreign language, I truly communicate my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
94. Now that I am studying this foreign language, I get good grades.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
95. I want to understand what speakers of this foreign language write.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
96. When I speak this foreign language, I feel a positive physical sensation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
97. When initially choosing this language, I was aiming to help improve international political relations for the U.S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
98. I am interested in different cultures in order to understand the world better.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
99. When I speak this foreign language, I have a feeling of pride.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

100. I like the idioms and expressions in the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
101. I am interested in books/magazines/newspapers of the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
102. I want to be able to communicate with my family and relatives who speak this foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
103. I like the gestures and facial expressions used in the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
104. I am interested in the food of the foreign language country/countries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
105. When initially choosing this language, I was aiming to promote the economic interests of the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
106. When I speak this foreign language, I feel like I belong to the foreign language culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
107. I like the class materials in the foreign language class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
108. Learning this foreign language is one of the important aspects of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
109. I am interested in the daily lives of the people who are native speakers of the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
110. I am interested in the clothing of the people who are native speakers of the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
111. Now that I am studying this language, I am aiming to promote the economic interests of the developed nation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
112. I think the foreign language country/countries is/are a developed nation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
113. Now that I am studying this languages, I am aiming to help improve international political relations for the U.S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
114. I want to be part of the cultural group that speaks this language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
115. I am interested in the lifestyle of the people who are native speakers of the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

116. Now that I am studying this language, I am aiming to contribute to the security of the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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Appendix B: Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocols

1. When and how did you first become interested in FL?
2. What were your expectations and goals before taking the FL class?
3. How do you feel about those goals and expectations now?
4. In the questionnaire your initial goals were and your current reasons were..... . How would you account for the difference?
5. What
 - a. would you **like** to do with FL in the near future?
 - b. do you **expect** to do with regard to FL in the near future?
6. What about FL made you decide to study this language?
7. If you were to describe the FL to an American college student who asks about it, how would you describe it – in brief?
8. If you were to describe **the culture/s associated** with the FL to an American college student who asks about it, how would you describe it – in brief?
9. If you were to describe **the country/countries in which FL is spoken** to an American college student who asks about it/them, how would you describe it/them – in brief?
10. If you were to describe **the people who speak FL natively** to an American college student who asks about them, how would you describe them – in brief?

11. If you were to describe **your experiences learning FL** to an American college student who asks about them, how would you describe them – in brief?
12. If you were to describe **learners of the FL** to an American college student who asks about them, how would you describe them – in brief?
13. If you were to describe **teachers of the FL** to an American college student who asks about them, how would you describe them – in brief?