



An investigation into factors affecting boys' motivation in the Modern Foreign Languages classroom

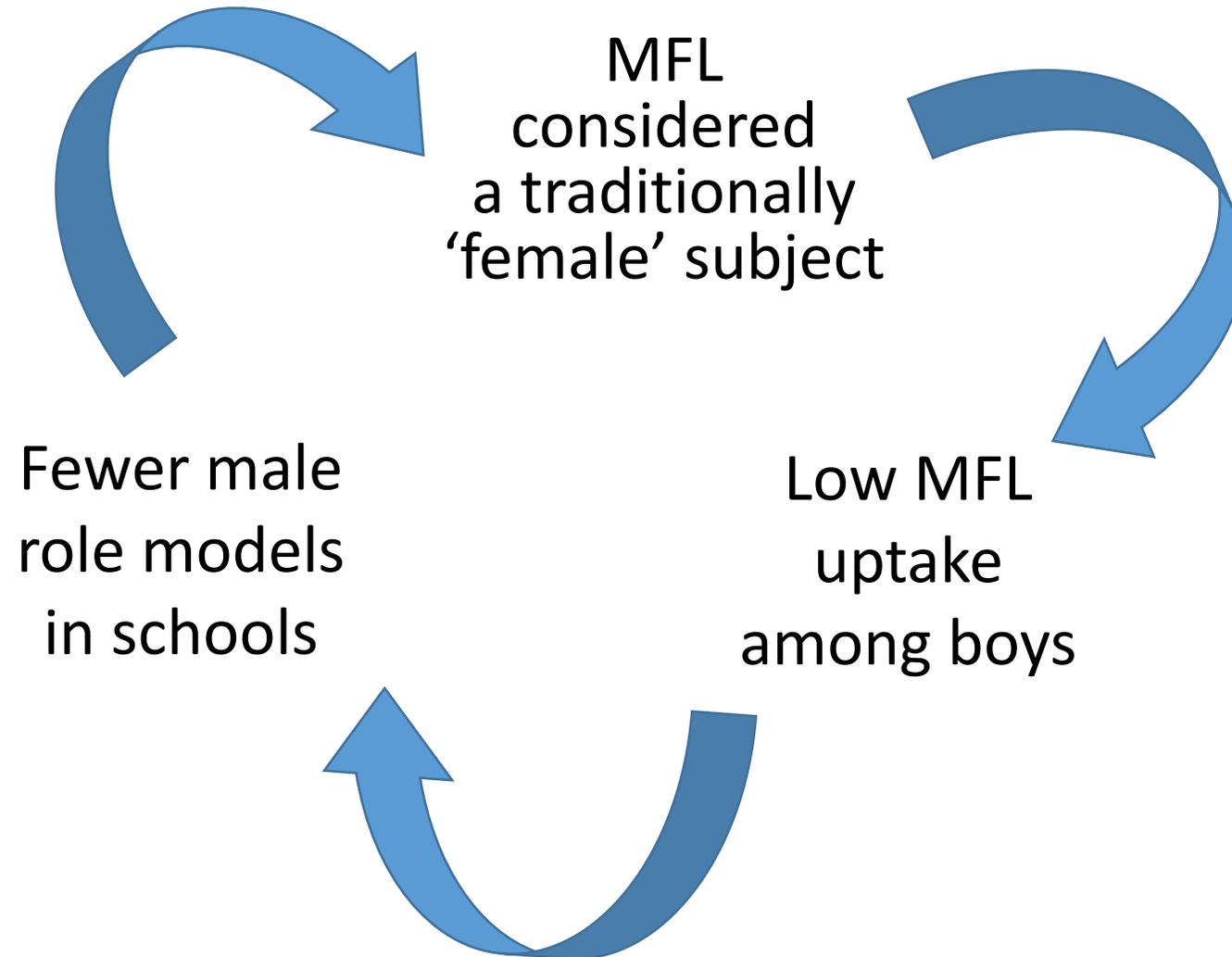
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MSc in Learning & Teaching

Part 2 (Postgraduate Diploma): Learners, Learning & Teaching

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Introduction





School Context

- Mixed Comprehensive School in the South-East of England
- Key School focus: increasing the attainment and motivation of boys
- MFL GCSE is optional and the 2018 GCSE Spanish and French cohort of students made up 45% of the year group, 36% of which were boys. The average MFL GCSE grade for girls in this cohort was a 5, whereas for boys it was a 4.
- The current Year 8 cohort are now streamed into literacy groups
- Students choose their GCSE options midway through Year 8 and students are now streamed into several different suggested pathways



Research Questions

1. How does gender affect student motivation?
2. What is the relationship between student perceptions of difficulty and enjoyment in MFL?
3. What impact does gender have on student self-efficacy in MFL?
4. What external influences are there on student motivation in MFL?
5. What impact do rewards have on student motivation?



Design of the Investigation

- 165 Year 8/9 male and female completed paper questionnaires about their motivation levels in their French/Spanish lessons
 - 17 multiple choice questions from the 'Attitude/Motivation Test Battery: International AMTB Research Project' (Gardner: 2004) and 7 open ended questions
 - Completed independently
- The 3 other members of the MFL department completed an online questionnaire regarding their thoughts of the research questions

Ethical Considerations



- All staff and students who took part in the investigation were accorded 'their rights to confidentiality and anonymity' (BERA 2001: 5).
- It was explained to staff and students that I was investigating my own practice as a teacher and they were advised that they could opt out of completing the questionnaire.
- However, participants were not informed as to the focus of my investigation on boys' motivation in MFL lessons

Findings and Discussion

How does gender affect student motivation?

- Students were asked to rate their own motivation from 1-10, 1 signifying they had no motivation and 10 that they were extremely motivated

Year 8 & 9 Boys Average Motivation in MFL	6.18
Year 8 & 9 Boys Average Motivation in All Lessons	6.57
Year 8 & 9 Girls Average Motivation in MFL	6.13
Year 8 & 9 Girls Average Motivation in All Lessons	6.96

- However, when we consider how student responses vary from Year 8 when MFL is compulsory and Year 9 when MFL is optional, we can see a change in the results:

Year 8 Boys Average Motivation in MFL	5.41
Year 9 Boys Average Motivation in MFL	7.03
Year 8 Girls Average Motivation in MFL	6
Year 9 Girls Average Motivation in MFL	6.21

Findings and Discussion

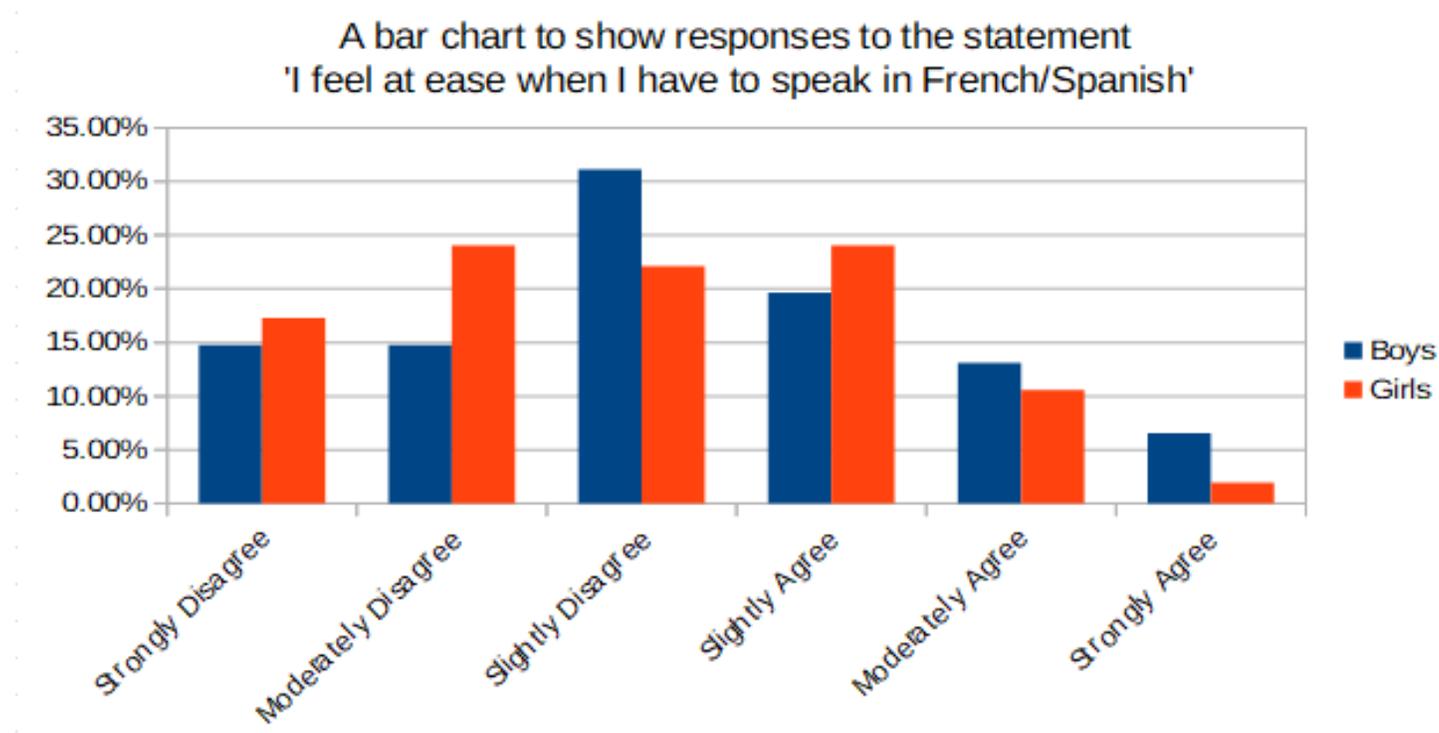
What is the relationship between student perceptions of difficulty and enjoyment in MFL?

- 70% of students agreed with the statement 'I enjoy the activities in our French/Spanish lessons'
- 72% of students agreed that they look forward to going to French/Spanish lessons
- When asked what topics they would like to study if they had the choice, girls suggested a much wider range of topics
- Both genders and year groups that there is a desire to take a more communicative approach to lessons in order to simply hold a conversation in the target language

Findings and Discussion

What impact does gender have on student self-efficacy in MFL?

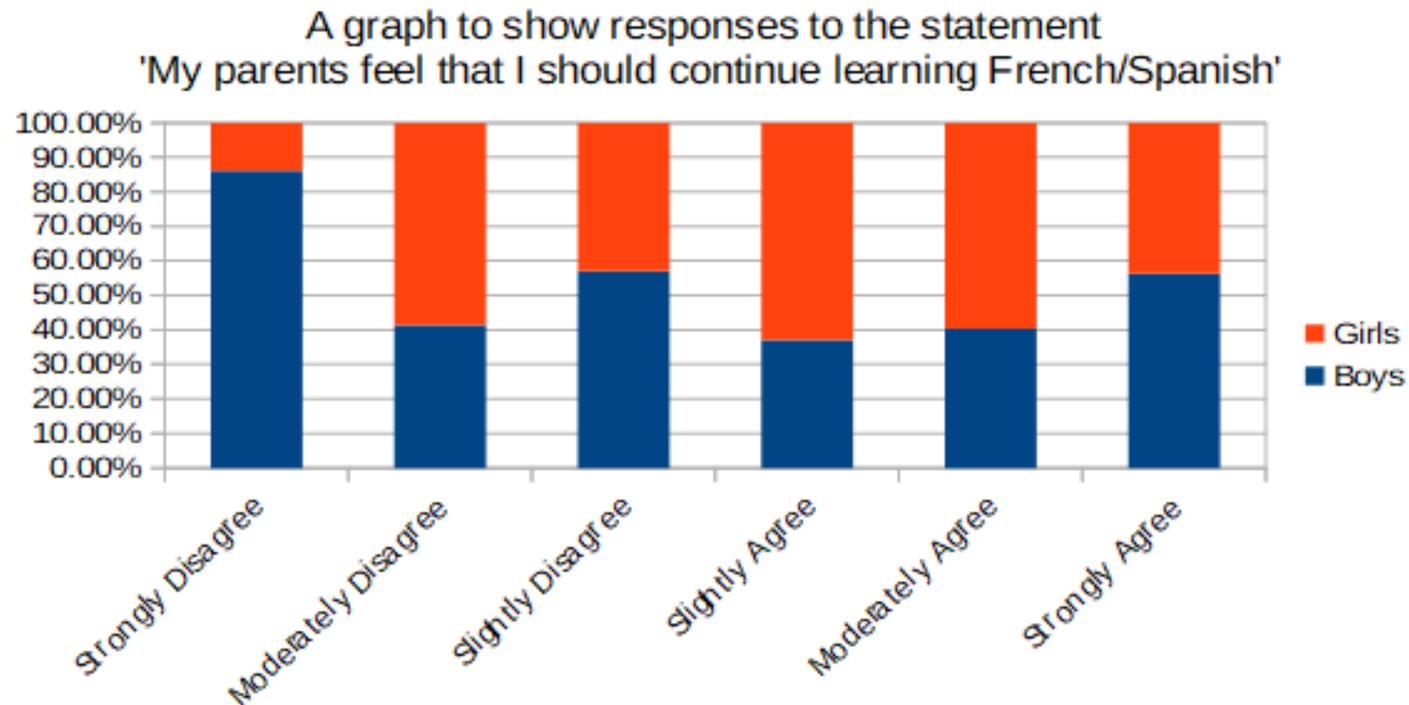
- 40% of students who agreed with the statement 'I tend to give up and not pay attention if I don't understand'



Findings and Discussion

What external influences are there on student motivation in MFL?

- 49% of students stated they receive support from parents with language learning, with fairly similar results across both genders



Findings and Discussion



What impact do rewards have on student motivation?

- The top three motivators identified by students were the same for boys and girls: parents/family, teachers and career aspirations
- 26 students stated that their motivation is not affected by rewards
- 35% of students responded that they do not receive any rewards
- The top 3 rewards that male and female students would like to receive in recognition of their hard work were 'none', 'food' and 'school rewards' (this includes house points and certificates)

Conclusion



- Improving boys' motivation in MFL requires a multifaceted approach
- Increase awareness of potential gender bias in teachers
- Use of strategy instruction to build resilience, independence and
- Although there are 'many...factors which contribute to...under-achievement' in boys, these 'are also detrimental to girls and what we should strive for is an overall improvement in the performance of both boys and girls' in the MFL classroom (Callaghan 1998: 6).

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