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Heritage and Majority Language Use-Related Self-Conscious Emotions in Adolescents in two European Countries

by

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Abstract

Initial research from North America and the Netherlands indicates that children and young adults growing up with more than one language may report positive but also negative feelings such as shame, guilt, and worry or even fear in relation to their language use (Driver, 2020; Jean & Geva, 2012; Sevinç & Dewaele, 2018). Experiencing positive emotions when using the heritage or majority language could be considered indicative of harmonious bilingualism which is likely to contribute to well-being (De Houwer, 2015) and positive development. Negative emotions in connection with using a language, on the other hand, could impede learning and memory processes (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017; Pekrun et al., 2017; Shao et al., 2019), or be linked to loss of a heritage language (Miller, 2017).

Thus, we investigate whether first findings on positive and negative language use-related emotions generalize to other languages and host societies. Using a brief online survey in a larger sample (n > 400), we will (1) gain insight into whether adolescents growing up with two or more languages in Switzerland or Germany self-report positive or negative emotions in connection with their own heritage and majority language use, (2) investigate predictors of heritage and majority language-related emotions on the situational, individual, peer and societal level (e.g., presence of native speakers, self-reported language proficiency, ethnic identity, peer group composition, teacher attitudes, and prestige of a particular heritage language). We apply the theory of self-conscious emotions (Robins & Schriber, 2009) as well as theoretical approaches on achievement-related emotions (Shao et al., 2020).

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