Exploring L2 Learner Identity Through Motivation, Emotion, and Self-Regulation

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Research on second language (L2) identity explores how learners perceive and position themselves in relation to their target language and its associated culture. This study investigates the factors contributing to the construction of Croatian English L2 students' identities, focusing on motivation, emotional experiences, and self-regulation strategies. Results indicate that students have high levels of motivation, a strong ideal L2 self, and high self-efficacy, which are integral to their sense of L2 identity. Positive emotions such as hope and pride play a significant role in students' experiences, influencing their language learning process. The study also finds that self-regulation strategies are closely linked to students' motivation and positively associated with emotional states, including enjoyment and hope. These findings suggest that enjoyment of learning is closely connected to students' sense of ownership and agency in their L2 journey. The interplay between motivation, emotion, and self-regulation underscores the dynamic, multifaceted nature of L2 learner identities, highlighting the importance of student autonomy in shaping them. A strong ideal L2 self and self-efficacy show a proactive, future focused approach to language learning. This research offers a nuanced understanding of how Croatian L2 students' identities are shaped by motivational, emotional, and regulatory processes, providing insights for further research in L2 identity development.

Key words: *Emotion, L2 learner identity, Motivation, Self-Regulation.*

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Introduction

Learning a second language (L2) in a foreign language context undeniably entails the development of an L2 identity. Researchers in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have approached this concept from various perspectives. From a sociocultural perspective, researchers have highlighted the complex relationship between language, power, and identity[1], considered how identity is negotiated in social contexts using the target language[2], and investigated how learners' identities are influenced by the expectations of others and social positioning[3]. When considering the psychological dimensions of identity, Dörnyei and Ushioda[4] suggest that many elements can affect language learners' identities, including motivation, self-concept, self-perceptions of ability, as well as learner emotions. In addition, self-regulation enables learners to actively manage and control their learning process which helps nurture a positive L2 identity[5]. Although research in L2 identity has increased immensely in the last two decades especially with regard to the socio-cultural dimensions, studies focusing on the psychological dimensions still need to be addressed, particularly in the Croatian context. Consequently, the aim of this research was to investigate Croatian English language learners' identity through the prism of motivation, emotions, and self-regulation.

1. Theoretical Background

1.1. The Ideal L2 Self

The concept of identity was an important factor in early motivation studies in L2 learning. The notion of *integrativeness* was a fundamental tenet of Gardner's[6] socio-educational model which suggested that proficient L2 learning involves an identification with L2 speakers and L2 culture. However, the develop-

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[1] Cf. Bonny NORTON, *Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity, and Educational Change*, 2nd ed., Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2013, 23-45.

[2] Cf. Aneta PAVLENKO, James P. LANTOLF, *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, 71-89.

[3] Cf. Claire KRAMSCH, *Language and Culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, 145-167.

[4] Cf. Zoltán DÖRNYEI, Ema USHIODA, *Teaching and researching motivation*, Harlow, Pearson Education, 2011, 55-56.

[5] Cf. Rebecca OXFORD, *Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies*, Harlow, Pearson Education, 2011, 40.

[6] Cf. Robert C. GARDNER, *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*, London, Edward Arnold, 1985, 6-18; Robert C. GARDNER, *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition: The Socio-educational Model*, New York, Peter Lang, 2010, 5-24.

ment of English as an international language indicated that identification with the L2 community needed to be viewed within a global context. Rather than viewing identification with members of a specific L2 group, Dörnyei[7] turned to self-theories to help explain L2 motivation. He introduced the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS)[8] which is based on the concept of future self-guides, that is, positive or negative selves that an individual expects to become or hopes to avoid becoming. The ideal L2 self is a key component of this framework and can be described as an individual's image of oneself as a proficient L2 speaker in the future. Individuals will be motivated to learn an L2 to decrease the disparity between one's actual and ideal self. Learners with a vivid and detailed ideal self-image or vision of one's future self have been found to be more motivated language learners[9]. Moreover, learners' visions of who they hope to become will influence both their current and future L2 identity which in turn will affect the learning process[10]. In brief, the ideal L2 self is an important component of L2 identity, affecting learners' aspirations, motivation, and the way they perceive themselves regarding the L2.

1.2. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy theory was developed by Albert Bandura and refers to an individual's belief in their capability to carry out certain tasks in order to achieve some type of goal[11]. Self-efficacy beliefs can influence a person's choice of activities, the amount of effort to be exerted, and persistence in carrying out an activity[12]. Individuals with high self-efficacy will most likely approach challenges with confidence, while those with low self-efficacy may avoid tasks or give up easily. Taking a socially defined perspective, early SLA research focused on the notion of linguistic self-confidence[13] which involved learners' self-perceptions of their ability to communicate and identify with the L2 cultural community. More recently, L2 motivation researchers have turned to the study of self-efficacy based on a cognitive perspective in keeping with theories in educational psy-

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[7] Cf. Zoltán DÖRNYEI, *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*, Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005, 99.

[8] Cf. Zoltán DÖRNYEI, The L2 motivational self system, in: Zoltán DÖRNYEI, Ema USHIODA (ed.), *Motivation, Language Identity, and the L2 Self*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2009, 9-42.

[9] Cf. Zoltán DÖRNYEI, Stephen RYAN, *The Psychology of the Language Learner Revisited*, New York, Routledge, 2015, 96-97.

[10] Cf. Dörnyei, *The L2 motivational self system…*, 18.

[11] Cf. Albert BANDURA, *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, New York, Freeman, 1997, 3.

[12] Cf. Albert BANDURA, Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective, *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52 (2001) 1-26.

[13] Cf. Robert CLÉMENT, Ethnicity, contact and communicative competence in a second language, in: Howard GILES, W. Peter ROBINSON, Philip M. SMITH (ed.), *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*, Oxford, Pergamon, 1980, 147-154.

chology[14]. Investigations showed relationships between self-efficacy, motivation, and success in L2 learning[15], L2 listening proficiency[16], learning and communication strategies[17], and anxiety[18]. Self-efficacy can also affect emotional states, for example, higher self-efficacy has been tied to lower stress levels and a more positive attitude[19]. Self-efficacy is closely connected to L2 identity because it can influence learners' perceptions of themselves as language users and thereby affect how they engage with the language learning process.

1.3. Emotions

Research in educational psychology has demonstrated the influence of emotions on human thought, motivation, and action, as well as academic learning[20]. Positive activating emotions, for example, enjoyment of learning, generally lead to better achievement, while negative deactivating emotions, such as boredom and hopelessness, can limit success. L2 research has focused mainly on the role of affect in language learning, in particular, L2 anxiety[21], rather than on spe-

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[14] Cf. Nicole MILLS, Self-efficacy in second language acquisition, in: Sarah MERCER, Marion WILLIAMS (ed.), *Multiple Perspectives on the Self in SLA,* Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2014, 12.

[15] Cf. Shuang GUO, Stephen RYAN, Self-efficacy and L2 learning: Exploring the role of learners' self-beliefs in Chinese college students' English learning motivation, *System*, 106 (2023) 102763; Judit KORMOS, Kata CSIZÉR, The role of self-efficacy in language learning motivation: A longitudinal investigation of Hungarian learners of English, *Language Learning*, 71 (2021) 2, 348-378; Nicole A. MILLS, Frank PAJARES, Carol HERRON, Self-efficacy of college intermediate French students: Relation to achievement and motivation, *Language Learning*, 57 (2007) 3, 417-442.

[16] Cf. Suzanne GRAHAM, Listening comprehension: The learners' perspective, *System*, 34 (2006) 165-182.

[17] Cf. Süleyman AYDIN, Self-efficacy and L2 learners' communication strategies in English as a foreign language, *Language Teaching Research*, 23 (2019) 2, 194-210; Suzanne GRAHAM, Ernesto MACARO, Strategy instruction in listening for lower-intermediate learners of French, *Language Learning*, 58 (2008) 4, 747-783.

[18] Cf. Nicole A. MILLS, Frank PAJARES, Carol A. HERRON, A re-evaluation of the role of anxiety: Self-efficacy, anxiety, and their relation to reading and listening proficiency, *Foreign Language Annals*, 39 (2006) 273-292; Zsuzsanna TÓTH, Nóra NÉMETH, Self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety: The case of Hungarian university students, *The Modern Language Journal*, 105 (2021) 2, 405-421.

[19] Cf. Tammy GREGERSEN, Peter D. MACINTYRE, *Capitalizing on Language Learners' Individuality: From Premise to Practice*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2014.

[20] Cf. Reinhard PERKUN, Krista R. MUIS, Anne C. FRENZEL, Thomas GOETZ, *Emotions at School*, New York, Routledge, 2018, 1.

[21] Cf. Elaine HORWITZ, Michael B. HORWITZ, Joann COPE, Foreign language classroom anxiety, *The Modern Language Journal*, 70 (1986) 125-132; Peter D. MACINTYRE, Language anxiety: A review of the research for language teachers, in: Dolly J. YOUNG (ed.), *Affect in Foreign Language and Second Language Teaching: A Practical Guide to Creating a Low-Anxiety Classroom Atmosphere*, Boston, McGraw-Hill, 1999, 24-45; Rebecca L. OXFORD, Anxiety and the language learner: New insights, in: Jane ARNOLD (ed.), *Affect in Language Learning*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 58-67.

cific emotions. Several researchers in Croatia have also considered the role of L2 anxiety in L2 learning[22]. To broaden the scope of L2 research in emotions, Dewaele and MacIntyre[23] suggested that language learning enjoyment, as well as L2 anxiety, need to be explored. Results have shown that foreign language enjoyment can positively affect achievements levels, whereas L2 anxiety can have a negative effect[24]. However, few studies have included other emotions and their effect on L2 learning. An exception is a study carried out by MacIntyre and Laszlo[25], which focused on numerous positive and negative emotions in L2 learning, indicating that diverse positive emotions were strongly correlated with various L2 motivational models. Emotions and L2 identity are intricately connected. When learning an L2, individuals develop a sociocultural and emotional identity that reflects their integration into a new community and culture[26]. Furthermore, positive emotions can strengthen motivation and identification with the target culture, while negative emotions may inhibit learner effort[27].

1.4. Self-regulated Learning

Self-regulation in learning can be described as one's ability to use the appropriate strategies to plan, monitor, and complete a task[28]. By establishing personally meaningful goals and employing effective strategies to achieve those goals, self-regulated learners exercise control over their behavior[29]. In

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[22] Cf. Jelena MIHALJEVIĆ DJIGUNOVIĆ, *Strah od stranoga jezika – kako nastaje, kako se očituje i kako ga se osloboditi*, Zagreb, Naklada Ljevak. 2002, 64-96; Anna MARTINOVIĆ, L2 motivation and L2 anxiety among non- language university majors, in: Kristina CERGOL KOVAČEVIĆ, Sanda Lucija UDIER (ed.), *Applied Linguistics Research and Methodology -– Proceedings from the 2015 CALS conference)*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2017,121-134.

[23] Cf. Jean-Marc DEWAELE, Peter D. MACINTYRE, The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom, *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4 (2014) 2, 237-274.

[24] Cf. Qing SU, The impact of emotional factors on L2 learners' enjoyment and anxiety in foreign languages, *Communications in Humanities Research*, 44 (2024) 29-35.

[25] Cf. Peter MACINTYRE, Vincze LÁSZLÓ, Positive and negative emotions underlie motivation for L2 learning, *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 7 (2017) 1, 61-88.

[26] Cf. Ana CANALES, Susana LERALTA (ed.), *Emotion and Identity in Second Language Learning*, Intercultural Studies and Foreign Language Learning, 23, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2023.

[27] Cf. Kaiqi SHAO, Laura J. NICHOLSON, Gulsah KUTUK, Fei LEI, Emotions and instructed language learning: Proposing a second language emotions and positive psychology model, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11 (2020) 2142.

[28] Cf. Barry J. ZIMMERMAN, Attaining self-regulation: A social cognitive perspective, in: Monique BOEKAERTS, Paul R. PINTRICH, Moshe ZEIDNER (ed.), *Handbook of Self-Regulation*, San Diego, Academic Press, 2000, 13-41.

[29] Cf. Nicole MILLS, Self-efficacy in second language acquisition, in: Sarah MERCER, Marion WILLIAMS (ed.), *Multiple Perspectives on the Self in SLA*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2014, 6-22.

L2 research, much attention has been given to language learning strategies[30]. However, Dörnyei[31] questioned the theoretical and psychometric validity of the assessment of this concept. Dörnyei and Ryan[32] suggested that self-regulation is more encompassing as it focuses on the processes of learning. Tseng et. al.[33] proposed the Self-Regulating Capacity in Vocabulary Learning Scale (SRCvoc), tapping into general learner traits as opposed to survey specific behavioral traits, which could be used for measuring self-regulation in L2 learning. L2 studies have shown an important relationship between higher use of self-regulatory strategies and motivation[34], emotions[35], and self-efficacy[36]. Self-regulation involves learners taking responsibility for their own learning, which can stimulate a sense of ownership over the L2 learning process[37]. This ownership can lead to a stronger, more positive L2 identity as learners see themselves as active participants in their language acquisition process rather than passive recipients. By regulating their learning, learners feel empowered and develop a sense of competence, which can contribute to a more confident L2 identity.

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[30] Cf. Anna U. CHAMOT, The role of learning strategies in second language acquisition, in: Michael P. BREEN (ed.), *Learner Contributions to Language Learning: New Directions in Research*, London, Longman, 2001, 25-43; Andrew D. COHEN, Ernesto MACARO, *Language Learning Strategies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

[31] Cf. Dörnyei, *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences...*, 182.

[32] Cf. Dörnyei, Ryan, *The Psychology of the Language...*, 159.

[33] Cf. Wen-Tsung TSENG, Zoltán DÖRNYEI, Norbert SCHMITT, A new approach to assessing strategic learning: The case of self-regulation in vocabulary acquisition, *Applied Linguistics*, 27 (2006) 1, 78-102.

[34] Cf. Alastair HENRY, Meng LIU, L2 motivation and self-regulated learning: An integrated model, *System*, 123 (2024)103301.

[35] Cf. Jakub BIELAK, Anna MYSTKOWSKA-WIERTELAK, Emotions and emotion regulation in L2 classroom speaking tasks: A mixed-methods study combining the idiodynamic and quantitative perspectives, *The Modern Language Journal*, 108 (2024) 3, 688-718.

[36] Cf. Suzanne GRAHAM, Learner strategies and self-efficacy: Making the connection, *Language Learning Journal*, 35 (2007) 81-93; Nicole A. MILLS, Frank PAJARES, Carol HERRON, Self-efficacy of college intermediate French students: Relation to achievement and motivation, *Language Learning*, 57 (2007) 3, 417-442.

[37] Cf. Oxford, *Teaching and Researching Language...*, 40.

2. Aim and Method

2.1. Aim

Research has shown a relationship between learners' motivation, emotions, and self-regulating strategies[38] which can also help explain learners' L2 identity[39]. However, little research focusing on these factors has been carried out in the Croatian context. As a result, the general aim of this study was to investigate aspects of language learners' identity, including their ideal L2 self and L2 self-efficacy, their emotions toward language learning, and their use of self-regulated learning strategies. In addition, the relationship between these elements was explored.

The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the motivational characteristics of students regarding their ideal L2 self and L2 self-efficacy?

2) What emotions do students experience when attending their language classes?

3) What self-regulated learning strategies do students use in their language classes?

4) Is there a relationship between students' motivation, emotions, and self-regulated learning strategies?

2.2. Method

2.2.1. Sample

The sample included 200 English language students who were in the double major program at a university in Croatia. This included 178 females (89%) and 22 males (11%). The English major program includes three years of undergraduate study followed by a two-year graduate study program. Out of the total number of students, 69 (34.5%) were in their first year of studies, 68 (34%) in the second year, 37 (18.5%) in the third year, and 26 (13%) in the fourth year. The average mean age was 20.65 (SD= 2.06) (Min.= 18, Max. 32) and the average mean score regarding the years of studying English was 13.35 (SD=1.67) (Min.=5, Max=18). Students were taking obligatory language courses, including the Modern English Practice (MEP) courses at the undergraduate level (MEP year I, II, III), and graduate level (MEP year IV) which were used as a reference

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[38] Cf. Thomas GOETZ, Ulrike E. NETT, Nathan C. HALL, Self-regulated learning, in: Nathan C. HALL, Thomas GOETZ (ed.), *Emotion, Motivation, and Self-Regulation: A Handbook for Teachers*, Bingley, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2013, 123-166.

[39] Cf. Dörnyei, Ryan, *The Psychology of the Language Learner...*, 80.

point for the questionnaire. These courses focused on language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary.

2.2.2. Instruments and Procedures

A five-part questionnaire was utilized in this study. The first part included participants' background information. The second part consisted of the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ)[40], and encompassed several class-related emotion scales (enjoyment, hope, pride, anger, anxiety, shame, hopelessness, boredom), including emotions experienced before being in class, during class, and after class (80 items in total). The third part of the questionnaire contained the Ideal L2 self scale[41] (6 items). The fourth section was comprised of the self-efficacy scale[42] (6 items). The last section included an adapted version of the Self-regulating Capacity in Vocabulary Learning Scale (SRCVOC)[43] and consisted of the following scales: Satiation control, Emotion control, Environmental control, Commitment control, Metacognitive control (20 items in total). All the scales were based on 5 pt. Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Moreover, the results indicated high reliability on all the scales with Cronbach alpha values above .70.

Students were approached during their English language class (MEP) and asked to complete a paper version of the questionnaire. They were informed of the aims of the study, and were told that their participation was voluntary, anonymous, and would be used for research purposes only. They were also asked to sign a consent form.

2.2.3 Data analysis

The results were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program. Descriptive analyses involved measuring frequencies, mean averages, and standard deviations. To examine the relationships between variables, inferential statistics were calculated using Pearson's correlation analysis.

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[40] Cf. Reinhard PEKRUN, Thomas GOETZ, *The Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ): User's Manual*, Munich, Department of Psychology, University of Munich, 2005.
[41] Cf. Tatsuya TAGUCHI, Maggie MAGID, Masoud PAPI, The L2 Motivational Self System Questionnaire, in: Dörnyei, Ushioda (eds.), *Motivation, Language…*, 66-97.
[42] Cf. Albert BANDURA, Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales, in: Frank PAJARES, Tim URDAN (eds.), *Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents*, Greenwich, Information Age Publishing, 2006, 307-337.
[43] Cf. Tseng, Dörnyei, Schmitt, *A New Approach to Assessing…*, 98-99.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. L2 Motivation

The first research question focused on students' motivation regarding English language learning, including students' ideal L2 self and self-efficacy. The results revealed a strong ideal L2 self (M=4.28, SD=.68) among students. In other words, their possible self encompassed visions of themselves as proficient users of English. Interestingly, mean averages on individual statements revealed that this vision was related to being fluent in English rather than achieving native-speaker norms. For example, higher mean averages were shown on the item *I image myself as someone who will be able to speak English fluently* (M=4.69, SD=.59), compared to the items *I imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English* (M=3.89, SD=1.09).

Students also demonstrated high self-efficacy levels in reference to their English language skills (M=4.23, SD=.60). This scale included items related to students' self-evaluation of their speaking, listening, reading, writing and grammar skills. Students indicated the highest averages for their listening (M=4.67, SD=.56) and speaking skills (M=4.42, SD=.72), while writing skills revealed lower mean averages (M=3.83, SD=.98). The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results: Ideal L2 Self and Self-efficacy

(N = Number, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Cronbach alpha = α)

	Items (N)	M	SD	Cronbach α
Ideal L2 self	6	4.28	.68	.84
Self-efficacy	5	4.23	.60	.80

In brief, Croatian L2 learners showed that they have a strong ideal L2 self that is associated with an image of themselves as proficient language speakers of English indicating high motivation. Many studies in various contexts have shown that high levels of an ideal L2 self can have a positive effect on L2 motivation[44]. Similarly, learners in this study displayed high levels of self-efficacy

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[44] Cf. Kata CSIZÉR, Judit KORMOS, Learning experiences, selves and motivated learning behaviour: A comparative analysis of structural models for Hungarian secondary and university learners of English, in: Zoltán DÖRNYEI, Ema USHIODA (ed.), *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2009, 98-119; Anna MARTINOVIĆ, The L2 motivational self system: Differences among learners, *Jezikoslovlje*, 19 (2018) 1, 133-157; Stephen RYAN, Self and identity in L2 motivation in Japan: The ideal L2 self and Japanese learners of English, in: Zoltán DÖRNYEI, Ema USHIODA (ed.), *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2009, 120-143; Tatsuya TAGUCHI, Mohammad MAGID, Mostafa PAPI, The L2 motivational self system among Japanese, Chinese, and Iranian learners of English: A comparative study, in: Zoltán DÖRNYEI, Ema USHIODA (ed.), *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2009, 66-97.

reflecting strong confidence in their L2 abilities. Numerous studies have shown that high levels of self-efficacy can increase motivation and L2 learning success[45]. These results suggest that high levels of motivation are an element of Croatian learners L2 identity.

3.2. Emotions

The second research question involved the investigation of their emotions toward English language learning. Students showed varying degrees of emotions regarding their English language course (MEP). The results indicated generally positive emotions among students who experienced moderate levels of hope (M=3.38, SD=.83) and pride (M=3.16, SD=.85) with somewhat lower levels of enjoyment (M=2.92, SD=.85). Negative emotions, including boredom (M=2.57, SD=1.1), anxiety (M=2.33, SD=.94), and shame (M=2.17, SD=.99) were moderately low, while the lowest levels were shown for anger (M=1.88, SD=.90) and hopelessness (M=1.71, SD=.79). The results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Class-related emotions

(N = Number, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Cronbach alpha = α)

Emotion	Items (N)	M	SD	Cronbach α
Enjoyment	10	2.92	.85	.91
Hope	8	3.38	.83	.86
Pride	9	3.16	.85	.88
Anger	9	1.88	.90	.90
Anxiety	12	2.33	.94	.92
Shame	11	2.17	.99	.93
Hopelessness	10	1.71	.79	.91
Boredom	11	2.57	1.1	.87

The results show that Croatian students experienced several positive emotions while learning English. Moderate levels of hope and pride indicate positive affect toward English classes. These results are similar to the findings of Dewaele and MacIntyre[46] who reported that feelings of pride among language learners were associated with a sense of accomplishment and success. The slightly lower levels of enjoyment seem to suggest a more neutral stance among students toward their language exercise classes, that is, an absence of

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[45] Cf. Guo, Ryan, *Self-efficacy and L2 learning...*, 102763; Kormos, Csizér, *The Role of Self-efficacy in Language Learning Motivation...*, 348; Mills, Pajares, Herron, *Self-efficacy of College Intermediate French Students...*, 417.

[46] Cf. Jean-Marc DEWAELE, Peter D. MACINTYRE, Foreign language enjoyment and foreign language classroom anxiety: The right and left feet of the language learner, in: Peter D. MACINTYRE, Tammy GREGERSEN, Sarah MERCER (ed.), *Positive Psychology in SLA*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2016, 215-236.

excitement. Although moderately low, students also revealed the presence of boredom which might help explain the lack of passionate feelings toward their classes. The presence of L2 anxiety corroborates findings which suggest that both enjoyment and anxiety are usually present when learning a language with higher levels of enjoyment found among successful language learners[47].

4.3. Self-regulation

The third research question explored the self-regulated learning strategies used by students while learning English. The results on the four scales showed moderate levels of environmental control (M=3.65, SD=.85), commitment control (M=3.47, SD = .82), emotion control (M= 3.18, SD=.90), and satiation control M=3.16, SD=.86). On the other hand, low levels were observed for meta-cognitive control (M=2.84, SD=.98). The following shows sample items from the individual scales: *When I am studying English and the learning environment becomes unsuitable, I try to sort out the problem* (environmental control); *When I am studying English, I have special techniques to achieve my learning goals* (commitment control); *When I feel stressed about learning English, I know how to reduce this stress* (emotion control); *During the process of learning English, I feel satisfied with the ways I eliminate boredom* (satiation control); *When learning English, I have special techniques to keep my concentration focused* (metacognitive control). The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Self-regulated learning strategies

(N = Number, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Cronbach alpha = α)

Sub-scale	Item (N)	M	SD	Cronbach α
Satiation control	4	3.16	.86	.79
Emotion control	4	3.18	.90	.73
Environmental control	4	3.65	.85	.80
Commitment control	4	3.47	.82	.71
Metacognitive control	3	2.84	.98	.85

Generally, students exhibited moderate use of self-regulation strategies in L2 learning. While learning English, they are able to regulate their environment (environment control), stress levels (emotion control), feelings of boredom (satiation control), and feel confident about reaching their learning goals (commitment control). However, students appear to be struggling with maintaining their concentration and avoiding procrastination while learning English (metacognitive control). Self-regulation is a broad, complex construct that entails learners assuming responsibility for their own learning, thereby

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[47] Cf. Dewaele, MacIntyre, *The Two Faces of Janus?...*, 241.

fostering a sense of ownership and autonomy in the process of L2 learning[48] (Oxford, 2011). The results indicate that learners are proactive agents rather than passive recipients in the L2 learning process which can enhance a confident and positive L2 identity.

3.4. The relationship among the variables

The fourth research question assessed the relationship between students' motivation, emotions, and self-regulated learning strategies. The analysis revealed the strongest positive correlation between the ideal L2 self and self-efficacy (r=.548). Meanwhile, moderate positive correlations were found between positive emotions and the ideal L2 self, for example, hope (r=.457), enjoyment (r=.412), pride (r=.376), as well as between self-efficacy and hope (r=.415) and enjoyment (r=.305). Moderate positive correlations were also found between the ideal L2 self and the self-regulating strategy of environmental control (r=.311). Similar correlations were shown between self-efficacy and the self-regulating strategies of commitment control (r=.406), emotion control (r=.387), and environmental control (r=.321). In contrast, moderate negative correlations were noted between the ideal L2 self and hopelessness (r=-.309) and anxiety (r=-.307). Moderate negative correlations were also found between self-efficacy and anxiety (r=-.394), hopelessness (r=-.322), and shame (r=-.319).

Interestingly, strong positive correlations were shown between four self-regulated learning strategies and enjoyment and hope. For example, satiation control and enjoyment (r=.630), and hope (r=.540); emotion control and hope (r=.594), and enjoyment (r=.537); environmental control and hope (r=.583), and enjoyment (r=.538); commitment control and hope (r=.608), and enjoyment (r=.575). Commitment control also showed strong positive correlations with-pride (r=.537). Strong negative correlations were only found between emotion control and the negative emotions of anxiety (r=-.515), shame (r=-.507), and hopelessness (r=-.525).

The results of the correlation analysis showed that the higher the students' motivation, the more they experienced positive emotions such as hope, enjoyment and pride. This is similar to other findings that have also found a connection between emotions and L2 motivation[49]. Moreover, a positive relationship was found between the ideal L2 self and self-efficacy and several self-regulated learning strategies. These findings corroborate other studies which indicated that higher motivation resulted in more use of self-regulation strategies[50]. Notably, the strongest correlations were found between students' self-regulated

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[48] Cf. Oxford, *Teaching and Researching...*, 40.

[49] Cf. MacIntyre, László, *Positive and Negative Emotions...*, 77.

[50] Cf. Dörnyei, *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Learner Differences...*, 92; Shanshan LIU, Toward the role of L2 enjoyment in EFL students' academic motivation and engagement,

learning strategies and emotions. For instance, being able to regulate their boredom, stress, and surroundings were closely tied to feelings of enjoyment and hope, while being able to regulate their learning goals was linked to hope, enjoyment, as well as pride. Furthermore, the stronger their emotional control, the less they felt negative feelings such as anxiety, shame, and hopelessness. These results suggest the close relationship between emotions and self-regulation which have been confirmed in other L2 contexts[51].

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that Croatian English L2 students are motivated and have a strong ideal L2 self and high levels of self-efficacy. Students revealed that they experience more positive emotions compared to negative emotions while learning English, including hope and pride. The use of self-regulation strategies among students such as regulating their environment and setting learning goals was also linked to their motivation to learn. In addition, students who used more self-regulation strategies also expressed higher levels of enjoyment and hope. This finding might indicate that enjoyment of learning is closely related to learners' sense of ownership or agency. These findings offer valuable insights into the construction of Croatian English L2 learners' identities. The presence of a strong ideal L2 self and high levels of self-efficacy suggests that learners envision themselves as successful users of the target language, reinforcing a forward-looking, agentive identity. The interplay between motivation, emotional experiences (such as hope and pride), and the use of self-regulation strategies further highlights the dynamic nature of their learner identities. Notably, the association between positive emotions, particularly enjoyment and self-regulatory behavior, may point to a deeper sense of agency and ownership over the learning process. Taken together, these elements form a multifaceted representation of Croatian L2 learners' identities, shaped by motivation, emotion, and autonomy within their language learning journey. While this study offers valuable insights into the identities of Croatian learners of English as a second language, several limitations should be acknowledged. Future research could enhance these findings by employing mixed-method approaches that integrate both quantitative and qualitative data. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or learner diaries, would allow for a more nuanced understanding of learners' personal experiences and identity construction. Moreover, longitudinal studies could provide a deeper understanding of how L2 identities develop and transform over time, particularly in response to changing learning contexts and individual experiences.

Frontiers in Psychology, 12 (2022) 822588; Mills, Pajares, Herron, *Self-efficacy of College…*, 417.

[51] Cf. Bielak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak, *Emotions and Emotion Regulation…*, 712.

Anna Martinović*

Istraživanje inojezičnog identiteta studenata kroz motivaciju, emocije i samoregulaciju

Sažetak

Istraživanja identiteta učenja inog jezika proučavaju kako učenici doživljavaju i pozicioniraju sebe u odnosu na ciljani jezik i pripadajuću kulturu. Ovo istraživanje ispituje čimbenike koji doprinose oblikovanju identiteta hrvatskih studenata engleskog kao stranog jezika, s naglaskom na motivaciju, emocionalna iskustva i strategije samoregulacije. Uzorak je obuhvaćao 200 hrvatskih studenata engleskog jezika na prijediplomskoj i diplomskoj razini studija. Rezultati pokazuju da studenti imaju visoku razinu motivacije, snažno idealno inojezično *ja* i visoku razinu samoučinkovitosti, što je ključno za razvoj njihova inojezičnog identiteta. Pozitivne emocije, poput nade i ponosa, imaju značajan utjecaj na ovladavanja inim jezikom. Istraživanje također pokazuje da su strategije samoregulacije usko povezane s motivacijom i pozitivno povezane s emocionalnim stanjima poput uživanja i nade. Rezultati ukazuju na činjenicu da je uživanje u učenju blisko povezano sa studentovim osjećajem odgovornosti i poduzetnosti u procesu ovladavanjem inim jezikom. Suodnos motivacije, emocija i samoregulacije naglašava dinamičnu i složenu prirodu inojezičnog identiteta te ističe važnost samostalnosti učenika u njegovu oblikovanju. Snažan inojezični *ja* i samoučinkovitost upućuju na proaktivan, budućnosti usmjeren pristup učenju jezika. Ovo istraživanje omogućuje bolje razumijevanje procesa oblikovanja inojezičnih identiteta hrvatskih studenata, uključujući motivacijske, emocionalne i regulatorne aspekte. Nadalje, ovaj rad pruža smjernice za daljnja istraživanja razvoja inojezičnog identiteta.

Ključne riječi: emocije, inojezični identitet, motivacija, samoregulacija.

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