



Motivation in Simultaneous Multiple Foreign Language Learning in Burundi: A Complex Dynamic Systems Theory Perspective

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Abstract

Drawing on qualitative research, this study explored, from a complex dynamic systems theory perspective, the motivation of Burundi junior high school students simultaneously learning L2 French, L3s English and Kiswahili. It aimed to fill the gap in research on (1) changes in motivational dynamics and factors responsible for any fluctuations in the levels of motivation over time and (2) complex interactions between different learner variables among multiple language learners. Twelve school pupils who were all Kirundi native speakers participated in this study. Retrospective interviews were used to collect data relating to the students' multilingual learning experiences over the period of their formal education. The findings indicated that the intensity of learning each target language fluctuated over time, with English generally enjoying the highest increase and Kiswahili the lowest and that different factors were responsible for such dynamic changes. Besides, complex interactions between the students' L1, L2, and L3s linguistic knowledge and their foreign language learning motivations were revealed. These results indeed highlight the complex and dynamic nature of motivation in learning multiple languages. In light of these findings, practical implications are discussed based on the Burundi educational context.

Keywords: Motivation, Complex Dynamic Systems Theory, Changes in motivation, Motivational factors, Multilingualism

Over the past six decades, motivation has been the target of sustained research interest due to the significant role that the construct plays in the process of second (L2) or foreign language (FL) learning. Since the foundation of the field of L2 motivation in

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the late 1950s by Gardner and his associates (see Gardner & Lambert, 1959), L2 motivation study has been dynamic as it has evolved from a focus on social psychological factors influencing language learning to an emphasis on how motivation emerges from a complex and dynamic interaction between individuals' cognitive, emotional and context-situated environmental factors (Dörnyei, Henry & MacIntyre, 2015).

Until the turn of the new millennium, however, prior motivation theoretical lenses overlooked the complexity, contextual and temporal variation of motivational behavior. Up to that period, social psychological and cognitivist models held motivation to be a static attribute of an individual's personality and linear cause-effect relationships among different motivational variables were characteristic of L2 motivation research (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). While these early approaches had their own merits, such linear paradigms could, however, not do full justice to the current conceptualization of L2 motivation as a complex, multifaceted, dynamic and situated factor characterized by synchronic and diachronic fluctuations (Hiver & Papi, 2019). In light of the limitations of the early linear theoretical perspectives, a non-linear and dynamic approach has been increasingly called for since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Ushioda, 2009). Corresponding to this call, Dörnyei (2009) has thus proposed to adopt a complexity theoretical perspective, the complex dynamic systems theory (CDST), for L2 motivation inquiry as the theory has become a broad foundation for scientific research in many disciplines, including applied linguistics (de Bot & Larsen-Freeman, 2011).

Empirically, starting with Dörnyei et al.'s (2015) anthology that aimed to explore the researchability of L2 motivation from a CDST perspective, a number of studies (e.g., Henry, 2015; Song & Kim, 2017; Wang & Liu, 2017) have adopted such an approach to track the motivational dynamics of their participants over shorter or longer timescales. Overall, the results of those studies revealed that students' language learning motivation was dynamic as the construct was found to fluctuate on the different time scales, ranging from one lesson to the next, minutes to hours, months and even years.

Although complexity thinking has established itself in the field of L2 motivation, the research literature has so far focused on students involved in learning a single language. The issue of how the different language systems in the learner's multilingual development repertoire exert mutual motivational impacts on each other has had little research enthusiasm (Bui & Teng, 2019). This is unfortunate in the current global context, where multilingual development is a common practice (De Angelis, 2007). To address this imbalance, this study set out to use a qualitative approach to investigate the dynamic and complex nature of multiple FL learning motivations based on Larsen-Freeman's (2015) CDST. Specifically, we examined the motivations of Burundi high school learners who had been simultaneously learning L1 Kirundi and three FLs (i.e., L2 French, L3 English and L3 Kiswahili) throughout their formal education. The study's purpose was, therefore, to provide insights to teachers, language policymakers and other people regarding the complexity and dynamism of Burundi young learners' multiple FL motivations, as well as to contribute to the scant existing body of L2 motivation research as it concerns simultaneous multiple language learning.

Literature Review

Language Learning as a Complex Dynamic System

Since the beginning of the 21st century, complexity theory has become a firm foundation for scientific research in applied linguistics (Hiver & Larsen-Freeman, 2020). Complexity theory, generally known as Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), was introduced into the study of language learning by Larsen-Freeman (1997) as an approach used to examine non-linear and emergent development and change of complex systems (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008).

As Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) highlight, for a system to be dynamic, two conditions are at least prerequisite: (1) it must have two or more elements that are interconnected with each other, and (2) the elements must also change in time. Taken together, these two conditions often result in ‘highly complex and unpredictable’ (p.89) system behavior due to the continuous interferences between the system’s developmental trajectories of its multiple componential elements. Besides, complex systems are always contextually constrained, i.e., their many parts not only interact with one another but also are in constant interaction with the larger context in which the systems are situated (Hiver & Papi, 2019).

Larsen-Freeman (1997) gave three reasons why languages can be described as complex systems: (1) they consist of many different subsystems which are both interdependent and interchangeable, (2) the subsystems are in constant interaction, (3) and changes in one individual subsystem likely leads to changes in the overall linguistic behavior. Moreover, Jessner (2008) argued that language development is indeed a complex and dynamic process due to the large number of variables related to the attributes of the learner, the learning situation and the target language (TL) that affect the learning process. To a greater extent, multilingual or third language (L3) acquisition is by far a process more complex and dynamic than second language acquisition (SLA) (Herdina & Jessner, 2000) because, unlike in SLA, where language transfer comes solely from the L1, cross-linguistic influences in the process of multilingual development takes place from the various languages already known to the learner or that are being simultaneously learned and, thus, the different language systems interfere and interact with each other in the learner’s mind. It follows, then, that multilingual or L3 acquisition is a process more complex than SLA. This means that in addition to all the individual differences or psychological factors (e.g., language aptitude, language learning strategies, language anxiety, motivation, attitude, self-confidence, etc.) acknowledged to influence SLA, the complexity of L3 acquisition resides in the fact that the development of the L3 system encompasses other more noticeable dynamic properties such as the interdependence of language systems, complex change over time, language attrition or loss, and fossilization of some parts of the multilingual system as well. Thus, acquiring an L3 may result in counteracting L1 or L2 growth or maintenance due to the interference of language systems and reversibility and nonlinearity in the development of a multilingual system. Multilingualism researchers (e.g., Herdina & Jessner, 2000; Jessner, 2008) have therefore

adopted CDST as a theoretical framework to understand the complexity of the process of acquiring multiple languages.

Motivation and Complex Dynamic Systems Theory

Although the origin of the field of L2 motivation dates back to the late 1950s with pioneering studies by Gardner and his associates (see Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972), it was not until the last decade of the 20th century that the variable started to be considered as dynamic. At that time, as researchers started to examine L2 motivation in situated contexts, they soon realized that motivation was not a stable individual difference attribute but rather a dynamic construct that ebbs and flows over time (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). This has resulted in a new era where the study of the continuous changes in L2 motivation required to adopt a new approach, a process-oriented paradigm (Dörnyei et al., 2015). Three process models (i.e., Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Ushioda, 1996; Williams & Burden, 1997) paved the way for the process-oriented approach to L2 motivation and also provided an impetus for empirical studies adopting the dynamic conceptualization of motivation. As a consequence, such a view of L2 motivation has resulted in a large number of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies examining motivational processes over time in several learning contexts thereafter (e.g., Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006; Fukui & Yahima, 2021; Nizigama, Fazilatfar & Jabbari, 2023). Overall, the results of these studies confirmed the temporal changeability in the participants' motivation with quantitative studies that involved school-age students as participants, also revealing a decline in the pupils' motivation over the L2 learning period.

Although among its merits, L2 motivation came to be portrayed as a staged process, a number of researchers soon realized that the process-oriented approach could not do full justice to the dynamic, multifaceted and complex situated nature of L2 motivation. For its drawbacks, the approach was still based on 'linear cause-effect relationships' (Waninge, Dörnyei, & de Bot, 2014, p.707) in the examination of relations between L2 motivation and other learner variables. Like any other linear model, it, therefore, failed to situate language learners into specific contexts and also paid little attention to the complex interactions among different motivational factors (Dörnyei et al., 2015). Another shortcoming of the paradigm was its overreliance on sample-based quantitative studies that not only detect general trends in groups of learners but also fail to uncover individual motivational behaviors and experiences (Ushioda, 2019). Nonetheless, this process-oriented understanding of motivation proved very important as it served as a transitional phase to a more complex dynamic systems perspective since it highlighted that viewing motivation as a static individual trait was to adopt a reductionist approach that could not allow an in-depth analysis of the complexity and dynamism of the construct.

With the influence of complexity thinking in applied linguistics, the variable of L2 motivation has then come to be seen as a dynamic and complex construct par excellence, as it has been emphasized in the following words: 'Motivation is less a trait than fluid play, an ever-changing one that emerges from the process of interaction of many agents, internal and external, in the ever-changing complex world of the learner' (Ellis & Larsen-

Freeman, 2006, p.563). L2 motivation is, thus, part of a complex dynamic system of language learner characteristics, which is in continuous interaction with the contextual factors where the learning takes place (Dörnyei, 2009).

The contribution of Larsen-Freeman's CDST (1997, 2015) to L2 motivation theory and research is its new way of thinking summarized into a number of points: (1) complexity theory invites researchers and scholars to see L2 motivation as a complex system with multiple components that are interrelated and thus adopt a relational unit or complex system analysis in their inquiry (Ushioda, 2015); (2) as L2 motivation is dynamic (Dörnyei, 2009), adopting a CDST when researching motivational processes requires to consider time as an important factor (Lemke, 2000); and (3) complex systems are open to contexts in which they are situated (Ushioda, 2009), that is, L2 motivation is always contextually constrained. In short, adopting CDST when researching L2 motivation can avoid, as scholars believe, the concepts of 'single causes, linear causality, immutable categories and highly specified endpoints' (Schumann, 2015, p. xv, as cited in Dörnyei et al., 2015).

Although the theory about CDST in L2 motivation has been considerable, Ushioda (2019) and (Waninge et al., 2014) deplore the scarcity of empirical studies that adopted that approach. In recent years, however, with the influence of complex thinking in the field, pioneering research by L2 motivation scholars (e.g., Henry, 2015; Rashidi, Rahimi & Alimorad, 2013; Song & Kim, 2017) have opened the way for more interest in exploring motivational changes in small groups or individual students. For example, Henry (2015) employed a multimethod approach to investigate six Swedish secondary school students' motivation to learn L3 French over a period of two semesters. Results revealed that students' motivation to learn French was dynamic; not only did it fluctuate over shorter timescales (for example, from one lesson to the next) but also over longer timescales among all the students. Besides, two contextual factors, i.e., the status of L2 English together with the reward of additional grades for L3 French learning, appeared to have exerted influences on the learners' motivation. Song & Kim (2017), in turn, focused on long-term changes by examining 64 Korean high school learners' motivation to learn English from nursery to high school. The results indicated that, for the majority of the students, demotivation started in high school due to external factors such as teachers' competence, ineffective teaching methods, social pressure and increasing learning difficulty. For those who experienced remotivation, however, internal factors such as positive attitudes toward English culture, positive learning experiences and external factors such as changes in teaching methods were reported to be behind their being remotivated again.

While the studies described above have shed some light on the dynamics of learners' motivation over different time scales and the factors responsible for the changes, the empirical evidence concerning the issues in question, together with the complexity of interactions among different variables in multilingual learning situations is extremely scant (Fukui & Yashima, 2021). This is unfortunate in the current global context where not only multilingual development has become the norm (De Angelis, 2007) but also

where L3 acquisition researchers (e.g., Herdina & Jessner, 2000) have acknowledged the process to be very complex and dynamic. The following are some of the few studies that have looked into motivational dynamics and complex interactions among multiple language learners.

Siridetkoon and Dewaele (2017) explored seven Thai university students' motivation for simultaneously learning L2 English and L3 (Korean, Japanese or Chinese) and the main causes of the students' motivational behavior across the different FLs. The findings indicated that students' motivation was dynamic and emerged from complex interactions as it was found to ebb and flow over time due to the learners' internal (e.g., students' decision to study another L3 formally) and external (e.g., pressure from family concerning the necessity of each FL) factors. While all the students recognized English as the most important FL, they still invested in learning other L3s. They put English on hold at various times because of the other opportunities that such L3s could also offer. Wang and Liu (2017), in turn, examined five Chinese learners studying L3 German over a two-year period. Like L2 English motivation, the findings revealed that L3 motivation fluctuated during the learning process. For instance, the participants' ideal L3 selves displayed a clear upward trajectory in the first months of the learning process, while they showed an observable decline in the second year.

In the context of Hong Kong, Bui and Teng (2019) also investigated the dynamic and complex nature of university students' multilingual learning motivations. Eight L1 Cantonese students learning L3 Japanese participated in the study. The results revealed significant interactions between and among learners' motivations for their three languages. Not only the L3 Japanese the students were learning was found to be affected by both their L1 Cantonese and L2 English they already knew, but the L3 was also found to affect the participants' existing L2 motivation. For example, the motivation to learn Japanese for some students was generated from the students' perceived similarity between Cantonese and Japanese and the Chinese and Japanese Cultures.

This review has shown that the variable of L2 motivation has recently started to be approached from a CDST perspective. However, studies exploring variations in motivational intensity and complex interactions among different motivational forces are still scarce (Ushioda, 2019), particularly the ones involving multilingual learners (Fukui & Yashima, 2021). Moreover, there is a research imbalance vis-a-vis learning contexts. In fact, not only most studies on L2 motivation have focused on tertiary education (Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019), but motivation research in geographic contexts other than East Asia, North America and Europe has been quite limited (Mendoza & Phung, 2019). As any linguistic system in an individual's multilingual repertoire receives influence from a CDST perspective, and inevitably exerts an impact on other linguistic systems, the present study intends therefore to fill this research gap by exploring any changes in Burundi high school students' motivations for learning each FL and how the participants' motivations for the different language systems involved in their simultaneous multilingual acquisition (i.e., L1 Kirundi, L2 French, and L3s English and Kiswahili) mutually influence each other.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How has students' motivation for learning each foreign language been dynamic over the period of their formal education?
2. What factors were responsible for any noted fluctuations in the students' motivations?
3. How have the different language systems in the learners' multilingual repertoire affected the learning motivation of each target language?

Method

This research study adopted a retrospective longitudinal multiple-case study to examine the dynamic and complex nature of the students' simultaneous multiple FL learning motivations. Dörnyei (2007, p. 84) defines a retrospective longitudinal approach as the process in which the data 'are gathered during a single investigation in which respondents are asked to think *back* and answer questions about the past' [*italics is added*]. Burundi junior high school students were therefore interviewed and asked to recollect their past multilingual learning experiences in order to gain insight into the complexity and dynamism of their multiple language learning motivations.

Research Context

This study was conducted in Burundi with junior high school students (grades 7 through 9) from state-owned schools of Ntahangwa and Matongo Districts. Although this east-central African country is historically monolingual, learners attending the country's educational system are simultaneously taught, from grade one, four languages (i.e., L1 Kirundi, L2 French, L3 English and L3 Kiswahili) since 2007, a year corresponding to the country's formal integration into the East African Community (EAC) where both English and Kiswahili are the community's official languages. At junior high school level, French and English are considered as the main FL school subjects. In fact, besides to being the medium of instruction from grade 7 upwards, French has five periods per week. On the other hand, students are taught English for four hours while Kiswahili has only one period per week. Regarding Kirundi, the native language of almost every Burundian, the language is taught for two hours in each school grade. At this educational level, a period corresponds to 45 minutes.

In Burundi, junior high school education is highly critical for parents, teachers and students as the students prepare to take the national exam. The results from the exam for all students in the 9th grade determine both admission to senior high school education and eligibility to a particular stream (e.g., the general secondary, which generally feeds into tertiary education, the vocational secondary, which usually leads to professional life, etc.). The exam tests students on all content areas in the French language and on their Kirundi, French, English, and Kiswahili content areas. It then follows that, for students to be admitted to senior secondary education, knowledge in the four languages plays a significant role.

Participants

Twelve Burundi junior high school (grades 7 through 9) students participated in this study, six boys and six girls. The participants had been involved in compulsory multiple language learning (i.e., L1 Kirundi, L2 French, L3 English and L3 Kiswahili) since grade one of their formal education. They were from four state-owned schools; in each district (i.e., Ntarangwa and Matongo), two schools were selected. In order to encourage equal representation, each school was represented by three students. The participants shared similar educational backgrounds; all studied in public schools and were Kirundi native speakers. As Kirundi is the language used outside the classroom, the status of French, English and Kiswahili is that of a FL. The participants were chosen from a larger group of students who contributed data for the Ph.D. dissertation of the first author.

Procedure

In this qualitative study, we used semi-structured interviews to collect data. This research used an interview guide adopted from Bui and Teng (2019) and Siridetkoon and Dewaele (2017), with some modifications (see Appendix). Questions in the guide intended to gain insight about (1) the participants' multilingual learning experiences, (2) the dynamic nature of motivation in terms of changes in their learning experience and any potential factors that might have caused any changes to their motivation, and (3) the complexity of multiple language learning motivations and its relation to contextual influences on their motivation for learning each FL.

Before collecting the data, the semi-structured interview guide was first translated into Kirundi. The interviews for the present study were then conducted in April 2022 with 12 students in Kirundi by the first author, whose L1 is also Kirundi. The semi-structured interviews were conducted individually after seeking permission from the relevant educational authorities and the participants' informed oral consent. Before each interview, the purpose of the study was explained orally to every participant. Each interviewee was informed that the confidentiality of their responses would be guaranteed. The interviews were conducted within the school premises of each participant. As a result, the participants felt at home during the interview sessions and the interviews were conducted smoothly. The average length of each interview was 15 minutes. With their explicit oral permission, the students' interviews were audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

The interview data were first transcribed verbatim and translated into English. To analyse the collected data, an inductive thematic analysis method was adopted. Thematic analysis is defined as an appropriate 'method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns and themes' within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.76), while the inductive approach refers to procedures 'that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts and themes' (Thomas, 2006, p.238). In line with Thomas, the first author immersed in the data and engaged in a detailed reading of the transcription by going through the data line by line thoroughly and assigning codes to chunks of text such as paragraphs relevant to the research aims. After several readings, key concepts and

themes relating to the dynamic and complex nature of language learning motivation were identified. In the second stage of the analysis process, in order to improve the trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis and ensure the first author had analyzed the data correctly (Gunawan, 2015), the second and third authors engaged in a peer-checking process in which they reviewed and assessed the transcription together with the study's methodology as a final process to validate the findings.

Results

RQ1. How has the students' motivation for learning each foreign language been dynamic over the period of their formal education?

With the aim of tracing any noted changes in the students' motivational intensity over the years of their formal education, the twelve students' interview data were analyzed. The analysis revealed that the intensity and engagement in learning the three TLs (i.e., French, English and Kiswahili) did not stay constant and was most often uneven across the languages. Three trends emerged from the data. The first trend was a group of learners, although not many, who reported that their motivation kept increasing equally in all three languages. The excerpt below illustrates that point:

My motivation to learn the three languages has kept increasing over the years. [...], as I advanced in upper classes [...], I came to realize that knowing several foreign languages is a plus, as all languages are important and may help me in the future. That is why I am investing a lot in studying all of them. (Interviewee 10)

The second group consisted of students who reported to have continuously maintained positive motivation to learn the three FLs over the years but who also revealed that the increase in their motivation was uneven across the languages, with English generally enjoying the highest increase and Kiswahili the lowest. Consider in this regard the following illustrative example from one such participant:

My motivation to learn the three foreign languages is not still the same. As I advanced in upper classes, my motivation to learn the languages has been increasing, though not to the same extent since I feel that all are not equally important. It is my motivation to learn English that kept experiencing a considerable increase due to its paramount importance in my future life. (Interviewee 1)

The last trend that was observed in the data was a group of learners who revealed to have experienced a decline in the level of their engagement in learning either French or Kiswahili or both. None of the interviewed students reported, however, to have experienced a decrease in their motivation for studying English. Below is one instance of the raised points from a student from that group:

My engagement for the three foreign languages had been positive over time until grade 7. When I reached grade 7, my motivation for both French and Kiswahili started to decline. [...] It was probably due to both the French and Kiswahili teachers whose teaching methods and styles I did not like. (Interviewee 3)

The analysis of the interview data of these simultaneous multilingual learners provided evidence for the dynamic nature of their motivation in learning each FL over the period of their formal education. The causes responsible for those fluctuations are addressed below in the answers to the second research question.

RQ2. What factors were responsible for any noted fluctuations in the students' motivations?

This research question concerned the factors responsible for any changes in the students' engagement in learning the three FLs. In this respect, the students' interview data were examined. Four major themes emerged to be the main causes behind the students' motivational fluctuations: a desire to achieve multilingual competence, attitudes and perceived importance of each TL, the role of significant others, and aspects of the learning experience.

Desire to achieve multilingual competence

Although all the interviewed students reported having experienced changes in their FL motivation over their formal education period, only a few learners said that their motivation kept increasing equally in all three languages. Achieving multilingual competence was the driving force for these students, who felt that the knowledge of each language might help them finish their high school education and bring more benefits to them when they become adults. This perception is reflected in the following excerpt:

The level of interest and engagement in learning these languages has been on the rise over this long period. I am equally motivated to study them and my dearest wish is to master each of them. They are all important. (Interviewee 11)

Attitudes and perceived importance of each target language

Despite the fact that the participants had been involved in simultaneous learning of multiple FLs over many years, the analysis of the data revealed that the students had, however, different attitudes towards the TLs. When asked which FL they liked most, most of the interviewed students – nine out of the twelve interviewees- spontaneously chose English, while the remaining three students selected French as their favorite FL. Regarding Kiswahili, none of the participants selected it as their best-liked language. The students' positive attitudes towards English and French are evidenced in the following sampled excerpts:

Personally, I like English most. It is the language I genuinely like, [...]. Second, it is a language that I believe will be of much benefit to me especially in my future when I become competent in it. (Interviewee 1)

French is the most important foreign language in Burundi. As our country is French speaking, French is used in many of the country's life domains such as education, administration, etc. It is for this reason that I like French most. (Interviewee 12)

Regarding Kiswahili learning, the analysis showed that most of the interviewed students had negative attitudes towards the language. As a consequence, most of the participants acknowledged not to be investing much of their time into learning Kiswahili;

the only motive for investing in it seemed just to pass the course. When asked about their reasons for not liking Kiswahili much, the majority of the students seemed to be giving tentative reasons. For example, Interviewee 1 said: '[...] I don't even invest a great deal of effort into learning Kiswahili. (Why?) I don't know why, maybe because I do not use much time to learn it.' Another student, Interviewee 8, told the researcher the following: 'Kiswahili? I am not into it that much. For sure, I don't know why. Maybe because it has fewer periods a week, which gives an impression that the subject is not that important.' Only one student was sure of why she liked least Kiswahili and provided a genuine reason found in the literature regarding how Burundians perceive Kiswahili and Kiswahili speakers:

From my early childhood I never liked Kiswahili. And even today, despite the fact that we learn it at school, I don't invest much of my time and energy into studying it. (Why?) Because when speaking it, people around you, even some classmates, tend to judge you negatively, thinking that you are a person of bad manners, a person not well-educated and of nasty behaviors. (Interviewee 12)

Regarding the importance of each language, most students (11 out of the 12 interviewed students) said that English was the most useful language for international communication. Consequently, this perception of English as an international language had a positive impact on the students' motivation. In fact, the majority of the students indicated a strong desire to improve their English knowledge because they strongly believe that when they know English, they can travel everywhere on the globe. Consider in this regard the following excerpt as an illustrative example of such learners:

English is an international language. I hope that the language will play a major role in my future than any other foreign language we are learning. It will help me when travelling abroad, to get a better job or to speak with foreigners visiting my country. (Interviewee 2)

Moreover, as most learners reported English to be their favorite FL and as most of them said that English was the most important language for international communication, none of the interviewed students reported, therefore, experiencing a decrease in their motivation in studying English, unlike with French and Kiswahili learning. Excerpt from Interviewee 6 instantiates this general trend:

As every year I was promoted to upper classes, my motivation to learn English also kept increasing. Maybe because it is the language I like most and a language I believe will be more important in my future. For both French and Kiswahili, however, my interest into them kept declining. Maybe because I find both very difficult.

With regard to the role of French and Kiswahili in helping the students to communicate internationally or with foreigners, the interviewed students also perceived them as practical languages, though to a lesser extent when compared to English. These

learners felt that French would also be useful when communicating with people from French-speaking countries, while Kiswahili seemed only to be important in Africa, particularly in its eastern and central regions. For these learners, French and Kiswahili are, therefore, more useful in narrower cycles compared to English, which is not only important in geographical areas where both French and Kiswahili are traditionally dominant, but also across the globe.

Role of significant others

From the students' interview data, family members and language teachers emerged to be among the factors behind the learners' motivational fluctuations. Regarding the influence of the family on students' language learning engagement, all the interviewed students reported having received pressure from such significant others in relation to one or other FL or all of them. The analysis indicated that four students received equal encouragement to learn each FL; two learners reported to have been pressured to invest most into learning French, while the remaining six students were told to invest most into English. For Kiswahili, none of the participants said to have received from their family pressure to invest most into studying it. Overall, family expectations appeared to have less influence on the students' French and Kiswahili learning compared to English learning. Below is an excerpt instantiating encouragement to invest in all the languages:

My parents encourage me to learn each language. My father often tells me that no language should be neglected. He said that French will help me to secure a good job in Burundi while both English and Kiswahili will help me when travelling abroad. (Interviewee 3)

Concerning the impact of teachers on the students' motivation, some learners were found to relate their feelings of success or learning difficulties to their teachers' teaching methods or styles, which either sustained or failed to revive some students' motives for learning the languages. Below is an illustrative example of the points just mentioned:

What makes me like English most is our English teacher. He teaches well and is always attentive to our learning difficulties. Because of him, I very much like English. (Interviewee 4)

Aspects of the learning experience

Aspects of the learning experience such as learner experience of success, perception of language learning ease or difficulties, and poor performance in terms of bad grades were reported to be responsible for the students' motivational dynamics. The following excerpts are some examples of the points raised above:

English is the language I like most and a language subject that I better understand and in which I get good grades. (Interviewee 3)

French is my favourite language subject. Maybe because I get good grades in it. Though I do not dislike English, I find it very difficult to learn; I have many difficulties in its pronunciation. (Interviewee 5)

RQ3. How have the different language systems in the learners' multilingual repertoire affected the learning motivation of each target language?

To answer this last research question, the students' interviews were examined. Three themes emerged concerning the complexity of motivation in learning multiple languages: the influence of L1 on L2/L3 motivation, the impact of L2 on L3 motivation, and the reciprocal influence of L3 on L2 motivation.

The influence of L1 on L2 or L3 motivation

Most of the interviewed learners typically viewed Kirundi and their L3 Kiswahili as similar linguistic systems, indicating that they study Kiswahili with relative ease. For example, interviewee 6 mentioned:

Of the three foreign languages, Kirundi looks more similar to Kiswahili. Both languages seem to have many points in common. Because of my knowledge of Kirundi, learning Kiswahili becomes easier.

Some learners provided more concrete evidence concerning the similarities between Kirundi and Kiswahili. For interviewee 2, the perceived structural similarity between Kirundi and Kiswahili was a source of motivation for Kiswahili learning.

Learning grammatical sentences in Kirundi and Kiswahili is almost the same. Kirundi and Kiswahili share certain similarities in terms of their formal structures. For example, *ndagukunda* (Kirundi) looks structurally more similar to *nakupenda* (Kiswahili) than its equivalent in both French (*Je t'aime*) and English (*I love you*).

Indeed, the example of this student shows how both languages are structurally similar. The sentence the student provided indicates that both Kiswahili and Kirundi are agglutinative languages, unlike both English and French. One word sentence can be used to express what both French and English do by using more words. The Kirundi word *ndagukunda* can be morpho-syntactically analyzed as *n-ra-ku-kund-a* (subject marker - focus marker - object marker - verb marker - aspect marker) and literally translated as (I-emphasis-you-love-aspect).

Interviewee 10 expressed the proximity of Kiswahili East African speakers' culture to Burundi's culture. This helped him to enjoy learning Kiswahili. As the student perceived that the two cultures were closer, this generated some sort of motivation for L3 Kiswahili learning.

I like watching Kiswahili films and music videos during my free time. It is amazing how the cultural folklores and traditional ceremonies in both cultures are similar. [...] So, I sometimes invest into learning Kiswahili to better understand their culture which is more closely related to Burundi culture.

The excerpts above from the learners' interviews seem to indicate that when the students perceive Kirundi to be closer or more similar to Kiswahili, some sort of motivation to learn it can then be generated.

The impact of L2 on L3 motivation

As for the influence of an L2 on L3 learning motivation, most of the interviewed learners revealed obvious connections between their L2 French and L3 English. Although the students had been involved in multiple FL learning since grade one, most of them said that they had more proficiency in French than in any other FL. This is quite normal in the Burundi context, where French is the dominant FL and a medium of instruction. For most learners, L2 French plays a facilitative role in learning L3 English. Interviewee 1, for instance, made the following point:

Despite the simultaneous learning of the three foreign languages, I feel that I am more proficient in French. As I know more words in French than in any other language, I use this ability in trying to know the equivalent meaning of those words in English through using bilingual dictionaries. French has helped me then to better learn other languages, particularly English.

To interviewee 7, the similarity between French and English at the level of vocabulary and spelling was a source of motivation for English learning:

When you know more French, English seems easier to learn. Both languages have in common many false friends, cognates and loanwords. This eases my English learning.

The influence of L3 on L2 motivation

Concerning the impact of L3s on L2 learning, the reports of some interviewees typically indicated that their L2 French learning in the presence of English either declined over time or did not increase to the same degree as the learning of English did. Reasons provided for this were the high instrumentality of English and the impossibility of allotting equal time to both while learning them. For example, Interviewee 11 below highlights his dilemma of spending equal time in both languages.

Learning French in the presence of English made my motivation to decline progressively over time. Because I find it extremely difficult for me to allot equal time and effort to both.

From the learners' interviews, a decline in the level of students' engagement in learning either French or Kiswahili or both was indeed reported by some learners. None of the interviewed pupils agreed, however, to have experienced a decrease in their motivation for studying English. This indicates, therefore, that L3 English sometimes plays a counter-intuitive role by negatively affecting the time learners spend on French and Kiswahili.

Discussion

Our research reveals dynamic changes in the learners' L2 motivation over time and complex interactions between learners' linguistic knowledge in the different language systems and their foreign language learning motivations.

RQ1 and RQ2 concerned the temporal evolution of the participants' motivation over the period of their formal education and the factors responsible for any noted changes in their learning engagement. The findings from the retrospective interview data provided some evidence for the dynamic process of students' motivation for learning each of the three TLs. The analysis of the interview data showed that the intensity of learning the three FLs did not stay constant but fluctuated over time. All the interviewed learners reported to have experienced an increase or decline in their motivation for learning each language. Three trends emerged from the interview data. First, among the interviewed students, a few learners reported that their motivation kept increasing equally in all three languages. Achieving multilingual competence was the driving force for those students who felt that the knowledge of each language might help them finish their high school education and bring more benefits to them when they become adults. For these learners, all three languages are important.

A second trend observed in the data was a group of students who not only reported to have continuously maintained positive motivation to learn all the FLs throughout their formal education but also agreed that the increase in their motivation was uneven across the languages, with English generally enjoying the highest increase and Kiswahili the lowest. For these students, perceived benefits associated with multilingualism, attitudes and perceived importance of each language, and the role of their significant others, such as teachers and parents, were some of the factors responsible for the increase.

The last trend was a group of learners who experienced a decline in the level of engagement in learning either French or Kiswahili or both. Some students even remembered when their motivation started decreasing and the factors responsible for those changes in their motivation. In many instances, such negative fluctuations were closely connected with the teacher's teaching style or method, perception of difficulty or poor grades in the language subject and negative attitudes towards Kiswahili from the learner social milieu. Some of these causes for the students' motivational behavior across the three FLs are similar to the findings of some studies conducted, for instance, in EFL contexts of Iran (Moiinvaziri & Razmjoo, 2014) and Korea (Song & Kim, 2017). As every single interviewed learner in the present study pointed out, English was the most important FL, and as most students had positive attitudes toward English, none of the students reported to have experienced a decrease in their motivation for studying English. This finding is in line with the results of a few studies conducted so far in the context of Burundi in which both French-medium university students (Irakoze, 2015) and senior high school learners (Bigirimana, 2018) were found to have more positive attitudes toward English than toward French and Kiswahili.

Overall, the analysis of the interview data of these simultaneous multilingual learners provided evidence for the dynamic nature of their FL learning motivation. Results indicated that the students' motivational intensity was subject to fluctuations over time, with English generally enjoying the highest increase in motivation and Kiswahili the lowest. Results also provided some insights into the causes responsible for those fluctuations in the level of motivation across the languages. The findings of the present

study are thus in line with the results of other studies (e.g., Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2017; Henry, 2015; Song & Kim, 2017; Wang & Liu, 2017) whose results also revealed that their students' language learning motivation was dynamic as the construct was found to fluctuate over shorter or longer time scales.

It should be noted, however, that the negative attitudes towards Kiswahili reported by most of the interviewed learners seem to find an explanation in the literature. In fact, negative attitudes towards Kiswahili are a legacy of the Belgian colonization (1919-1962). Kiswahili was introduced in Burundi in the late 19th century through trade and Islam. During this period of colonization, Kiswahili and Kiswahili speakers were marginalized and discriminated against in the country. Kirundi and French were the only languages used in education, while the colonial Belgian government branded Kiswahili as slang, the language of Muslims, strangers, criminals and uncivilized people (Belt, 2010). As a consequence, some Burundians, especially those from rural areas or higher socio-economic classes, still regard, even today, Kiswahili and Kiswahili speakers as displaying bad manners, associating them with the thug, dishonest, liar and thief tradespeople in Bujumbura, who are often Kiswahili speakers (Irankeje & Nduwamahoro, 2022).

RQ3 explores the influence of each language from the learner's multilingual repertoire on L2 or L3 learning motivation. Interview data revealed complex interactions between students' L1, L2, and L3s linguistic knowledge and their FL learning motivations. Concerning the impact of the students' L1 system on non-native languages, most of the interviewed learners mentioned the positive influence of L1 Kirundi in learning L3 Kiswahili. Learners such as interviewees 2, 4, 6 and 10 attributed some of their motivation in learning Kiswahili to its perceived structural and cultural proximity to their L1 Kirundi. These learners felt that the psychotypological similarities between Kirundi and Kiswahili made the learning of the latter less difficult. This seems to lend credence to Kellerman's (1983) psychotypology concept. These results suggest that learner-perceived typological closeness between one's L1 and an additional language could create the initial motive for the learning of a non-native language. This finding is also corroborated by Siridetkoon and Dewaele's (2017) study in which their Thai participants attributed some of their L3 Japanese learning motivation to its perceived typological similarity to their L1 Chinese.

Regarding the influence of an L2 on L3s motivation, the students' L2 French higher proficiency was reported to play a facilitative role in learning L3 English due to the perceived high instrumentality of English. For other learners, such as interviewee 7, the obvious structural similarities in terms of vocabulary and spelling between French and English made the English learning process easier. This finding is similar to Sikogukira's (1993) study, also conducted with Burundi learners, in which L3 English learning was found to be more influenced by L2 French than L1 Kirundi.

Regarding the influence of L3s on L2 learning, some students typically indicated that their L2 French learning in the presence of English either declined over time or did not increase to the same degree as the learning of English did. Indeed, a decline in the level

of students' engagement in learning either French or Kiswahili or both was observed in some learners, while none of the interviewed pupils agreed to have experienced a decrease in their motivation for studying English. These results seem to find support from other studies (e.g., Dörnyei et al., 2006; Henry, 2011; Nizigama et al., 2023) in which English was found to have a negative impact on the learning of languages other than English (LOTEs) regardless of whether it was being learned as an L2 or L3. As it was also concluded elsewhere (e.g., Dörnyei et al., 2006), LOTE learning can, thus, be impeded as the different target languages compete for the learners' fixed amount of motivational and cognitive resources. This finds some echo in Interviewee 11's report who emphasized his dilemma of spending equal time to both French and English while learning them. Therefore, the reciprocal effect of L3 English on L2 French in this study seems negative. It follows that an L3 can negatively affect the learning of an established L2 if students perceive that the L3 is more important for their future. This finding indeed highlights the complex nature of multilingual development (Larsen-Freeman, 2015).

According to CDST, a number of factors, such as linguistic (i.e., different language systems) and non-linguistic (the status of the TL, language proficiency), might influence learner's motivation. In the present study, there is an array of complex interactions between these two motivational factors in the learner's multilingual learning motivation. First, languages with a closer typology to a TL were found to have a positive influence on the learning motivation of the latter. Second, L3 English had a reciprocal negative impact on L2 French learning motivation due to the perceived high prestige of English. Similar to other studies (e.g., Bui & Teng, 2019; Fukui & Yashima, 2021; Siridetkoon & Dewaele, 2017), it appears that motivational influences among the different languages in the learner's multilingual development repertoire exert mutual impacts on each other in a very complex way.

Conclusion

The overarching aim of the present qualitative study was to investigate the dynamic and complex nature of Burundi junior high school students' multiple foreign language motivations. This research drew on Larsen-Freeman's (2015) complex dynamic systems theory (CDST) to fill a gap in the literature where examining the motivational dynamics of language learners over shorter or longer time scales together with the complex interactions of different motivational factors in the learning process was an area overlooked until more recently (Fukui & Yashima, 2021). With regard to the three research questions that guided this study, the interview data were used to draw the following conclusions:

As for the first and second RQs regarding the dynamic changes in the learners' motivation across the target languages and factors responsible for any changes over the period of the participants' formal education, the interview data revealed that their motivations were indeed dynamic. The findings showed that the intensity in learning each FL fluctuated over time, with English generally enjoying the highest increase and Kiswahili the lowest. Moreover, a decline in motivation was reported in some learners in

relation to learning French, Kiswahili or both. Factors that lay behind the dynamic changes were, among others, positive attitudes towards English and French, negative attitudes towards Kiswahili, perceived importance of each language, influence of parents and school teachers, and desire to achieve multilingual competence.

For the last question (RQ3), complex interactions between the students' L1, L2, and L3s linguistic knowledge and their FLs learning motivations were revealed. First, the positive influence of L1 Kirundi in learning L3 Kiswahili due to the learners' perceived structural proximity between the two linguistic systems was reported by most of the interviewees. This result suggests that learners perceived typological closeness between their L1 Kirundi and L3 Kiswahili created the initial motive for learning the latter, giving credence to Kellerman's (1983) concept of psychotypology. Regarding the influence of an L2 on L3s motivation, the students' higher proficiency in French was reported to play a facilitative role in learning L3 English due to the perceived high instrumentality of English. For other learners, the structural similarities in terms of vocabulary and spelling between French and English also made the English learning process easier. Regarding the influence of L3s on L2 learning, some students typically indicated that their L2 French learning in the presence of English either declined over time or did not increase to the same degree as the learning of English did. Indeed, a decline in the level of students' engagement in learning either French or Kiswahili or both was reported by some learners, while none of the interviewed pupils agreed to have experienced a decrease in their motivation for studying English. Thus, these findings suggest that LOTE learning can be impeded as the different target languages compete for the learners' fixed amount of motivational and cognitive resources due to the perceived importance of global English. These results indeed highlight the complex nature of multiple language learning motivations.

Our study has some practical implications for the Burundi educational system. Given that the findings revealed a positive influence of L1 Kirundi on L3 Kiswahili learning motivation, on the one hand, and as L2 French was found to play a facilitative role in learning L3 English, on the other, the country's Ministry of Education should therefore reconsider the 2007 Burundi simultaneous multiple FL teaching policy. Instead of teaching all three FLs from the very first grade, the four languages (i.e., Kirundi, French, English and Kiswahili) taught in primary and secondary schools should be gradually introduced. L1 Kirundi and L2 French should be the only languages taught in lower grades, and when learners have achieved some proficiency that can facilitate the learning of the subsequent FLs, English and Kiswahili can then be introduced in the curriculum of upper school grades. Although the policy was revised in 2019 (see the May 22nd, 2019 decree No 100/078), having gradually introduced English and Kiswahili, respectively, from grades 3 and 5 seems too early. In fact, as children start learning simultaneously both Kirundi and French starting from grade 1, and as most of them do not attend nursery schools (see World Bank, 2018), whether they have developed basic literacy skills in both languages when they reach grade 3 seems uncertain.

Although this study revealed important findings, it had, however, some limitations. To examine the dynamic changes over time in the students' motivational behavior across the three FLs and the causes of changes, a longitudinal study with one school grade pupils over time would give more interesting results. Besides, more sources of data collection (e.g., asking learners to draw graphs mapping their motivation fluctuations over the school learning period, open-ended questionnaires, etc.) were needed for triangulation of the findings.

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Appendix. Questions from the Interview Guide

1. Of all the three foreign languages you are learning, which one do you like most and least? Why?
2. Thinking back to the commencement of your study of FLs in grade 1, do you think your motivation for each language has remained constant or has changed over time?
3. If your language learning motivation has ever changed, what factors do you think were behind such fluctuations?
4. Could you comment on the similarities and differences between Kirundi and English? Kirundi and French? Kirundi and Kiswahili? And between or among the different FLs?
5. Does Kirundi affect your French/English/Swahili learning motivations?
6. You have been learning three FLs from grade one. Do you think that this has helped or hindered your ability to learn any of those languages?