

Beteckning _____



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Motivation - the driving force for our actions

A study of the importance of *learning experiences, learner beliefs, self-determination* and *personal goals* for motivation and attitudes in English language learning

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December 2010

Examensarbete

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Abstract

The pedagogical debates within language learning and language teaching have emphasized motivation as one of the key factors. Conversely, the broadness of motivation and its complexity has been acknowledged as a challenging concept which is difficult to grasp. This study aims at examining motivation as a concept determined by different internal and external factors which also shape individuals' attitudes towards language learning. With the aim of understanding the existence of motivation and attitudes in a variety of contexts, individuals' level of language knowledge is the point of departure in this study. Motivation and attitudes in language learning are examined in the light of individuals' learning experiences, personal beliefs, self-determination and personal goals.

Key words: motivation, motivational elements, level of language knowledge

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1. Introduction

We all have subjective reasons for our willingness to acquire or resist acquiring knowledge. Every individual is surrounded by an infinite amount of knowledge where different factors of a subjective nature determine its relevance in accordance to individuals' personal goals currently as well as in the future. Regarding language learning, the measures that promote proficiency ought to be taken as a helping tool in the process of motivation. One of the key factors, which in second language learning, as well as learning in general, is considered to be of decisive importance is motivation. Learning achievements are thus strongly associated with individuals' motivation.

Motivation strategies and attitudes are, in my viewpoint, two interrelated factors and cannot be understood or provided with a conceivable solution if one of these factors is examined without any consideration of the other factor. It is essential to discover and understand the reasons for pupils' lack of motivation embedded in their attitudes towards language learning, with the intention of establishing different strategies for increasing motivation. In addition, my research will put emphasis on attitudes and motivation in English language learning brought to the surface by pupils through interaction with each other in natural, social discourse.

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine the motivational processes among vocational pupils in the course of their language learning. Specifically, this study aims at discovering the reasons behind pupils' expressed willingness or lack of willingness to learn English. The intention with establishing these reasons is, based on pupils' utterances, to ascertain whether pupils' attitudes towards English learning is influenced by either internal (within oneself) factors or external factors (outside oneself), or rather by both these factors in interplay. In addition, these reasons will be treated as foundational elements which form pupils' motivation and attitudes.

1.2. Research questions

With regard to clarity and fluency in this study, it should be noted that the research questions below aim at guiding me, as a researcher, in collection and analysis of data. They differ from questions, mentioned in the method section (4.3.), which were used during the group interviews. Conversely, they are only different in formulation and contain the same meaning.

With the consideration of this study's purpose, the following questions are the starting point for the present study:

- What experiences do pupils describe in their English learning?
- What attitudes do pupils express regarding their English learning?
- What are the reasons behind pupils' attitudes towards their English learning?
- What aims do pupils describe with their English learning?

1.3. The definition of motivation

The significance of motivation is great in a variety of contexts, but its broadness and complexity becomes an obstacle in attempt to define it. Nakata (2006) asserts that "most of us would not disagree with the statement that motivation is largely responsible for determining human behaviour, and thus those who are really motivated to learn a foreign language will be able to become proficient to a certain degree regardless of their intelligence or language aptitude" (p.23). Nevertheless, a definition of motivation is required when using it, which Nakata also highlights. There is a great necessity for characterizing motivation with the aim of providing oneself with initial understanding of this concept when studying it. Thus, *what is* motivation is of equal importance as the questions *why* and *how*.

Motivation in the national encyclopedia is defined as "a psychological term for those factors which within the individual arouse, shape and direct his/her behavior toward different goals" ¹(my translation). Consequently, several definitions on motivation have been offered based on different knowledge domains such as biology, psychology, sociology etc., outlining specific factors as crucial in motivational processes. With emphasis on individuals' actions, Dörnyei (2001) defines motivation as follows:

Perhaps the only thing about motivation most researchers would agree on is that it, by definition, concerns the *direction* and *magnitude* of human behaviour, that is:

- the *choice* of a particular action,
- the *persistence* with it,
- the *effort* expended on it.

In other words, motivation is responsible for

- *why* people decide to do something,
- *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity,
- *how hard* they are going to pursue it. (p. 8)

¹ [http://www.ne.se.webproxy.student.hig.se:2048/lang/motivation 16/10-2010](http://www.ne.se.webproxy.student.hig.se:2048/lang/motivation%2016/10-2010)

Dörnyei's definition of motivation can be understood as actions involved in a process and determined by different factors. However, an important aspect, which should be added to Dörnyei's definition, is that motivation is responsible for why people make the decision *not to do* something as well as why they *choose to do* something.

Additionally, individuals' motivation is a process which is developed against the background of different environments. One important aspect which Nakata raises is that motivation is not merely attached to the classroom and should be viewed as such:

When we discuss motivation, we often think in terms of positive or negative attitudes in the classroom. This is a superficial and narrow view. Personal motivation in fact includes factors that extend beyond the classroom (...). In other words, we should not regard motivations as belonging to one community in the classroom; there are broad connections between the classroom and the school, the school and the government and the country at large (p.19).

Thus, the reliability of a definition of motivation which only includes factors connected to school is highly questionable regardless of the study's aim.

On the subject of definitions, it ought to be highlighted that the terms *motivation* and *interest* in this study will be used synonymously, implying that the formulations *pupils are motivated* or *that pupils are interested* only differ in the usage of words but contain the same meaning.

2. Theoretical framework

Motivation is context- dependent, individual-dependent as well as experience-dependent. My theoretical point of departure is based on academic works discussing different aspects of motivation as well as how they are interlinked. Dörnyei (2001) highlights an important consideration regarding the theoretical aspect of motivation as follows: "To enable us to describe student motivation with a precision that can be used as a basis for practical measures, we need a detailed and most likely eclectic model that represents multiple perspectives" (p.12). As a complement to research theory, my theoretical framework consists of multiple perspectives on motivation which highlight both internal and external factors.

2.1. Learning experiences, learner beliefs and self-efficacy

Beliefs and the experiences of individuals are strongly interrelated and have a crucial significance for individuals' motivation as well as for their attitudes. Nakata (2006) argues that beliefs and experiences are two of the most essential factors to consider when researching motivation. "Beliefs associated with learning are some of the most important issues relating to motivation. This is in part because learners develop their various beliefs based on their learning experiences in the learning environment. Beliefs are a matter of how they internalise these experiences" (p.74). Nakata's statement, then, suggests that beliefs develop along the lines of experiences and are most likely a result of these.

Regarding second language learning, experiences lead to different beliefs within a learner which subsequently influence learners' attitudes as well as behaviours. Significantly, Nakata underlines that "it is reasonable to suppose that beliefs are unlikely to be easily modified, because they are formed over a long period through numerous experiences" (p.76). This suggests that learners' attitudes towards language learning are strongly affected and shaped by their beliefs. It is important to bear in mind that beliefs as a theoretical construct has strong relevance for my study, given that pupils' attitudes toward English learning is, among other aspects, the mainstay in this study.

To this point, I have discussed the interrelationship between personal experiences and beliefs. Nevertheless, little emphasis has been put on experiences as both influential and unimportant to learners. Nakata underlines that experiences controlled by the educational system influence learners' motivation, which decreases their ambition to learn, that is the intrinsic motivation (p.89-90). The most important aspect, though, highlighted by Nakata is the following:

However, two notes must be sounded here. In the first place, there is still room for argument as to whether increasing learners' positive experiences leads in practice to their longlasting motivational enhancement and, by the same token, whether limiting negative experiences helps to counteract their loss of motivation. The key to answering this question is to learn how learners perceive their experiences, either as meaningful or meaningless. (p.91)

In the light of Nakata's observation, regardless of the influence of personal experiences on individuals' attitudes, they might not be meaningful. On an abstract level, it can be concluded that individuals are constantly surrounded by external factors which can be both meaningful and meaningless in individuals' shaping of beliefs and their goal-setting.

Research studies in the field of individual beliefs emphasize self-efficacy as a type of personal belief. Among others, Nakata defines self-efficacy as a belief in one's

capabilities to complete required tasks. Nakata (2006) statement that “motivational behaviour can be greatly influenced by the perceived level of ability to attain a goal” (p.76-77), implies that an individual’s level of motivation and actions are affected by subjective beliefs rather than objective assessment. Self-efficacy as an influential factor in individuals’ motivations is also acknowledged by Alderman (2008) with a critical point of view. Alderman draws attention to self-efficacy differentiating from self-esteem on the basis that the first-mentioned is context and task specific while the latter consists of general judgments (p.69-70). Within the scope of motivation in language learning and the present study, the level of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and learners’ attitudes can, among other influential factors, be deeply rooted in their subjective perception of learning ability. However, we should bear in mind that learners’ level of motivation might be caused by low self-efficacy attached to school and its requirements (so called school-English), simultaneously as learners’ self-efficacy might be high outside the school environment.

Self-efficacy is by Nakata and Alderman discussed in association with specific tasks rather than language learning generally. However, self-efficacy includes also beliefs of individuals’ ability to learn a language which in its turn influences motivation. Self-efficacy is discussed by Schunk and Pajares (2009) on a theoretical level as an influential factor on people’s motivation:

Self-efficacy can influence the choices people make and the courses of action they pursue. Individuals tend to select tasks and activities in which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not. Unless people believe that their actions will produce the desired consequences, they have little incentive to engage in those actions. [---] Self-efficacy can influence one’s ultimate accomplishments and lead to self-fulfilling prophecy in which one accomplishes what one believes one can accomplish. (p.37-38)

As an illustration of self-efficacy as a significant factor in language learning generally, a learner with low self-efficacy in relation to a particular task is most likely to hold beliefs that he/she does not have ability to be successful in language learning. Thus, a learner with low self-efficacy does not feel motivated to learn a language as a learner with high self-efficacy. High self-efficacy level functions as a motivational, driving force, whereas low self-efficacy is a barrier which afflicts motivation.

2.2. Self-determination – Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

The concept of self-determination is viewed in relation to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) define intrinsic motivation as follows: “The phenomenon of *intrinsic motivation* reflects the primary propensity of organisms to engage in activities that interest them and, in so doing, to learn, develop, and expand their capacities. Intrinsic motivation is entailed whenever people behave for the satisfaction inherent in the behavior itself” (p.16). Intrinsic motivation is rather dependent on the individual than on external factors. Noels, Pelletier, Clément and Vallerand (2003) break intrinsic motivation down into three components, namely *knowledge* with the aim of developing one’s own knowledge, *accomplishment* with the aim of achieving a goal and *stimulation* with the aim of feeling appreciation and excitement (p.38).

In contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation can be defined as actions preformed with the intention of reaching an end to either get a reward or avoid a punishment. Alderman states that “*extrinsic motivation* occurs when students engage in activities for external reasons (outside of themselves) such as praise, grades, special privileges, and certificates or material rewards” (p. 252). Similar to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation is also self-determined (p.39), according to Noels and her colleagues. Extrinsic motivation can be recognized in three different forms: *external regulation* where external sources determine activities performed by an individual, *introjected regulation* meaning that the pressure within the individual is the driving force in performing an activity and *identified regulation* where a valued goal drives individuals to accomplish an activity (Noels et. al., 2003, p.39).

The relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is highlighted by Nakata as two concepts traditionally viewed as positive and negative motivation:

According to self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation is separate from extrinsic motivation which is behaviour in the absence of self-determination. These two types of motivation used to be considered as antagonistic. Intrinsic motivation has traditionally been considered to be positive and longlasting, while extrinsic motivation has been seen as negative and a factor that may diminish the learner’s intrinsic interest. (p.98)

Traditionally, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation thus provides learners with either continuous or temporary incentives. Viewing motivation as furtherance or limitation in the learning process implies that learners’ intrinsic motivation becomes affiliated to extrinsic motivation.

Nakata holds this traditional differentiation up to criticism because of “the simplicity of the distinction between these two concepts” (p.98). This simplicity leaves other significant factors out of consideration:

First, extrinsic motivation should not be regarded simply as an antagonistic counterpart of intrinsic motivation.[---] Second, extrinsic motivation, depending on its level, is not necessarily a negative factor that diminishes intrinsic motivation. There are conditions under which tangible rewards do not necessarily undermine intrinsic motivation, although in other conditions extrinsic rewards may run the risk of diminishing intrinsic interest rather than promoting it. [---] Third, the original theory lacks social relatedness, emphasising individuals too much. Obviously, motivational development cannot be explained without a social dimension. (p.98)

Nakata’s criticism signifies that extrinsic motivation does not necessarily have a negative influence on intrinsic motivation, but in other situations it cannot be denied that intrinsic motivation can be negatively affected by extrinsic rewards. Unquestionably, regardless of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic drive in the learning process, both still function as motivational engines to produce knowledge. Independently of how individuals’ reasons for motivation are categorized, and irrespective of the distinction between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*, it ought to be underlined that both these concepts describe and shape individuals’ motivation.

In addition, the interrelationship between individuals’ self-efficacy and their motivation ought to be highlighted. Nakata underlines that “most learners with low confidence, low self-efficacy, and low proficiency may indeed not be able to set the most appropriate goal by themselves” because “learners with low confidence in their ability are unmotivated to learn since they believe there is nothing they can do”(p.96-97). In the light of Nakata’s statement, low confidence in one’s ability is equivalent to low self-efficacy which causes a greater dependence on intrinsic factors for motivation. On the contrary, high confidence in one’s ability is equivalent to high self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation.

2.3. Personal goals

Pupils’ attitudes towards second language learning are goal-dependent, meaning that their motivation to learn or not to learn is highly dependent on what they want to achieve. Personal goals as a significant factor in pupils’ formation of attitudes are discussed by Ford (1992) as follows: “PERSONAL GOALS HAVE TWO BASIC PROPERTIES: they represent the consequences to be achieved (or avoided), and they direct the other components of the person to try to produce those consequences (or prevent them from occurring). These are the *content* and *process* aspects of personal goals” (p.83). Personal goals as a theoretical approach are

also acknowledged by Nakata (2006) as an influential factor in individuals' motivation. Nakata states that "Goals are *current* cognitive representations of a general 'energy' construct that activates learners' behaviour towards the desired direction. Goals play a very important role, since motivation is considered to be process of instigating and sustaining goal-directed behaviour" (p.95). In the light of Ford's and Nakata's views, goals activate individuals' desire to achieve or avoid something. Therefore, personal goals play a significant part in why an individual is motivated or unmotivated to acquire knowledge.

Like Ford, Nakata highlights two main orientations of personal goals, namely performance goals and mastery goals. By definition, "performance goal orientation puts the focus on demonstrating ability, getting good grades or rewards, or beating other students" (p.96). "Mastery goal orientation on the other hand puts the focus on learning and the mastery of content" where "individuals are oriented toward developing new skills" (p.96). Moreover, categorization of personal goals is that of short-term and long-term goals. Alderman (2008) describes short-term goals as "the stepping stones to the long-term goal", while long-term goals are those which "keep us directed toward our ultimate target" (p.111). Further, Alderman underlines that both goals coexist and each goal has a specific role where they complement each other in individuals' achievements (p.111). Thus, performance goals are short-term, content-oriented whereas mastery goals are long-term, process-oriented. In the light of the coexistence of short and long-term goals, both performance and mastery goals can be adopted by individuals in their language learning at the same time.

The behaviour and attitude of an individual is determined by a specific goal only on rare occasions. The coexistence of multiple goals is also discussed by Boekaerts (2009) who underlines that individuals function in different worlds where they are influenced by multiple contexts such as social and cultural, and therefore aim at multiple goals (p.106-107). As such, there is an interaction between multiple contexts and multiple goals which makes it difficult to merely focus on one specific goal.

Ford highlights that multiple goals are rather decisive for people's behavior and might be outside an individual's awareness at the same time as a goal is changeable in response to received feedback. According to Ford's judgment, the obstacle with personal goals as a theoretical approach is that goals tend to be viewed as temporary, task-specific phenomena without any explanatory value (p.84). Since a specific goal can be influenced by internal and external factors, it cannot be viewed as something temporary and connected only to a specific situation.

2.4. Discussion of the research's multiple perspectives on motivation

The broadness of motivation requires a researcher to examine motivation through different approaches. A choice of different approaches draws attention to some aspects at the expense of others and must be made with an awareness that motivation consists of various components. In the light of Dörnyei's statement regarding the necessity of multiple perspectives in research of motivation, my theoretical discussion above highlights my perspectives. In this section I intend to explain my choice of perspectives and their relevance for this study.

The motive behind the choice of multiple perspectives for this study is mainly that they cover both internal and external factors which, as we have seen, can influence individuals' motivation. However, these perspectives are also interrelated and influence each other strongly. The diagram below is my own attempt to show this interrelationship where external factors (learning experiences) influence personal beliefs and self-efficacy, which in its turn influence self-determination and shape personal goals.

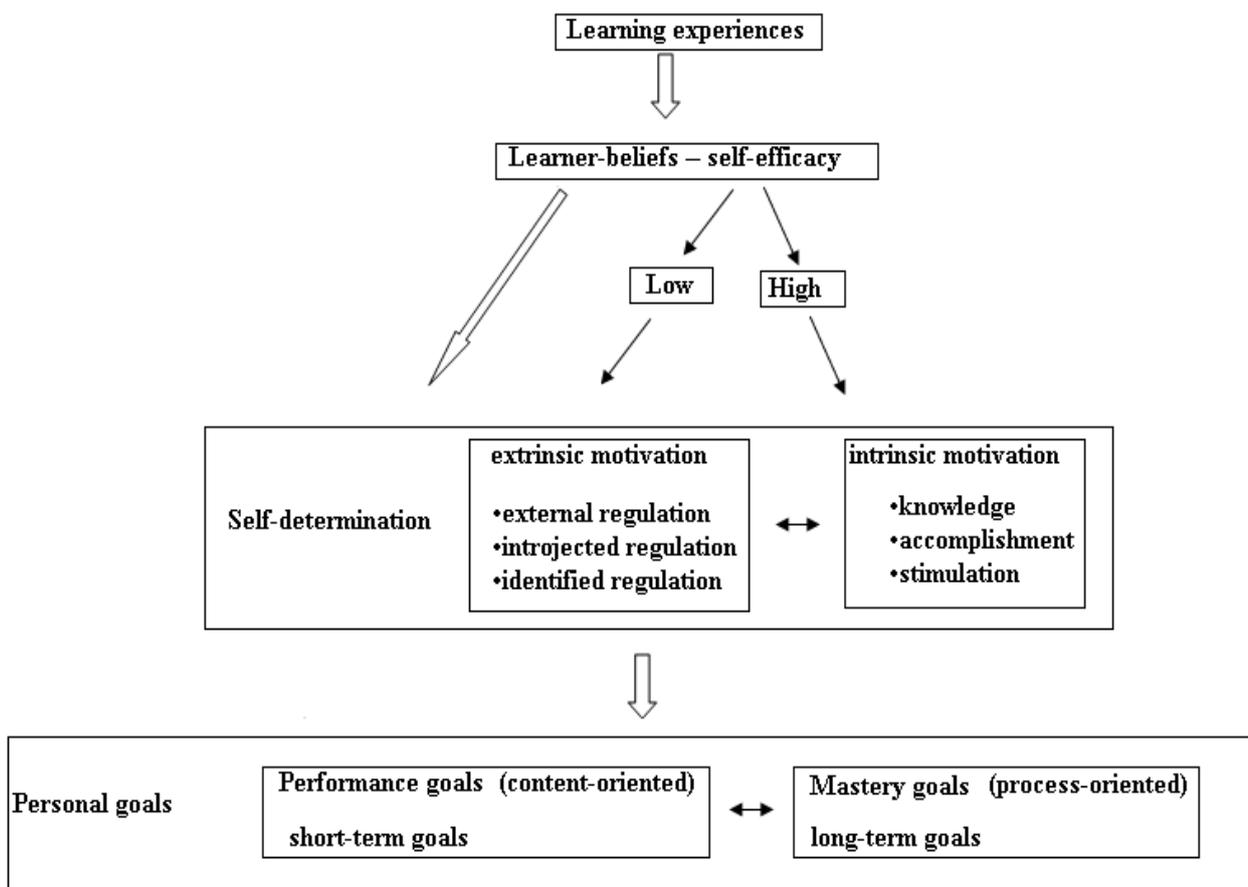


Figure 1: Different elements in the process of motivation

The diagram above of the interrelationship between multiple perspectives of this study is of pyramidal shape consisting of different elements in the process of motivation. Individuals' learning experiences is the primary element in the formation of individuals' motivation and attitudes towards second language learning. Learning experiences as an external factor can be both significant and meaningless to individuals, but, regardless of whichever of the two it is, *that* individuals' experiences have an effect can not be disregarded. Experiences arouse reactions within the individuals and shape their beliefs and self-efficacy which provide the foundation for individuals' motivation and attitudes.

Self-efficacy beliefs have a strong effect on individuals' self-determination as well as their vulnerability. Individuals with high self-efficacy possess greater intrinsic interest in learning and are self-determined to challenge themselves and succeed. Low self-efficacy, on the other hand, creates a need within the individual to receive extrinsic rewards with the aim of succeeding, a need which as well is self-determined. These diversities in individuals' self-determination influence their personal goals and thus motivation and attitudes in language learning.

Irrespective of the interrelationship between the discussed factors, the relevance of these factors for this study ought to be emphasized as well. Given that pupils' skills and abilities lack a complete explanation for pupils' attitudes towards language learning, other factors ought to be taken into consideration. In the light of the above, the choice of my multiple perspectives is an attempt to construct a model sufficiently detailed to enable me to fulfill my purpose and describe pupils' motivation in association with themselves as well as with external forces.

3. Motivation studies in second language learning

This section (3.) reports on previous research dealing with motivation in language learning in relation to different contextual factors and individual views. Previous research referred to in this study serves merely as a general view of different studies examining motivation with the aim of describing pupils' attitudes towards language learning. The studies mentioned below will be discussed later in relation to the results of this study, with the aim of establishing similarities and differences and possibly observing a pattern in the process of motivation.

3.1. Internal and external, influential factors in language learning

On the subject of pupils' motivation in relation to different influential factors, previous studies examine willingness to communicate, different reasons for learning a second language and the importance of teachers' communicative style in pupils' formation of attitudes.

Motivation is discussed by Baker and MacIntyre (2003) who highlight the differences in communication, attitudes and motivation among immersion and nonimmersion students. Their research shows that immersion students have more willingness to communicate in a second language than nonimmersion students. However, Baker and MacIntyre point out that despite the differences observed on communication variables, immersion/nonimmersion is not an essential variable in pupils' reasons for studying French and their attitudes toward French. There is rather a gender difference where male and female immersion students as well as nonimmersion female students express high motivation in French learning, whereas nonimmersion male students express to some extent lower motivation. However, regardless of the fact that both immersion and nonimmersion students have negative experiences in their French learning, these experiences appear not to have a disadvantageous effect on their attitudes (p.88-93).

Irrespective of gender and immersion as two variables which can play a crucial part in student's formation of attitudes towards second language learning, as Baker and MacIntyre highlight, teachers' communicative style might as well be a significant variable in this process. While Baker's and MacIntyre's research is student-oriented, Noels' et al.'s (2003) research as well as Noels' (2003) research, have their point of departure in the teacher. Noels et al. highlight pupils' personal reasons for learning French as a second language. Whether the students' motivation is linked to self-determined factors or whether their amotivation² level is high, is strongly dependent on freedom of choice. The more controlling a teacher is and the more he/she does not express positive feedback, the less pupils are intrinsically motivated in their language learning (p.52-53). Noels (2003), on the other hand, highlights that teachers' behaviors have a direct bearing on students' feelings of autonomy as well as their competence in Spanish learning. Noels points out that the more a teacher is perceived as controlling as well as the more students experience their freedom of choice is low, the less they feel that second language learning has value (p.125-127). As was previously noted, attitudes toward language learning are determined by multiple factors such as gender, enthusiasm and individuals' influences in their language teaching.

² "Amotivation refers to the situation in which people see no relation between their actions and the consequences of those actions" (Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2003, p.40).

3.2. Attitudes and motivation in second language learning

Motivation studies also explain the relationship between learners' attitudes and motivation in language learning. In the study of motivation among Japanese university students, Nakata (2006) emphasizes motivation among students whose English learning is a part of their degree requirements (p.201). Nakata points out that the students find great joy in language learning where intrinsic purposes and personal responsibility dominate. Regardless of this joy, students express insecurity in their communication skills simultaneously as great wish for communicative ability. Nakata concludes that students' success in English is the main factor for their intrinsic motivation (p.212-214). As Nakata's research shows, intrinsic motivation is linked to personal goals representing a desire to gain knowledge regardless of the ability to use English communicatively.

On the other hand, Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh (2006) point out that English learning in Hungary has lost its significance because the language has become a compulsory subject in education rather than a motivated, independent choice by pupils (p.144). Against this background, Hungarian pupils do not regard English learning as prestigious and therefore their goal attainments differ from Japanese students with opposing views. In addition, there is an age difference between Nakata's and Dörnyei's et al.'s research where English is a compulsory subject both for Japanese and Hungarian pupils but has caused different attitudes among the students.

Resembling Japanese and Hungarian learners of English, Swedish pupils in the compulsory school have English language as a compulsory subject. Swedish national evaluation of the compulsory school carried out by Skolverket (2003) shows that English knowledge among pupils is high. Skolverket concludes that "the pupils consider that English is one of the most important, useful and most interesting subjects in the compulsory school, but four out of ten pupils, nevertheless, consider that English is difficult" (p.33). According to the results of Skolverket (ibid.), English is a subject where "gender differences in performance and grades is minimal" (p.33). Moreover, Skolverket highlights that pupils' English learning is a continuing process both in and outside school, but one in which most knowledge is gained outside the scope of school environment.

4. Method

4.1. Participants

The participants included in this research are vocational pupils, attending their first year at the upper secondary school. The selection of vocational pupils is determined by the fact that pupils are placed in an ability group based on their language knowledge. This level division is of rare occurrence and is not put into practice within other study programs against the background that the pupils' level of knowledge within these programs is much higher. Grouping of vocational pupils will give me the opportunity to see whether their differences in motivation are linked to their level knowledge or if these differences are rather based on different internal and external factors outlined in the theoretical framework.

Vocational pupils are grouped as follows: *low ability group* where pupils don't reach course goals, *intermediate level group* where pupils reach goals but are dependent on the teacher and have difficulties with working independently, and *top level group* where both pupils' language use and proficiency are strong. The number of participants selected for this study is twelve – four pupils from each level group. Given that my research is a qualitative study, this number of participants was considered to be sufficient. For the sake of reliability, the selection of participants is based on distribution according to sex, where two boys and two girls have been selected from each level group, with the exception of top-level group where only one girl wanted to participate. Thus, under the prevailing circumstances, three boys and one girl were selected from the top-level group. The pupils offered themselves as participants voluntarily. This procedure was considered suitable for this study with the aim of diminishing my own influence as much as possible.

For the sake of clarity, fluency and anonymity, the participants have been given fictitious names in the presentation of results as the table below shows:

Low ability group	Intermediate level group	Top-level group
Anna	Jenny	Sara
Amanda	Johanna	Simon
Anders	Jonas	Stefan
Andreas	Joakim	Sebastian

4.2. Semi-structured interview and methodological discussion

With the aim of emphasizing the reasons for pupils' willingness as well as lack of willingness to learn English, the method used in this research was digital-recorded, semi-structured group discussions in the presence of the researcher. The presence of the researcher during the discussions serves to maintain the relevance of the discussion with regard to the project's purpose. Semi-structured interview is a qualitative method which allows for deep level discussions. As Lindlof (1995) underlines:

Focus groups create settings in which diverse perceptions, judgments, and experiences concerning particular topics can surface. Persons in focus groups are stimulated by the experiences of other members of the group to articulate their own perspectives. The way they support, debate or resolve issues with each other can resemble the dynamics of everyday social discourse (p.174).

Producing data through group interaction constitutes valuable information which would not be accessible if interaction between the participants was excluded. Group interaction functions as a driving force for participants to express their own opinions. Regarding choice of other interview techniques, a semi-structured interview was considered more fruitful. As Lindlof argues: "Moreover, the individual interview cannot capture very well dynamic processes of natural group interaction or collective interpretation" (p.174).

On the subject of semi-structured method as a research tool, there are two different terms used in defining this method. Barbour (2007) outlines different conflicting views which have caused opposing methodological debates between *focus group discussions* and *group interviews*. Barbour highlights that researchers apply "the term 'group interviews' but describe an approach that is more commonly referred to as 'focus group discussions', relying on generating data and analyzing interaction between participants, rather than asking the same question (or list of questions) to each group participant in turn, which would be the approach favoured by what is more commonly referred to as 'group interview'" (p.2). This terminological distinction is of considerable value if such a clear distinction is achievable. In addition, it ought to be emphasized that a semi-structured method can combine both concepts where the one is complementary to the other rather than being diametrically opposed to the other.

Both focus group discussions and group interviews are applicable to the present study which aims to encourage group interaction and simultaneously ask participants questions as a complementary addition to the introduction of the topic. It is of great importance that the participants receive an introduction of the topic followed by discussion

questions with the aim of participants becoming conversant with the research focus (Lindlof, 1995, p.174). In agreement with Barbour's distinction and Lindlof's statement, I consider the application of both terms equally valuable, since participants' maturity and, all the more so, their unconscious reasons, necessitate such an application with the aim of creating an environment where exchange of views are facilitated.

Individuals' level of conscious factors and the importance of a researcher's awareness of this condition, is emphasized by Dörnyei (2001) as follows:

The first fundamental question about the nature of human motives we need to ask is *how conscious* – that is, being within the control of the individual – they are. Although the most of contemporary motivation literature takes it for granted that human behaviour can be explained by factors of which the individual is aware, it requires little justification that this is *not* always so. (p.9)

If the researcher assumes that the participants are always conscious of the reasons for their attitudes towards second language learning, the research will be an unsuccessful attempt to highlight these reasons. As Dörnyei (2001) states, "(...) humans do a lot of things as a matter of routine, and such relatively automated or habitual actions are often not under direct motivational control (...)" (p.9). Thus, individuals' actions are challenging for the researcher in the attempt to understand their function. However, this obstacle can be surmounted if a suitable mode of procedure is applied with the aim of successfully accessing this study's data. Based on Dörnyei's emphasis, a suitable research tool, as highlighted above, can be composed of focus group discussions and group interview.

Hitherto, the methodological discussion has dealt with the advantages of focus group discussions and group interviews as well as the application of the two. Conversely, the disadvantages ought to be mentioned as well. Regardless of the application of the two concepts, the desirable outcome might not be achieved. Even though the use of interview questions functions as a tool to excavate thoughts, attitudes or feelings captivated in the subconscious minds of individuals, these questions might be unfruitful. Emphasizing this dilemma, Barbour states:

Fortunately all is not lost in qualitative research if initial hypotheses are not supported – if the comparisons we make in interrogating our data do not provide the patterning, and hence analytic purchase, for which we had hoped. Since qualitative methods – and focus groups in particular – generate such rich data, there are always differences, dimensions or processes that we can explore (146).

Thus, the collected data is not necessarily undermined by unanswered hypothesis and still provides the researcher with analytic directions. Since no predetermined answers are desirable

and no initial hypotheses are made, the data for this study is not considered to be insufficient in relation to the aim. In addition, using focus groups as a method, one ought to bear in mind that the answers of participants are highly unpredictable, all the more so in attempt to describe learners' experiences and attitudes.

In relation to experiences and attitudes, Barbour warns researchers against applying focus groups as a method. Firstly, Barbour argues that "having several participants competing to tell their individual and detailed stories is likely to produce 'noise', that is, data that is hard to order and attribute to speakers" (p.18). Secondly, Barbour states "Nor are focus groups an appropriate method if you want to measure attitudes" (p.19). Barbour emphasizes value of methodological consideration which is well-reasoned. Conversely, it cannot with certainty be stated that the outcome of focus groups will be merely undecipherable data in view of the fact that the collected data might as well be easy to organize depending on individuals' personalities. In my opinion, there are rather multiple factors determining these outcomes which, however, are manageable if a researcher is conscious of them, such as the number of participants within a focus group. Regarding measurement of attitudes through focus groups, I argue that any method would be insufficient if the aim is to *measure* attitudes. Regarding participants' utterances, attitudes can be described in relation to different factors such as individuals' experiences, personal goals etc. When examining individuals' experiences and attitudes, focus groups are, in my viewpoint, advantageous since the interaction arouses opinions and discussions which otherwise would not be achievable.

4.3. Procedure

Initially, before the execution of group discussions, all the participants had received information regarding their identity being anonymous as well as their digital-recorded utterances being destroyed after the research has been completed. After a consideration, the decision has been made not to have mixed groups where each participant represents her/his own ability group. As a more suitable alternative, the participants within the same ability group were also a discussion group for this study, due to the fact that their personal acquaintance would create a less tense environment where they can express themselves more freely.

Regarding the time for group discussions, each group discussed and exchanged their ideas for 15 minutes in view of the fact that enough information for the study would be gained simultaneously as the participants would not feel forced to speak and feel that it is a time wasting activity. To avoid any constraints on the participants, the language used during

the discussions was Swedish since the ability to express one's views is dependent on individual's language competence.

Pupils were asked to discuss their own interest or lack of interest in English learning as well as the variables that might have caused their attitudes. In the light of Dörnyei's argument highlighted above, I have deliberately decided to ask participants questions regarding their attitudes in an attempt to attain their unconscious reasons. The following questions were used during the discussions:

- Do you like/dislike learning English and if so why?
- Do you find it difficult/easy to learn English and for what reason?
- What do you think about your present English teaching?
- What do you think about your earlier English teaching?
- Do you learn more in school or outside the school? Explain why?
- What goals do you have with your English learning?

5. Results

With the aim of assessing the underlying reasons for pupils' interest and lack of interest in language learning, the results below give further details about pupils' personal experiences in English learning, their motivations and attitudes towards English learning and their personal goals. The presentation of the results is structured by the grouping of pupils based on their level of knowledge, starting with the low ability pupils, followed by the intermediate and then the top-level pupils. The outline of the presentation aims at demonstrating the interrelationship between different motivational factors previously discussed. Thus, the level groups will be separately presented under different sections. In addition, it should be observed that the application of quotation marks occurs only when the pupils' utterances are literally reproduced, whereas no quotation marks are used when the utterances are reformulated.

5.1. Learning experiences of pupils

Pupils' learning experiences are both positively and negatively reviewed in relation to different factors such as teachers, individual responsibilities and course requirements. These factors are differently emphasized depending on the pupils' level of knowledge and their personal needs. In addition, pupils give an account of their previous English teaching in the compulsory school as well as their present English teaching in the upper secondary school.

This section (5.1.) presents pupils' discussions on questions: *What do you think about your present English teaching? What do you think about your earlier English teaching?*

5.1.1. Low ability pupils' experiences - Teacher in the center of criticism

Regarding pupils whose language knowledge is low, their learning experiences have given rise to dissatisfaction with English language learning where both previous and current English teaching is unfavorably reviewed.

The pupils' dissatisfaction is primarily associated with received help from teachers and changing of teachers. On the subject of pupils' previous English teaching, the female participants highlight the role of pupils and the role of a teacher, whereas the male participants show a lack of memory of their previous English teaching. According to Anna, the difficulty with previous English teaching has been due to the fact that teachers have resigned their appointments and been replaced by new teachers. Teachers' lack of respect for pupils is underlined by Amanda with the emphasis that "nobody listens and then one does not learn anything either". Even though the male participants encounter difficulties in describing their previous English teaching, Anders points out that he doesn't have a distinct recollection of his teachers and therefore he has no memory of having English teaching. Thus, Anders' statement indicates that English teaching is strongly associated with the teachers; two distinct parts which constitute a unity.

As regards pupils' present English teaching, the female participants express satisfaction while the male participants show frustration. Anders describes his present English teaching as worthless and insignificant. Referring to the teacher, Andreas states that "he does not explain a thing. If one asks for help, he just goes away". Evidently, Andreas is frustrated because his personal needs are being neglected. The female participants, conversely, dissociate themselves from this statement and point out that they receive explanation from the teacher. In response, Andreas highlights the teacher getting into a nervous state, a comment further developed by Anders who draws attention to the teacher's lack of competence as somebody who is not engaged in the pupils when giving explanations, which is the reason why they become incomprehensible. In addition, present learning experiences are at variance among the male and the female participants.

5.1.2. Intermediate level pupils' experiences – Individuals' learning responsibilities

The descriptions of learning experiences among the intermediate level pupils are both teacher-oriented and individual-oriented. Different lines of arguments are conducted by the pupils based on the relationship between three different factors, namely learner, teacher and learning circumstances.

The participants describe their previous English teaching in connection to their own responsibilities and the need of teacher's help in their learning. All of the participants express a positive attitude toward their previous English teaching. Joakim highlights his own role as a learner and points out that his own effort in learning was not satisfactory. Further, he states that "I don't think that it depends on our teachers, anyway, that we are not proficient in English". In connection to present English teaching, previous English teaching is not as good, according to Johanna. However, she underlines the importance of her own responsibility when stating "But it is still up to oneself if one wants to learn". Jonas acknowledges his lack of responsibility as follows: "I had good teaching and good teachers, but I never cared about studying". Conversely, Jenny does not describe her previous English teaching in relation to herself, but rather in relation to her learning circumstances. The only exception to her positive attitude towards English teaching comes when she says "But we were so many in the class so one almost didn't get any help".

The participants' descriptions of their present English teaching took on the nature of a discussion where variety in teaching is emphasized in relation to their achievements and their needs. None of the participants express a negative attitude towards their present English teaching. Joakim explains that "It is good, it is a good teacher and than it gets fun going to English lessons". This description is confirmed by Johanna when stating "Yes, and one gets to do fun stuff during the lessons". These aspects describe good English teaching as distinguished by clearly understood lessons and a teacher's devotion to his/her work. However, a teacher ought to be helping and considerate towards pupils, as Jenny points out "The best thing is that one gets help all the time". Nevertheless, the participants also highlight their present English teaching as successful on the basis of their own responsibility. "We chatter during the lessons but we get a lot of thing done anyway", says Joakim supported by Jonas who says "Yes, actually. I've turn in every assignment".

5.1.3. Top-level pupils' experiences – Course requirements in the center of criticism

Learning experiences among the pupils with high level of knowledge are both positively and negatively reviewed with heavy emphasis on teachers' personalities, the usage of English in school and non-balanced time distribution regarding different tasks.

The previous English teaching of the participants is reviewed in relation to their present teaching. Primarily, it is teachers' demands that pupils' should express their opinions in *English*, which is being criticized. Stefan draws attention to this by comparing his previous and present English teaching "It was good, I think. Our teacher was good, he was funny. And there we could speak English occasionally, that was good. We are not allowed to do that now, we are supposed to speak English all the time". Simon substantiates Stefan's observation by expressing strong disapproval of the demand to only use English in speech and underlining that this disturbs him. Sara and Sebastian agree with the statements above and point out that they have nothing more to add since they all were in the same class and therefore share same experiences. However, Sebastian accentuates the fact that positive experiences present great difficulties when endeavoring to put one's thoughts into words "It is difficult to rattle off a lot of thing if one thinks it is good. It is much easier to say if something is bad". Sebastian's remark concerning effortlessness in subjecting something to criticism rather than paying tribute to something shows that positive experiences might be unconscious and thus difficult to describe.

Effortlessness in leveling criticism to something is evident in the pupils' arguments on the subject of their present English teaching, which according to the pupils, is at an accelerated tempo and has given rise to the prevailing dissatisfaction. Simon points out that there are both advantages and disadvantages with their present English teaching "It is good at the same time as it is bad". Further, a circumstantial description is given by Stefan "Yes, I think that it is at very, very top-pressured speed, kind of", a statement which is supported by Simon who gives further information on this matter "Yes, a chapter a week and then we only have two lessons to work". Sebastian and Sara highlight the difficult challenge with performing tasks with the present time limit and in relation to other school work. Sara points out "One has a lot of other things to think about except English, kind of". From Sebastian's viewpoint, in due course, the demands and pressure they experience will become unbearable.

5.2. Pupils' attitudes towards English language learning

On the subject of pupils' attitudes, the level of knowledge and the perception of self-efficacy play a crucial part in how pupils view English learning. Pupils lines of arguments are presented in this section (5.2.) on following questions: *Do you like/dislike learning English and if so why?, Do you find it difficult/easy to learn English and for what reason?, Do you learn more in school or outside the school? Explain why?*

5.2.1. Learning difficulties – Low ability pupils' reasoning

English learning among the participants is described as hard and unnecessary against the background of their learning experiences, lack of ability to understand the language and lack of individual effort to gain knowledge. Thus, the pupils' attitudes towards English learning are both individual-dependent and experience-dependent, two factors which both give rise to reluctance in the learning process.

All of the participants consider their English learning as difficult, with the exception of Andreas who regards English learning as easy and unproblematic with the explanation that he easily gains knowledge. However, Andreas cannot give a profound explanation to his aptitude for learning: "I don't know. I suppose I have a big head and a lot of memory". Presumably, Andreas is unconscious about the reasons for his aptitude for learning and therefore no profound clarification can be uttered verbally.

Regarding the difficulty with English learning, different underlying causes are emphasized by the participants. From Anna's point of view, English learning is "boring and unnecessary", and thus it becomes difficult to learn. The ability to speak English does not represent value in terms of knowledge. However, Anna associates her lack of learning ability with herself "I might be slow on the uptake, who knows". Anders corroborates Anna's explanation by overruling the objection regarding their difficulties with English learning being caused by other factors "I don't think so. I never understand anything". Anders draws attention to his struggle with English language "I have never understood English in my whole life" because "I don't remember anything". Observably, with reference to Anna's and Anders' lines of arguments, pupils' English learning and their learning difficulties revolve round their individual performances.

Conversely, individual performance is underlined as a result of learning experiences by Amanda. Resembling Anna's intimation regarding the tediousness of English, Amanda points out "One doesn't get any inspiration kind of, because it is boring and difficult". However, the difficulty with English learning, from Amanda's viewpoint, is as

well teacher-related. Amanda draws attention to the teaching profession and points out that her struggle with English might be caused by compulsory school teachers not being certificated. Teachers' role is alleged by Amanda as a reason for learning difficulties rather than just individual performances even though its relevance is not being rejected in Amanda's line of argument.

On the subject of learning environment, the low ability pupils do not differentiate learning English in school and outside the scope of school, with the exception of Anders who states that "at home one hears and sees the text and it is more fun". From Anders' viewpoint, English outside the school is more comprehensible "Of course, if one sees a movie than it is much more fun. It is like I understand what they say in the movie and I don't get it when the teacher stands and talks". In contrast to Anders, Andreas considers English as impossible to learn "I never learn English, if I hear or see English on the computer then I switch it off immediately. I hate computers because of that". In response to whether English learning takes place in relation to music, Amanda indicates that music is not instrumental in learning with support from Anna who states "No, I never understand what they sing". Further, Amanda highlights "I use the computer and watch English movies but I hardly learn anything from that". Evidently, the low ability pupils do not differentiate English learning in school and outside the scope of school, with the exception of Anders.

5.2.2. Learning difficulties and individual's learning responsibilities – intermediate level pupils' approaches

The intermediate level pupils perceive English learning as difficult as was also the case with the low ability pupils. In addition, they give explanation for English being difficult in relation to their lack of learning responsibilities. English represents value in terms of knowledge but the pupils' opinions differ on the subject of enjoyment in English learning.

All of the participants regard English learning as difficult with the emphasis on different factors. Jenny expresses displeasure against the background of her own competence "I suppose it is not that fun because I am not so good at it", an opinion which also is shared by Johanna. The male participants, conversely, hold opposing views with a distinction between enjoyment and their individual success in English learning. In response to Jenny's viewpoint, Jonas speaks favourably of English learning "No, I am not good at it either but I think it is fun". Joakim substantiates Jonas' judgment by using the same, but nevertheless reformulated, utterance.

Additionally, pupils' individual success is discussed in relation to their effort where their lack of responsibility in learning is the point of departure rather than learning difficulties. Joakim expresses his opinion on this subject "No, it is not so difficult, but I suppose one maybe has not made an effort, kind of". Lack of effort is, in Jonas' viewpoint, an individual's responsibility "Mmm, it is up to oneself", with agreement from Jenny and Johanna. Further, Joakim explains that his lack of effort has always been in attendance "I suppose, it's already from the beginning that one has not bothered about it". Jenny and Johanna perceive their English learning as challenging and boring against the background that it is difficult to comprehend.

On the subject of comprehension difficulties in English learning, Jenny and Johanna regard school as an instrumental in learning where knowledge is easier acquired. Jenny states "I learn best in school, I think. I barely talk any English outside the school", which Johanna is in agreement with as well. In response, Jonas draws attention to the presence of English outside the school environment and notes "Yes, but one hears a lot of English outside the school and then one learns in a different way". In addition, Jenny replies "Yes, but I don't listen. I just shut off". However, Joakim draws attention to different learning strategies and points out that "I suppose, one can learn in different ways, one learns a little in school and then something at home. But that is learning in different places but both are good, but I suppose it depends on how one does". In agreement with Joakim, Johanna underlines that "it is up to oneself how much one learns and what one chooses to learn", corroborated by Jenny and Jonas.

5.2.3. English as a global language and its significance – top level pupils' views

In the exchange of views on the subject of personal thoughts about English language, English learning is favorably reviewed among the top-level pupils who enjoy learning English. Furthermore, the importance of English language and its presence in individuals' lives is highlighted by the pupils with regard to their own ambition to gain knowledge of English.

The participants do not regard English learning as difficult and perceive themselves as good linguists with criticism leveled against division of time in their English teaching. As Stefan underlines "No, it is not difficult to learn, but the time is too short". Simon authenticates Stefan's statement by uttering "Yes, it is just difficult to manage to do everything". Evidently, imbalance between the division of time and school assignments causes dissatisfaction rather than learning difficulties and English language itself. Sara points

out that “I do understand English, but sometimes it is too much” which according to Sebastian leads to that “one only works but doesn’t get anywhere, kind of”.

The value of English is discussed in relation to different circumstances where the language is required. The globalization of English language is mentioned by Stefan who states “Yes, English is important if one is going abroad. English is the biggest language”. In response to Stefan’s argument, Simon draws attention to the importance of individual proficiency where a teacher is not obtainable, and thus one’s own language skills become crucial. English proficiency is also emphasized by Sebastian “But English is good, the subject is all right, kind of. One, kind of, has to be able to speak English because it is so important”. Evidently, Sebastian’s statement expresses that the English language is not only gained for personal interest of an individual, but it is also a requirement in society. Sara points out personal advantages of English “I love English, it is pretty cool to be able to speak it”. Ability to speak English carries a certain prestige for individuals as well. “Yes, there are a lot of different languages in the world and English is, kind of, the biggest language and the best, kind of”, according to Stefan. These statements show pupils’ consciousness of the prestigious position of English language in the world. The present pattern of society and social life of pupils is distinguished by this prestige as well, as Sebastian highlights “Yes, a lot of things are in English on different jobs”. In view of the pupils’ comments, English language has a prominent position and is regarded as influential and thus essential qualification of an individual.

Additionally, English in the school and outside the school is among the top level pupils regarded as two elements supplementing each other. Learning, however, is according to Simon and Stefan easier in the school, which is contradicted by Sara. She considers English outside the school easier to learn with the explanation that she lacks power of concentration in the school. However, the fact that learning takes place both in the school and outside the school is not rejected, which Sebastian also highlights “I suppose it is both” with the explanation that “Yes, I suppose what’s good in the school is that one has a teacher who helps if one is stuck, and I suppose that at home one is maybe a little more free to do the things one likes”. Different activities outside the school which promote learning are also demonstrated. Stefan draws attention to movies “Yes, movies, if one watches movies and stuff like that”, whereas Simon emphasizes computers “And computers, everything on a computer is almost in English, kind of”. As regards enjoyable learning, in Simon’s viewpoint, English learning in school is on a pair with English learning outside the school. Stefan, conversely, describes

English learning in school as more enjoyable “It’s almost more fun in school, everybody knows everybody so one dares to say wrong”, which Sebastian also agrees with.

5.3. Personal goals – intrinsic or extrinsic interest in learning

The presentation of results in this section (5.3.) is an account of the pupils’ discussions on the question *What goals do you have with your English learning?* Pupils’ goals with English learning are both individual-determined and environment-dependent. However, both single and multiple goals stand out, and at the same time, they are determined by both internal and external factors. This means that the pupils have both intrinsic and extrinsic drive in their English learning. Nevertheless, regardless of the differences in the level of knowledge between the pupils, a goal all the pupils have in common is getting a grade. In addition, it should be highlighted that the low ability pupils are merely striving for a passing grade while the intermediate and the top-level pupils also strive for language proficiency.

The participants from the low ability group do not express any internal wish for learning English but feel rather that they are externally forced to learn a second language. As Anders points out “I have no goal with it, I would never learn a word of English if I didn’t have to”. Further, Anders explains this feeling of compulsion in relation to grading “Yes, otherwise I will be failed, and I don’t want that. I just want to pass, then I don’t care”. Andreas and both of the female participants share Anders opinion where the only ambition in English learning is getting a passing grade. In addition, Andreas describes English language as insignificant and needless serving as an explanation to why only a passing grade is desirable “Sure, it is good to be able to order thing on internet, but I don’t need English in school for that”.

In contrast to the low ability pupils, there is an interaction between multiple goals among the intermediate level pupils rather than one single goal. However, the importance of good grades is emphasized by the intermediate level pupils in relation to language usage. When Joakim draws attention to getting a good grade, Jonas underlines the significance of communicative competence “Yes, one wants to be able to speak it as well”. These two aspects become associated with each other by Joakim in his statement that a good grade includes the ability to communicate. However, Jonas regards this association with doubt and states “Yes, but it does not show that you really are able to use English. You can be worthless in writing.” Even though good grades are the main goal with intermediate pupils’ English learning, they express consciousness about language usage consisting of different, but however, equally important parts. This consciousness is developed further more by the female

participants where ability to use a language is highlighted in relation to different situations. Johanna connects English language to travelling “Yes if one travels abroad, one has to be able to speak and understand”. Johanna’s statement is confirmed by Jenny who emphasizes the difference between school grades and individual’s ability “Yes, and then it does not matter what grade one had in school. Nobody asks about that, kind of”.

Similar to the intermediate level pupils, multiple goals are also highlighted by the pupils placed in the top-level group with the main emphasis on grading. A passing grade is the primary goal with English learning for all of the participants but a higher grade is desirable. Even though grades are the main goal, language proficiency is also highly valued. On the subject of goal-setting, Simon emphasizes an additional aim beyond grades “No, I suppose one wants to learn English to be able to use it and so”, meaning that the ability to speak English is significant as well. This observation is also made by Sebastian who makes a distinction between grading and knowledge “Yes, it is not only about writing a test and getting a good grade, one wants to be able to use it as well”. Noticeably, success within the scope of school work is desirable, however, its intention is to support success outside the school. Stefan relates English language to travelling “Yes, when you travel abroad like I said”. Sara, on the other hand, highlights the advantage of mobility with the English language and the freedom of individual “Yes, I want to be able to speak English, one is more free, kind of, one doesn’t need to live one’s whole life at the same place”.

6. Discussion

In the light of the theoretical framework and the interrelationship between the multiple perspectives, the results are discussed in this section (6.) with the aid of the pyramidal diagram (see. Figure 1.) outlining pupils' motivational processes and their attitudes toward English language learning. With reference to this tool, each level group is discussed separately.

6.1. Motivation and attitudes among pupils with low language ability

Generally, expressions of discontent among the low ability pupils and low confidence in their ability are complementary to their extrinsic motivation and their personal goals. The diagram below illustrates the pupils' motivational process where learning experiences are the primary element in this process:

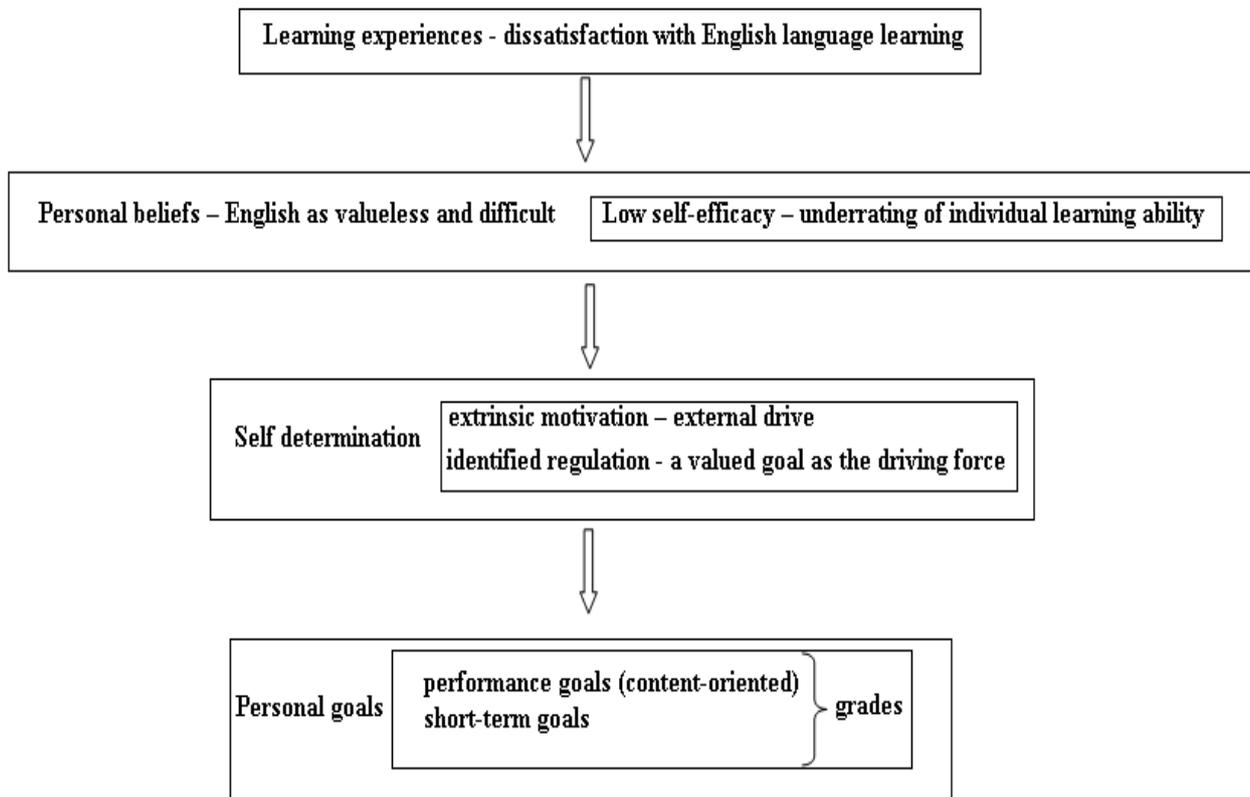


Figure 2: Low ability group's process of motivation

The pupils' lines of arguments suggest that their views of English teaching are strongly linked to their perception of teachers and their teaching styles. In the light of Nakata's emphasis regarding pupils' perception of learning experiences as meaningful, the pupils' utterances in this study indicate that negative experiences function as a counteraction in the pupils'

motivational processes. Thus, the pupils' disapproval of the teacher sets in motion a critical view of English teaching. In contrast to Baker's and MacIntyre's conclusion that negative experiences are insignificant for learners of French, the results of this study suggest that negative experiences among the pupils with low ability have a disadvantageous effect on the development of their attitudes.

As motives for the pupils' negative attitudes, the sufficient need for teacher assistance in their language learning is voiced. In line with Noels' et al.'s emphasis on freedom of choice in motivation, and Noels' stress on the influence of teachers' behaviors on students' autonomy, this study shows that teachers' approachability plays a crucial part in pupils' perception of their own competence and their attitudes. In addition, it is observable that the dissatisfactions with English teaching of the male and the female participants among the low ability pupils differ, but stating that these differences are gender-dependent would be to jump into conclusions. These differences, in my opinion, are based on rather individual experiences than gender.

Against the background of learning experiences and low self-efficacy, the low ability pupils regard language learning as unnecessary. English language knowledge is not considered as an additional qualification but rather as an imperative necessity. The pupils' inward struggle with English is merely viewed in relation to their individual lack of ability to achieve success in language learning. The steadfast belief among the pupils that English language presents great difficulties in their success which they have to contend with, contributes to the perception of low self-efficacy. The pupils' low self-efficacy, thus, counteracts the development of intrinsic motivation and as a substitute promotes the need for extrinsic motivation in language learning.

Low self-efficacy is also instrumental in the pupils' perception of the learning environment. Against Skolverket's national evaluation regarding more knowledge being gained outside the scope of school, the low ability pupils do not differentiate the school and outside the school environment. These learning environments are both correspondingly not valued as supportive of learning autonomy. Evidently, low self-efficacy has strong influence on the pupils' perception of language learning and the desirability of language knowledge. English learning is viewed as knowledge inflicted on them and therefore the only goal with learning is to achieve a passing grade. Thus internal and external factors coexist in interplay in the pupils' motivational processes with a single, content-oriented, short-term goal.

6.2. Motivation and attitudes among intermediate level pupils

The description of the pupils' discussion reveals that their motivational processes and attitudes are not primarily affected by the learning experience. The pupils' perception of individual learning responsibilities in the acquisition of knowledge is primary in their formation of attitudes. The diagram below displays the intermediate level pupils' processes of motivation as follows:

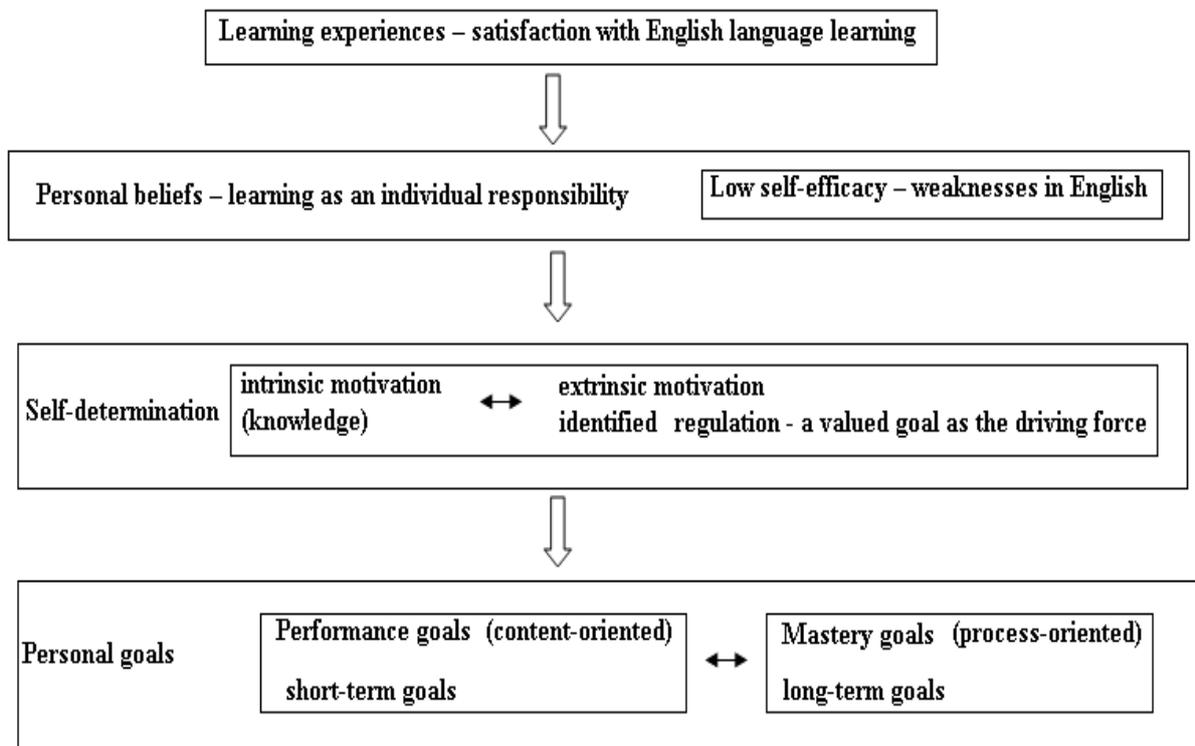


Figure 3: Intermediate level group's process of motivation

Resembling the low ability pupils' emphasis on teacher, the intermediate level pupils view their learning experiences in relation to their perception of teachers. In the light of this perception, learning experiences are favorably viewed which also suggests that teacher behaviors are related to the pupils' perceptions of English teaching. Their low achievements in learning are rather a result of their lack of effort than their English teaching. Thus, the pupils draw attention to individual's responsibility in the learning process where the acquisition of knowledge is individual-dependent. In the light of Nakata's observation on the influence of learning experiences, it cannot with certainty be established that the pupils' positive experiences are the most influential element in their motivational development.

However, even though there are no verbal utterances which provide evidence for positive experience increasing motivation, there is no evidence in the pupils' utterances which can be used to counter this argument. Conversely, there is a relationship between the pupils' awareness of their responsibilities and their positive experiences. These experiences have contributed greatly to the pupils' consciousness of their own role in the learning process. Thus, the learning experiences of the intermediate level pupils are the primary element in their motivational process but it is not the most influential one.

Against the background of English learning difficulties, the intermediate level pupils express low confidence in their ability. In contrast to the low ability pupils, the intermediate level pupils describe their low self-efficacy as a result of their lack of effort as a general behavior throughout their English teaching. Despite the pupils' effortless, English language is regarded as prestigious and desirable. Nevertheless, the pupils' low self-efficacy and their views of English have contributed to intrinsic and extrinsic interest in language learning. The complexity of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation which Nakata underlines, is noticeable in the pupils' discussions. The pupils express extrinsic interest in their language learning where priority is given to assessment criteria for higher grades. In coexistent with extrinsic interest, intrinsic force is also distinguished where communicative competence is sought-after. Furthermore, good grades are, according to some pupils, on level with knowledge meaning that language knowledge is reflected in the received grade. Other pupils, on the other hand, are critical of this observation claiming that a high grade does not necessarily provide an individual with language knowledge; such competence may be acquired regardless of grades.

In addition, based on the fact that the pupils are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated in their language learning, they also strive for multiple goals simultaneously. These multiple goals consist of performance goals where focus is put on grades and mastery goals where focus is put on ability to communicate. Similar to motivations among Japanese students which Nakata underlines, personal responsibility among the intermediate level pupils dominates. Regardless of the weaknesses in language and the importance of grades, pupils' desire for communicative ability is prioritized as well. Thus, short-term and long-term goals are equally important.

6.3. Motivation and attitudes among top-level pupils

The process of motivation and attitudes among the top-level pupils is of a moderately different shape in relation to the low ability pupils and the intermediate level pupils. The main distinction between the three level groups is observable in confidence in individual ability. The top-level pupils draw attention to the prestige of English language in social contexts and its usefulness in practical situations. The diagram below shows different stages in the motivational process among top-level pupils as follows:

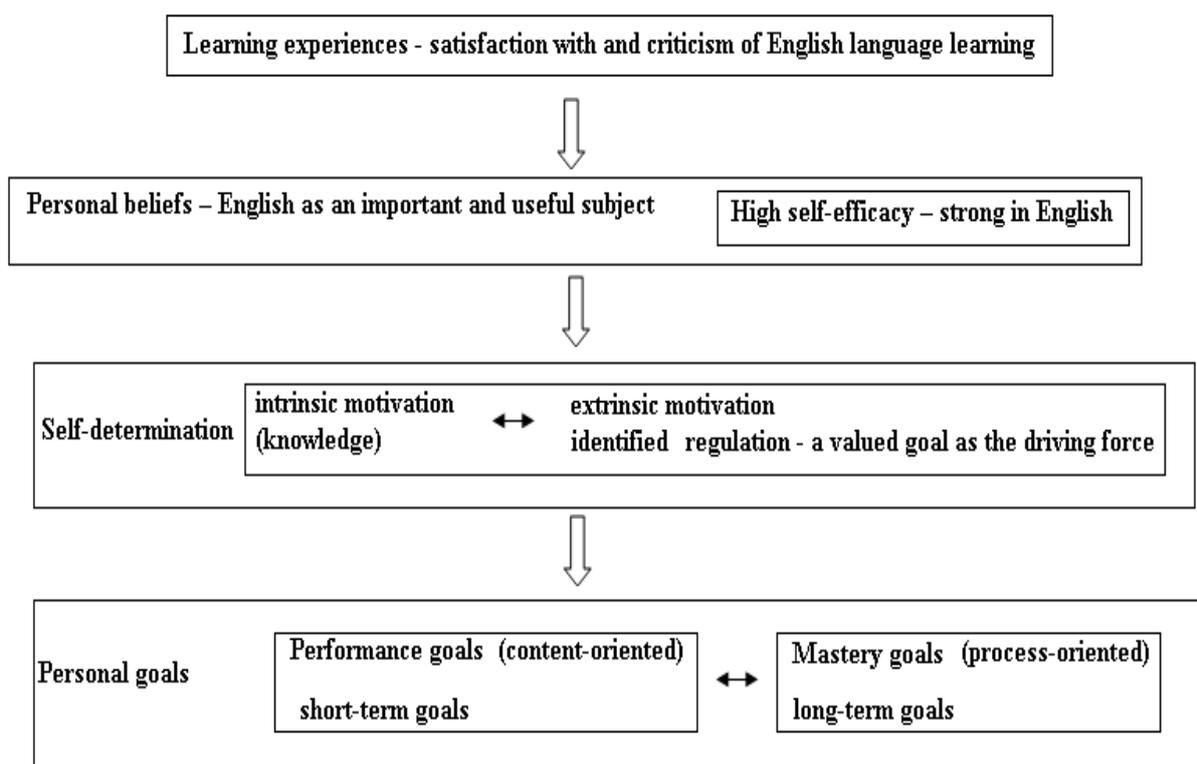


Figure 3: Top-level group's process of motivation

English language teaching is the target of criticism and simultaneously favorably viewed among the top-level pupils. Previous English teaching is positively described whereas the discussion of pupils' present English teaching is a manifestation of dissatisfaction. Irrespective of this variation in discussion, the top-level pupils' approaches differ tremendously in relation to the other level groups. The disapproval of the teacher is less conspicuous whereas assessment criteria and too high expectations are criticized to a greater extent. Moreover, learning experiences are discussed in relation to teaching in general rather than in relation to teachers. Thus, in view of Nakata's emphasis that the learners' perception of their experiences determines their influence, the top-level pupils' lines of arguments reveal

that meaningfulness or meaninglessness of their experiences is not evident. Conversely, it is observable that the top-level pupils' experiences do not have a disadvantageous effect on their attitudes and motivation.

The top-level pupils' personal beliefs disclose positive attitudes towards English language learning. English is regarded as a matter of primary importance in various social contexts both in the pupils' native society and other societies as well. The global importance of the language is present in the pupil's consciousness and therefore they view English as a possibility rather than a limitation. Pupil's awareness of global prestige of English language is the crucial and the most influential factor in their attitudes. In contrast to the intermediate level pupils, the importance of English is not merely attached to pleasure but rather a combination of business and pleasure. Thus, English learning is not strictly personal among the top-level pupils in view of the fact that it is regarded as socially required knowledge.

Pupils' consciousness of the presence of English in individuals' everyday life is strongly linked to their perception of self-efficacy. In the light of the pupils' emphasis on English proficiency as a matter of course, they regard language learning as easily comprehensible and thus their self-efficacy is high. However, the pupils' lines of arguments on the subject of goal attainment reveal that intrinsic and extrinsic drive coexist but where intrinsic interest is the prime mover in the pupils' language learning. The importance of grades is evident in unison with striving for English proficiency, and particularly communicative competence. Thus, similar to the intermediate level pupils, the top-level pupils aim at multiple goals, namely performance goals and mastery goals. In addition, mastery goals are superior to performance goals due to the fact that language learning is regarded as long-term knowledge rather than a short-term educational subject.

7. Conclusion

Individuals' motivations and attitudes are processes of the interrelationship between individual experiences and environmental elements. In the light of the theoretical framework, this study reveals that motivational processes among the three level groups differentiate against the background of pupils' learning experiences, personal beliefs, self-efficacy, self-determination and personal goals in language learning.

All of the level groups expressed virtually similar descriptions of their learning experiences where English teaching is unfavorably viewed because the teacher or the teaching is disapproved of. Attitudes among the low ability pupils are more strongly associated with

the teacher than among the intermediate and the top-level pupils. The intermediate level pupils' and the top-level pupils' descriptions also gravitated toward a criticism of English teaching but they are less willing to blame negative experiences, and thus their attitudes are less influenced by their learning experiences. In contrast to the low ability pupils, learning experiences among the intermediate level pupils and the top-level pupils are rather self-oriented than teacher-oriented in the light of individual learning responsibilities and teacher's expectations of pupils in relation to coursework. In addition, the fact that learning experiences, negative as well as positive, are an influential, external factor in the process of motivation can not be excluded. However, the impact of these experiences is conclusively ascertained in relation to pupils' subjective views and their personal needs.

Moreover, there is an appreciable diversity in attitudes and motivation among the level groups examined in this study. The attitudes towards language learning are strongly related to personal beliefs and perception of self-efficacy. The perceptions of English learning and low confidence in individual learning ability influence pupils' self-determination and their personal goals. Regardless of the heterogeneous outcomes of these stages in motivational processes among the level groups, it is evident that the mentioned elements in the development of motivation and attitudes play a crucial part.

Although this study reveals several differences between the motivational processes of the respective level groups, it is essential to consider what possible generalizations of the present results can be made. The present results suggest that pupils' level of knowledge is crucial in their motivational processes with reference to the theoretical framework. In the light of the utter impossibility to fully grasp individuals' motives for their behaviors, the function of knowledge level in individuals' motivational processes is complex. Individuals' level of knowledge might as well be a result of these processes. Nevertheless, the interrelationship between the theoretical aspects of this study is evident due to the fact that they are strongly involved in the process of motivation and formation of attitudes. Regardless of the interplay, the influences of different factors vary among the level groups. In conclusion, this study has presented results and attempted, with the aid of a pyramidal diagram (see Figures 1-4), to construct a conceivable and comprehensive model of motivation and attitudes in English language learning.

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Appendix 1

Interview/Group discussion with low ability group

Jag: Det här är som en gruppdiskussion som handlar om vad ni tycker om engelska och såna saker och bland annat varför ni vill eller inte vill lära er engelska. Jag kommer att ge er en fråga och sen diskuterar ni med varandra och ifall ni fastnar och inte förstår så hoppar jag in och hjälper er. Ja, och min första fråga är om vad ni själva tycker om engelska som ämne?

Anna: Svårt

Andreas: Skit lätt

Amanda: Jätte svårt

Anders: Jag fattar inte ett skit

Jag: Men varför tycker ni att det är svårt?

Andreas: Jag har inte sagt att det är svårt.

Jag: Men nu frågar jag först varför de tycker att det är svårt och så får du berätta varför du tycker att det är lätt.

Andreas: Jag har lätt att lära mig saker.

Jag: Varför har du lätt att lära dig?

Andreas: För att jag har ADHD.

Jag: Men kan du inte försöka utveckla det lite mer?

Andreas: Inte vet jag. Jag har väl stort huvud och mycket minne.

Jag: Känner du då att du har lätt att lära dig allt?

Andreas: Ja, faktiskt. Förutom matte.

Jag: Varför tycker ni andra att det är svårt?

Anna: Tråkigt och onödigt

Jag: Tycker ni att det är svårt för att ni inte förstår vad lärarna går igenom?

Anna: Jag kanske är trög, vem vet.

Jag: Nej, det kan det inte vara?

Anders: Jo, det kan man visst.

Jag: Så ni tror inte att det kan bero på något annat?

Anders: Det tycker jag inte. Jag fattar aldrig någonting.

Jag: Men vad tror ni det beror på att ni har så svårt att lära er engelska?

Anders: Jag har aldrig fattat engelska i hela mitt liv.

Amanda: Dåliga lärare i grundskolan också.

Jag: Är det så?

Amanda: Mmm, det kan vara mycket därför.

Anna: Alltså jag vet inte, det är svårt, typ för att jag tycker inte att det är kul så att det är svårt att lära sig.

Anders: Jag kommer inte ihåg någonting.

Amanda: Man får ingen inspiration liksom för det är tråkigt och svårt.

Jag: Eftersom ni tidigare tog upp att det kanske är svårt men engelska på grund av dåliga lärare i grundskolan. Kan ni berätta för mig hur undervisningen har varit då?

Amanda: Ingen lyssnar och då lär man sig ingenting heller. Lärarna har ingen respekt till någon.

Anders: Jag vet inte.

Anna: Mycket olika lärare har man haft och lärare har slutat så man har hela tiden fått nya och då blir det svårt att lära sig.

Anders: Jag kommer inte ens ihåg vad mina lärare hette eller såg ut och då kan jag inte veta om de lärde mig någonting.

Jag: Men försök att minnas hur undervisningen var, vad du hade för lektioner och sådana saker?

Anders: Det kommer jag inte ihåg heller för jag kommer inte ihåg att jag haft undervisning i engelska.

Jag: Okej. Men hur är undervisningen nu, jag menar sen ni började på gymnasiet?

Anna: Bra

Amanda: Mmm

Anders: Va? Bra! Den är för fan värdelös.

Andreas: Ja, eller hur? Han (läraren) förklarar inte ett dugg. Frågar man om hjälp, sticker han bara därifrån.

Anna: Jo, för oss förklarar han.

Amanda: Ja, alltid.

Andreas: Han är ju så jävla nervös.

Jag: Är det läraren som är nervös?

Anders: Ja, han kan aldrig stå still och förklara så man fattar.

Andreas: Ja, frågar man kan du hjälpa mig med det här så säger han ja, det är bara att göra så, så går han. Man fattar verkligen mycket då. Det är som att stå och prata med en vägg.

Anders: En studsande vägg.

Jag: Så ni får inte hjälp av läraren. Men tycker ni att ni lär er mer i skolan eller utanför skolan? Jag tänkte mer på att ni hemma har datorer, och tittar på tv och lyssnar på musik där engelska finns. Är det någon skillnad hur mycket engelska utanför skolan och i skolan ni lär er?

Anders: Hemma hör man och ser texten och det är roligare. Det är klart, kollar man på en film så är det mycket roligare. Det är som att jag förstår vad de säger i filmen och jag fattar inte när läraren står och snackar.

Andreas: Jag lär mig aldrig engelska, hör jag eller ser engelska på datorn så stänger jag av det på en gång. Jag hatar datorer på grund av det.

Jag: Ni då tjejer?

Anna: Jag vet inte.

Jag: Men ni lyssna på engelsk musik, eller hur? Ni tittar på idol? Där är det ju mycket engelska låtar? Lär ni er någonting utifrån låttexter?

Amanda: Nej, aldrig.

Anna: Nej, jag förstår aldrig vad de sjunger.

Amanda: Jag håller på med datorn och tittar på engelska filmer men det är knappast så att jag lär mig något av det.

Jag: Okej. Vi kan säga att vissa lär sig utanför skolan och vissa gör inte det. Men om ni tänker på engelska, vad har ni för mål med att ni lär er engelska? Kan ni berätta för mig vad era personliga mål är?

Anders: Jag har inget mål med det, jag skulle aldrig lära mig ett ord engelska om jag inte var tvungen.

Jag: Varför känner du dig tvungen till det?

Anders: Ja, annars blir jag underkänd och det vill jag inte. Jag vill bara klara mig sen bryr jag mig inte.

Jag: Men ni övriga, handlar engelska bara om betyg för er också?

Andreas: Ja, det är väl klart. Man vill bara bli godkänd. Visst är det bra att kunna beställa saker typ på internet, men jag behöver inte engelska i skolan för det.

Anna: Ja, för mig är det viktigast att bli godkänd.

Amanda: För mig med.

Appendix 2

Interview/group discussion with intermediate level group

Jag: Vi kan först börja diskutera lite generellt och sedan kan vi gå in på olika saker som har med engelska att göra. Helst vill jag att ni diskuterar med varandra så mycket ni kan och vill och ni får kommentera varandras åsikter och säga precis vad ni vill. Min första fråga som jag vill att ni diskuterar är: Vad tycker ni själva om engelska och framförallt att lära er engelska?

Jenny: Det är väl inte så kul eftersom jag inte är så bra på det.

Johanna: Det är samma sak för mig.

Jonas: Nej, jag är inte heller bra på det men jag tycker det är roligt.

Joakim: Jag tycker lika. Jag är inte bra på engelska men det är roligt.

Jag: Ni känner alla att ni inte är bra på engelska. Tycker ni att det är svårt eller lätt att lära sig engelska?

Joakim: Nej, det är inte så svårt, men man har väl kanske aldrig liksom tagit tag i det.

Jonas: Mmm, det hänger ju på en själv.

Jenny: Mmm.

Johanna: Mmm.

Joakim: Det är väl redan från början att man har struntat i det.

Jenny: Ja, jag tycker inte att det är så lätt.

Johanna: Jag tycker inte heller att det är lätt.

Jenny: Ja, då blir det tråkigt för att man inte fattar typ.

Jag: Men vad hade ni för undervisning innan? Kan ni beskriva hur den var?

Joakim: Det var nog bra då, sen kanske man inte jobbade. Jag tror inte det beror på våra lärare i alla fall att vi inte kan.

Johanna: Själv tycker jag att det var sämre på högstadiet. Men det är ändå upp till en själv om man vill lära sig

Jenny: Jag tyckte det var bättre då, eller typ lika som nu. Men vi var så många i klassen så man fick nästa ingen hjälp.

Jonas: Jag hade bra undervisning och bra lärare, men jag brydde mig aldrig om att plugga.

Jag: Hur är undervisningen nu?

Jonas: Kanon, det är jätte bra.

Joakim: Den är bra, det är en bra lärare och då blir det roligt och gå på engelska.

Johanna: Ja, och man gör roliga saker på lektionerna.

Jonas: Mmm.

Joakim: Vi babblar på lektionerna men vi får mycket gjort ändå.

Jonas: Ja, faktiskt. Jag har lämnat in varenda uppgift.

Jenny: Jag håller med. Det bästa är att man hela tiden får hjälp.

Jag: Men det är ju jätte bra. Man kan prata på lektionerna men så länge man inte stör någon annan. Men tycker ni att det finns någon skillnad mellan hur mycket ni lär er i skolan och hur mycket ni lär er utanför skolan?

Jenny: Jag lär mig bäst i skolan, tror jag. Jag pratar typ ingen engelska utanför skolan.

Johanna: Aaa, i skolan.

Jonas: Ja, men man hör mycket mer engelska utanför skolan och då lär man sig på ett annat sätt.

Jenny: Ja, men jag lyssnar inte. Jag bara stänger av.

Joakim: Man kan väl lära sig på olika sätt, lite lär man sig väl i skolan och så sen någonting hemma. Men det blir att man lär sig på olika håll men både och är bra, men det beror väl på hur man gör själv.

Johanna: Det hänger på en själv hur mycket man lär sig och vad man väljer att lära sig.

Jenny: Mmm.

Jonas: Ja, precis.

Jag: Och vad man väljer att lära sig beror på vad man själv har för mål. Vad har ni för mål med engelska? Handlar det om betyg eller andra saker också?

Joakim: Ja, alltså man vill ju ha bra betyg. Jag vill bara få VG och jag är rätt så nära.

Jonas: Ja, men man vill kunna prata det också.

Joakim: Ja, men det kan man väl om man får VG.

Jonas: Ja, men det visar inte att du egentligen kan engelska. Du kan vara värdelös på att skriva.

Joakim: Ja, men hur ofta skriver man någonting till nån.

Jonas: Ja, typ varenda lektion.

Joakim: Va, på engelska.

Jonas: Ja.

Jag: Ni då tjejer, håller ni med att det handlar om att få bra betyg eller är det något mer ni har som mål?

Johanna: Ja, men om man åker utomlands måste man kunna prata och förstå.

Jenny: Ja, och då spelar det ingen roll vad man hade för betyg i skolan. Ingen frågar efter det liksom.

Johanna: Nej.

Appendix 3

Interview/group discussion with top-level group

Det här kommer att handla lite om vad ni själva tycker om engelska, varför ni är intresserade av det eller inte och vad ni tycker om undervisningen som ni får och har haft. Ni ska prata alla tillsammans som en gruppdiskussion, ni får kommentera varandras svar om ni har något att säga och ni får säga precis vad ni vill. Allt som dyker upp i hjärnan är det bra om ni säger.

Vi kan börja med frågan vad ni själva tycker om engelska. Tycker ni om att lära er engelska eller är det typ ett hatobjekt?

Simon: Ja, jag tycker om det.

Stefan: Ja, men det är viktigt med engelska. Om man ska åka utomlands, engelska är ju största språket.

Simon: Man kan inte alltid ha läraren med sig liksom.

Sebastian: Men engelska är bra, det är liksom ett helt okej ämne. Man liksom måste kunna engelska för det är så viktigt.

Sara: Jag älskar engelska, det är fan ganska coolt och kunna det.

Stefan: Ja, det finns så många olika språk i världen och engelska är liksom bland det största språket och bästa liksom.

Sebastian: Ja, mycket är ju på engelska, typ på olika jobb.

Tycker ni att det är lätt eller svårt att lära sig överlag?

Stefan: Nej, det är inte svårt att lära sig, men tiden är knapp.

Simon: Ja, det är svårt att hinna med allt bara.

Sara: Jag fattar mig på engelska, men det är ibland för mycket.

Sebastian: Mmm, man bara jobbar men kommer ingen vart liksom.

Men vad hade ni för undervisning i grundskolan. Vad tyckte ni om det? Var det bra eller dåligt och så vill jag att ni motiverar varför?

Stefan: Det var bra tycker jag, våran lärare var bra, han var rolig. Och där fick vi prata engelska emellan, det var bra. Det får vi inte göra nu, vi ska typ prata engelska hela tiden.

Simon: Ja, och det är lite smått, väldigt mycket, irriterande.

Sara: Aaa. Alltså vi gick alla i samma klass tidigare så jag har inget mer och säga typ.

Sebastian: Mmm. Inte jag heller. Det är svårt att rabbla upp massa grejer om man tycker att det är bra. Det är mycket lättare och säga om något är dåligt.

Okej, nej men jag kommer inte tvinga er att rabbla upp massa grejer. Jag vill att ni känner er fria att säga precis vad ni vill men har ni inget mer att säga så har ni inte det. Jag kanske försöker pressa er lite om ni

svarar att ni inte vet och såna saker. Men när vi är inne på undervisningen nu, kan ni berätta för mig vad ni tycker om undervisningen som ni har nu på gymnasiet?

Simon: Det är bra samtidigt som det är dåligt.

Stefan: Ja, jag tycker det blir väldigt väldigt högt tempo liksom.

Simon: Ja, ett kapitel per vecka och så får vi bara två lektioner och jobba på.

Sebastian: Mmm, det är nästan omöjligt ibland.

Sara: Mmm, speciellt inte jag.

Jag: Visst är ni gruppen som ska vara bäst i engelska.

Stefan: Ja, eller vi är den snabba gruppen.

Sara: Man har ju liksom ganska mycket annat och tänka på förutom engelska.

Sebastian: Det blir ju jävligt jobbigt i längden för oss.

Men var lär ni är bäst, är det lättare att lära sig i skolan eller utanför skolan?

Simon: Det är väl lättare att lära sig i skolan.

Stefan: Mmm

Sebastian: Det är väl både och

Sara: Nej det är lättare hemma

Jag: Varför?

Stefan: Ja, filmer, tittar man mycket på filmer och sånt

Simon: Och dator, allt är ju typ på engelska på en dator nästan

Sara: Men jag kan inte koncentrera mig på lektionerna

Är det roligare och hålla på med engelska utanför skolan?

Simon: Ja roligare och roligare, det är typ samma

Stefan: Det är nästan roligare i skolan, alla känner alla liksom så man vågar säga fel

Sebastian: Mmm

Jag: Du sa att det var både och, kan du förklara på vilket sätt?

Sebastian: Ja det som är bra i skolan det är liksom att man har en lärare som hjälper om man inte kan och hemma är det väl att man är kanske lite friare och göra det man tycker om

Okej, ni tycker om engelska och ni tycker att det är lätt att lära sig engelska fast det går för fort eller hur.

Men vad har ni för mål med engelska?

Sara: Att få godkänt så klart

Sebastian: Ja

Simon: Mmm

Stefan: Mmm

Handlar det bara om att få godkänt, inget mer?

Stefan: Ja, VG vill man helst ha.

Sebastian: Man vill väl alltid ha bättre än godkänt men godkänt är väl okej.

Sara: Fast jag vill helst ha VG för det hade jag i grundskolan

Men oavsett vilket betyg ni vill ha, är det bara betyg ni har som mål?

Simon: Nej man vill väl lära sig engelska för att kunna det och så

Stefan: Ja när man åker utomlands som jag sa

Sebastian: Ja, det handlar inte bara om att skriva prov och få ett bra betyg man vill kunna använda det också.

Sara: Ja, ja vill kunna prata engelska, man är mer fri liksom man behöver inte bo hela sitt liv på samma ställe.